Yoroboshi; A Modern Noh Play

By

S. Hassan Razavi

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We acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Supervisory Committee

Prof. M. Cody Poulton, Supervisor
Department of Pacific and Asian Studies

Dr. Tim Iles, Departmental Member
Department of Pacific and Asian Studies

Abstract

This thesis examines the implications of designating an adaptation with the source material's name when the two bear little resemblance. Focusing on Mishima Yukio's *Yoroboshi*, a play from his *Modern Noh Plays* collection, this study investigates the effects of this practice on the imagined audience. By classifying a Western-style drama (*shingeki*) under the highly formalized genre of Noh and creating the category of "Modern Noh," Mishima merges the contrasting notions of tradition and modernity. This thesis posits that this fusion suggests that solutions to contemporary issues critiqued in the play, such as the erosion of national identity, may be found in the past.

Mishima's *Yoroboshi*, adapted from a classical Noh play of the same name, introduces a family court to adjudicate the legal parentage of a young man blinded in an aerial bombing. The thesis explores the sociopolitical context of its time and the impact of labeling it as "Noh" on the audience. This analysis involves contextualizing the play, conducting a critical translation, and comparing it with the source material to assess its nature as an adaptation.

Through this examination, this thesis aims to enhance understanding of Mishima's Modern Noh drama in the postwar context and its significance for the audience.

Contents

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Chapter I. Introduction

> *The Noh theatre is a temple of beauty, the place above all wherein is realized the supreme union of religious solemnity and sensuous beauty. In no other theatrical tradition has such an exquisite refinement been achieved… True beauty is something that attacks, overpowers, robs, and finally destroys.*
>
> *-from an essay by Mishima, "The Japan Within", translated and quoted in Henry Scott Stokes's The Life and Death of Yukio Mishima*

Mishima Yukio, a towering figure in Japanese literature and culture, left an enduring legacy through his diverse work encompassing novels, plays, essays, and even filmmaking. Throughout his career, Mishima explored complex themes of identity, sexuality, beauty, and death, often drawing inspiration from traditional Japanese aesthetics and cultural values while grappling with the anxieties and contradictions of postwar Japanese society. Between 1949 and 1962, Mishima composed a series of nine plays based on classical Noh sources and called the *Modern Noh Plays* (近代能楽集). These plays were written as Western-style, psychological drama (known in Japan as New Theatre or *shingeki*) and have no self-evident resemblance to the classical Noh. In his Modern Noh plays, Mishima reimagined familiar characters and scenarios from the classical Noh plays, usually set in serene ancient courts and Buddhist temples, and relocated them to a gritty, urbanized Japan that turned its back on its traditions.

Mishima's modern Noh plays, with their fusion of Western dramaturgy and traditional Japanese aesthetics, embody a paradox central to his personal, philosophical, and political identity. It could be argued that Mishima utilized this distinctive form to channel his creative energy and used the classical Noh's fluid boundaries between the tangible and intangible as a metaphor for both

postwar Japan and his own constantly changing identity. This thesis focuses on one of these intriguing plays, *Yoroboshi*, an adaptation of a classical Noh play of the same name. Set in a family court in postwar Japan, the play revolves around Toshinori, a young man blinded and separated from his parents during the firebombing of Tokyo. Fifteen years later, a custody battle ensues between his biological and adoptive parents, leading Mishima to delve into complex themes of identity, trauma, and the clash between tradition and modernity in postwar Japan. By analyzing *Yoroboshi*, this project aims to illuminate Mishima's sociopolitical commentary, his subversion and homage to Noh conventions, and the enduring relevance of his work in understanding the complexities of cultural identity and historical trauma in the face of rapid societal change.

In this thesis, I will argue that Mishima uses the allegory of a family court to critique Japan's postwar identity and the perceived departure from traditions and the national identity that he nostalgically revered. Mishima's adaptation strategy intentionally omits most of the source material yet retains the titles to evoke a sense of nostalgia and conjure a national identity for an imagined audience familiar with Noh traditions. I will also argue that, in his adaptation, by discarding the physicality of traditional Noh performance, the masks, costumes, and stylized movements, and focusing instead on the psychological landscape of the characters, Mishima leverages the strengths of modern theater to delve deeper into the emotional and psychological complexities of the narrative. While *Yoroboshi* deviates significantly from the classical Noh play in form and content, it retains the essence of Noh's exploration of human emotions, suffering, and the search for meaning. Mishima's adaptation can be seen as a "reconstruction" of the original play where the core themes and ideas are reinterpreted and given new life through a different artistic medium.

To support this argument, I will conduct a textual analysis of *Yoroboshi*, focusing on how he has transformed the setting and the characters, and also on significant plot deviations from the source material, such as the depiction of hell and apocalypse instead of Nirvana. Additionally, I will examine a series of performative utterances within the play; from simple state-of-being sentences that label Toshinori, the protagonist, as "mad", "lunatic", and "blind" to Toshinori calling himself "a naked prisoner" and his parents "cowards" and "insects".

The first step in this literary analysis involves contextualization: understanding who Mishima Yukio was, and how his personal life and political activism influenced his writings. This includes exploring the philosophies that shaped his life, the social and political context in which he wrote these plays, the theatre scene of his time, and the artistic heritage he followed. After examining the themes of the play in the context of Mishima's life and other works, and in Japan's postwar sociopolitical situation, I will explore the artistic heritage of Mishima's adaptation, including the form of classical Noh, the history of the Shintokumaru story (the basis for *Yoroboshi*), and Noh in contemporary times.

The significance of *Yoroboshi* within Mishima's collection of Modern Noh plays is multifaceted. Firstly, its composition in 1960 coincides with Mishima's growing political activism, marked by his short story "Patriotism" (1960) which extolled the virtues of a young ultranationalist army officer who committed *seppuku* after a failed coup. This marked a turning point in Mishima's career, as his writings increasingly reflected his right-wing political leanings.

Secondly, the narrative of *Yoroboshi* is deeply rooted in Japanese cultural history. The legend of Shintokumaru, a blind beggar reunited with his father, has been adapted across various traditional Japanese theatrical forms, including Noh, Kabuki, and Bunraku. Each adaptation explores distinct

themes, ranging from love and suffering to revenge and social critique. The enduring appeal of this narrative, with its recurring motifs of transgressing, pollution, truth, and authority, provides a fertile ground for examining the political undercurrents in Mishima's adaptations. The story's resurgence in various forms throughout Japanese history, including contemporary adaptations by Terayama Shūji and Orikuchi Shinobu, underscores its cultural significance and its potential to illuminate the sociopolitical concerns of different eras.

Mishima's collection of *Modern Noh Plays* aligns well with his critique of modernity, particularly the Westernization and loss of traditional values in postwar Japan. However, it is important to think of what Mishima meant by Modern. The word "modern" is inherently problematic; it is subjective, ambiguous, and constantly changing. In the introduction that he wrote for a collection called *New Writings in Japan* (1972), in which he included his *Patriotism* as one of the exemplary short stories of contemporary Japan, Mishima tries to define what "modern" means in Japanese literature. He compares the essence of the "modern" with a pebble hidden in a loaf of bread, a painful, brief shock that disrupts the flow of the everyday. He argues that while the Japanese have kept parts of the traditions of their classical culture alive, there is no connection between the traditional and modern literature of Japan. However, after more than a hundred years at his time from the beginning of modern literature, he suggests that there is a tendency to go back to once-abandoned traditions of Japanese classical literature to slowly fertilize "the roots of the superficial grafting of European literary trends." (Mishima, Introduction, 1972)

In other words, Mishima equates "modern" with European, Western, Global, non-Japanese, and non-traditional. For him, "modern" is not necessarily the same as contemporary, as he distinguishes between contemporary writings that try to fuse Japanese traditional form with European form and the ones that only imitate the European styles. In Mishima's lexicon, "modern"

is soulless, superficial, empty, and meaningless. With that in mind, we can see that Mishima's Modern Noh plays are Noh plays set in the perceived modern world of Mishima, rather than just contemporizing the stories of those plays.

More than half a century after Mishima's suicide, his anxieties and concerns are still relatable, if not on the rise again at a global level. At the time of writing this thesis, many European countries have handed their governments to their hard-right parties, including Italy, Finland, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, and the Czech Republic. Many polls show that the nationalist parties are either leading or second in popularity in 15 countries of Europe. (Coi, 2024) White supremacist, alt-right movements in North America such as Donald Trump's MAGA campaign gained more followers in recent years, advocating for xenophobic, misogynistic, anti-LGBTQ policies behind the shield of keeping the traditions alive. (Wimberly, 2021) Similar to Mishima, many of these movements and political parties share the anxiety of losing touch with their traditions and national identity and their imagined utopia entails restoring a glory that has never existed. By examining Mishima Yukio's life and works, particularly focusing on his play *Yoroboshi,* in this case, as a turning point in his career, we can understand how cultural anxieties can be embodied in nihilistic characters in a play. Additionally, we can see how Mishima manipulates his imagined audience to feel nostalgic for traditional values through his adaptation strategies.

Through the characters' struggles with loss, identity, and the search for meaning, *Yoroboshi* offers a glimpse into the psychological landscape of postwar Japan. The play delves into the depths of human despair, exploring themes of nihilism, war, alienation, and the disintegration of traditional values. The characters' yearning to return to a romanticized past and their inability to reconcile with the present speak volumes about the societal anxieties that Mishima thought were plaguing the nation. The original Noh play, dealing with themes of wandering mad men and the search for

salvation, resonated with the postwar Japanese psyche, seeking solace and meaning in a world that seemed irrevocably changed. By reimagining this classic tale, Mishima not only pays homage to traditional Japanese theater but also uses it as a vehicle to express contemporary anxieties and critique the erosion of cultural identity.

Methodology

The intricate layers of meaning embedded within Mishima's *Yoroboshi* necessitate a multi-faceted methodological approach to fully grasp its sociopolitical commentary and cultural significance. Primarily, a close reading and textual analysis of the play will be conducted. This entails a meticulous examination of the language, symbolism, character development, and dramatic structure employed by Mishima. Through a careful dissection of the text, recurring motifs, patterns, and nuances in language can be identified, shedding light on the play's underlying themes and messages.

In addition to a close reading, as an adaptation, a comparative analysis of the classical Noh play *Yoroboshi* is necessary. By juxtaposing the two versions, key differences in plot, characterization, and thematic emphasis can be highlighted. This comparison will reveal the specific choices Mishima made in his adaptation. To avoid expanding this study out of scope, I intend to limit the comparative analysis to the direct source material, which is the classical Noh version of the story. I will, however, touch upon the many different versions of Shintokumaru's story that have been adapted for multiple forms in different eras.

The historical and cultural context of postwar Japan serves as a crucial lens through which to interpret *Yoroboshi*. An understanding of the social, political, and economic landscape of the time is essential for deciphering the play's coded messages and allusions. By situating the play within

its historical context, the nuances and subtleties of Mishima's commentary on issues such as cultural identity, disillusionment, and the search for meaning can be more fully appreciated. To conduct the contextualization, I chose Thomas Postlewait's methodology, with some degree of customization. In "The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography," Thomas Postlewait (2009) proposes a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between a theatrical work and its context. He visually represents this as a graph where the play itself occupies a central position, interconnected with four key elements: Possible Worlds, Receptions, Artistic Heritage, and Agents. This model emphasizes the dynamic interplay between the text and its surrounding factors.

While acknowledging this complex context, this thesis primarily examines Mishima's *Yoroboshi* as a literary work, meaning it does not concern itself with the reception of the play, for several reasons:

Although Mishima was deeply involved in theater throughout his career, he did not participate directly in the first staging of *Yoroboshi,* which occurred five years after its publication. It was the only staging of *Yoroboshi* while Mishima was alive. This thesis focuses on Mishima's written work, not the theatrical production of *Yoroboshi*. Mishima exclusively collaborated with the Bungakuza theater troupe, a prominent *shingeki* group known for its literary focus, prioritizing publication of the play's text before its stage adaptation. Even after forming his own troupe, *Neo Littérature Théâtre*, with former Bungakuza members, Mishima maintained this practice. *Neo Littérature Théâtre* was formed a few months before *Yoroboshi*'s production and was responsible for a joint production of *Yoroboshi* and *Hanjo*.

Mishima's Modern Noh plays, including *Yoroboshi*, deliberately eschew the traditional elements of the form of Noh theater. Despite Noh's iconic features like the distinctive stage, masks, costumes, choreography, narration style, chanting, and music, Mishima incorporated none of these into his

works. His plays were written for and performed in the *shingeki* style, a Western-influenced form of Japanese theater. His Modern Noh plays lack reliance on specific scenographic elements and hence can be studied as a work of literature.

In this thesis, the focus is on the audience Mishima imagined for *Yoroboshi* rather than the readers of the play ("readers") or those who watch it on stage ("spectators"). This approach prioritizes the analysis of the play as a literary work, exploring the implications of the text on the ideal audience and the plot differences between the classical Noh version and Mishima's version. While the actual staging and viewing of *Yoroboshi* are acknowledged, they are not central to this specific line of inquiry.

To clarify, I am omitting the aspect of reception from the contextualization of the play. That means I do not study how the spectators reacted to the performance, whether it received a standing ovation or people threw rotten tomatoes at the actors. I also do not concern this study with how critics reacted to it, whether as a play on stage or a published play as literature. By omitting Reception from the contextualization equation, we will be left with two triangles in Postlewait's model:

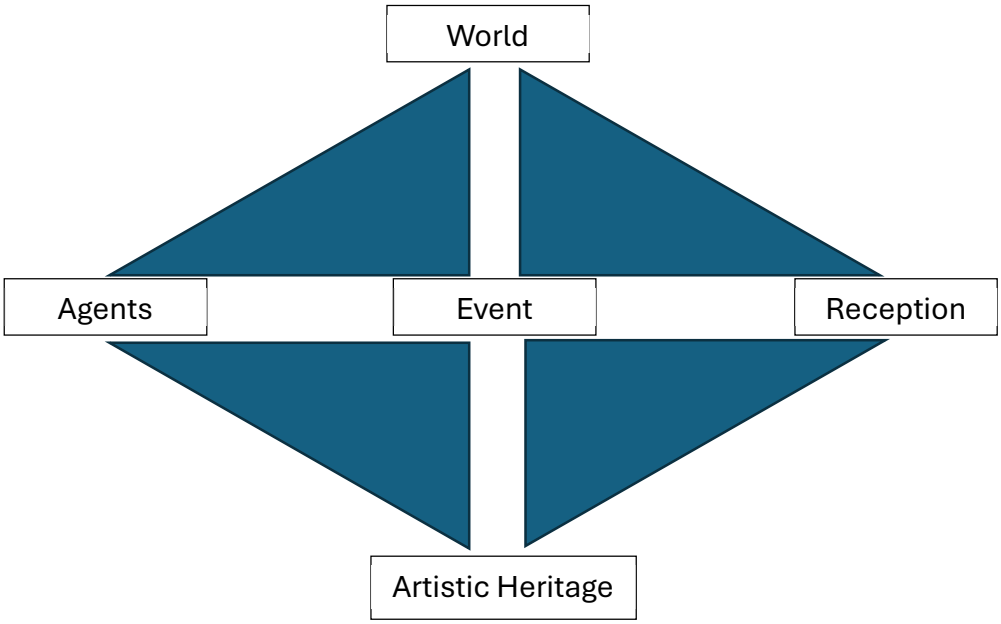

Figure 1. Postlewait's graph of context

"Possible Worlds-Event-Agents" and "Agents-Events-Artistic Heritage." To examine the context of Mishima's contribution to the event, I will present a brief biography of him, focusing mainly on the themes I identified during the initial close reading of *Yoroboshi*. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the "death of the author" and "authorial fallacy" concepts, which emphasize the necessary separation between creator and creation. While Mishima's biography provides valuable insights into his motivations and cultural context, it doesn't definitively determine the meaning of *Yoroboshi*. The play must be allowed to speak for itself, with interpretations stemming from the interplay between its language, structure, and the historical context in which it was written. Therefore, while Mishima's life and works offer a lens through which to view the play, they are not the sole determinants of its significance. The analysis will strive to balance acknowledging the author's influence and allowing the text to reveal its multifaceted meanings. In other words, I will adopt the approach of hypothetical intentionalism, which prioritizes the perspective of an intended or ideal audience. This approach imagines an ideal audience that has access to public knowledge and contextual information to infer the author's intentions.

Moreover, the sociopolitical context of postwar Japan will be examined to understand the "World" corner of the context. This brief history of Japan will start from the last year of the war and continue to the year that the play was written, which is also the year in which the play is set. This sociopolitical context will help us understand the situation to which Mishima was responding through this play and the setting of the play itself. For the section on Artistic Heritage, I will begin by providing a concise history of *shingeki*. Following this, I will analyze the form of classical Noh theatre. Subsequently, I will explore the narrative of Shintokumaru and its various adaptations across different forms. Finally, I will examine the contemporary state of Noh, focusing on Mishima's Modern Noh collection.

Furthermore, I will pay attention to the theatrical elements of *Yoroboshi*. The use of music, costumes, masks, and stage design in Noh theater are not merely decorative but carry symbolic weight and contribute to the play's overall meaning. Analyzing how Mishima deals with these elements in the context of his adaptation will shed light on how he utilized the theatrical medium to enhance his sociopolitical commentary.

By combining close reading, comparative analysis, historical contextualization, and theoretical frameworks, this multi-pronged methodology aims to unravel the intricate layers of meaning within *Yoroboshi*. This approach will illuminate the play's significance as a cultural artifact, its reflection of postwar anxieties, and its enduring relevance in contemporary discourse.

Theory

In his introduction to the 1957 translation of Mishima's *Five Modern Noh Plays* Donald Keene parallels Mishima's adaptations of classical Noh and 20th-century adaptations of Greek tragedies. Keene highlights that while familiarity with the original works can deepen appreciation in both cases, the adaptations stand alone on their own merit, showcasing the creative reinterpretation of familiar material. (Keene, Introduction, 1957) This observation encapsulates a central tension in adaptation studies: the balance between fidelity to the source and the autonomy of the new creation.

Linda Hutcheon, a prominent figure in contemporary adaptation studies, in her book *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), argues that “In the workings of the human imagination, adaptation is the norm, not the exception.” Hutcheon emphasizes that adaptations must be studied as adaptations and should not be judged based on “fidelity criticism,” which assesses an adaptation by how faithful the reproduction of the source material is. (Hutcheon, 2006, pp. 6-7) While it is true that an adaptation is linked to an earlier text by “equivalences” of characters, plot, setting, images, etc., it

distinguishes itself from its source material by introducing new information, perspectives, signs, modes of presentation, etc. Hutcheon asserts that adaptations and their source material “exist laterally, not vertically.” (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 169)

Hutcheon emphasizes the shared responsibility of both the adapter and the receiver (reader/audience) in the adaptation process and considers them equal collaborators in creating new meaning through textual mediation. Adaptation, viewed as deliberate appropriation, involves a writer intentionally utilizing an existing text to create a new one. This process provides a unique opportunity to analyze the compositional strategies and underlying intentions that influence the creation and, ultimately, the autonomy of the new work. Conversely, the ability of an adaptation to foster intertextual "double reading," where the audience engages with both the original and adapted works simultaneously, depends on the receiver having a foundational understanding of the source material and its subsequent adaptation. Hutcheon argues that the dual nature of adaptation, as both a creative and receptive process, places a dual responsibility on the adaptor: to act as both the creator of a new work and the interpreter of an existing one. (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 8)

In her analysis of the receiver's role, Hutcheon differentiates between knowing and unknowing audiences. Knowing audiences, those familiar with the source material (prototext) approach adaptations with specific expectations and requirements. For them, experiencing the adaptation becomes a dynamic interplay between the new text and their recollections of the original work. In contrast, Hutcheon empowers unknowing audiences by asserting that adaptations can challenge established notions of priority and originality for them. (Hutcheon, 2006, pp. 121-122) For those who encounter an adaptation before the source material, common in modern adaptations of classic works, the value is not primarily derived from a comparative analysis but rather from an assessment of the adaptation on its own merit. Moreover, unknowing audience members engage

in a reversed influence if they later seek out the source material. Their interpretation of the original is shaped by the adaptations they first encountered, as they filter the prototext through the lens of the adaptation's variations and commonalities. This scenario inverts the conventional understanding of memory, with the receiver "remembering" the newer adaptation when encountering the source material later.

Metatextual theory, which explores how textual mediation shapes literary transformations, engages readers concurrently with multiple texts. This theory also enables the identification of elements within a text that either oppose or facilitate adaptation. Gerard Genette contends that texts cannot be fully understood in isolation (in opposition to the formalist approach of New Criticism). Instead, their meaning is derived from their interconnectedness with other textual traditions, encompassing structural, thematic, linguistic, and categorical relationships. (Genette, Architext, 1992, p. 81)

In *Palimpsests*, Genette breaks down the broader concept of transtextuality into five categories: Intertextuality, Paratextuality, Metatextuality, Hypertextuality, and Architextuality. The category most relevant to this study is Hypertextuality, which describes the relationship between a text and a preceding text it is based upon, but not a commentary. Genette suggests that hypertextuality involves both direct and indirect transformative processes, utilizing simple or complex systems of transposition and imitation. (Genette, Palimpsets, 1997, pp. 1-6)

Hypertexts can perform various functions in relation to their hypotexts, including continuation, prolongation, reduction, and augmentation. Continuations address what Genette terms lateral gaps, or paralipses, within an existing narrative, aiming to expand or conclude a text that was left open-ended or incomplete. (Genette, Palimpsets, 1997, p. 181) Prolongations, a specific form of

continuation, typically take the shape of sequels or prequels, offering supplementary episodes or stories to narratives that were originally considered complete. (p. 181) Reductions can involve removing textual elements to create condensed yet faithful versions of lengthy works or modified versions that serve a particular social or editorial purpose. Authors can also reduce texts through concision, removing outdated or overly complex language to make the content more accessible and understandable for modern audiences. (pp. 230-235) Augmentation expands a narrative to align with specific stylistic or thematic conventions of a particular historical period (like the neoclassical five-act structure) or develops a fragmented source text into a complete and cohesive narrative. (p. 262)

After establishing the major categories and functions of hypertextuality in *Palimpsests*, Genette illustrates the diverse literary techniques employed in transforming a source text (hypotext) into a new work (hypertext). At the fundamental linguistic level, adapted texts may be versified (prose to verse), prosified (verse to prose), or transmetrified (one metrical pattern to another). (Genette, Palimpsets, 1997, pp. 218-225) Similarly, transmodalization involves shifting a narrative hypotext into a dramatic form or vice versa. (p. 277) Transstylization entails "stylistic rewriting," either by adding stylistic flourishes to a hypotext (stylization) or removing stylistic elements that hinder clarity or impact (destylization). (pp. 226-227)

The adapter's distinct voice is most apparent in Genette's transmotivation, transvaluation, and transfocalization strategies. Transmotivation, the substitution of psychological motivations within a text, often reveals an author's intention to update outdated or simplistic reasons behind characters' thoughts and actions, particularly in post-Freudian adaptations of pre-Freudian works. Motivation introduces psychological rationale where the original text lacks it; demotivation suppresses or

removes an original motive, while remotivation replaces an existing motive with an equally or more compelling one. (Genette, Palimpsets, 1997, pp. 324-325)

Transvaluation alters the value systems that underpin a text and its characters, achieved either through revaluation, which imbues morality into characters lacking honor in the original, or devaluation, which reduces or eliminates ethics from previously esteemed characters or societies. (Genette, Palimpsets, 1997, pp. 350-354) Transfocalization occurs when the narrative perspective shifts through changes in point of view, exploration of "missing" episodes within the original text's timeframe, or adoption of a new interpretive lens. (p. 287)

The most prevalent form of adaptation in drama involves what Genette terms transdiegetization, the alteration of space, time, character, and setting. Homodiegesis maintains faithfulness to the spatio-temporal aspects of the original work, retaining place names, character names, and time periods. In contrast, heterodiegesis modifies or reimagines the spatio-temporal identity of the original's world. (Genette, Palimpsets, 1997, pp. 296-297)

Jean Mitry's article, Remarks on the Problem of Cinematic Adaptation*,* delves into the complexities of cinematic adaptation, particularly focusing on the challenges of translating literary works into film. He argues that the inherent differences between literary and cinematic forms make direct adaptation impossible. The essence of a literary work, especially drama lies in its language and the specific way it conveys meaning. Attempting to replicate this in a visual medium like film inevitably leads to a distortion or loss of the original's essence. (Mitry, 1971) In other words, in adaptation from one form to another, the narrative loses the innate features of the source form and adopts the features of its new form.

Mitry contends that the "problem of adaptation" is a false one, as it seeks to equate the signified (the underlying meaning) despite the differences in signification (the means of expression). He proposes two possible solutions: either the filmmaker faithfully reproduces the events of the story, resulting in mere illustration, or they reinterpret the subject, creating a new work inspired by the original. In the former, the film becomes a visual representation of the literary work, potentially capturing its atmosphere and mood but failing to translate its deeper meaning. In the latter, the film becomes an independent creation, using the original as a starting point but ultimately diverging from it in meaning and significance.

Mitry also discusses the relationship between film and the novel, noting their shared ability to depict characters in a series of events unfolding over time. However, he emphasizes that the film's reliance on visual representation and its grounding in concrete reality distinguish it from the novel's conceptual space and focus on duration. While both mediums can explore character development and psychological depth, they do so through different means and with distinct effects. Ultimately, Mitry concludes that while the film can borrow structures and movements from the novel, it cannot replicate its unique mode of signification.

Classical dramatic forms like Greek tragedy or Noh are distinguished by inherent formal conventions, such as the use of a chorus, established character archetypes, integrated music and dance, and direct address dialogue/monologue. These forms are often defined by their adherence to recognizable plot structures or specific intended poetic effects. Therefore, when examining adaptations of these classical works, assessing how these conventions' inclusion or omission (in whole or in part) impacts the intertextual connection to the source material is crucial.

In examining classical Noh adaptations, the analysis becomes more intricate, as most Noh texts are composed of interwoven allusions and quotations from diverse sources, connected by strict formal dialogue patterns, music, and dance. These texts rarely present a complete narrative in the traditional sense. Instead, a plot (in the Aristotelian sense of a narrative with rising action, climax, and resolution) is a nuanced aspect of classical Noh dramaturgy, often secondary to the emotional, spiritual, or poetic journey of the shite (main character).

Furthermore, as the *shite* is often a recognized figure from history or literature with a story known to the audience, and because the events of that story have transpired in the past, what is presented on stage is essentially a recreated memory. Consequently, narrative as a means of revealing plot or information becomes less significant. As Henry Scott Stokes quotes him from his essay "The Japan Within," Mishima Yukio states that because Noh plays are tales told by ghosts, their plots, unlike in most dramas, are not presented in a present progressive form but instead rely on evoking the past, implying that the drama has already concluded by the time a Noh play commences. (Scott-Stokes, 1974, p. 172)

When analyzing modern adaptations of Greek tragedy or Japanese Noh, we can discern certain fundamental cultural, aesthetic, socio-historical, and structural conventions that persist through the adaptation process, connecting the new work to its source material. However, these defining elements, though recognizable, do not remain static in the adaptation. They often blend with other textual or cultural traditions that shape the context of the new work. For example, the chorus may be reduced from a collective body to a single actor on stage, with traditional chanting or singing replaced by more natural speech patterns. Changes in the choral identity (and the sociocultural need for such a figure on stage) may also require a more active role for the chorus within the plot.

With his Modern Noh, Mishima Yukio sought to create a new theatrical form, drawing inspiration from the structures and themes of classical Noh while forging a connection between mid-twentieth-century Japan and its heritage. However, "Modern Noh" is a distinct genre that is not to be considered traditional Noh itself. By analyzing the persistent elements of classical Noh that endure through adaptation, we can identify the remnants of *shite* and *waki* characters or the echoes of a twentieth-century interpretation of traditional aesthetics of Japanese art.

Chapter II. Who Was Mishima Yukio?

Yoroboshi's protagonist, Toshinori, is a young man who just turned 20, the age of entering adulthood in Japan. He lost his vision by the fire of war, lost his birth parents, and was raised by another pair of guardians. He is arrogant, manipulative, and cynical, full of rage and lacking hope in humanity. His caretakers pity him, and he mistakes their tolerance for unwanted love. He is confused about his identity: He is still stuck in his traumatizing past, while others reduce his trauma to being blind and his cynicism to madness. The family court is there to decide who gets to be his legal caretaker now that his birth parents found him after 15 years, but he is not content with being governed by any of them; he wants to be his own authority.

If we assume Mishima sees himself in his protagonists (which will be discussed in detail why this is a valid assumption), what aspects of his personal life and political views are reflected in *Yoroboshi*'s Toshinori? In this chapter, I will look at Mishima's childhood, relationship with his parents and grandparents, war experience, and ideas about the emperor and the US. To trace the root of cynicism in Toshinori, I will look at some of the philosophies and literary movements that influenced Mishima's works throughout his life: Europe's literature of decadence and active and passive Nihilism.

Mishima before Mishima

Toshinori's bizarre relationship with his parents, natural or adoptive, is an interesting aspect that was noticed even by the characters inside the play. Before he even entered the stage, his adoptive parents described him as lunatic and ungovernable. His biological parents, on the other hand, have a dreamy, innocent image of him in their mind, which matches the adoptive mother's recollection of the first time they found him begging under a bridge. However, as soon as Toshinori sets foot on the stage, the situation gets more intense. He is unempathetic towards his real mother, does not

take his fathers seriously, and calls his parents “idiots,” “insects,” and “slaves.” Where does this hostility towards parents, or parental figures in general, come from?

Before 1941, Mishima Yukio was not called Mishima Yukio. Hiraoka Kimitake, who had the pen name Mishima Yukio chosen for him when he was sixteen, was born into a family with a military and traditional background. His father, Hiraoka Azusa, was a government official. Azusa’s mother, Natsuko, was the eldest daughter of a Tokyo prefecture gentry and a Supreme Court of Judicature judge. Kimitake's mother, Shizue, was the daughter of a classical Chinese scholar and the fifth principal of Kaisei Academy (one of the most prestigious secondary schools in Japan), Hashi Kenzo, who himself was the great-grandson of a samurai serving the Maeda clan. (Inose & Sato, 2012, pp. 21-40)

In his semi-autobiography, Confessions of a Mask, he describes the house in which he lived for the first nine years of his life as an old, big two/three-storeyed house in which ten people lived before he was born, including six maids and his grandparents. (Mishima, 1960, p. 4) The house was rented, and the family had lost all their wealth and status due to his grandfather's debts. Kimitake’s parents lived on the second floor, and his grandmother, who seemed to have signs of chronic neuralgia and was said to have hysteria and been afflicted with gonorrhea from her husband, lived in a dark sickroom on the ground floor. When he was only 49 days old, his grandmother decided that she was going to keep the child in her room and raise him by her sickbed to "protect him from the danger of raising a child on the upper floor.” (Inose & Sato, 2012, pp. 86-88)

This is the beginning of Natsuko's long and lasting influence as the first significant body of authority in Mishima’s life. She had fixed exact feeding sessions that allowed Shizue, his mother,

to come down, feed him, and go back upstairs. The methods Natsuko had selected for raising him were seen as more fit for a girl in a traditional household. He always had a nursemaid attend to him. He was not allowed to run about in the house and was forbidden to go out or upstairs, and was always accompanied by either Natsuko or a maid. Even his mother was not allowed to take him outside on a sunny day. (Scott-Stokes, 1974, pp. 60-63)

In 1929, He became ill with autointoxication,[1] which had him hospitalized regularly. This only made Natsuko's rules stricter. His only allowed playmates were older girls who played house or origami. His diet was also very restricted. His condition got better when he started school in 1931. Even though the family was, at best, middle class, Natsuko's obsession with her Samurai background led to her insisting on Kimitake being enrolled in Gakushuin, or Peers School, a school mainly reserved for elite aristocratic children. Natsuko's protectiveness kept getting more serious. Because of the restricted diet of bland whitefish and certain types of mashed potatoes, he was not allowed to eat in the school cafeteria. She had made sure that he was excused from the physical education program and did not let him join his class on excursions. (Nathan, 1975, pp. 14-16) His biographers disagree on his classmates' behavior toward him. Nathan claims he did not know how to behave around boys and was frail and girlish; hence, his classmates always bullied him. (Nathan, 1975, p. 16) Inose, however, claims that he was a prankster, cheerful, and a joy to be around, according to his classmates and teachers. (Inose & Sato, 2012, p. 54)

All along, Kimitake's mother, Shizue, tried to spend as much time with her son as Natsuko would allow. Shizue would try to take him out to walk and play in the sun, buy him toys, and read to him. But as soon as Natsuko found out about the occasion, she would make the situation more difficult

[1] Autointoxication, a discredited 19th-century theory, proposed that rotting feces in the large intestine harbored harmful substances, leading to various health problems.

for Shizue. Shizue claims that Kimitake deferred to Natsuko because he understood early that disobeying her rules meant more trouble for his mother. (Nathan, 1975, pp. 8-12) This duality of authority in the home only became worse for Kimitake when, in 1934, his family moved a few stations down the line into two tiny houses on the same street. They let three of the maids go. His parents lived in one house with his two younger siblings, and he was left with his grandfather and grandmother. Shizue walked him to school and walked him back, but she had to leave him at Natsuko's house for his prepared 3 O'clock snack. Only after an hour of reciting his lessons was he allowed to visit his parent's house, but he had to return for dinner. Sometimes, he was not allowed to see them for 4-5 days consecutive. Natsuko's health situation had worsened, and Kimitake was left to act as her nurse. She would only take her medicine from him, and he had to accompany her to the toilet and massage her head, back, and hip. At night, her pain would be even more excruciating, so much so that she would ask Kimitake to comfort her. One time, she even took a knife to her neck and threatened that she would kill herself. (Nathan, 1975, pp. 18-20)

Some of Mishima's biographers blame his childhood mostly spent under Natsuko's firm rearing and influence, especially the three years that he lived in a separate house with her, for his samurai mentality and partly for his fascination with death, for his "romantic agony" and "poetic longing for a distant past, an elegant past, a past of beauty." (for example, Nathan, 1975, p. 7; p. 27; Scott-Stokes, 1974, pp. 73-74) However, there isn't any concrete proof for this claim. Natsuko would also be responsible for his interest in literature and the first time he saw a Kabuki play. She took him to see *Kanadehon Chushigura -The Tale of the 47 Ronin-* which is said to be one of the most exciting Kabuki plays. (Inose & Sato, 2012, pp. 67-68; Nathan, 1975, pp. 26-27) It could be said that Mishima's idea of the "true Japanese" was beginning to form based on how much Natsuko stressed her Samurai ancestry and expressed her hatred toward the Meiji bureaucratic reform

(Mishima's grandfather, Sadataro, was dubbed the "quintessential Meiji man" by Inose). (Inose & Sato, 2012, p. 46) Even if there is no saying how much of how Mishima turned out to be is because of Natsuko, it can be confidently said that the duality of authority figures in his early years had a severe impact on him, as when he reflects upon his life in *Confessions of a Mask*, the complicated relationship with his grandmother and mother in the first 12 years of his life constitutes a big part of the first chapters. Kimitake loved and showed respect to Natsuko but also loved his mother, even if he knew he couldn't show it while Natsuko lived unless he was prepared to face the consequences of making her more jealous. His love for his mother became more apparent when Natsuko passed away, to the extent that some of his friends called their relationship concerning. Mishima showed his absolute love and affection toward Shizue in disregard of other people's presence, even his father. (Inose & Sato, 2012, p. 68)

In 1937, the year of the Nanjing Massacre, Kimitake's family was finally reunited and moved to a new place in Shibuya. Most Japanese people were not aware of the extent of the Japanese army's atrocities in Nanjing and thought it was going to be the end of the Sino-Japanese Conflict, yet at only 12 years of age, Kimitake wrote an essay about the fight, praising the Japanese soldiers for fighting this "Holy War" and saying this will be the beginning of "the second Sino-Japanese war, nay, the Second World War." (Inose & Sato, 2012, p. 58) With the move to the new place, the next stage of paradoxical dual authority at home began: His mother would drown him in her love -and Kimitake would allow it- and his father believed Natsuko, the strict grandmother, was too soft and brought his son up too feminine. He was not happy that Kimitake was interested in literature or that he would write poems for his class and school-wide competitions. (he would snatch books out of the 13-year-old Kimitake's hand, and after confirming that they were literary books, primarily decadent literature of Oscar Wilde, Rilke, and Tanizaki Junichiro even from that early age, he

would tear them up) (Nathan, 1975, p. 24) Shizue, on the other hand, would always read Kimitake's poems and essays (this tradition of Shizue being the first person to read Mishima's writings continued to the end) and encouraged him to do more. (Inose & Sato, 2012, pp. 59-60) When he was 16 years old, Kimitake wrote a story called "The Forest in Full Bloom" and showed it to his teacher, who was so impressed that he sent it to an editor friend in *Bunka Bungei* magazine. The editor liked the story and decided to publish it. Still, partly in fear of the dislike Kimitake's father held toward literature and partly following an ancient Chinese custom, they decided to choose a penname for him. The conversation to decide on his pen name was held during the editorial meeting of *Bungei Bunka,* which happened somewhere outside of Tokyo. To get there by train, the editors passed the Mishima station with a view of the snow (Yuki)- covered peak of Mt. Fuji. Hence, his pen name was chosen: Mishima Yukio. (Inose & Sato, 2012, pp. 91-92)

In one incident, years before Kimitake moved back to his parents, after his father, Azusa, had voiced his concerns over "his son growing up like a girl," Azusa took Kimitake out. They happened to be in Shinjuku station when Azusa saw a steam locomotive go by. He instantly picked Kimitake up and held him close to the train. Azusa describes his action as "Spartan education" and a "masculine phenomenon." Contrary to his expectations, Kimitake did not react to it. He neither cried "like a girl" nor cheered "like a boy." His face was as emotionless as a Noh mask. (Inose & Sato, 2012, p. 59)

Susan Napier in *Escape from the Wasteland* (1995, p. 122) states that the father figure in Mishima's works represents ugliness and ordinariness. Analyzing Mishima Yukio's interview with Ōe Kenzaburō, Napier observes a connection between Mishima's rejection of the father figure and its association with "ordinary life." Napier argues that for Mishima, the father embodies a life of

normalcy, which he views as inherently harmful and even "evil." This perspective necessitates a complete rejection of the paternal role.

The duality of authority figures in the childhood and adolescent stages of Kimitake's life was still visible after Mishima's death when his father and mother were interviewed by his first biographer, John Nathan. Their versions of the truth about Mishima's childhood often contradicted each other; they accused each other of different things they thought had led to their son's "unusual" life (and death), and they could not even keep this out of the biography Azusa wrote about his son himself accompanied by Shizue. (Inose & Sato, 2012, p. 50) One year after moving to their new home in Shibuya, Azusa got a promotion that required moving to Osaka. For four years, until he quit his job, he only lived a few nights a month with his family, so Kimitake had more freedom to read and write and have a happy life surrounded by his mother's love while Azusa was away. (Nathan, 1975, pp. 24-26)

Mishima's first encounter with Noh was thanks to his maternal grandmother, Tomiko, a student of the Kanze school of Noh chanting. The first play she took him to was one of the divine category, *Miwa*, (Inose & Sato, 2012, p. 68) This deeply Buddhist story ends in a dream scene where the Miwa deity transforms into a noblewoman who tells ancient myths, performs dreamy music for the Buddhist monk, and concludes with the reciters chanting, "I will miss it. I don't want to wake up from this dream." (Noh Plays Database: Miwa: Synopsis and Highlight, n.d.) Mishima later said about the first Noh play and first Kabuki play that he saw that he felt "blessed with the special favors of Japan's deity of performing arts." (Inose & Sato, 2012, p. 68)

The Beautiful Rubble of War

For someone "obsessed with death" who talks a lot about how he idealizes wartime and despises the post-war era, lived through World War II, and aspired to join the Japanese army but failed to do so, Mishima certainly does not mention war enough in his literature. In his semi-autobiographies and the works written about him, whether by his biographers or his critics, most claim that he was significantly shaped by his experience of war and wartime ideology and propaganda, and even though it can be seen in his philosophical agenda and nonfiction writings, in contrast to many post-war authors, he rarely conforms to this image in his fictional writings. *Yoroboshi* is one of the few fictional creations of Mishima that concerns wartime experience and the effects of war on a personal level.

In the few works of Mishima in which war has a more noticeable presence than a mere mention, one that stands out because of its peculiarity is the short story *Botan* (Peonies) (1955), in which he references the Nanjing massacre. In this short story, the first-person narrator visits a garden of 580 beautiful blooming peonies, each with its own poetic name. The garden is tended by Kawamata, a former colonel responsible for the Nanjing massacre, who is implicated in tens of thousands of atrocities done under his supervision, had killed 580 people with his own hands, all of them women. This symbolism and low-key presentation of war crimes is not strange to his other works either. (Hijiya-Kirschnereit, 2009, pp. 53-54)

The shared trope in Mishima's stories in which war has a function is the landscape of "the world's end." It is as though what fascinates the author is the aesthetic aspects of the war, not the history *per se*. (Hijiya-Kirschnereit, 2009, p. 57) In *Kinkakuji* (The Golden Pavilion) (1955), the war provides a heightened sense of existence in the imminence of death for the protagonist as he impatiently expects the looming firebombing of Kyoto. In *Kyōko no ie* (Kyoko's House) (1958-

1959), the characters recall a typical landscape of the early postwar days as a flat landscape filled with debris and broken glass that sparkle under the sunrise light. At some point in the book, the protagonist and each of her four friends reminisce about this scenery, which seems to be similar to that of Tokyo in the summer of 1945, after many of its buildings were burnt down by the air raids, allowing an unrestricted view of the horizon, reminding them of "the time which knew no tomorrow." On the rooftop of a high-rise building, they feel uneasy with the sight of normality restored and feel nostalgic toward the scene of destruction.

In *Akatsuki no Tera* (The Temple of Dawn) (1970), the third installment of his *magnum opus*, *Hōjō no Umi* (The Sea of Fertility), a similar landscape can be found. In June 1945, several weeks earlier than the Tokyo air raids, Honda, who is the observer throughout the tetralogy and the connecting character, is looking out a window in a Shibuya villa and imagines the following apocalyptic scenes:

> Here and there, something glittered brightly – for the most part, the remains of shattered panes of glass, glass surfaces burned and warped, pieces of broken bottles that reflected the sun. These little fragments harvested all the June light they could gather to them. Honda beheld for the first time the brilliance of the rubble.

Later, after the incident happens, Honda is described as watching the scene of destruction emotionless. Only after catching the bright reflections of the broken glass in ruins and getting "blinded" momentarily does he understand that this catastrophe, too, will disappear to give way to the subsequent, total destruction. The uncertainty of the future and the lack of hope gives Honda a feeling of euphoria.

This same imagery of war that resembles the end of the world, which mainly functions as “nothing but a motive for an individual and highly aesthetic epiphany, prompting moods of nihilistic ennui and an aura of nonchalant paradoxes” (Hijiya-Kirschnereit, 2009, p. 60) is an integral part of *Yoroboshi*, which will be analyzed in detail later.

Although the war in Mishima’s literature primarily serves an aesthetic purpose, evoking unique moods and attitudes in his characters rather than as a fatal event that shapes the narrative and the character’s fate, Mishima’s image and self-image remain profoundly influenced by his war experience. In *Confessions of a Mask*, he described his astonishment by Japan’s wartime unity and his dream of joining the army and, in line with his general desire for death and self-destruction, dying for his country, but more in an aesthetic way: “What I wanted was to die among strangers, untroubled, beneath a cloudless sky.” He wanted a warrior’s death. (Mishima, Confessions of a Mask, 1960, p. 138)

Suppose I continue building on the convenient assumption that Mishima’s biographers made and take *Confessions of a Mask* as a word-for-word retelling of Mishima's thoughts and feelings. In that case, the few pages that talk about the Tokyo fire-bombings that included Hiraokas’ town and expanded to other cities and the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings do not give us much information about how he felt about the atrocities of war. They do, however, tell us how it affected his paradoxical obsession with death while longing for life.

Based on the number of times it is talked about, maybe one of the most influential “war experiences” Mishima had was the failure to join the army when he was drafted. Mishima was summoned to join the Imperial Japanese Army in the final stages of the war on 27 April 1944. He underwent a physical examination on 16 May 1944 and received a "second class" conscription rating, which

meant he was barely fit for duty. He was due to report for service on 10 February 1945, but he had a cold that day, and the young army doctor mistook it for tuberculosis. The doctor declared Mishima unfit for service and dismissed him. (Nathan, 1975, pp. 54-56)

Before the failed medical exam, Mishima left a farewell note for his family, signed with "Long live the emperor!" (Tennō heika banzai) at the end. The unit that Mishima was supposed to join went to the Philippines, where most of them were killed. Mishima's admiration for the *tokkōtai* (Special Attack Unit or *Kamikaze* pilots) is evident in one of his letters to his friend: "…the *tokkōtai* is not a resuscitation of the ancient era but an annihilation of the modern…not overcoming but wounding and killing…of the 'modern' that is vast, monumental, Kant's, America's that we should never disdain…" (Inose & Sato, 2012, pp. 128-130) His love and hate relationship with modernity, or Westernization, will be discussed later in this chapter.

Mishima's ideas of war do not resemble those of most postwar authors of Japan. He does not regard war head-first. In most of his works, War maintains a ghostly presence, if any. He does not document the ruins of the war, victimize Japan or individual Japanese people experiencing war, or address the responsibility of either nation-state involved in the war (he even goes as far as stating that the real war responsibility is on the shoulders of "the masses and their stupidity." (Inose & Sato, 2012, p. 136). Instead, he looks for the sublime beauty of destruction. Not a threat to culture, he calls war an "opportunity for cultural exchange." (Inose & Sato, 2012, p. 135) He lamented the unheroic, bourgeois postwar spirit of the Japanese and idealized the experience of the sublime. (Washburn, 2010, pp. 101-102)

Tennō heika at the Core of "Ultranationalism" and "Fascism"

Mishima has been called a "fascist" and an "Ultra-right" political activist by many, from scholars who study him to his contemporaries. While he objected to these labels, he fits perfectly in many telling signs of both labels. To define Fascism and discuss, for example, every fourteen features of Ur-Fascism as counted by Umberto Eco and sifting Mishima through it to see how much of a fascist he was is out of the scope of this research, however, as Eco argues, as an "all-purpose term," we can take away one or more features off a fascist regime, and it will still be recognizable as fascist. (Eco, 1995)

In "Fascism from Above?" Gregory Kasza argues that while fascism in Europe has always been studied as a political movement, then a political ideology, and then a political regime, in that order, in Japan, it was received in reverse. (Kasza, 2001, p. 191) He claims that fascism had its most significant impact first on Japan's political regime, then on the elites and political thought, and it had the most negligible effect on the mass and political movements. In other words, similar to the case of China, Japanese Imperialism was mainly fascinated by the image of a powerful nation presented by Nazi Germany and implemented, or got inspired by, some of their policies in their wartime policies. This asynchronous encounter with fascism is part of the reason why the fascist ideology of Mishima does not necessarily fall into the same category as the pre-war European fascist ideologues' or that of wartime Japan.

Roger Griffin defines general fascism as an umbrella term that includes more than just the interwar and wartime fascism of Europe: "Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultranationalism." (Griffin, 2018) So, the notion of a nation in a Fascist's mind is more than a body of people united by a shared history, culture, or language living in a common geographical boundary. They see it as Ultranation, a

personified entity that can be decadent, humiliated, glorious, sacred, or reborn. And they see this ultranation in a sick, dying state where it must be reborn and return to a glory that often only exists in an imagined past. In other words, at the core of a fascist ideology is an imagined utopia where the ultranation is saved from its current state of crisis and is reborn into all its past glory.

According to Damian Flanagan, referencing Mishima's writings during his last two years of life, Mishima's utopian Japan is a nation fully militarized once again, boasting a million men in military force. In his vision, fortified bunkers, strategically placed throughout Tokyo, stood prepared for potential missile attacks. An extensive network of highways spanned the nation, constructed primarily for tank transportation. Within this envisioned Japan, educational curricula prioritized 'national mythology' courses as history and diplomatic ties with the United States had been severed for a long while. These proposals were Mishima's specific recommended national policies. (Flanagan, 2014, pp. 18-19) He advocated for returning to Japan's pre-war era and continuing that trajectory.

The idea of returning to a "true Japan" or an unlived past is not rare in Mishima's writings. The same goes for the concept of a "sick" nation in a critical state. In *The Sea of Fertility*, he contrasts the aggressive spirit of the Kendo team, which he posits as a representation of the "true Japan," and the subdued, passive nature of the Thai princes, who, in his perspective, exemplify the "effeminacy" and "decadence" of a nation whose cultural integrity has been significantly compromised by foreign ideologies:

> …Honda feared that the princes' memories of Japan […] certainly were not good. What had made them feel ill at ease in Japan was their isolation […] But, what had ultimately alienated them was what also isolated not only ordinary youth like Honda and Kiyoaki but

> also the liberal humanitarian youth of the Shirakaba-ha: that threatening "spirit of the Kendo team". Perhaps the princes themselves were vaguely aware that the real Japan [Hontō no Nippon], unfortunately, existed only weakly among their friends, and far more strongly among their enemies. That uncompromising Japan, haughty as a young warrior […] that Japan as quick as a boy to take offense, a boy who challenged people before they ridiculed him, and charged to his death before they slighted him.

We can see here how Mishima, through the eyes of his protagonist, considers a "real spirit" for Japan and sees it like a warrior in its original state, brave, unafraid of death, ready to attack, and yet dying and decaying now. Indeed, the utterances in question are from the protagonist of a fiction Mishima wrote. Still, significantly, the expression of "the real Japan" occurred in his final address to members of the Self-Defence Force as well: rise together and return Japan to her true form, a Japan with a strong, legitimate Imperial army. "For the real Japan, the real Japanese, and the real bushi [samurai, warrior] spirit exists nowhere else but in the Self-Defense Forces." (Starrs, 1986, p. 178)

These sentiments were not new or exclusive to his final decade, either. For his first twenty years, Japan was allied with the Fascist axis of the world war, and on a more personal level, even though he did not always agree with him, his father followed Hitler's actions very closely and had extensive conversations with Mishima about him and the importance of reading about his "novel ideas." (Inose & Sato, 2012, pp. 80-81) Still, even more important than that, as he was rarely in total agreement with his father anyway, was that as a teenage writer, he was adopted by the "Japan Romantic School" (*Nippon Roman-ha*). According to Etō Jun, the Roman-ha were "nationalist romantic" writers who followed the nineteenth-century German style and believed that destruction, and ultimately self-destruction, held intrinsic value. They advocated for "purity of sentiment," a

concept they did not concretely define, and the "preservation of the nation" through purging the self-serving political figures and corporate leaders. They believed, Etō continues, that self-destruction would precipitate a form of reincarnation, enigmatically intertwined with the emperor's benevolence. In their view, the Japanese people were deemed superior to all other ethnic groups. (Scott-Stokes, 1974, pp. 86-87) More than twenty years after the war ended, Mishima paid homage to Roman-ha's action plan of purging selfish political figures and corporate leaders, followed by suicide and rebirth, in his novel *Runaway Horses*.

Roy Starrs argues that Mishima's fascism, "if we can call it so," mainly has its roots in his nihilism, which will be discussed in more detail in the next part. Like the case of European "active nihilists" who embraced European Fascism, Mishima embraced Japanese ultranationalism "out of a desperate need for an action philosophy." (Starrs, 1986, p. 188) Mishima would agree with him, as he had a precise definition of Fascism in his essay, A New Theory of Fascism (1959), that did not wholly apply to himself. He even criticizes the leftist activists who call him fascist in using the term very lightly and saying, generally, leftists think that fascist is the worst thing they can call anyone, so, if we translate this word into everyday language, it means something like "idiot…" This could be the case, as we are seeing a rise in using the same word as an insult with the rise of neo-fascists and neo-Nazis today. However, Starrs' hesitation over calling Mishima a fascist, or even a "fascist sympathizer," could be because, to define "fascism," he mainly refers to Mishima's half-baked theory of fascism and only defines it by the features seen in European fascist nations. If we apply Griffin's theory of fascism, Mishima quickly falls into the definition. He was an ultranationalist, felt the "true essence" of the nation was at a critical point, and his utopia was a revival of that true nation. It is worth reminding that, based on Griffin's definition, fascism is, first

and foremost, a political belief and does not necessarily and on every occasion end in genocide and a dream of world domination.

However, an essential point in Mishima's fascism is the central role of Tennō, the emperor, in his revived utopia. In his argument that the curriculum should prioritize myths and illogicality over conventional, rational structure, he elevates Tennō veneration to the status of an "esoteric Buddhism," a treasured, non-rational belief system. Mishima believed that the emperor safeguards the sacred nation of Japan, preventing its reduction to a mere Western-style nation defined by legal frameworks and uninspired bureaucrats. (Flanagan, 2014, p. 20) This is another example of Mishma's image of ultranation. For him, the emperor serves as a bulwark against the rampant egotism he perceived in modern Japan. The emperor embodied a counterpoint to the prevailing psychology and morals of the modern Japanese. He functions as the central axis of Japanese society, the final defense against the perceived "decadence and decay" of the West. The importance of Tennō's role in Mishima's utopia is to the point that he calls to defend this symbol to the utmost, even through death.

However, Mishima's emperor worship was never about the real emperor of his time, Hirohito. To begin with, Hirohito did not want to be worshiped. He had given up his divine status with his surrender speech, which resulted in his humanization in the eyes of the public. Mishima clearly states his distaste for Hirohito's humanization in an interview one week before his failed coup and in the form of an allegory in his novel *Silk and Insight* (1964). (Sekiguchi, 2022, p. 64) The paradox in his call for emperor worship and his criticism of Hirohito is more apparent in how the activists and thinkers who were actual emperor worshipers disapproved of him, saying that Hirohito had betrayed the fallen by renouncing his divine status. (Starrs, 1986, p. 191)

For Mishima, Tennō is not a real person but a "cultural concept," as he states in "*On the Defence of Culture*" (1969). Mishima Yukio's concept of Japanese culture, centered around the emperor, prioritizes a specific interpretation of masculinity. He distinguished it from traditionally feminine aesthetics like the tea ceremony or Ikebana. For Mishima, Japanese culture is the masculine art of choosing immediate death to resolve moral dilemmas: Bushido. Tennō, in his view, serves as the unifying force that allows Japanese soldiers to find meaning in their sacrifice, expressed through the war cry "Tennō Heika Banzai!" Long live the emperor! Without this divine authority, Mishima argues, the Japanese warrior would have nothing to die for. (Starrs, 1986, p. 194)

Considering the paradox in Mishima's attitude toward the real Tennō, Hirohito, and the utmost respect he held for the ideal emperor in his ideology, it is reasonable to propose that while the allegorical, utopian emperor represents masculinity and "true Japanese culture" in Mishima's fictions, the postwar emperor is described as the father figure. However, as stated before, the father figure in Mishima's works is an evil, ugly, weak entity that is to be removed by any means necessary, especially if it would result in resorting to violence.

All Yin, No Yang: Mishima's Nihilism

Nihilism, a broad philosophical umbrella, encompasses a range of beliefs centered on rejecting inherent meaning, knowledge, and morality. According to the general definition of nihilism, life lacks objective purpose or order, and knowledge, particularly of ultimate truths, is unreliable or unattainable. Nihilism is associated with being destructive, antisocial, and willing to use violence to achieve one's goals. Nolen Gertz, in his book, *Nihilism* (2019), defines nihilism as "the ability to enjoy a glass of wine while watching the world burn," (p. 107) as the Nihilist, by denying that life or any action has meaning, sees the world "the way a sick person does," and hence, only wants what makes him feel better and avoids anything that would make him think otherwise. He cleverly

defines Nihilism in an example in the glossary section at the end of his book: “Wanting complicated ideas reduced to one sentence made easily available in the back of a book.” (p. 188) Gertz (p. 74) quotes Donald Crosby’s typology of nihilism from Crosby’s book, *The Specter of The Absurd*, and counts five species for nihilism that all center around negation or denial:

> *Political nihilism* negates the political structures within which life is currently lived, as well as the social and cultural outlooks that inform these structures. It has little or no vision of constructive alternatives or of how to achieve them. *Moral nihilism* denies the sense of moral obligation, the objectivity of moral principles, or the moral viewpoint. *Epistemological nihilism* denies that there can be anything like truths or meanings not strictly confined within, or wholly relative to, a single individual, group, or conceptual scheme. *Cosmic nihilism* disavows intelligibility or value in nature, seeing it as indifferent or hostile to fundamental human concerns. *Existential nihilism* negates the meaning of life.

The concept of nihilism has a lengthy and multifaceted history in philosophy, and while numerous philosophers have contributed to it, the work of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche holds particular significance in understanding the visible influence it had on Mishima Yukio's literary corpus. Nietzsche saw nihilism as a disease, both at personal and societal levels, rooted in seeking meaning from a superhuman source to the point that it makes humans powerless and, hence, life meaningless. (Gertz, 2019, pp. 55-57) He argues that nihilism can be broken down to evading reality rather than confronting it. For Nietzsche, nihilism is not discovering that life is meaningless; it is instead finding out that life is pointless *and* deciding to go on with our lives. He differentiates the response to this realization into *Active nihilism* and *Passive nihilism.* Where passive nihilists give up on seeking meaning in life, active nihilists indulge in the conscious destruction of old beliefs and the pursuit of new ones. While active nihilists would seek to construct their own

meaningful existence, passive nihilists might still cling to traditional values, quickly join mass movements, and find comfort in external authorities, even if they seem hollow. (Active and Passive Nihilism, 2012) In other words, the debate between active and passive nihilism is a debate between action and thought.

Whether Mishima was a true nihilist in the strictest sense is debatable. Roy Starrs quotes Mishima in his book *Deadly Dialectics* (1994, p. 17) and names the German novelist Thomas Mann, Mishima's favorite novelist, to whom he resembles both in style and in the underlying philosophical issues they address: the problem of nihilism as defined by Nietzsche. Much like Mann's, Mishima's novels are filled with themes of "sickness, deformity, crime, and decadence as obvious symptoms and symbols of the nihilism which pervades modern society." However, Starrs argues, Mishima's nihilism is different from what Mann and Nietzsche describe as nihilism in two aspects: first, it roots deeply in his psyche and instinct and his tendencies toward "Death and Night and Blood" at an early age.

What a combination of living with a sick and harsh grandmother in a dark room and growing up under the shadow of immediate death at war provided for Mishima was a sense of predicament that was more present in his early writings. After the war and with those predicaments gone from his life, he created new predicaments to replace war that "although not deadly in a traditional sense, are nevertheless capable of lending an aura of ending to the narrative." (Blinder, 1993, p. 27) Despite the unsettling erotic nature of young Mishima's death wish, he strategically vailed it with a layer of patriotic sentiment that he borrowed from the ideals of nationalist romantics. By that, Mishima could recast his morbid fascination as a form of purity and nobility. Scott-Stokes quotes him: "… it was a rare time when my personal nihilism and the nihilism of the age and of society at large perfectly corresponded." (Scott-Stokes, 1974, p. 95)

The second difference Starrs points out is that Mishima's nihilism is distinctively Japanese rather than European. This may align with Mishima's ultranationalism and his advocacy for traditional Japan. Still, to have a concrete understanding of this "Japanese nihilism" and to be able to put it in words, he needed to look at it through European philosophy's filter, Nietzsche's in particular. Starrs argues that this pattern can be seen throughout Mishima's life: processing Japanese traditional concepts through European ideas, making Mishima a "Western" or "modern" thinker rather than a traditional Sino-Japanese thinker. (Starrs, 1986, p. 7) In other words, Mishima's view of Japanese culture exhibits inconsistencies and distortions because of his interpretation through a Western lens. For example, he judges his Japanese cultural heroes through Nietzsche's active or passive nihilism scale, applauding samurai ethicists like Yamamoto Jōchō and neo-Confucian revolutionaries like Ōshio Heihachirō as examples of "manly active nihilism." (Starrs, 1994, pp. 41-42)

As stated before, violence is not only permitted but also promoted as a means to achieve the destruction of the status quo and create new meanings in the case of active nihilists. As Mishima states in his essay, "A New Theory of Fascism," fascism is a straightforward next stop after active nihilism. However, drawing parallels between the level of violence tolerated by the aftereffects of European active nihilism, Fascists and Nazis, and Mishima stops somewhere. He did not care for the excess scope of the violence in Europe. He believed that this "necessary violence" should be "carefully selective in their choice of victims." (Starrs, 1986, pp. 188-190) So, even though he condemned indiscriminate killing, he heroized the terrorists who acted more selective in his novels. This centrality of violence in his politics is an expression of his nihilism. And with the Tennō acting as the core of his ultranationalism, all violence would be permissible in the name of Japan and the emperor.

The theme of action vs thought, or active vs passive nihilism, is of such importance in Mishima's life that it is the central philosophical debate in many, if not all, of his fiction. The discussion takes on a more political and actual form in the last decade of his life when he takes his political ultranationalist activities more seriously and forms Tatenokai, the Shield Society, which was a small private army to train young men within the philosophy of Sword and Pen dedicated to defending the emperor to death. His final novel equates passivity with evil. Honda and Tōru, through inaction, descend into corruption. Conversely, action, even futile action, elevates Isao's morality. (Starrs, 1994, pp. 107-108)

Starrs argues that while Mishima was familiar with the dual mode of thought in ancient Sino-Japanese philosophy, active and passive, masculine and feminine, *yin* and *yang*, he ignored the part where that same philosophy encouraged people to keep them balanced. He favored one over the other, took one as a positive property and the other as unfavorable, and tried to omit the negative from his life. He hated the feminine features of Japanese culture and wanted only the "manly" traditions to come back. In his path to self-improvement, he only worked on his physical and intellectual aspects and ignored his psychological and spiritual self. He demonized passivity to the point that even the passive practices of Buddhist meditation, such as *zazen*, had no place in his ideal training for writers. Starrs argues that this unbalanced attitude toward the yin/yang forces of life was what eventually resulted in taking an action that lacked maturity, pointing to the unsuccessful coup that led to his suicide, the ultimate life-negating act which is typical of a passive nihilist. (Starrs, 1994, p. 109)

Starrs uses the allegory of a mask to discuss Mishima's psychology in general and nihilism in particular. He points out that Mishima's ultranationalism is one of the two faces of his nihilism mask, "the face a passive nihilist assumes in his desperation to find some basis, however irrational,

for action." (Starrs, 1994, p. 194) Mishima put on the mask of Japanese traditions to cover the more aggressive aspects of neo-Confucianism, ultranationalism, and the samurai traditions. For Mishima, death was the sole potential resolution to the intricate separation between self and action. It offered him a sense of purpose, albeit not for living, then for the act of dying itself.

Chapter III. What was going on in Tokyo?

Yoroboshi takes place in a small family courtroom, but its significance extends beyond the resolution of a domestic dispute. The time of the play is deliberately placed fifteen years after the end of World War II, in 1960. That means the play was contemporary to the time it was written. However, the narrative goes deeper, drawing its core conflict from a firebombing that ravaged Tokyo in 1945, the war's final year.

This temporal juxtaposition is not coincidental. At the time of the bombing, Mishima had turned twenty, the important age of adulthood in Japan, the same age as the play's protagonist, Toshinori. Mishima uses the family court, which was established to determine Toshinori's legal guardian, as an allegory for the post-war Japanese national identity. He perceived this identity as lost and derelict in the aftermath of World War II, a theme that will be explored further. To fully understand why Mishima felt like the country needed to go through a cultural reform, and why he selected this specific story for adaptation at that time, we need to know the sociopolitical context that shaped both the play's historical backdrop (1945) and the time of its writing (1960). These two critical junctures provide the necessary framework for understanding the implications of the play and where it stands in Mishima's political ideas in the last decade of his life.

Total Defeat

The firebombing that made Toshinori blind, in reality, was part of a series of campaigns that the United States had conducted from March to April 1945. These raids caused widespread destruction and civilian casualties, with estimates suggesting somewhere between 80000 to 130000 people killed, mostly women, children, and elderly unable to run away from the infernos that consumed entire neighborhoods, making more than one million people homeless all over Japan, around 750

thousand of which was in Tokyo. After the island-hopping campaign that had started the year before and continued throughout the last year of the war as one of the most effective strategies to get closer to the main island of Japan, the firebombing campaign targeting major cities like Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka weakened Japanese morale and industrial capacity. (Bradley, 1999, pp. 33-38)

Despite the immense devastation and the crippled industrial capacity caused by the raids, some militarists insisted on continuing the war to the last person and resisted external and internal pressure to surrender. With the Axis powers losing the war in Europe and the Soviet Union formally joining the Pacific Theatre, taking back Manchuria, and stretching Japan's resources even thinner, those military leaders advocated for the defense of the Japanese mainland even after the Hiroshima bombing. (Hoyt, 1986, p. 401) It was only after the second atomic bombing, three days after the first one, that the emperor finally intervened, made a public speech on the radio for the first time ever, and announced the end of the war. In his speech, he declared the casus belli defending "Japan's self-preservation and the stabilization of East Asia", denying any "territorial aggrandizement" intention, and one reason for "accepting" the "provisions" of the Potsdam Declaration (avoiding calling it to surrender), concern for the chance of survival for the Japanese nation and even the human civilization if the fight would continue and atomic bombs would be used again. (Text of Hirohito's Radio Rescript, 1945)

Many years later, in mid-1966, writing about making the short film based on his short story *Patriotism* (1960, the same year he wrote *Yoroboshi*), Mishima talked about how he felt about the 2.26 Incident, a failed coup in 1936 that ended with a number of rebel generals committing *seppuku*, and about the end of the war: "Surely, with the breakdown of the 2.26 Incident a great god died. At the time an eleven-year-old boy, I merely felt it only vaguely, but when I encountered [Japan's] defeat in war at the hypersensitive age of twenty, I felt that the terrifyingly cruel sense of the death

of god at the time might be closely related to what I had intuited as a boy of eleven." (Inose & Sato, 2012, p. 376)

On New Year's Day in 1946, Hirohito issued another rescript, now best known as *ningen sengen* or "Declaration of Humanity." In it, he declared that the relationship between the emperor and the people of Japan is based on mutual trust and not on "mere legends and myths," like the "fictitious conceptions" that the emperor is "divine" (or manifest *kami*) or that the Japanese people are "superior to other races and fated to rule the world." While the Western media were focused on the denial-of-divinity aspect of the rescript, the Japanese press passed that part quickly and reported it as a New Year Rescript. Hirohito himself clarified in an interview he did more than 30 years later that he wanted the Japanese people not to forget their pride. The commentary by the Prime Minister that accompanied the rescript also focused on the prior existence of democracy before the occupation and dating back to the Meiji era, not mentioning anything about denying Tennō's divinity. (Decker, 1999, pp. 308-317)

Nevertheless, the 21-year-old Mishima was not happy about this rescript. He was especially angry at its subsequent newspaper coverage, accompanied by photos of the emperor (Tennō) in a Western suit instead of a formal traditional court attire. Inose (2012, pp. 142-143) quotes him from an undated piece that was most likely written around the same time:

> That which has reserved what is truly Oriental, the last line of Oriental mysticism, in the form of a modern constitutional state, is Japan's Tennō system. The Tennō system is the essence of all Oriental cultures of the past, the final conclusion of the sovereignty of life. When this is lost, Oriental culture's bridge to modern culture, the last bridge of its understanding, will also be lost.

This is another example of Mishima thinking about Japan through a Western lens. Mishima's perception of Japanese culture was full of contradictions. He lamented the perceived loss of "Oriental mysticism" in post-war Japan, advocating for a return to traditional values and a rejection of Western influence. Yet, his very understanding of "Oriental culture" was filtered through a Western lens, a romanticized and essentialized vision that reduced Japanese culture to a set of fixed and unchanging characteristics.

This contradiction was further evident in Mishima's own lifestyle. While he criticized the "Americanization" of Japan and the adoption of Western clothing, he himself lived in a Western-style house and often wore Western attire. His anxiety over a sudden loss of "Oriental" identity also overlooked the long history of Western influence in Japan, which predated the post-war occupation. Mishima's idealized vision of Japanese culture, therefore, was not only a reaction to the perceived threats of the present but also a nostalgic yearning for an imagined past, a past that never truly existed.

US, “The Masculine”

The terms of the Allied occupation of Japan led by the United States were clear: complete disarmament of Japan, trials for war criminals, and a new pacifist constitution renouncing war as a means of settling international disputes. The occupation claimed to aim for political and social reforms, prevent a resurgence of militarism, and foster democracy while dismantling the feudalistic land ownership system. Many of these changes meant there would be different censorships in place than the wartime policy censorships. Censorship in Japan intensified during the early twentieth century, reaching its peak with the rise of a militarist government.

The Meiji Restoration ushered in a new era of censorship in Japan, primarily aimed at protecting the emperor and the new government. This involved strict regulations on publications and newspapers, including pre-publication reviews, bans on certain topics, and severe punishments for violations. While initially intended to safeguard public order and state security, these laws were often used to suppress dissent and limit freedom of speech and the press. This trend continued and even intensified during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, with the military imposing additional censorship restrictions. (Rubin, 1984, pp. 195-220)During the late 1930s and into the 1940s, the Japanese government significantly tightened its control over information. It created new organizations, such as the Information and Propaganda Committee and later the Cabinet Information Division, to manage and censor media content. These bodies restricted information and actively shaped the narrative to support the government's agenda. This control extended to all forms of media, including print, radio, and photographs, and was particularly evident in the reporting of the Second Sino-Japanese War, where positive portrayals of the Japanese military were encouraged and negative aspects of the war were suppressed. Regular meetings were held between government ministries and publishers to ensure compliance with increasingly stringent regulations. (Rubin, 1984, p. 257) This period witnessed a brutal crackdown on dissent, with documented cases of torture inflicted upon editors and publishers. (Inose & Sato, 2012, p. 152)

While seemingly promoting democracy and freedom of speech, the occupation authorities viewed anything deemed "undemocratic" as a threat. A pervasive system of pre-publication censorship was applied to all forms of media, including film, theater, and print. Strict guidelines dictated acceptable content, for example, prohibiting any reference to the US military as the "enemy" or any depictions of the air raids on Japanese cities. Even indirect references or allusions to these topics were suppressed. The Occupation government did not even allow traces of censorship to

avoid alluding to any negative image of them. This meant that news of sensitive issues, such as rapes committed by occupation forces, was suppressed, and any traces of censorship had to be meticulously concealed. (Dower, 1999)

This new censorship regime was, in some ways, even more restrictive than the Japanese military censorship it replaced. Journalists and writers were forced to rewrite entire articles to avoid any mention of prohibited topics, creating a climate of fear and self-censorship. Despite the initial promises of freedom of speech, the Occupation authorities maintained a tight grip on information, controlling the narrative and suppressing any news that could potentially damage their image or undermine their authority. (Rosenfeld, 2002)

The Japanese public and the state, however, welcomed the occupation troops warmly. In a letter to his friend in the first few months after the surrender, Mishima wrote how he felt about the presence of the occupation troops in Ginza, near the Kabuki-za theatre, and the reaction he was seeing from the Japanese: "[…] There isn't a single store where the Japanese can buy things. The Occupation force popularity, shall we call it. It's simply a bizarre popularity […] Enchanted by shopping Occupation soldiers and women reporters, there are […] crowds upon crowds of people, mouth agape, listening gratefully to (though they [the Japanese people] can't hope to understand) the responses in English. Nothing other than animal curiosity. […] There are some who frown on those begging for cigarettes from the Occupation troops and bemoan, 'The Japanese have fallen so low,' but this lament somewhat misses the point; their present ugly state neither adds anything to them nor subtracts anything from them. What a base, despicable, and yet loveable people the Japanese are!" (Inose & Sato, 2012, pp. 137-138)

The public's behavior was only a shadow of what the government had done in preparation. Just after announcing surrender, the same organ responsible for controlling civilian conduct and censorship set up the "Association for Special Comfort Facilities" in Tokyo, or in other words, brothels reserved for the Occupation forces. So, the country that had forced the women of its colonies into becoming "comfort women" for Japanese soldiers became known for lining up more than 1,000 comfort women for the Occupation troops. (Inose & Sato, 2012, pp. 138-139) In a short story Mishima wrote in 1953 called *Eguchi Hatsujo Oboegaki* (A Memorandum on Eguchi Hatsujo), he described the age of the Occupation as "an age of humiliation. It is an age of falsity. It is an age of obedience face to face and disobedience when the back is turned, of physical and spiritual prostitution, and of machination and deception." (Inose & Sato, 2012, p. 338)

This passive/active dynamic between Japan and the West, especially the United States, has a long history. Since Commodore Perry's arrival in 1853, the West took an active role and became a symbol of powerful masculinity for Japan. Mishima was aware of this history, and saw the Western influence, or rather the Japanese reaction to it, as an 'emasculation' of Japanese culture, suppressing warrior traditions and even some 'primitive', 'masculine' aspects of Shinto, like *Hadaka Matsuri* or Naked festival. He blamed a Western-induced sense of shame for the suppression of this embodiment of raw male energy. Mishima compared the way the Japanese reacted to the West to "an anxious housewife cleaning for guests." (Starrs, 1994, pp. 15-16) This 'emasculation complex' was further reinforced by the American Occupation, and the way the American media changed the portrayal of Japan and Japanese women is a testimony to that.

During the Occupation and especially with the start of the Korean War, Japan went through a rebranding in American media as a peaceful, democratic nation: an ideal vacation destination. One of the active figures in this rebranding campaign was James Michener, a novelist most famous for

his novel *Sayonara* (1953). His portrayal of Japan heavily relied on two elements: Aesthetic refinement, and the “ideal” woman. He presented a stereotypical image of the submissive and devoted Japanese wife, contrasting them favorably with American women (often portrayed negatively in his works). Michener’s idealized image of Japanese women resonated with American audiences. Popular magazines like Reader's Digest and Life featured his articles, and his depiction influenced advertisements, like the notorious 1957 New Yorker ad suggesting American wives adopt a geisha-like subservience after wearing a silk shirt. Mishima criticized Michener's portrayal as unrealistic and likened it to the opera *Madama Butterfly*. Despite criticisms, Michener's work and the 1957 film adaptation of "Sayonara" undeniably fueled a surge in American tourism to Japan throughout the 1950s and 1960s. (Sheppard, 2019, pp. 236-237)

Other American postwar films such as *Japanese War Bride* (1952) and *The Teahouse of the August Moon* (1956) explored the cultural clashes and romantic relationships between American servicemen and Japanese women, often highlighting the prejudices and misunderstandings on both sides, mostly stereotypically rather than critically. While not directly addressing misconduct, these films hinted at the potential for exploitation and the challenges of cross-cultural understanding. While they might have increased tolerance for interracial marriage in the United States, they also amplified the “geisha girl” stereotype of Japanese women as passive and “good wives.” Even *The Ugly American* (1963), though set in a fictional Southeast Asia, resonated with the anxieties of the time regarding American interventionism and the potential for cultural insensitivity. While these films did not explicitly critique the Occupation's darker aspects, they offered a glimpse into the cultural and social dynamics of the era, hinting at the complexities of the American presence in Japan.

A New Identity

In the postwar era, with pre-war nationalism and militarism being discredited, Japan needed to adopt the modern world definition of national identity: national identity defined by "the pursuit of the good life through consumption." Economic growth and rising living standards emerged as unifying goals in the vacuum created after the defeat. This focus on prosperity, democracy, and "modernization" aimed to redefine Japan as a nation rising from the ashes. This change of focus can be seen in many of the postwar speeches by the emperor and the prime ministers focusing on themes of "unifying to rebuild the country".

In his book, *Mass Media, Consumerism and National Identity in Postwar Japan*, Martyn David Smith (2018) argues that focusing on economic growth came with a hidden cost: it reshaped Japanese identity. People were encouraged to see themselves as individual consumers, buying more goods to enjoy a better life. However, this approach created tensions. On one hand, Japan promoted democratic freedoms and individual choices. On the other hand, the country became increasingly dependent on the global market and relied on the US for military protection. This raised questions about how much real freedom Japan actually had.

Flanagan (2014, p. 21) refers to Mishima's *For Young Samurai* essay (「若きサムライのために」), where Mishima claims that while he embraced urbanization, modernization, and industrialization, he also saw a growing emptiness in a world solely focused on the modern. This is where the emperor, in his view, took on a crucial role. Mishima believed the emperor should embody a timeless tradition, a symbol that transcended egotism, industrialism, and modernization. Mishima wrote *For Young Samurai* in the context of the 1968 student riots that had been particularly intense at Tokyo University. These riots usually led to violence and were expected to

get more serious by 1970, when the security treaty with the United States was up for renewal one more time.

Yoroboshi, and after that, *Patriotism,* were written in a similar context in 1960. The Anpo protests erupted in opposition to the revision of the United States-Japan Security Treaty in 1959 and continued throughout 1960. The treaty, which was ratified in 1951, allowed the US to maintain military bases on Japanese soil. Many people saw this as a violation of Japan's newly adopted pacifist constitution. The presence of US bases was also seen as a symbol of American dominance and a limitation on Japan's sovereignty. The growing tensions of the Cold War and the potential role of Japan in a US-led military conflict made hundreds of thousands of people rally on the streets surrounding the Japanese National Diet building in Tokyo, on many occasions ending in violent clashes with police. Even though the revised treaty was ratified by the Japanese parliament in January 1960, the continuation of the protests peaking in June made a lasting impact on Japan's foreign policy and showed public anxieties about the remilitarization of Japan.

In both cases, while Mishima disagreed with the pacifist sentiments of the protesters, he agreed with the anti-American sentiments. However, Mishima wasn't against all aspects of Western culture. He specifically disliked the democratic, liberal, and humanitarian ideals. In his view, these became the dominant forces in both Japan and the West after World War II, a direct result of the Axis defeat. Since he associated these ideas mainly with England and the United States, it explains the recurring anti-American and anti-British themes in his work. (Starrs, 1986, p. 181) At the same time, Mishima was very fond of another aspect of Western culture that was mainly represented by names such as the Marquis de Sade, Baudelaire, Nietzsche, Oscar Wilde, and even Hitler. His feud with Japan's postwar alliance with the West also did not extend to the War era, as he did not see that alliance suppressing the "true nature of the real Japan." In other words, while Mishima claimed

to abhor the postwar relationship of Japan with a Western country due to his anxiety over the possible loss of traditional values of Japan, he never showed the same sentiment toward Japan's wartime relationship with Germany, another Western country which could have the same "modernizing" and "Westernizing" effect on Japan. This could be due to the fact that, unlike the dynamic between Japan and the United States, Nazi Germany amplified the masculine aspects of Japan, such as violence and a desire to conquer.

Maybe Mishima's view of Japan's postwar relationship with the United States could best be seen through a scene in his story *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea* (1963), where, as the protagonist is penetrating a woman in Hong Kong, a neon sign of "Coca-Cola," written in Chinese transliteration, can be seen from the window, outshining the "weak lanterns in the foreground." This scene signifies both the Japanese colonial invasion of Asia and the shadow that the American empire casts on Japanese masculinity in the Postwar era. (Sekiguchi, 2022, p. 22)

Mishima's adaptation of *Yoroboshi* is deeply rooted in the sociopolitical context of postwar Japan. The play, set in 1960 but drawing its central conflict from the firebombing of Tokyo in 1945, serves as an allegory for the perceived loss of Japanese national identity in the postwar era. Mishima's personal experiences and anxieties about Japan's cultural shifts, particularly the perceived "emasculation" of Japanese culture due to Western influence, are reflected in the play's themes. The historical context of the American Occupation, with its complex dynamics of censorship, cultural exchange, and shifting gender roles, further informs Mishima's critique of post-war Japanese society. By understanding these historical contexts, we can better grasp the sociopolitical landscape to which Mishima's adaptation is reacting. This understanding sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the play's form and content, particularly its connection to the

traditional Noh theater and the history of the Shintokumaru story, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter IV. What is Noh? Is This Noh?

Noh had always been an undercurrent in Mishima's literature. There are numerous references to Noh, whether as a classic art form or a rich source of inspiration, in Mishima's fiction before he started adapting classic plays for Modern theatre. Yoroboshi is the last play that Mishima officially added to his *Modern Noh Plays* collection while he was alive. Two years later, in 1962, he published another play adapted from Noh, called *Genjikuyō* (Genji Memorial Service). However, he regretted doing so and refused to add it to the collection. *Long After Love* (1971) (original name in English) and *Busu* (1971) (附子) are two other plays in the same style published posthumously.

Yoroboshi was published in the magazine "Koe" in July 1960 and was produced in May-June 1965 in Shinjuku Bunka Art Theater as part of "NLT + Shinjuku Bunka Art Theater Collaboration: Mishima Yukio's Modern Noh Plays Night". It was staged alongside with one of his other Modern Noh plays, *Hanjo* (1955). That was the only production of *Yoroboshi* while Mishima was alive. Terasaki Yoshihiro directed it, and Suguro Homare (Toshinori), Okuno Tadashi, Masaki Miki, Kondō Jun, Miyauchi Junko, and Tanami Yatsuko (Shinako) were the six actors and actresses who gave life to the characters. (Sato, Inoue, & Yamanaka, 2005, p. 835) The organizing company, NLT or Neo Littérature Théâtre, was formed by Mishima Yukio and some other former members of the Bungakuza, including Tanami Yatsuko, one year prior and this was their second production.

In adapting the classic Noh plays, Mishima transformed nearly every aspect while retaining their original titles, calling the collection Modern Noh Plays. This paradoxical move invites us to explore the implications of his decision. To understand the significance of his work, it is necessary to understand the classical art of Noh, its structure, and the historical context of adaptations from this medium. It is also important to understand the form of *shingeki* to which Mishima adapted

these Noh plays. Lastly, I will look at the history of Shuntokumaru's legend, which is the source of the Noh play *Yoroboshi,* and how it has changed in each adaptation for different forms. By examining these facets, we can unravel the layers of meaning embedded in Mishima's Modern Noh play, *Yoroboshi.*

What is Noh?

Noh theatre holds a complex position in modern Japan. On one hand, it is seen as a classical art form that plays a significant role in shaping the Japanese cultural identity. Yet, at the same time, it is a relic of the past, a nostalgic reminder of a bygone era that feels strangely out of place in contemporary life. For those who perform Noh, its very antiquity can be a powerful tool, disrupting the newness of the present. British Historian Eric Hobsbawm (The Invention of Tradition, 2012) argued that many traditions seen as uniquely national were "invented" alongside the rise of modern nation-states. Nogaku is one of the examples.

Noh theater's journey to becoming a national classic is intertwined with Japan's modernization and wartime experiences. While Noh boasts a rich history dating back centuries, its elevation to a symbol of national identity was a deliberate construction that coincided with the rise of the modern Japanese nation-state. For instance, before the Meiji era, Noh had always been associated with the *shogunate*, but with the Meiji restoration, like anything else linked to the *shogunate*, Noh's position was in danger. However, since Japan now wanted to be seen as a hospitable country to outsiders, Noh was chosen to be one of the representing forms of entertainment for foreign visitors. It only found a concrete status again when the imperial family decided to patronize it. (Keene, *Nō and Bunraku: Two Forms of Japanese Theatre*, 1990, p. 43) In this context, "tradition" is not merely an unbroken continuation of the past, but a carefully curated and often idealized representation of

cultural heritage that serves a specific purpose in shaping national identity and the shared heritage of a nation.

Yokoi Haruno's assertion in his book *The Life of Zeami* (1943), that Noh's status grew with each military conflict, highlights the role of nationalism in this process. The theater's association with traditional values and cultural pride made it a potent tool for fostering national unity and bolstering morale during times of war. However, it was in the aftermath of World War II, amidst the devastation and loss of national pride, that Noh truly ascended to the status of a national treasure. The re-evaluation and promotion of traditional art forms like Noh became a way for Japan to reclaim its cultural identity and reassert its place on the world stage. Thus, while Noh's roots are ancient, its significance as a national symbol was "invented" or perhaps reinvented in the context of “modern” nation-building and cultural revitalization. Its status was changed from a court performance to a symbol of Japanese art and aesthetics.

The classic Noh theater is a unique form of drama that combines acting, music, and dance. Its stages are known for their simplicity and spiritual meaning, often featuring just a single painting of a pine tree. This simplicity allows the audience to focus on the performers’ skills. Shimazaki Tōson, Meiji era poet and Naturalist writer, has written about the Noh stage as follows: "On the stage of the Noh theatre, there are no sets that change with each piece. Neither is there a curtain. There is only a simple panel with a painting of a green pine tree. This creates the impression that anything that could provide any shading has been banished. To break such monotony and make something happen is no easy thing." The stage also features a bridge called *hashigakari*, which holds symbolic significance. It represents a means by which deities were believed to descend to Earth during Shinto rituals. Additionally, the narrow bridge serves as an entry point for principal

actors as they step onto the stage. The *hashigakari*'s presence underscores the mythic and otherworldly themes often found in Noh plays. (Komparu, 1983, pp. 111-125)

Masks are a key part of Noh and have been known worldwide as a symbol of Noh, or even a symbol of Japan as a whole. Noh masks are detailed and serve more than a decorative purpose; they help tell the story. Noh masks signify the characters' gender, age, and social ranking, and by wearing masks, the actors may portray young, old, female, or nonhuman (divine, demonic, or animal) characters. The presence of masks does not make facial expressions insignificant; it codifies and stylizes facial expressions and enhances the actors' ability to express emotions through small movements. (Rath, 2004, pp. 12-15)

The story in Noh is told through a combination of singing and music. A storyteller recites the story with a specific rhythm, and a small group of musicians play flutes and drums. The text is poetic and follows a traditional Japanese rhythm, filled with symbolic references that deepen the understanding of the story's themes. Movement is also crucial in Noh. The actors' movements are carefully choreographed and passed down through generations and years of training, sometimes starting as young as three. Zeami and his father Kan'ami, who developed Noh in the 14th century, created a system of nine levels of acting skills, from energetic physical movements to a more subtle, spiritual performance. (Komparu, 1983, pp. 209-216)

While roughly 2,000 Noh plays have been written, only about 240 remain in the active repertoire of the five surviving Noh schools. This current repertoire does not necessarily show how popular these plays were among the Japanese people, as the taste of the aristocratic class in the Tokugawa period heavily influenced it. (Ortolani, 1995, p. 130) Many of the plays are taken from the *Heike Monogatari* and *Genji Monogatari* and can be categorized into two primary classifications based

on how they involve supernatural elements. Genzai Noh (present Noh) features human characters as protagonists. The narrative unfolds chronologically within the play's timeframe, using a linear cause-and-effect structure. *Mugen* Noh (phantasmal Noh) is more complicated. The *shite*, the principal actor, often embodies deities, spirits, ghosts, phantasms, or a mad person. Time becomes a fluid concept, used in a non-linear fashion. The action may seamlessly switch between past and present moments, including flashbacks and dream states, to convey the narrative. (Ortolani, 1995, p. 130)

All Noh plays are traditionally categorized into five groups based on themes. This system, considered the most practical for programming purposes, continues to influence formal Noh performance selections today. A typical formal program of five plays will often feature one selection from each thematic group. (Ortolani, 1995, pp. 130-133)

The first category features the *shite* actor portraying a deity. These plays often focus on the mythic story of a specific shrine or praise of a particular god. Many god plays are structured in two acts, with the deity initially disguised in human form during the first act, revealing their true identity in the second.

The second category, *shura mono* (warrior plays), derives its name from the Buddhist concept of the Warrior Hell. The protagonist, typically a ghost of a renowned samurai, pleads with a monk for salvation. The drama often culminates in a dramatic reenactment of the warrior's death scene, with the *shite* actor appearing in full war attire.

The third category, wig plays, or woman plays, features the shite actor portraying a female character. This category has some of Noh's most refined songs and dances, reflecting the graceful and flowing movements associated with female roles, and the themes often centre on love and

suffering. Usually, the main character is the ghost of a woman trapped on earth, condemned to feel an unattainable love.

The fourth play is usually from the Crazed category. The *shite* takes the role of a madman or woman in these plays, not usually clinically insane, but rather driven to madness by a tragic back-story. Sometimes instead of a play from this category, miscellaneous plays that cannot easily fit into a category are staged as the fourth piece in a five-play program.

Finally, *kiri Noh* (final plays) or *oni mono* (demon plays) typically feature the *shite* actor in the role of a monstrous creature or demon. Often chosen for their vibrant colors and fast-paced, tense finales, *kiri Noh* plays are traditionally performed last. This category consists of roughly 30 plays, generally shorter than those found in other categories.

While there is no single plot structure, most Noh plays, especially the *mugen* Noh, share a common format. First, a secondary character, usually a priest or monk (*waki*), sets the scene and introduces the main character (*shite*). Then, the *shite*, often disguised as a traveler or villager, interacts with the *waki* and reveals their story. This could involve a past tragedy, a desire for something unobtainable, or an encounter with the spirit world. The *shite* performs a dance or song that expresses their emotions and explores the central theme. This is often the most visually striking part of the play. This pivotal moment of heightened emotional intensity and dramatic action is called *kiri.* While not a direct equivalent to the Western concept of climax, *kiri* serves as a culmination of the emotional and thematic build-up in the play and is often the most memorable point of each play. The play usually ends with the *shite* revealing their true identity (the reveal could happen before *kiri*) and coming to terms with their situation, often involving a prayer from the *waki*. (Ortolani, 1995) The play often ends with a sense of acceptance or a peaceful resolution.

Shinto and Buddhist elements significantly shape the thematic fabric of Noh theater. Many plays feature Shinto gods, incorporate shamanistic elements, and utilize distinctly Buddhist terminology. Yet, the Buddhism depicted in Noh is not easily linked to any specific Buddhist denomination or sect. Noh's worldview mirrors the era's common Buddhism, a time when the syncretism of Shinto and Buddhism was widespread among people, and a continuity between the Shinto *kami* and Buddha was taken for granted. (Tyler, 1987, pp. 46-48)

In Noh drama, religion does not guarantee a straightforward resolution similar to a conventional happy ending. Instead, the narratives explore notions such as *karma*, the transient nature of existence, and the interrelationships of the corporeal and ethereal domains. Recurrent themes include loss, the inevitability of death, and the anguish of unmet desires. The plays often convey religious teachings about attaining enlightenment or finding solace in the afterlife, providing a framework for both characters and viewers to find reconciliation. Through sacred rituals or encounters with spiritual entities, the protagonists may reconcile with their circumstances and relinquish worldly bonds.

Noh in Modern Times

Hobsbawm's concept of "invented tradition" reveals that the modern era is not a complete break from the past, but rather a selective reinterpretation and reimagining of it. Tradition, in this context, serves as a crucial tool for constructing and legitimizing the modern. By invoking a sense of historical continuity and shared heritage, invented traditions provide a foundation for national identity and social cohesion in a rapidly changing world. These traditions, often fabricated or embellished, offer a sense of stability and belonging in the face of uncertainty and change. In this

way, the modern is not merely a rejection of the past, but a complex dialogue with it, where tradition is strategically employed to create a sense of continuity and purpose.

Establishing a centralized modern form of sovereignty was crucial in the aftermath of imperial restoration and expansion in East Asia. During the Taisho and early Showa eras, the drive to control images of emerging nationhood reflected a broader aim to foster a sense of homogenous community. (Williams, 2003) This involved incorporating nostalgic dreams, or imaginaries, of a socially transformed Japanese society into the propaganda of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. These imaginaries served to reinforce imperial rule and legitimize expansionist ambitions by appealing to a shared cultural heritage and promoting a unified vision of the future.

While Noh is often perceived as an ancient art form steeped in tradition, its development and presentation have been shaped by both historical and contemporary forces. In *The Life of Zeami* (Yokoi, 1943) the author posits that Nohgaku symbolizes the essence of both Japanese and Greater East Asian ethos. Yokoi suggests that to comprehend the roots of Noh, one must know the ancient divine eras of Japan, acknowledging the contributions of Kan'ami and Zeami. However, the text also reveals that Noh, having evolved over five centuries since Kan'ami, may have been strategically employed as a tool of Japan's imperial propaganda machine, encapsulating the spirit of Japan and Greater East Asia, potentially serving as an example of Hobsbawm's "invented tradition." (Tamura, 2012, p. 3)

Yokoi's narrative does not dispute the notion that Noh's origins can be traced to the ancient times of Japan, with influences from China. However, the introduction transitions to the contemporary perspective, proposing that Noh should be viewed as an art form that is not only quintessentially Japanese but also emblematic of Greater East Asia. This interpretation represents a significant shift

from the traditional understanding of Noh as a uniquely Japanese art, suggesting its use in the cultural policies of Manchuria and Taiwan to promote a pan-East Asian identity. It mechanically changes Noh from a narrative/performative art form to a vessel of “true culture.”

However, since the end of the war, Noh has undergone a significant transformation from its historical role as an art form representing the collective spirit of Greater East Asia to embracing a new mission aimed at cultural revival. The inaugural issue of “Yūgen” magazine, published in June 1946, articulated a vision for Noh as a fundamental embodiment of Japanese culture. The magazine advocated for Noh to become more accessible to the masses, suggesting that its artistic and cultural virtues would substantially contribute to the enrichment of Japanese culture in the post-war era. The September Issue of “Yūgen” described contemporary Noh as a “democratic” art form, reflecting the changing societal values. Furthermore, the first edition of the Noh magazine, released in January 1947 by the Nohgaku Association, emphasized Noh’s significance in the context of Japan’s re-emergence as a nation with a strong cultural identity. (Tamura, 2012, p. 35)

During the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, the Olympic Noh Festival showcased Noh theater as both an ethnic and international performing art, highlighting its significance within world theater history. (Tamura, 2012, p. 37) Nohgaku, once cultivated as ceremonial music, later used to promote nationalistic sentiment during wartime, was rediscovered in postwar Japan as a "classic" art form, emblematic of a "cultured nation." The Tokyo Olympics, symbolizing Japan's post-war recovery, further solidified Noh's position as a revered "traditional performing art," worthy of admiration and recognition for its contribution to global theatrical heritage.

Shingeki

Mishima Yukio's modern Noh collection was written for *shingeki*, a realist theatre movement that emerged in early 20th-century Japan, led by figures like Kishida Kunio, who returned from France after World War I. The purpose of *shingeki* was to break from traditional Japanese theatre forms like Kabuki and Noh. It sought to establish a thoroughly realistic theatre, rejecting the perceived "irrationality" of premodern forms.

The transition to modern Japanese drama signified more than a shift from presentational to realistic technique. It reflected a profound change in worldview, replacing religious certainty and moral absolutes with skepticism, doubt, agnosticism, intellectual relativism, and alienation from traditional cosmology. While gods, ghosts, and religious-spiritual rituals were central to the premodern theatre, especially Noh, *shingeki* aimed to supplant this "god-infested" imagination. (Goodman, 1988, p. 17)

By the early 1930s, *shingeki* had solidified its position as a purely realistic theatre, culminating in the psychological realism of Kishida Kunio and the socialist realism of Kubo Sakae. The dramas written for *shingeki* intended to be close to European drama, like the works of Ibsen and Chekhov for playwrights who were attempting to stress psychological elements, and the works of Frank Wedekind, Ernst Toller, and George Keiser for proletariat political playwrights. The importance of left-wing *shingeki* plays kept rising until the government started heavy censorship and finally almost completely stopped it before and during World War II. In the post-war era, other *shingeki* troupes came back to work and soon took their past political stances. However, the form that had once defined itself as the voice of resistance to traditional theatrical practices and the status quo

became an orthodoxy, closely aligned with the Japanese Communist Party and mostly followed the 1930s Russian socialist realism style. (Rimer, The Tsukiji Little Theater, 2014)

During the war, Kishida Kunio's Bungakuza theatre company emerged as the sole surviving *shingeki* troupe. Maintaining a focus on literary merit, Bungakuza staged both foreign and Japanese plays. Mishima Yukio, a prominent figure within the company from its inception, wrote almost exclusively for Bungakuza. His play, *Rokumeikan* (1956), became a signature piece and achieved considerable popularity. Mishima Yukio sought to shift *shingeki*'s dramaturgy away from a purely representational style towards a more presentational approach. While his Modern Noh plays exemplify this effort, even in his relatively realistic works, Mishima employed a highly poetic, occasionally unnatural dialogue that at times seems to clash with his otherwise realistic dramaturgy. Mishima, along with other playwrights like Kinoshita Junji, experimented with incorporating elements of classical theatre into the *shingeki* framework. (Rimer, Wartime and Postwar, 2014)

Over time, Bungakuza faced pressures to conform to the prevailing left-wing norms within the *shingeki* movement. These concessions caused significant friction with Mishima, leading to prolonged disputes and his eventual departure in 1963. Notably, despite Mishima's objections, the troupe embarked on a tour of Communist China, performing *Rokumeikan* with alterations to appease government censors. However, Mishima was not alone in his disillusionment with *shingeki* in the 1960s. Other playwrights, including Abe Kobo, a notable leftist writer, began to perceive that *shingeki* theatre was becoming trapped in similar constraints from which it had originally sought to escape. Hence, the avant-garde movement of *angura* or post-*shingeki* started. (Poulton, Underground Theater, 2014)

David Goodman (1988) posits that Mishima's diagnosis of postwar Japan's cultural malaise, a sense of emptiness and meaninglessness resulting from a disconnect with traditional Japanese culture, aligned with the concerns of the *angura* drama movement. However, their responses diverged significantly. While both addressed similar cultural and psychological needs, Mishima's solution was characterized by activism and solipsism, contrasting with the post-*shingeki* movement's dialectical and engaged approach. Mishima's assertion that the emperor was and always had been the essential core of Japanese culture and that defending Japanese culture inherently required defending the imperial institution exemplifies his activistic stance. This position starkly contrasts with the post-*shingeki* movement's deliberate avoidance of an "uncritical reinstatement of a fictitious, idealized past."

Modernization of Noh

Mishima's Modern Noh Plays aren't the only post-war attempt at making Noh more relatable and accessible to the contemporary audience, whether from inside or outside Japan. These "modernizing" attempts could be loosely categorized into three groups: New plays written on contemporary subjects in classic Noh style (or *shinsaku* Noh), adapting Noh plays for modern media, and other forms of drama influenced by Noh, especially aesthetically or dramaturgically. The last one is more about keeping the legacy of Noh alive, whether Noh organically influenced other forms of media or someone intentionally took inspiration from it rather than keeping Noh relatable to modern times. For example, in 2017, a Noh-inspired opera was performed in New York City by SITI Company: *Hanjo*, which was based on, not directly the classic Noh play *Hanjo*, but Mishima's modern play. (Samur, 2022) Another recent example is the critically acclaimed anime movie *Inu-Oh*, released in 2021. It mixed Noh and Glam Metal aesthetics into an outlandish, harlequin visual story with the theme of art against power, about a blind Biwa player and a masked,

deformed Noh dancer whose deformity gets cured slowly with every Noh dance he performs. (Ide, 2021)

An example of new plays written for Noh, sometimes referred to as *shinsaku* Noh (generally any Noh play written after the Meiji era), would be the works of Allan Marett, *Eliza* (1985), and *Oppenheimer* (2015). Even though these two plays are written in English, they are performed in the style of classical Noh plays, on a Noh stage, with Noh costumes and masks, dances, and music. Both plays follow the Noh formula, as well. In *Eliza*, the role of *waki* encounters the *shite,* who appears as an old woman telling the story of Eliza Fraser on Fraser Island of Australia and reveals to be the ghost of Eliza herself. In the final act, she reappears and dances at an Aboriginal festival. *Oppenheimer*, too, following the structure of a *mugen Noh*, tells the story of the tormented ghost of Robert J. Oppenheimer finally finding redemption from being condemned to visit Hiroshima every year and seeing the suffering his creation caused, through a final dance. (Rosenbaum, 2023) Immunologist Tada Tomio's Shinsaku Noh play *Hermit Isseki* features Albert Einstein as the *shite*, weaving Eastern and Western artistic and scientific allusions to explore complex scientific concepts, including relativity, the Big Bang, and the potential end of the world, while also warning of the dangers of nuclear weapons. (Feder, 2005) Another example is the Noh adaptation of classics from other nations, such as *Macbeth, Othello*, (Ingham & Nakao, 2018) *Ophelia,* and *Hamlet*, all of which have been frequently performed since their first staging. (Salz, 1996)

Another example is The Theatre Nohgaku company, established by Richard Emmert and colleagues, which aims to engage contemporary audiences with Noh theater through *shinsaku* plays performed in modern Japanese or English. Their 2017 production, *Blue Moon over Memphis,* featured Elvis Presley as the *shite*, demonstrating their innovative approach. (Quinn, 2018) Similarly, the San Francisco-based Theatre of Yūgen, an experimental ensemble, seeks to create a

unique blend of world theater and classical Noh dramaturgy. While their productions incorporate traditional elements like the pine tree painted backdrop, they also utilize modern staging techniques such as video installations and contemporary lighting, potentially catering to Western audience expectations. (Ehn, 2004)

A middle ground for these two groups is the "New Noh" works of authors like Okada Toshiki, who wrote *Miren no yūrei to kaibutsu: Zaha, Tsuruga* (*Unrequited Ghosts and Monsters: Zaha, Tsuruga*), two separate plays, yet published and performed together, that draw inspiration from the structure of traditional *mugen* Noh plays. (Poulton, *Mugen* 夢幻, 2024) The set is a minimal, modern version of the Noh set, with a chorus and orchestra of contemporary music. In the first segment, titled "Zaha," the ghostly presence of architect Zaha Hadid takes the role of *shite*. Meanwhile, in the second segment, "Tsuruga," the Nuclear Fuel Recycling Policy manifests as a spectral figure. (Poulton, Playwright Toshiki Okada and the "New Noh", 2023)

Other than examples of Mishima Yukio, Terayama Shuji, and Ichihara Satoko, who will be discussed in the last part of this chapter for adapting Shintokumaru's story for modern theatre, another example of this group is Kawamura Takeshi whose adaptations have been titled "Contemporary Noh Plays." He has written four plays for the Setagaya Public Theatre Contemporary Noh Theatre series, including *AOI* and *KOMACHI*. (Eckersall, 2011) In these two plays, which, similar to Okada Toshiki's plays, were published and performed together as *AOI/KOMACHI*, he blends paranoid sexual psychosis with themes of J-horror, following Mishima's example in adapting classic plays of *Aoi no Ue* and *Sotoba Komachi* for a modern medium.

Mishima's Modern Noh

In April 1956, one year after the publication of *Hanjo*, Mishima Yukio released the book *Kindai Nōgakushu*. In the postscript, (Tamura, 2012, p. 15) he reflected on the origins of his work:

> My Modern Noh Plays collection was originally inspired by three plays by Torahiko Kōri: *Kanawa, Dōjōji*, and *Kiyohime*. Three unique, small masterpieces that were adapted from Noh to one-act plays that were pioneering for his time.
>
> However, my collection of Modern Noh Plays has the opposite intention. Rather than modernizing Noh plays, I aim to utilize the free manipulation of time and space in Noh, as well as its overt metaphysical themes, to bring them to life in the modern era. To achieve this, I selected plays from the Noh repertoire that have clear themes, such as *Aya no Tsuzumi* and *Kantan*, plays by Kan'ami, such as the polemically entertaining *Sotoba Komachi*, and plays with a high degree of emotional purity, such as *Aoi no Ue* and *Hanjo*. It would be difficult to adapt *waki* Noh, plays that focus on dance, or *gendai mono*, and there was no point in even attempting to adapt them. Thus, over the past few years, it has become my habit to browse through the complete collection of Noh plays whenever I have the time. However, I have concluded that these five plays are the only ones that are suitable for modernization and that these five plays exhaust the possibilities. The time has finally come to compile them into a single volume.

Two years later, he published *Dōjōji* as part of the collection, then *Yuya,* and then *Yoroboshi*. Other than *Yuya*, which is from the third group, a women's play, the rest belong to the fourth group. *Kantan*, the first play Mishima adapted, is a Dream Noh, where most of the play happens in a dream state. Looking for enlightenment, the *shite* goes on a pilgrimage but finds enlightenment in

a mundane situation, sleeping on a special pillow on the advice of an inn mistress and dreaming of becoming the emperor, and enjoying 50 years of glory. (Kantan, n.d.)

The second play, *Sotoba Komachi*, is a *rōjomono*, where the *shite* is an old woman. It is filled with deep Buddhist philosophy and deals with themes of lost beauty, age, and unattainable love. The play ends with the *shite* coming back from her demonic state and telling humans that the best thing to do is to pray to become a Buddha after death and live to reach enlightenment. (Sotoba Komachi, n.d.)

Aya no Tsuzumi, the third play, is a tragic story that involves age, status, karma, and an unattainable love that turns into hate. It is not clear what is the ghost's destiny in this play, whether it is free after teaching a lesson in karma to the lady who drove him to madness and suicide with her impossible task or is forever trapped in the obsession that ended his life. (Aya no Tsuzumi, n.d.)

Aoi no Ue is another love and obsession story that involves possession, exorcism, and using prayers and magic to fend off a crazed phantom. It ends with the vengeful spirit becoming peaceful and becoming Buddha. (Aoi no Ue (Lady Aoi), n.d.) *Dōjōji*, the sixth play that Mishima adapted, has the same themes and a similar plot line. (Dōjōji, n.d.) These two plays are two of the most well-known Noh plays and include a very complicated transformation scene.

The Fifth play, *Hanjo,* tells the story of a strong love that drives the lady to madness after a long separation and restores her sanity after the reunion. It is filled with themes of loneliness and pure love between an entertainer woman (or an artful prostitute, for ease of understanding) and a powerful man. (Hanjo, n.d.) *Yuya*, the seventh play Mishima adapted, involves a relationship of the same nature but revolves around the daughter's love for and duty to her mother. This *genzai*,

Women Noh, tells the story of a mistress who tries to get her master to let her attend to her sick mother when he wants her company in cherry blossom season. (Yuya, n.d.)

In adapting these plays, to fit in his image of "modernity", he rejects the Buddhist salvation and life affirmation themes they have and creates a world void of meaning. (Tamura, 2012, pp. 16-17) His characters always perceive the era they are living in negatively:

> Jiro (*turning away*): A child is born into such a dark world. Even inside a mother's womb is brighter. Why do we foolishly try to come out into an even darker place?
>
> Kaneko: We live in such troubled times, enduring so much suffering just to deceive ourselves. (from *Aya no Tsuzumi*)
>
> Toshinori: This world has already ended. (from *Yoroboshi*)

In a way, this inability to adapt to modern reality is the core of many of Mishima's works, and in his Modern Noh collections, this negative way of life is explored, affirmed, and accepted as the "modern" aspect of the post-war era. While in many of the source materials true salvation comes from praying and becoming Buddha, in Mishima's versions the only true salvation comes from death and destruction. An unattainable love, or love between different social classes, can only be relieved through death.

Yoroboshi

Yoroboshi, written by Kanze Jūrō Motomasa, is a *mugen* Noh of the Crazed category. It follows the *mugen* structure: First, Takayasu Michitoshi (*waki*) sets the scene and introduces us to Shuntokumaru (*shite*). Then, Shuntokumaru who is "disguised" as a blind beggar, the lowest social rank of that time, interacts with the *waki* and reveals his story which involves a past tragedy. At

the *kiri*, Shuntokumaru performs a dance and describes seeing the beautiful scenery of Naniwa. And finally, *waki* reveals that he knows the true identity of Shuntokumaru, and the *shite* comes to terms with his situation.

It also follows the structure of a tragedy: Takayasu Michitoshi is a rich villager who has a son, Shuntokumaru (The Exposition). He believes a scandalous story about his son, disowns him, and sends him away (The Rising Action). Michitoshi regrets his decision and goes on a pilgrimage to perform the Buddhist practice of making offerings for seven days in the Shitennōji temple to pray for the peace and comfort of his son. On the seventh day, he meets a blind beggar, who turns out to be his son (Climax). He does not introduce himself to his son, waits until night, and speaks with him about Buddhist practices and teachings. Shuntokumaru meditates and imagines the beautiful scenery of Nirvana and the Land of Naniwa while facing the setting sun. He becomes overwhelmed, trips and stumbles, and becomes ashamed of his situation. Michitoshi introduces himself to his son. Shuntokumaru tries to run away, but Michitoshi catches up to him and calms him (The Falling Action). He takes Shuntokumaru back to the village with him (Denouement).

However, many scholars have argued that Noh plays are not tragedies. The reason we can see this parallel could be hidden in Donald Keene's argument that the story of Shuntokumaru came a long way to reach its classical Noh version and did not stop there. Donald Keene argues that, at the core, *Yoroboshi* is a Japanese retelling of Euripides' play Hippolytus. (Keene, The Hippolytus Triangle, 1962) He traces the core of the classical Greek play, which is a triangle between a king, his son, and the king's young wife who catches feelings for her stepson, traveling from Greece to India (the Legend of Prince Kunala), then to China, and lastly to Japan. The earliest surviving text of Kunala's story in Japan is from *Konjaku Monogatari* (Heian era).

As for Shuntokumaru's story, the classical Noh is the earliest written record of it. As Keene admits, the similarities between the classical Noh *Yoroboshi* and Kunala's story are few. The stepmother's accusation, which in the case of Hippolytus, is motivated by unattainable love and jealousy, is not explicitly explained in *Yoroboshi.* In another Noh play, *Tennōji Monogurui,* we find out that the boy's stepmother slandered him, but nothing in either play indicates that there was a rejected love behind that slander.

One could argue that Shuntokumaru's story has more in common with the story of Oedipus in terms of themes and even more in common with a poem from the 12th-century Persian Poem collection*, Haft Peykar*, also known as *The Book of Bahram*, by Nizami Ganjavi. In the sixth tale of Haft Peykar, the sixth wife of King Bahram who resides in the Sandal colored dome and is visited by him on Thursday, tells him the story of two men named Good and Evil who are traveling together. The plot of this tale contains the Good getting blinded out of jealousy, him begging for food and getting the attention of a wealthy man who has a sick daughter, his blindness and her epilepsy getting cured by a miraculous leaf, and seven days of celebration afterward and, of course, ending with Evil getting beheaded. (There are multiple translations of *Haft Peykar* available in English, for example, Julie Scott Meisami's 1995 translation titled *The Haft Paykar: A Medieval Romance* published by Oxford University Press.)

There are more similarities to Kunala's story in the Sekkyōbushi version of Shuntokumaru, a medieval form of storytelling that usually involved moral stories with violent themes. In the Sekkyōbushi version, a wealthy couple called the Takayasus cannot get pregnant, so they pray until a bodhisattva appears to them and tells them that their wish will be granted, however, it will cost them one of their lives when their child grows up. They agree to the cost, and so the beautiful Shintokumaru (his name in the Sekkyōbushi version is Shintokumaru, not Shuntokumaru) is born.

Shintokumaru grows up, and sure enough, his mother passes away. His father remarries and has another son with his new wife. The new wife, worried about her son's share of the inheritance, asks the gods to curse Shintokumaru, and he loses his eyesight and gets leprosy. She convinces her husband that having someone with leprosy in one's household will curse the whole household, so Shintokumaru's father takes him to the Shitennōji temple and leaves him there. (Kimbrough, 2013)

One major difference between the Noh and Sekkyōbushi versions is that after regretting what he has done, unlike the Noh version, Shintokumaru's father does not go after him in the Sekkyōbushi version. Instead, he goes blind as well and wanders around with his new family. The person who does go after Shintokumaru is the wealthy girl who loved him before he got leprosy and heard he became a blind, weak beggar, or *yoroboshi*, and looked for him at the Shitennōji temple, where she prayed to get him back as the beautiful young man she knew. Her prayer came true in the form of a cure for blindness and leprosy in a bird's feather. Shintokumaru gets cured of both and they celebrate for seven days, which leads to his father finding him. He cures his father's blindness, too, and beheads his stepmother. The reunited son and father go back home to mourn his late mother.

Other than Noh, Shintokumaru's story has been adapted into many forms of theatre, including Bunraku (puppet theatre) and Kabuki. In the Bunraku/Kabuki version, *Sesshū Gappō ga Tsuji*, the stepmother character, Tamate Gozen, is in love with Shuntokumaru. Her illegitimate son poisons him out of jealousy and to secure his inheritance. Shuntokumaru's sight is only restored after Tamate Gozen gives him her blood and liver and sacrifices herself. (Shirane, 2002)

Shintokumaru's story has been adapted for the modern audience, as well, on multiple occasions. Eighteen years after Mishima's Modern Noh adaptation, Terayama Shuji, along with Kishida Rio, wrote a play called *Shintokumaru*, in which a widower goes to a mother-selling store to buy a

mother for his son because “there would not be a family without a dad, a mom, and a child.” A love/hate relationship forms between Shintokumaru and his new mother until he runs away. He gets his hands on an unusual mask through which he can go to the underworld and see his real mother in hell. When he comes back, the hate between them gets stronger to the point that the new mother cannot bear to see his hellish eyes and blinds him. He runs away and returns for revenge on the new child that the father bought to make his family whole again. After ruining the father’s “family” and making him lose his mind, he finally joins the new mother as a man and woman, released from the family frame. (Terayama, 2014)

In September 2023, Ichihara Satoko staged her version of *Yoroboshi* as a twisted, dark comedy Grand Guignol puppet play that dived into themes of domestic violence, sex toys, incest, dismemberment, murder, and suicide. (Poulton, Not a Barbie World, 2024) Despite the commonality of shared titles, these cases diverge significantly in their thematic explorations and the questions they pose to the audience. This divergence highlights the adaptability of the source material in the hands of different creators, each imbuing the shared title with unique meaning and significance. In the following chapter, I will delve deeper into the case of Mishima Yukio’s *Yoroboshi*, analyzing the specific ways in which it departs from and reimagines its origin and exploring the implications of these changes for the audience. By examining the nuances of *Yoroboshi*’s case, we will gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between adaptation and source material, and the potential for shared titles to spark a multitude of interpretations and responses.

Chapter V. What has Changed? A Close Reading of *Yoroboshi*

Mishima adapted *Yoroboshi* from a classic Noh play of the same name, but the resemblance between the two is little. In fact, it could be said that Mishima's *Yoroboshi* is the farthest from its prototext among his Modern Noh plays. The classical Noh play *Yoroboshi*, generally attributed to Kanze Motomasa (1394 – 1432), son of the famous Zeami (1363 – 1443), retells the story of Shuntokumaru, son of Takayasu Michitoshi, a powerful local man, who is wrongfully accused of a slanderous act, sent away and disowned. The play, like other Noh plays, starts with the *waki*, Takayasu Michitoshi, explaining how he regrets sending his only son away and how he has visited Tennōji Temple around the time of spring equinox to carry out a seven-day almsgiving or Segyō. Segyō is a Buddhist practice where the practitioner makes offerings of food and necessities to monks or the poor as a way of prayer or good deeds. The play is set in Tennōji and on the last day of Michitoshi's Segyō.

Then, the *shite*, the titular character Yoroboshi (weak monk), a blind beggar named Shuntokumaru, appears on stage, talking about his misfortune of being blind as a result of grief, human emotions, such as loneliness, sorrow, negative karma, and the existential limbo between life and death. Michitoshi happens to see Shuntokumaru, calls him Yoroboshi, and invites him over to take offerings. Shuntokumaru (accompanied by the reciters) talks about the origin of Tennōji Temple and the path to Buddhist salvation and Nirvana that goes through it. Michitoshi realizes that Yoroboshi is his son but decides to wait until after sunset and not reveal it to avoid other people's attention. He asks Shuntokumaru to face the setting sun and pray, imagining the land of Nirvana. Shuntokumaru does so, walking and dancing while he describes the pictorial scenes in his mind. He describes how the west gate of Tennōji connects to the east gate of the Land of Nirvana. The scenes he describes are the familiar scenery of Naniwa, listing the scenic places that can be seen

from that shore. He sings and dances to these descriptions, exclaiming that he can clearly see the scene in his mind's eyes. Then, he stumbles and imagines people mocking him for it. He feels ashamed and swears that he will never dance again like that. Michitoshi introduces himself to Shuntokumaru, but since he is ashamed of his present state, he tries to run away. Michitoshi catches up to him, takes his hand, and they return to the village together.

Mishima's version, though bearing the same title, takes place in a family court, where two couples are having a dispute over the custody of a 20-year-old boy called Toshinori. Toshinori, written in *kanji* characters as 俊徳, shares the first two characters of the name Shintokumaru (俊徳丸). The first character, 俊, means excellence or genius and is usually read as Shun, but in names, it can be read as Toshi or Suguru as well. The second character, 徳, means benevolence, virtue, or commanding respect, and is usually read as Toku, but in names, it can be read as Atsu, Naru, Nori, Yuki, and Yoshi. The last character in Shintokumaru's name, 丸, is a suffix that was given to boys and was taken off their names when they reached adulthood. (Plutschow, 1995, pp. 12-13) Changing the pronunciation of the *shite'*s name from Shuntoku, which is an archaic name, to a more contemporary name was one tactic that Mishima used to signal the "modernization" of the Noh story. However, by taking Maru off his name, he both applies the same tactic of removing an archaic practice in naming to signal "modernization" and shows that the *shite* of his play is not a child anymore and has reached adulthood.

In the courtroom, the biological parents of Toshinori, the Takayasus, who lost him at a firebombing when he was five and just found out that he is alive, sit on one side and the adoptive parents, the Kawashimas, who found him and have raised him for the past fifteen years, sit on the other side. The arbitrator, Sakurama Shinako, sitting at the centre, starts by commenting on the weather and

the low budget of family courts, and then, invites everyone to start the conversation. Through this conversation between the two sets of parents, we find out that, contrary to the Takayasus' image of a perfect son, Toshinori not only has lost his vision during the air raid but also has developed an eccentric personality. While the Takayasus insist on keeping the perfect image of Toshinori in their minds, the Kawashimas try to warn them and on multiple occasions label him with words such as lunatic and blind. When Toshinori finally enters the room, dressed in a sharp suit, he shows no emotion towards his biological parents. Through bizarre dialogues between Toshinori and his adoptive parents, soon the Takayasus see why they talked about him that way, and to gain his affection, find no other way than to follow the Kawashimas in agreeing with whatever he says and pretending to accept him as he is. He talks about how he thinks the world has already ended, and how he feels how bizarre it is that people go about their normal life in a world that has ended. He gets both sets of his parents to agree with him on anything he says, including calling himself a naked ghost and everyone else insects and idiots.

At this point, seeing how there has not been any progress in determining who gets to be Toshinori's guardians, Shinako intervenes and asks the parents to leave the room so that she can talk with Toshinori alone. After a short conversation about what he thinks about his parents, Shinako mentions that the sun is setting. This triggers a long monologue that mirrors the final dance of the classical Noh. Toshinori starts talking about how he sees the sunset as a scene from the end of the world and how he constantly sees the flames that burn the world. In contrast to Shuntokumaru seeing the beautiful scenery of Naniwa and the Land of Nirvana, Toshinori describes seeing hellish scenes of the city burning. However, Shinako refuses to agree with him and says that all she sees is a normal, beautiful sunset. Toshinori says that denying the landscape of the world's end will kill him, yet Shinako insists on it, saying that based on what Toshinori has previously said, he is already

dead. A quasi-romantic relationship forms between them. She helps him sit back in his chair and leaves him to get him food, as he had asked. Toshinori remains, all alone.

In the following analysis of Mishima's *Yoroboshi*, I will reference many features and practices that are unique to the classical Noh form. As discussed in the introduction chapter, a comparative analysis of Mishima's Modern Noh plays against their prototexts and defining these unique components that will help us understand their significance to the "modern" text as adaptations, either through their inclusion, omission, or subversion. In adapting the classical Noh play of *Yoroboshi* for the *shingeki* theatre, Mishima, of course, omits many formal devices such as the Noh masks, costumes, dances, chanters, and music. However, a critical analysis of Mishima's adaptation should focus on the methods employed to transform these classical Noh elements. This analysis should identify the strategies used to create contemporary equivalents that align with the conventions of *shingeki* theatre.

Setting

First, we can start by comparing the setting of the classical Noh play and Mishima's *Yoroboshi*. The former takes place in Shitennōji, or Tennōji Temple for short, where Shuntokumaru and other beggars gather around to receive offerings. Mishima has turned this setting into a family court where two sets of parents have come together with a lady as their mediator, to decide on the custody of Toshinori.

Shitennōji is a Buddhist temple located in Osaka and is believed to be the oldest commissioned Buddhist temple in Japan. It is said to have been founded in 593 by Prince Shōtoku (572 – 621), who vowed to make a temple devoted to the four heavenly kings of Buddhism. The temple has separate buildings dedicated to religion and education, welfare, and sick people. (The Princeton

Dictionary of Buddhism, 2014) Shitennōji Temple may have functioned as a site for medical care, offering basic treatment and sustenance to the "sick." The motivation of those providing aid may have extended beyond simple compassion, potentially including the accumulation of merit through acts of charity, as seen in *Yoroboshi*. After Shuntokumaru's conversation with Michitoshi about plum blossoms, Shuntokumaru, accompanied by the chanters, describes Tennōji at length, ending with the following sentences:

> Just as [the spring water's flow at Kamei] is inexhaustible, for generations to come, its water will continue to guide people tainted by the Five Defilements (the five evil things occurring in the human body and mind) to board the boat of salvation that will ferry them to the yonder shore of the Land of Nirvana. The tolling of the bell of this Tennō-ji Temple resonates all the way to distant shores, universally filling every region with the Buddha's vow, showing that all will attain Buddhahood, even the tide-filling ocean and the mountains of Naniwa.

In Mishima's version, this place that heals the sick and provides Buddhist salvation to others appears as a room in a family court. The first thing we learn about this courtroom is that it has a tiny budget, not enough to even provide a fan in the hot days of summer. Before Toshinori enters, when the conversation between the two sets of parents gets heated up, Shinako describes the purpose of the family court which mirrors Shuntokumaru's description of Tennōji.

> There is no need to become emotional. After all, this is a place of peace, a place where any dispute turns into a nice smile. I hold an invisible two-tray scale in my hand and offer the proper amount of satisfaction and also the proper amount of disappointment equally to both parties. To my eyes, angry flames look like nothing but agate carvings, and the roiling

> torrent water looks like nothing but crystal reliefs. I cannot help but think that, to me, the tightly entangled yarn and the entangled ivy vines have a strange, evil spirit, which takes the form of a forced complexity. All complex situations are just apparitions. In reality, the world is an uncomplicated and forever deadly silent place. At least that is what I believe.

Shinako's description is very poetic, yet apathetic toward the people whose "complex situations" had brought them there. Before Toshinori even comes to the stage, Shinako is calling the very serious problem the two families are facing "just apparitions." She promises no salvation, just a superficial, "nice smile," and a "proper amount of satisfaction and also the proper amount of disappointment equally to both parties." In other words, the family court is not solving any problems and only exists to maintain the appearance of "peace."

To separate domestic relations and juvenile offenses from civil cases, family courts were established on January 1, 1949. Family courts prioritize conciliation over litigation. This means they encourage parties to find solutions through mediation before resorting to formal court proceedings. Compared to district courts, family courts have a less formal environment, aiming to create a space where people feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues. The creation of family courts reflected the modernization of Japan's legal system after World War II. The aim was to move away from the traditional patriarchal family structure and provide a more equitable and specialized system for resolving family disputes. (Guide to the Family Court of Japan, 2023)

In a way, the court represents the very mundane nature of the postwar world that Toshinori, and Mishima himself, disdain. It is a modern setting for the drama between the two sets of parents, the arbitrator, and Toshinori, where final relief can never be expected, where the purpose of the system is to bring everything to a moderate and superficial level of peace. In other words, the

enlightenment reached through Buddhist meditation has been replaced by modern bureaucratic court systems which in the end are incapable of solving Toshinori's dilemma. This change from a spiritual, healing setting to a modern, apathetic courtroom provides Mishima the ideal site to critique the dangers of postwar "modernization" or "Americanization."

Through the family court, Mishima constructs an allegory for the shifting family dynamics and legal frameworks of the postwar era, lamenting the erosion of traditional family values. The court, a symbol of modern bureaucracy, stands in stark contrast to the spiritual and emotional depth of the Noh tradition. In this sterile environment, Toshinori's identity crisis, rooted in the loss of his biological parents and the complex dynamics of his adoptive family, remains unresolved. The court, bound by legalistic procedures and definitions, fails to address the deeper emotional and spiritual needs of its participants. This critique of changing family law and the resulting fragmentation of traditional family structures resonates with Mishima's broader concern about the loss of cultural identity in postwar Japan. Ironically, this critique comes from an author whose own family life was far from traditional, marked by a complex relationship with his birth family and his own open and unconventional relationships as an adult. This irony adds a layer of complexity to Mishima's critique, revealing a personal struggle with the very values he seems to champion.

Characters

Following an examination of the setting, the analysis should proceed by identifying the character archetypes specific to Noh drama in the classical *Yoroboshi*. Subsequently, a comparative approach should be employed to explore how these archetypes are reinterpreted or potentially subverted within Mishima's adaptation. Unlike classic Western drama, where the dramatic action is explored through the chain of events that happen, the main "dramatic action" of Noh drama is

the revelation of a main character's true identity and/or story. This central character is called the *shite.* As Nogami Toyoichiro argues, Noh adopts a monodramatic structure, where all elements, including the chorus and musical accompaniment, function in service of the *shite*'s performance. (Nogami, 1981)

The role of *shite* in the classical version of *Yoroboshi*, Shuntokumaru, is described as a young man, probably a teenager, who, despite the hardship he has experienced, did not lose his pure and kind heart. His command of language suggests a high level of education. This is further evidenced by his habit of correcting others' word choices. Additionally, his own use of language has a poetic quality. In response to Michitoshi's comment on the plum blossoms blooming and falling onto his sleeves, he says:

> How sad to hear such a comment, lacking elegance. In the spring-time in Naniwazu, one need say no more than, "the flowering tree", rather than "plum blossoms." It is now mid-spring, but I have not yet snapped off a twig of blossoming plum and put it in my hair, as did people in an ancient poem. However, the petals have fallen onto my robe as if spring snow were falling in February. Oh, the flowers smell so wonderful.

Despite falling in social stature to the lowest social caste of his time, being a blind beggar, his faith gives him hope. When he is meditating to imagine the Land of Nirvana, he vividly describes the scenery of Naniwa, the region where Tennōji is, and says: "All of this terrain, as far as the eye can see, exists in the mind."

Toshinori, the *shite* equivalent of Mishima's *Yoroboshi*, has just turned 20 and entered the world of adulthood. He has a dark and nihilistic worldview and believes that the world has ended when

he lost his eyesight in a firebombing. Like his classical counterpart, he uses very poetic language. But when he describes his suit, he uses the most mundane words, true to his nihilistic nature:

> This is what people call a necktie, what they call a dress shirt, what they call a suit. These are the clothes I wear as I am told to, but I don't really know how I look in them.
>
> This is what people call a pocket. [In it,] there are matches spilled out of matchboxes, there are small coins, there is a train line change ticket, there are safety pins, there are losing lottery tickets, there are dead flies, there are pieces of an eraser…
>
> It is a worthless bag that these kinds of things always get mixed up with lint in it. That is how this whole thing, this unparalleled uniform of safety called suit, is a contract that shows faithfulness to the cycle of everyday life, isn't it?

Even though when the Kawashimas found him he was a "blind beggar," they describe him as having the aura of a prince. It is as if not only his hardship did not affect his social status, but also his stoic worldview somehow made him superior to others. He rejects both hope and salvation, as these are irrelevant concepts in a world he perceives as having already ended.

In most classical two-part *mugen* Noh plays, the actor playing the *shite* changes costumes and masks when their true identity is revealed, with the character being called *mae shite* in the first part and *nochi shite* in the second part. Even though the classic *Yoroboshi* does not have a moment where the *shite* changes his mask from *mae shite* to *nochi shite*, it could be argued that Mishima's version does. Even though we know that Mishima did not employ masks in most of his Modern Noh plays (with the exception of the dream sequence in *Kantan* (1950)) there is a psychological unmasking moment in Mishima's *Yoroboshi*. Generally, in most *mugen* Noh, with a few

exceptions, the actor playing the *shite* is the only masked character, which is to keep the true identity of the *shite* hidden, until it is revealed and the mask and costume changes.

Throughout Mishima's body of literature, masking is a very important and recurring motif, evident most accessibly in his first major work, *Confessions of a Mask* (*kamen*). While the word that Mishima uses in his book, *kamen*, indicates a temporary or provisional face, the Noh mask, *omote*, literally means face or front surface. In other words, where the mask Mishima utilizes in his works is meant to conceal, the Noh mask's function is to reveal the character's true essence. Of course, the masking in Mishma's works is psychological, as Mishima's character embodies conflicting public and private personas. Donald Keene described him in an article as follows: "He had assumed his mask as a protection from society. Gradually, however, he became aware that his greatest desire was to make the mask his real face. The mask would enable him to become whatever he chose." (Keene, The Blue-eyed Tarokaja: a Donald Keene Anthology, 1996, p. 207) Mirroring Mishima's personal complexities, many of his characters within his works wear a form of psychological mask to conceal their authentic selves from the external world. The act of self-unmasking, often involuntary, frequently elicits a profound sense of shock in their self-recognition. Within the context of Mishima's critique of postwar Japan, this concept of psychological masking gains more significance, as he argues that the superficial adoption of Western attire and mannerisms serves as a mere facade, failing to quell the inner turmoil experienced by the "true Japanese" soul. However, let's not forget that despite what he thought about adopting Western lifestyle, in reality he wore Western clothes and lived in a Western-style house.

Robert Neblett (2011) argues that in Mishima's Modern Noh plays, the traditional roles are flipped. The *shite* becomes the only one with a genuine identity. In contrast, the surrounding characters wear psychological masks, hiding behind facades of deception and fractured personalities. Unlike

the classic Noh where the *waki* reveals the *shite*'s nature, here, the *shite*'s mere presence exposes the world around them as a hollow sham.

While this is true for the roles of parents in Mishima's *Yoroboshi*, I would argue that Toshinori also wears a mask that is shattered at the very end by Shinako. After his long monologue describing the scenery of the world's end, which is Mishima's equivalent to the classical version's final dance, Shinako breaks Toshinori's mask of a nihilistic young man who believes has gone beyond everyday life by seeing the end of the world. After refusing to see the scenes Toshinori describes, the way that his parents did, Shinako makes him accept the normal world and, defeated, sit alone and wait for her to show him love through the mundane act of bringing him food.

Toshinori: You saw the end of this world, right? Right? You sure saw it, Miss Sakurama.

(long pause)

Shinako: No, I don't see it.

Toshinori: That's a lie. You're denying what you saw.

Shinako: (gently) no, I really can't see it. The only thing I saw was the sunset.

[….]

Toshinori: You're trying to snatch away the landscape of this world's end from me, aren't you?

Shinako: That's right. That is my duty.

Toshinori: Without that, I can't live. Knowing that, you're still trying to snatch it away, aren't you?

Shinako: Yes.

From a man who finds everyone else stupid, Toshinori changes to a young boy who begs to be understood, and when he does not get what he wants and instead receives what he needs, which is a firm shaking that brings him back to the normal, real world, he longs for a motherly love from someone who is not his mother:

Toshinori: So, it's ok if I ask something of you, like of a servant, right?

Shinako: Rather like of an older sister.

Toshinori: Hee, hee. I'm hungry.

And then, when she asks him to wait there while she leaves to get him food:

Toshinori: Say…

Shinako: Yes?

Toshinori: I… I don't know why, but everybody loves me.

In a classical Noh play, this transformation, the moment that the *mae-jite* changes into *nochi shite* is often triggered by the *waki* role. The *waki* is the character that starts the story, usually as a traveler or pilgrim who encounters the *shite* and begins a series of interactions and conversations that will lead to the *shite* revealing their true identity. In the classical Noh play *Yoroboshi*, Michitoshi functions as the *waki* who is burdened by grief and guilt stemming from a past mistake that led to his separation from his son and unwittingly encounters the now blind Yoroboshi, who is unaware of their familial bond. After inviting Shuntokumaru to meditate and then introducing himself and calming him down when Shuntokumaru becomes overwhelmed by the reality of his condition, Michitoshi takes him back to their village, Takayasu.

Mishima splits the role of *waki* into two sets of parents: the Takayasus, Toshinori's biological parents, and the Kawashimas, his adoptive parents. Like a *waki* in a classical Noh play who sings a "traveling song" or *michiyuki* in the opening section of the play (which often indicates the great distance he has traveled followed by an exclamation that it has taken them less time than expected) the Kawashimas start by talking about the long 15 years that has passed since they found Toshinori, and after a relatively long period of only staring at the door, the Takayasus start with exclaiming that they want to reach the destination (here, meeting Toshinori) as soon as possible. While there are other reasons attributed to Shuntokumaru's blindness like leprosy or curses in other versions of the story, in the classical Noh version it is only vaguely talked about as a quick judgment from the father which resulted in tremendous hardship and sorrow that eventually took away Shuntokumaru's eyesight. However, in Mishima's version, it was the flames of American firebombing that took Toshinori's eyesight away. The Kawashimas try to put the guilt on the Takayasus for leaving their son and fleeing, but unlike their counterpart in the classical Noh play, the Takayasus rarely show any sign of guilt. In fact, they have idealized the reunion so much that when they see Toshinori's apathy toward them, they try to follow the Kawashimas in acting like they approve of anything he says or wants. The remorse that Michitoshi felt for sending his son away has turned into the Kawashimas' constant fear of Toshinori's abuse and at the same time a parental sense of duty to care for him. In other words, to gain Toshinori's affection, both sets of parents try to deceive him into believing they accept him as he is.

Neblett (2011) argues that the adaptive strategies of vilification and inversion of the role of *waki* can be seen throughout all of Mishima's Modern Noh plays. For example, in *Sotoba Komachi*, Mishima changes the *waki* from a Buddhist priest who is amazed by seeing an old poet Ono no Komachi who was known for her beauty at her young age, into a drunken poet who does not

recognize her and mocks her. This change in the nature of the *waki* changes the theme and the ending of the play, as well. Instead of looking for salvation, Komachi lets her dead lover possess the poet after he finally recognizes her beauty. (Neblett, 2011, p. 133) Reading *Sotoba Komachi* within Mishima's political views, it is apparent that by changing the *waki* role to a young Westernized poet who does not recognize Japan's traditional beauty and putting him against a forgotten traditional poet trapped in the memories of the past, he tried to touch on his long debate of modernity versus tradition.

In another example, *Yuya*, Mishima replaces the Heike lord with a Westernized business tycoon who, unlike his counterpart, is not keeping Yuya only for company during the cherry blossom viewing, but to discover Yuya's secret plan to join her lover, not her "sick mother." Mishima's *waki* orchestrates this revelation not to expose the truth, but to function as a test for Yuya's fidelity and moral compass. Despite the revelation shattering the illusion of their relationship, Yuya's ultimate decision to remain signifies a prioritization of a love built upon a shared deception over one grounded in truth and honesty. This resolute commitment in the face of disillusionment underscores the play's nihilistic conclusion. (Neblett, 2011, p. 133)

In the example of *Aoi no Ue,* to modernize the *waki* role, Mishima goes further back than the Noh version. Instead of a Holy Man who can exorcise Lady Rokujo and save Lady Aoi, Mishima restores an element of the classical Noh's source material, *Genji Monogatari.* In the novel version, it is Genji who is beside his beloved Aoi, and it is him, and not the priests and exorcists present, who draws out the spirit that possesses her. Although, unlike the poetic Genji, Mishima's version is cold and unromantic, falls for Rokujo's tempting ghost and follows her offstage, which triggers Aoi's death. The play enacts a nihilistic subversion of the traditional shite-waki dynamic which turns it from a tale of Buddhist salvation into one of death and an ugly love.

In *Yoroboshi*, too, Mishima referenced older versions of Shintokumaru's story by bringing the arbiter Sakurama Shinako's role into his adaptation. As discussed, in the Sekkyōbushi version, there is a love interest character who ends up healing Shintokumaru through her praying. If the character remained in the classical Noh play, it would be a *tsure* archetype. However, in Mishima's retelling, it is difficult to determine whether Shinako is a *waki-tsure* or *a shite-tsure*. Maybe the best way to look at Shinako's function in the play is to consider her a substitute for the chanters in the first part of the play when Toshinori is not yet on the stage; then a *waki-tsure* in the second part as the official questioner who continues the function of *waki* after the parents leave the room; and lastly a *shite-tsure* as on the one hand she contrasts the *shite*'s personality, and on the other hand a quasi-romantic relationship forms between them.

It can also be argued that Shinako's character was modeled after a real-life judge. In 1949, two years after the publication of the new Constitution, Mibuchi Yoshiko became one of the first two female judges in Japan. Mibuchi was one of the lead figures in establishing the Japan Women's Bar Association and new family laws, both of which were done under the direct supervision of American female officers. Twelve years after the publication of *Yoroboshi*, Mibuchi became the first female chief judge of the Niigata Family Court in 1972. (Hayashi, 1992, pp. 17-18)

The importance of Shinako's role can be seen after Toshinori's "final dance." Unlike Shuntokumaru, Toshinori does not become ashamed of his condition, no matter how many times Shinako denies his "the landscape of the world's end." Even after Shinako makes him face the reality of everyday life, he does not retract his story. Shuntokumaru's final dance results in his reunion with his father, which is like a Buddhist salvation. But in Mishima's version, he is forced to face the reality of himself by Shinako, when she tells him: "You were already dead."

Toshinori: You're an unpleasant woman. You're a really unpleasant woman.

Shinako: Yet, I am staying here. If you want me to leave… Yes, ask something of me. Something boring, something that has nothing to do with this world's end or the sea of fire, it's ok if you ask something tiny of me.

She tries to erase the image of "this world's end" and the flames that consumed the world from Toshinori's mind, and return to a superficial peaceful world, as that is her job. In the pamphlet that was published with NLT's premiere of Yoroboshi, Mishima talked about the last scene in a roundtable titled "Special Feature 1: Roundtable Discussion on Modern Noh Collection" where he says that Toshinori is taking revenge on the world of adults, and that it is evidenced by how all the adult characters in the play act nonsensical, except for Shinako. (Tamura, 2012, pp. 237-238)

Similar to the stepmother character in the Kabuki version of Shintokumaru, Shinako is sacrificing part of herself, in this case, this sacrifice would be to not follow the pattern of his parents' behavior and repeat everything Toshinori says to gain his approval and let him live in a world that has already ended. To save him and bring him back to the reality of everyday life would mean sacrificing his approval. However, when she leaves the room, Toshinori is left alone with the image of the flames that consumed the world still burning in his eyes (evidenced by the stage directions stating that the room is still brightly lit by the sunset's light). The end scene resembles the ending of Mishima's *Aoi no Ue*, where the dead Aoi is left alone in the middle of the stage.

Name-calling

The first thing Michitoshi says when he first lays eyes on Shuntokumaru, before recognizing him, is "Oh, the beggar coming here must be him, Yoroboshi." A more technical translation would be "Oh, the beggar who came here, that is the Yoroboshi-called person, isn't it?" In the Story Paper

text of the play, uploaded on the Noh.com website, which presents Noh chant stories in modern Japanese speech and its English translation, a note explains that *yoroboshi* is a term of contempt, used to describe beggars who often dressed like monks and walked unsteadily. What is implied in Michitoshi saying "that is the Yoroboshi-called person" is that he had heard of a beggar in Tennoji who people call Yoroboshi because of the way he stumbles around as a blind person. Upon hearing Michitoshi calling him Yoroboshi, Shuntokumaru says:

> Everyone calls me by the nickname, "Yoroboshi". Certainly, I am blind and crippled like a broken cart with a missing wheel, teetering around. So it does make sense that people call me "Yoroboshi".

A few schools include "How shameful" at the beginning of Shuntokumaru's line, implying that he is unhappy with people calling him Yoroboshi. Right after, Michitoshi says:

> Well, he sounds refined, although he only said a few words.

So, even though he is being identified by his disability and social status, his father, before even recognizing him, starts sympathizing with him by recognizing his mental capacity. After Michitoshi finds out Shuntokumaru's true identity, he does not call him Yoroboshi again, except on one occasion in some schools' versions. Shuntokumaru himself, however, uses this word to address himself on two other occasions, once at the beginning of his final dance when he says that, despite becoming the blind *yoroboshi*, he still remembers the scenery of Naniwa well, and once after his dance when he falls and feels embarrassed because he thinks now people think he is a real Yoroboshi. This shows how the name is truly derogatory.

In Mishima's adaptation, these name-callings are more complicated. The play features a significant number of descriptive utterances directed toward Toshinori. These utterances are done by both sets

of parents and by Toshinori himself, either directed to himself or others. Building on J. L. Austin's speech act theory, which posits that utterances perform something rather than simply describe something, (Austin, 1962) the emphasis on these descriptive statements can be interpreted as a deliberate narrative strategy that functions not only to depict his character but also to actively shape and reveal multifaceted aspects of his identity. It is also worth noting that most of these utterances are structured as simple, declarative sentences with the Japanese equivalent of "to be" verbs. In other words, rather than being speculative or uncertain, most of these sentences are "I am/You are/He is" sentences that are designed to state a fact. As soon as the Kawashimas start talking about Toshinori, it starts:

> Mrs. Kawashima: […] A sweet young-looking blind child in rags was begging. […] Even though his eyes were destroyed, his eyebrows were unconcerned. His fair complexion was noble. In the middle of the sour smell of that underpass, there was a light only around this child, as if he was a prince.
>
> Mr. Kawashima: […] When we brought him back to our house and bathed him, his natural beauty became apparent. The first thing we did was to give him a warm bed and warm food. Next was to treat his eyes, but so far, this is the only thing we have been unable to accomplish. His eyes were burned by the flames as he was trying to run away, injured [from air raids].

They both describe anything about his nature in a positive way and anything about his environment in a negative way. He was sweet, adorable, calm, with a noble-like fair complexion and the aura of a prince. But his rags, blindness, and his environment had a sour smell. He had natural beauty, but his body was disabled in war. Their descriptions continue with words such as "helpless",

"attached to his adoptive parents" and "very self-indulgent". Until Mr. Kawashima starts revealing that there is another side to him:

> To tell the truth, there is a strange aspect that we cannot understand. It's like a hard shell around him.

This is where the Kawashimas start to warn the Takayasus how Toshinori has developed a dark, nihilistic personality after becoming blind. In the subsequent line, he even says that Toshinori now has a "strange nature", contradicting what they were saying about his nature when they had just found him. He explains that he shows no emotions, not even when he hears that his biological parents were found. However, Toshinori's biological mother, Mrs. Takayasu, reacts to this statement immediately and shows how in the past fifteen years that they were separated from their son, they have idolized him:

> Toshinori is not that kind of child. If he sees our face once…

Then, after she is reminded by Mr. Kawashima that Toshinori cannot see them because he is blind:

> No, we know that if he hears our voices once, the shell around his heart will melt away instantly and he'll become his old pure self. […]

She still sees Toshinori as the "pure" child she lost, if not even more idealized. She explains in detail how they have spent the past fifteen years with Toshinori's thoughts, not knowing whether he is still alive or dead. To twist the situation in their favor, Mrs. Takayasu tries to call Toshinori a burden for the Kawashimas, and in doing so, he calls Toshinori a "blind, twisted freak."

The Kawashimas get defensive and say that Toshinori is already legally their child, but then Mr. Kawashima continues to say:

> To put it bluntly, that kid is some kind of lunatic. Since we have endured his madness, we have the right to scoff at your naïve sentimentality. After all, we have stubbornly endured him, so far as we have become one with him in body and spirit. You cannot understand the horror of this bonding. We even came to think of killing him a couple of times…[…] That kid's blindness saved him and saved us from committing a crime. You two have no idea.

This back-and-forth continues with all four parties calling Toshinori mad, lunatic, and crazy, while the Takayasus still idealize him and only repeat what the Kawashimas are trying to convey as a realistic image of Toshinori. These name-callings do not stop after Shinako intervenes and brings Toshinori inside. To each other and to his face, they continue calling him "poor baby" and "twisted". These can be seen as means of asserting their authority over Toshinori, who is already an adult. At the same time, they both feel indebted to Toshinori, the Takayasus for abandoning him in the fire, and the Kawashimas for the strange bond they have with Toshinori that has only been forged after considering several times to kill him.

However, when Toshinori enters the stage, he changes the direction of these utterances. After showing no emotion toward his biological parents, or anyone else, for that matter, and then talking about how he misses the sounds of war, he says he sees himself surrounded by flames and asks for Shinako's affirmation. When Shinako tells him he is only feeling hot because he is wearing a suit on a hot summer day, he starts describing his clothes and compares them to shackles and restraints, and that is when he says his first describing utterance:

> I don't care about that kind of appearance. All I know is the feeling of this neck being squeezed and the feeling of this sweat-soaked tight underwear. I put on silk shackles around my neck and cotton restraining clothes. Isn't it right? I am a naked prisoner.

And right after, Mrs. Kawashima confirms:

> Of course, it is. You are for sure a naked prisoner. You are forced to wear shackles around your neck. You are forced to wear restraining prison clothes.

Toshinori shows that he appreciates being validated by calling Mrs. Kawashima "Mom", which makes Mrs. Takayasu jealous. Being called mother or father is the reward for anyone who agrees with him. Otherwise, they do not deserve it. One by one, he asks them if they think he is a naked prisoner and one by one, they agree in order to get rewarded by getting called Mom or Dad.

> "Hahaha, now I have a full set of two pairs of parents," he says.

As a result, he seamlessly changes the narrative around him from being a pitiful, lunatic child who requires authority figures to becoming the authority figure for his parents. The difference between the two sets of parents, more clearly seen in the mothers, is that while the Takayasus are at first shaken by the violence and nihilistic world of Toshinori, the Kawashimas dismiss it as insanity.

At face value, Toshinori's speech about his suit might be seen as him stressing his blindness, saying that he does not see what he is wearing, hence it does not have any meaning for him. This might align with the way when he tries to silence Shinako and says everything is meaningless to him and then says that the "Human face is nothing but bumps", implying that not only can he not see, but using words or touching things will not help him understand the world either. However, he ensures that his speech is not taken at face value when he counters Mrs. Takayasu's claim that all Toshinori thinks about is his eyes. After Toshinori gets his mothers to agree that "[a] light shines in all directions from the center of [his] body", he says seeing that is "the sole reason that [they] have eyes." Mrs. Takayasu says:

> “Poor baby! He’s always thinking about eyes. What a pity!”

Toshinori erupts and makes everyone silent.

> […] The only reason you have eyes is to see these. Your eyes are a responsibility, so to speak. They are responsible for seeing what I request them to see. That is when your eyes begin to substitute my eyes and become noble organs. […] Your eyes must see such miracles, or any miracle there and then. If they don’t, it would be better if you tossed them out…

This pivotal moment is when Toshinori, previously positioned as the object of a custody battle deserving of pity, decisively asserts control within the family court. While attributing a quasi-holy status to Toshinori due to his physical limitations might be an overstatement, his undeniable talent for manipulating language and influencing others through his words cannot be ignored. Toshinori's actions, embodied by his verbal performance as a "rich brat" and the act of smoking a cigarette offered to him as if he were a "respectable everyday person" can be interpreted as an attempt to secure his parents' acceptance of his "madness" and their compliance with his demands. The central question, therefore, transcends Toshinori's blindness or madness; it becomes who will accompany him through the worldview he has constructed.

Before Shinako asks the parents to leave the room so that she can speak alone with him, and after his adoptive parents agree with him that he is a “star”, a “ghost”, and “formless”, Toshinori gets them to repeat descriptive utterances that are the final nail into the coffin of his parents’ authority:

> Toshinori: […] You live like corpses.
>
> Mr. Kawashima: […] We are corpses, for sure.

Mrs. Kawashima: Even I am a corpse, of course.

[…]

Toshinori: […] You are cowards. A bunch of insects.

Mrs. Kawashima: We are cowards.

Mr. Kawashima: We are insects.

Mrs. Takayasu resists one last time and disagrees, but Mr. Takayasu advises her that if she wants to "take Toshinori back", she has "no other way but to turn into an insect."

Mrs. Takayasu: Then I'm an insect, too. Instead, I beg you, call me mother.

Toshinori: *(emotionless)* Mother… Insect…

Mrs. Takayasu: Finally, he kindly called me mother!

Mr. Takayasu: Right after that was an "insect"!

Toshinori: You are all stupid morons.

(a moment of hesitation)

Kawashimas and Takayasus: We are all stupid morons.

It is not Toshinori who is a "blind", "lunatic" child who needs his parents' pity. Rather, it is the Takayasus and the Kawashimas who are "crazy" and "devoid of emotion." Following a twisted version of the *kuruimono* (madness Noh) tradition, Toshinori successfully managed to reveal that the two sets of parents who on the surface claimed to be normal, sane people and called him mad, were, in fact, the mad ones for trying to live a normal life in a world that has already ended. After

the parents leave, he calls his adoptive parents his “slaves” and his biological parents “hopeless morons”. In Mishima’s postwar Japan, anyone who lives a normal life is crazy.

Visions

The highlight of the classical Noh play, *Yoroboshi*, is when Shuntokumaru starts describing the scenery in his mind. After realizing Shuntokumaru is his son, Michitoshi, who decided to keep his identity concealed until after the day ended, suggested that Shuntokumaru perform *Nissōkan*. *Nissōkan* is a Pure Land Buddhist practice of meditation that involves visualizing the setting sun while trying to imagine the Western Land. (In most translations of, and research on, *Yoroboshi*, Nirvana has been used instead of the Western Land, which is a Pure Land Buddhist concept. This is probably because Nirvana is a universally well-known concept and more familiar to the Western audience. Since it does not make any difference in the story, and since the difference between the Western Land and Nirvana is outside the scope of this thesis, I have kept this intentional mistranslation.) In the sutra that describes the practice of *Nissōkan*, (Machida, 1999, p. 90) the following passage is written:

> You might ask, ‘But how can we make the image [of the Western Land]?’ Unless blind from birth, all people have seen the sunset. Strengthen your imagination, sit facing west, and gaze at the sun. Set your mind firmly, let it not wander, and see how the sun takes on the form of a drum, as it desires to set. Afterwards, evince the scene, opening and closing your eyes.

Shuntokumaru talks about how the gates of Tennōji are connected to the gates of Nirvana, and the gates of Nirvana to the western ocean of Naniwa. As the sun is setting, he starts dancing as he describes the familiar scenery of Naniwa instead of Nirvana. At one point, the reciters sing:

> […] We offer prayer towards the setting sun not for the sake of seeing the sun with our eyes but for the sake of seeing it in the mind's eye. So, a blind man like myself can clearly envision the beautiful, unclouded image of Awaji's Ejima Island, Suma, and Akashi, even as far away as the ocean off of Kii. All of this terrain, as far as the eye can see, exists in the mind.

Shuntokumaru, dancing and singing, exclaims:

> Oh, yes! I can see them very well! I can see them very well!

He continues describing the scenery from different perspectives vividly until he loses his control and falls. Instead of focusing on his meditation and imagining Nirvana, he gets carried away, dancing and singing, imagining the scene that he could have been seeing if he still had his eyesight.

Where Shuntokumaru sees the calming landscape that he used to see when he visited Tennōji, Toshinori saw the flames that devoured the world behind his eyelids. Before Shinako asks the parents to leave, Toshinori reminisces about walking among people who live their everyday lives and likens it to a flower flourishing in a world that has already ended. He mentions multiple times that he has seen the world end and that he imagines miraculous, absurd things happening in the world that others cannot see.

Then, parallel to Shuntokumaru's *Nissōkan*, after the parents leave, Toshinori stares at the sunset's light and says that it is the scenery of the world's end. He describes the gate of the park outside of the courtroom's window as being connected to the gates of hell. Like Shuntokumaru seeing the scenery of Naniwa clearly behind his blind eyelids, Toshinori describes how he can still clearly see the flame that burned his eyes. He describes the scene of the city burning colorfully and poetically and calls it "the form of this world being embraced in flames."

> Look! Countless flames are raining down from the sky. Every house is burning. Every window of every house is spouting out flames. I can see clearly. The sky full of fire sparks. The low-hanging clouds have turned into the color of poisonous grapes, the same clouds are mirrored in the river that is already burning bright red. The brightness of the silhouette of a huge steel trestle. A grim form, a big tree embraced in flames, the treetop completely covered in sparks, wind shaking its trunk. Small trees and bamboo grass thickets were all wearing emblems of fire. In every corner, the emblems of fire and border decorations of fire were moving briskly. […]

The war and the firebombing provide an image that fits Mishima's aesthetics. Even though Toshinori is describing a horrific situation that permanently harmed him, he still remembers it as a sublime phenomenon. He describes the "agonized cry of humanity" as "nostalgic" and "sincere." That was his reaction to Mrs. Takayasu's cries, as well.

When he finishes describing the flame that jumped in his eyes and took away his sight, he covers his eyes and collapses. Shinako helps him get up. Toshinori wants her to agree with him and admit that she saw the end of the world, too. However, she refuses and says that she only sees a beautiful sunset. The hellish image of Tokyo burning in the flames of war contrasts with the beautiful sunset that Shinako sees and the peaceful landscape that Shuntokumaru saw. Toshinori lost his sight before the war ended, so he did not see the world transition from war to the everyday life of "riding the subway." For Toshinori, when the "peaceful" world of the postwar is created by sealing the landscape of the end of the world away, the people who are living with a false sense of peace are like "ghosts". Considering how he feels about the postwar world, it would not be an overstatement to say that Toshinori is glad that he became blind, and the world ended for him at its peak.

Yoroboshi as a Political Play

Mishima's *Yoroboshi*, which has been stripped of Buddhist salvation and the celebration of Buddhist norms and practices, is not just a story about people who continue to live their normal lives in a world that has already ended. It serves as a metaphorical critique of what he calls the globalization or "coca-colonization of Japanese culture" by the West. (Mishima, Introduction, 1972, p. 16) His play is filled with political symbolism which aims to warn against the dangers of postwar Japan's cultural assimilation by the West.

Analyzing the *shite* role in Mishima's *Dōjōji*, Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei argues that the young dancer represents the nation of Japan itself who, despite the betrayal by the West and postwar revisionists who claim that traditional samurai values and national identity are deformed, remains fundamentally unchanged. In other words, "the ideal of Japan, the beloved mother and idealized woman, is intact." (Sorgenfrei, 2007, pp. 72-73) Robert Neblett argues that throughout the Modern Noh collection, the *shite* characters, regardless of their supernatural status, often represent various aspects of a modern Japan teetering on the brink of cultural amnesia. In some plays, such as *Yoroboshi* and *Genji Kuyō*, the damage inflicted upon the Japanese psyche appears irreparable. However, other plays, such as The Lady Aoi and Sotoba Komachi, suggest that the nation's heart retains the capacity for self-assertion, even if it manifests in a terrifyingly destructive way.

Mishima only keeps a handful of the classical Noh elements in his adaptation of *Yoroboshi* and uses the example of Japan's postwar family courts to criticize the political paralysis and cultural anxieties of postwar Japan. Unlike Shuntokumaru whose blindness was caused by grief and false accusations, Toshinori, who represents the damaged soul of "true Japanese", lost his sight as a direct result of an American firebombing during World War II. Tormented by apocalyptic

visions that have led him to a nihilistic depression, he is so strange to everyday life that neither set of parents can successfully integrate him back into their lives.

Toshinori's biological parents, the Takayasus, who represent the idealized past, or the idea of the emperor in Mishima's political guidelines, struggle to accept him for who he has turned into and still hold an idealized view of him. They ignore the unresolved trauma of his wartime abandonment. The labels that Toshinori attaches to the Takayasus show Mishima's disappointment in the passive role that the emperor has taken in Japan's postwar situation.

The Kawashimas, on the other hand, who represent the "modernized" present, or the idea of the occupying forces in Mishima's thought, have a more realistic view of Toshinori's personality. However, their view is very clinical and negative, and their solution to agree with whatever he says only makes them look selfless while it offers no redemption to Toshinori. Ironically, despite holding opposing viewpoints, both sets of parents fail to recognize their son's true identity, even though Toshinori seems to believe that he can see everyone's true identity transparently. Through this portrayal, Mishima appears to suggest the inherent instability within the postwar Japanese psyche, incapable of finding solace either in a romanticized past or a wholly practical present.

Another example is Toshinori's critique of his suit and calling himself a "naked prisoner" which can be interpreted through Mishima's aforementioned view of Japan's Naked Festival. Roy Starrs quotes Mishima in *Deadly Dialectics* (1994, p. 15) talking about how Western culture brought shame and suppressed the raw, masculine energy of the Japanese warriors: "Blue-collar workers from huge factories, bank tellers, construction workers – they have bravely cast aside all clothing in favor of the ancient loincloth, they have reclaimed their right to be living males, they have regained joy, fierceness, laughter, and all the primitive attributes of man."

If we consider how the Family Court system and the real-life model of Shinako were heavily influenced by the American law system, the courtroom's failure to provide a closure for Toshinori's case could also be seen as another criticism of Japan's "modernization" and "Americanization." Neblett argues that in adapting *Aoi no Ue*, Mishima shifts from depicting religious rituals to portraying modern psychoanalysis, and modern medicine in general, which offers him a platform to critique the potential dangers of Westernization in postwar Japan. (Neblett, 2011, p. 153) Similarly, it can be argued that Mishima is doing the same thing in *Yoroboshi*, but this time criticizing the modern legal system as ineffective compared to the spiritual practices of before.

The lack of salvation in Mishima's Modern Noh plays, or more specifically, the fact that the characters in *Yoroboshi* are not looking for Buddhist enlightenment, evokes the concept of *mappō*, especially considering that Mishima was well aware of the classical Noh Buddhist undercurrents. *Mappō* is a term used in Buddhist thought to describe the third and final stage in the Buddha's teachings, which is believed to be the current era. During *mappō*, the teachings are said to be largely forgotten or misunderstood, and achieving enlightenment is extremely difficult or not sought after.

Considering the twisted employment of the *shite* archetype in Mishima's Modern Noh plays where the only character who does not have a psychological mask is the *shite*, Toshinori can be interpreted as a symbol of the inevitable cataclysm that shatters the established cultural order in Mishima's vision of Japan. He embodies the potential for a complete obliteration of both historical memory and contemporary reality, paving the way for the emergence of a wholly new national identity in the future.

Chapter VI. Why Call It Noh?

Mishima Yukio's modern Noh plays, specifically his adaptation of *Yoroboshi*, represent a deliberate departure from classical Noh conventions while still retaining the essence of the art form. He uses both extrapolative and interpolative strategies to keep his adaptations aligned with his nihilistic aesthetics and political agendas that signal the probability of ultranationalism and fascism. Mishima explicitly rejects the stylized movements, masks, and costumes of classical Noh, opting instead for a Westernized *shingeki* composition and performance technique. However, he maintains a subtle awareness of standard Noh conventions, such as the use of long, dream-like monologues that mirror the final dance in Noh, as seen in Toshinori's monologue describing the scenery of the world's end.

Mishima's adaptation of *Yoroboshi* for the *shingeki* stage shifts the focus from the physical performance of specific techniques in Noh to a psychological performance that delves into the characters' inner turmoil and motivations. While classical Noh relies on stylized movements, masks, and costumes to convey emotions and narratives, Mishima's adaptation utilizes dialogue and symbolic language to reveal the characters' true identities. This shift in focus allows Mishima to explore complex themes such as trauma, loss, and the search for meaning in a meaningless world, resonating with contemporary audiences while still maintaining a connection to the core philosophical underpinnings of Noh. The concept of "unmasking" or revelation of true identity, central to *mugen* Noh drama, is reinterpreted in Mishima's *Yoroboshi*. In the classical Noh, the shite's true identity is revealed through a change of mask and costume, signifying a transformation or spiritual awakening. However, in Mishima's adaptation, the unmasking is psychological, as the characters shed their societal facades and confront their inner emptiness. Toshinori's nihilistic worldview and the parents' desperate attempts to maintain control over him are gradually exposed

through their interactions and dialogues, culminating in a final confrontation that reveals their true selves.

In conclusion, Mishima Yukio's adaptation of the classical Noh play *Yoroboshi* serves as a profound reflection on the sociopolitical landscape of postwar Japan. By reimagining the traditional narrative within a modern setting, Mishima critiques the nation's rapid modernization and the pervasive influence of globalization. Through the character of Toshinori, a young man scarred by the traumas of war and disillusioned with the superficiality of postwar society, Mishima explores the psychological toll of cultural assimilation. Toshinori's nihilistic worldview and rejection of societal norms challenge the audience to confront the consequences of blindly embracing Western values at the expense of traditional Japanese identity.

Mishima's adaptation also delves into the complexities of familial relationships and the struggle to reconcile past traumas with present realities. The strained interactions between Toshinori and his biological and adoptive parents highlight the generational divide and the difficulties of communication in a rapidly changing society. The family court, a symbol of modern bureaucracy, fails to provide a resolution to their conflict, underscoring the limitations of institutionalized solutions in addressing deeply personal and cultural issues.

Furthermore, Mishima's reinterpretation of the classical Noh elements, such as the setting, characters, and symbolic language, adds layers of meaning to the play. The transformation of the sacred temple into a sterile courtroom reflects the erosion of spiritual values in favor of a more pragmatic and materialistic worldview. The characters, stripped of their traditional masks and costumes, reveal their psychological vulnerabilities and the masks they wear to conform to societal expectations.

The transition from the metaphysical focus of Noh to the psychological emphasis of *shingeki* in Mishima's adaptation is not solely a deliberate authorial choice but also an inherent consequence of the differing natures of these theatrical forms. This shift occurs both as a natural evolution during the adaptation process and as a conscious decision by Mishima, who recognized the distinct characteristics of each form. By leveraging these inherent differences, Mishima skillfully integrates his political ideologies into the play, using the psychological lens of *shingeki* to explore the individual and societal anxieties of postwar Japan.

In essence, Mishima's *Yoroboshi* is a powerful indictment of the postwar Japanese society's loss of cultural identity and the consequences of the quick adoption of Western values. Through Toshinori's poignant struggle and the play's uncertain conclusion, Mishima urges the audience to reflect on the importance of preserving cultural heritage and finding a balance between tradition and modernity. The play's enduring relevance lies in its ability to spark conversations about the complexities of cultural identity, the impact of historical trauma, and the search for meaning in a swiftly changing world.

The absence of traditional Noh elements in Mishima's *Yoroboshi*, while retaining the title and association with Noh, can also be interpreted as a deliberate strategy to evoke the audience's memory and understanding of the classical Noh tradition. By presenting a modern adaptation that deviates significantly from the original form, Mishima creates a stark contrast that highlights the absence of traditional values and spiritual solace in postwar Japan.

The ideal audience who has access to general knowledge and is familiar with the conventions of Noh would expect certain elements like masks, costumes, music, and dance, and even more importantly, narrative conventions such as the role of tradition and/or religion in resolving the

play’s main complication. However, by denying them these familiar signifiers, Mishima forces them to confront the void left by the loss of tradition. The absence of Buddhist salvation and the unresolved ending, where Toshinori remains trapped in his nihilistic worldview, further emphasizes the sense of doom and confusion that permeates postwar Japanese society.

When an adaptation retains the original name but presents a contrasting new story, it creates a dynamic interplay between familiarity and novelty, tradition and innovation. This approach can be seen as a deliberate artistic strategy to engage the audience in a dialogue with the source material while simultaneously offering a fresh perspective. By invoking the original name, the adaptation taps into the audience's pre-existing knowledge and expectations, creating a sense of recognition and connection to the familiar. However, the contrasting new story challenges these expectations, prompting the audience to reconsider their understanding of the original work and its themes. This juxtaposition of the familiar and the new can be particularly effective in highlighting social or cultural changes.

In this way, Mishima's adaptation can be seen as a call to remember and re-evaluate the importance of traditional values and cultural heritage. By presenting a bleak and unsettling vision of a society devoid of spiritual grounding, he implicitly urges the audience to reflect on the consequences of abandoning tradition in favor of uncritical modernization and Westernization. The play's open ending and lack of resolution can be interpreted as a challenge to the audience to seek their own answers and find ways to reconnect with their cultural roots. The absence of traditional Noh elements in Mishima's *Yoroboshi* is not a rejection of the tradition but rather a reimagining of it. By challenging conventions and pushing boundaries, Mishima creates a modern Noh that is both a tribute to the past and a reflection of the present.

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Appendix

Time

Late summer, from afternoon to sunset

Place

Family court

Characters

Toshinori

Mr. Kawashima (Toshinori's adoptive father)

Mrs. Kawashima (Toshinori's adoptive mother)

Mr. Takayasu (Toshinori's biological father)

Mrs. Takayasu (Toshinori's biological mother)

Sakurama Shinako (The arbitrator)

Line	Character	Japanese	Translation
When the curtain opens, Shinako is sitting in the center, with Mr. and Mrs. Kawashima on the right side of the stage, and Mr. and Mrs. Takayasu on the left side. For a while, nobody talks or moves.			
001	Shinako *(A beautiful woman past forty, dressed in a kimono)*	ひどく蒸しますのね。こんな風で、扇風器もございませんし．．．（一同沈黙。級子仕方なしに笑って）何しろ御承知のとおり、家庭裁判所というところは、予算も雀の涙ほどですし、私ども調停委員と申しましても、名前は立派なようでございますけれど。．．．（一同沈黙。ややあって）どうぞ。お話しになって。喧嘩の場所じゃございませんのですから、ここは。[2]	It is awfully humid, is it not? Still, we do not even have a fan… *(Everybody remains silent. With no other option, Shinako laughs)* For you see, as you are aware, this so-called family court has a very tiny budget, and even though I am called an Arbitrator, it is merely a name that sounds impressive… *(Everybody remains silent. After a short pause)* Please. Start the conversation. After all, this is not a place for quarrels.

[2] Her style of talking is very honorific and humble. She refers to herself with *Watakushidomo,* which is a very humble pronoun to refer to the first person. She uses *degozaimasu* instead of *desu*, which is very polite. She uses words like *Goshouchi* (your knowledge) which is a very honorific way to address the other person's

002	Mr. Kawashima	まことに．．．まことに思いがけませんでした。こうして俊徳の実の御両親にお目にかかることになろうとは。．．．あれから十五年、．．．十五年でございますからなあ。	It was indeed… it was indeed unexpected. We never thought we would meet Toshinori's biological parents like this… After fifteen years… Because it has been fifteen years since then.
003	Mrs. Kawashima *(wiping her tears away with a handkerchief)*	十五年と申しますと、もう実の子も同然で．．．	When you say fifteen years, it's like he's our own son now…
004	Shinako *(while looking at papers)*	俊儀さんは今年二十歳におなりでいらっしゃいますね。[3]	Mr. Toshinori is turning twenty years old this year, right?
The Takayasu family keeps their attention on the door from the beginning to the end, and all the while remains silent.			
005	Mr. Kawashima	はあ、．．．さようです。	Yes… that is right.
006	Mrs. Kawashima	思い出しますときのうのようでございますわ。私どもには子供がおりませんでした。そしていつか子供をもらうなら、一等不幸のどん底にいる子供を、私どもの手で救い上げて、この地上のたのしみの一切をその子のものにしてやろうと、かねがね宅とも話し合っていたのでございます。	When I think about it, it is just like yesterday. We did not have a child of our own. So, my husband and I had discussed for a long time that if we were ever to take a child in, we would personally pick and rescue a child from the very rock bottom of misfortune and would give this child all the pleasures of this world.
007	Mr. Kawashima	戦争がおわって間もなく、秋の夜風がそわそわ身にしむ近．．．	Just after the end of the war, almost the time when you could feel the touch of the autumn night's wind on your body…
008	Shinako *(while leafing through papers)*	あなた方は上野の地下道で、俊儀さんにお会いになったのでございますね。	You met Mr. Toshinori for the first time in an underpass in Ueno, right?

knowledge of something. Throughout the play, she keeps this style of very formal, honorific, humble and polite speaking. The other characters use a polite and formal style of speaking at first, as well.

[3] In Japan, twenty is the age of adulthood.

009	Mrs. Kawashima	今もありありとおもいますわ。いたいけな年ごろの盲らの子供が、襤褸をまとって物乞いをしておりました。汚ない親方のかたわらに、よごれた筵の上に座って。．．．一目見るなり、私は思いました。この子こそ、私どもの子になるべきだと。．．．目こそつぶれていても涼しい眉、色白の気高い顔立ち、暗い地下道の酸えた匂いのなかで、その子のまわりにだけは光りが漂い、王子さまのように見えたのです。	I can still remember it clearly. A sweet young-looking blind child in rags was begging. He was sitting beside his dirty boss, on a straw mat… After one glance, I thought to myself, that this child had to be ours… Even though his eyes were destroyed, his eyebrows were unconcerned. His fair complexion was noble. In the middle of the sour smell of that underpass, there was a light only around this child, as if he was a prince.
010	Mr. Kawashima	私は親方に相応の金を払い、早速その子を引取りました。家へ連れて行って風呂に入れると、天成の麗しさが現れました。私どものまずやったことは、温かいねぐらと温かい食事を与えることでしたが、あの子はいとも自然にそれを享け入れました。次には目を治してやることでしたが、これればかりは今にいたるまで成功しておりません。戦災をうけて逃げまどうときに、あの子の目は炎で灼かれたのです。	I paid his boss a reasonable amount of money, and immediately took that kid in. When we brought him back to our house and bathed him, his natural beauty became apparent. The first thing we did was to give[4] him a warm bed and warm food. Next was to treat his eyes, but so far, this is the only thing we have been unable to accomplish. His eyes were burned by the flames as he was trying to run away, injured [from air raids].[5]

[4] 与える is especially used when someone from a higher position gives something to someone from a lower position.

[5] It is not directly said in which incident Toshinori loses his eyesight. Mr. Kawashima only says that he was injured in the war, and he lost his eyesight by the flames [of war]. It is not said whether it was in an air raid or anything else, here. Later, Mrs. Kawashima mentions that Toshinori had said that his house was burned down in an air raid.

011	Mrs. Takayasu *(as if it was all she was thinking about, to Shinako)*	早くあの子に合わして下さいまし！	Please, [I beg you,] let us see that child, immediately!
012	Mr. Takayasu	まあ、お話を伺ってからにするものだ。	Well, they'll do it right after they finish their stories.
013	Mrs. Kawashima *(to Shinako)*	頑是ない子供のことですから、はっきりしたことはわりませんでしたが、空襲で家を焼かれて、多分親と死に別れてから、人に縋って暮してきたのだと申しました。私どもはただ不悪で不悪で、物の乏しい時代でございましたが、できるかぎりの手数をかけ、蝶よ花よと育てたのでございます。	Since he was just a helpless kid, we could not know it for sure, but he said that after his house burned down in an air raid, and probably death separated him from his parents, he had to rely on others to stay alive. Even though we were very poor ourselves, since everything was scarce those days, we did our best to raise him in a bed of roses.
014	Shinako	それから十五年間．．．それで俊徳さんはあなた方によくなついておいででしたね。	It has been fifteen years since then… That is why Mr. Toshinori has become so attached to both of you, right?
015	Mrs. Kawashima	それはもう．．．	That is right…
016	Shinako	いじけていたり、よそよそしかったり、そういうことはございませんでしたわね。	And he was never fearful nor acted cold or anything like that, is that right?
017	Mrs. Kawashima	いいえ、それどころか我儘一杯で。	No. If anything, he is very self-indulgent.
018	Mr. Kawashima	お前、本当のことを申し上げたほうがいいよ。実をいうとあの子の性質には、私どもにどうにも理解できない妙なところ、固い殻のようなものがあるのです。	We had better tell the truth, dear. To tell the truth, there is a strange aspect that we cannot understand. It's like a hard shell around him.
019	Mrs. Takayasu *(getting angry)*	あの子はそんな子じゃありません。	He is not that kind of child.
020	Mr. Kawashima	あなた方は御存知ない。たった五年間、しかも目のあいていた間だ	You do not have any idea. It was only five years, and when he still could see, at that. Unfortunately, that

		けだ。あの子のふしぎな性質は可哀想に、盲らになってから培われたものなんです。	kid's strange nature developed after he became blind.
021	Mrs. Takayasu *(crying)*	可哀想に! 可哀想に!	Poor kid! Poor kid!
022	Mr. Takayasu	それは具体的に言うと、どういうのでしょう、その理解できないと仰言るのは。	Specifically, what is it that you say you do not understand [about him]?
023	Mr. Kawashima	とても一概には申せません。まあ一例が、そうですね、あの子には感動というものがないのです。実の御両親が現われたときいても、あの子はまるで感動を示しもせず、ここへ来るあいだも至極つまらなそうな顔をしていました。そうかと思うと些細なことに、急に激して手に負えなくなったり．．．。	It can not be explained in one general statement. One example is, well, that kid shows no emotion. Even when he heard that his biological parents were found, he did not show any emotions. On our way here, he looked like he was extremely bored. Now that I think of it, he would suddenly become very hostile and over trivial things and we could not handle him…
024	Mrs. Takayasu	俊徳はそんな子じゃございません。一度私どもの顔を見たら．．．	Toshinori is not that kind of child. If he sees our face once…
025	Mr. Kawashima	申し上げときますが、あの子は盲らですよ。	I have been telling you, he is blind.
026	Mrs. Takayasu	いいえ、一度私どもの声をきけば、心の殻も一ぺんに融け、もとどおりの素直な子に戻ることは知れています。ああ、今まで十五年、あの子のことを思わなかった日はない私ですもの。あなた方は十五年間あの子の体と一緒に暮しておいででしたが、私は同じ年月、あの子の心と一緒に暮して来たんです。．．．	No, we know that if he hears our voices once, the shell around his heart will melt away instantly and he'll become his old pure self. Ah, it has been fifteen years, and there has not been a day that we have not thought about that kid. You two have spent fifteen years with his body, I have spent the same years and months with his spirit… We gave up and thought he was dead, held his funeral, and put up a tombstone. Even then, we could not give

		死んでしまったものと諦らめ、葬いもすまし、お墓も立て、その上でまだ諦らめきれず、主人と二人で上野の浮浪児たちを検分にまわりはじめたとき、ああ、そのときはもう俊徳はそちらのお手許にいたのですね。 私どもはあの子の生と死と、二つの夢に附合って、十五年を過したんです。 百日紅の花の赤いお墓に詣でるとあの子がどこかに生きているような気がしましたし、汚れた浮浪児たちの顔を見ると、あの子はもう死んでしまったような気がしました。 まるで日向と影のように、そうですわ、影にいれば日向に気をとられ、日向にいれば影を怖れて、私どもはそのどちらにも腰を据える決心がつきかねました。海にうかぶ雲を見ても、あの子の姿をさながらだと思い、垣根ごしにきく隣りの子供の声も、わが子の声かとおどろかれ、庭に咲く花々を見れば、お墓へ持って行くべきか、それとも主のいない勉強部屋に活けてやるべきかと戸惑いました。．．． それを、まあ、どうでしょう、ふとした機縁であの子が川島家にお世話になっているとわかったとき!	up completely, and by the time we started searching among the waifs of Ueno with my husband… Ah, by then Toshinori was in your hands, wasn't he? We lived fifteen years with two dreams: was he alive or was he dead? When we saw his tombstone covered with red blossoms of crape myrtle, we felt as if he was alive somewhere, and when we saw the dirty faces of waifs, we felt as if he was already dead. Just like sunshine and shadow, oh yes, when you are in a shade you are preoccupied with the sunshine, and when you are in the sunshine, you are afraid of the shadow. Just like that, we could not set our minds on one of them. Even when we saw a cloud floating on top of the sea, we thought it looked like his silhouette. When we heard neighbors' kids' voices over the hedge, we were startled, thinking it was our kid's. When we saw flowers blooming in the yard, we could not decide whether we should take them to his grave or arrange them in his empty study room… And now, out of the blue, we find out that he is being cared for by the Kawashimas.

027	Mr. Kawashima	高安さん、「お世話になっている」と仰言るのは、どうも当っておりませんな。戸籍上からも、すでにあれは私どもの子なんですから。	Mrs. Takayasu, it is not right to say he was “being cared for.” Even according to the family register, he is already our child.
028	Mrs. Takayasu	でも盲らで、そんなにひねくれた変り者を、もう厄介払いしたいお気持なんでしょう、本当のところ。	But in reality, you must be anxious to get rid of that blind, twisted freak.[6]
029	Mrs. Kawashima	まあ、何ということを！	Hey, watch your mouth!
030	Mr. Kawashima *(to his wife)*	言わせておおきなさい。どうせごまめの歯ぎしりなんだ。それにあの子は実の親のところへなんか帰りたがらないに決っている。	Let them say what they want. After all, it is nothing but teeth-grinding.[7] Besides, he definitely does not want to go back to his biological parents.
031	Mr. Takayasu	大へんな自信ですな。	Such confidence!
032	Mr. Kawashima	ええ、自信も持ちますとも。はっきり申せば、あの子は一種の狂人です。あの子の狂気に堪えてきた私どもには、あなた方の甘い感傷を嘲る資格があるわけですよ。とにかく私どもは堪えに堪え、それで一心同体にまでなったのです。この絆のおそろしさは、あなた方にはおわかりじゃない。何度かあの子を殺そうとまで思い詰めたことがあったが．．．。	Yes, I have confidence. To put it bluntly, that kid is some kind of lunatic. Since we have endured his madness, we have the right to scoff at your naïve sentimentality. After all, we have stubbornly endured him, so far as we have become one with him in body and spirit. You cannot understand the horror of this bonding. We even came to think of killing him a couple of times…
033	Mrs. Takayasu	まあやっぱり虐待していたんだ!	I knew you were abusing him!

[6] The formal and polite form of speaking between the parents gradually starts to become more casual from this point on. Although, women still try to keep some degree of politeness and humbleness in their speech, which gives more a touch of sarcasm to their tone.

[7] A Japanese proverb literally translating into a dried young anchovy’s tooth grinding, meaning insignificant people can not do anything but talk.

034	Mr. Kawashima	あの子の盲らがあの子を救い、私どもをも罪から救った。あなた方はまるでおわかりじゃない。	That kid's blindness saved him and saved us from committing a crime. You two have no idea.
035	Mrs. Takayasu	あの可愛い俊徳を狂人ですって!	You call that cute Toshinori a lunatic!
036	Mr. Takayasu	何かと難癖をつけておいでなのさ。	They're trying to somehow find fault with him.
037	Mrs. Kawashima	まあ見ていらっしゃい、あなた方の手に負えるかどうか。	Well, let us see if you two can manage him.
038	Mrs. Takayasu	大した教育者でいらっしゃること!	Well, we have you as our great role models!
039	Mr. Takayasu	あなた方があの子を狂気にしたのだ。	You two drove him crazy.
040	Mrs. Kawashima	いいえ、火の中に見捨てたあなた方こそ。御自分の命が大事なばっかりに。	No, you were the ones who abandoned him in the middle of the fire. Because only your own lives mattered.
041	Mrs. Takayasu	見捨てたですって? 見捨てたですって?	Abandoned? Did you say we abandoned him?
042	Shinako	お静かに。感情的におなりになってはいけませんわ。ここはともあれ平和の場所、どんな争いも程のいい微笑に変る場所なのですもの。私は見えない秤を手に持って、双方へ等分に、相応の満足と、それから相応の不本意をさしあげるのです。 私の目には怒っている焔も、瑪瑙の彫刻にしか見えませんし、たぎっている瀬の水も、水晶の浮彫にしか見えません。 もつれにもつれた毛糸も、からみ合った蔦かずらも、何かしら私には、そこにへんな悪い魂があって、む	Silence. There is no need to become emotional. After all, this is a place of peace, a place where any dispute turns into a nice smile. I hold an invisible two-tray scale in my hand and offer the proper amount of satisfaction and also the proper amount of disappointment equally to both parties. To my eyes, angry flames look like nothing but agate carvings, and the roiling torrent water looks like nothing but crystal reliefs. I can not help but think that, to me, the tightly entangled yarn and the entangled ivy vines have a strange, evil spirit, which takes the form of a forced complexity. All complex situations are just apparitions. In reality, the

		りに複雑さに化けて見せているのだとしか思えません。複雑な事情などというものは、みんなただのお化けなのですわ。本当は世界は単純でいつもしんとしている場所なのですわ。少くとも私はそう信じております。 ですから私には、闘牛場の血みどろの戦いのさなかに、飛び下りて来て平気で砂の上を、無器用な足取で歩いてゆく白い鳩のような勇気がございます。私の白い翼が血に汚れたとて、それが何でしょう。血も幻、戦いも幻なのですもの。 私は海ぞいのお寺の美しい屋根の上を歩く鳩のように、争い事に波立っているお心の上を平気で歩いて差上げますわ．．．。 よございますね。今はもう当の御本人にお会いになる時期だと思います。ここへ俊徳さんをお連れいたしましょう。	world is an uncomplicated and forever deadly silent place. At least that is what I believe. That is why I have the courage of a white dove that calmly descends on the sand of a bullring in the middle of a blood-drenched battle and waddles around awkwardly. So what if my white wings get dirty with blood? Because blood is an illusion, and battle is an illusion. Like a dove that walks on top of the beautiful roof of a temple by the sea, I will walk calmly on your hearts that are in turmoil with dispute… This is it. I think now is the time to meet the person in question himself. Let us bring in Mr. Toshinori.
Shinako exits. A moment of anticipation.			
043	Shinako	さあ、俊徳さん、ここへおいでなさい。	Alright, Mr. Toshinori, please come here.
Leading Toshinori by the hand, Shinako enters. He wears a well-tailored suit, and a pair of dark glasses, and uses a stick.			
044	Mr. and Mrs. Takayasu	俊儀！	Toshinori!
With that, they try to embrace him.			
045	Shinako	さあここへお座りなさい。	Now, please sit here.
With that, she leads Toshinori to a chair next to hers.			

046	Shinako	あなたの右にいらっしゃるお二人が実の御両親ですよ。	The two persons who are on your right are your real parents.
Toshinori remains indifferent.			
047	Mrs. Takayasu *(while crying)*	まあ、こんなに大きくなって！お母親が見えないのね。可哀想に！可哀想に！あなた、あんまり感動が大きいので、あの子は呆然としているんですわ。てにさわってごらん。顔にさわってごらん。そうしたら生みの母親とわかるから。	Indeed, you have grown up! You can't see Mother, can you? Poor kid! Poor kid! *[(to Mr. Takayasu)]* Dear, that child is moved so deeply that is speechless. *[(to Toshinori)]* Touch my hand and see. Touch my face and see. Then you will know the mother who gave birth to you.
With that, she draws near Toshinori and tries to take his hand. Toshinori cruelly brushes her hand away. Mrs. Takayasu hopelessly goes back to her seat and cries.			
048	Mr. Takayasu	泣くのはおよし。こりゃあ、あちら様がよほど悪い先入主を吹き込んでおられるのだ。じっくり時を稼いで、心の融けるのを待つまでだよ。	Stop crying. Look at me, these people have inspired very bad preconceptions [about us into him]. We must be thoroughly patient and wait for his heart to melt.
049	Mrs. Kawashima	勝手に何とでも御想像あそばせ。ねえ、あなた、やっぱり私どもの思ったとおりでしたわね。	Imagine whatever you please. [*(to Mr. Kawashima)*] In the end, it was as we thought, dear, wasn't it?
050	Mr. Kawashima	うむ。まあ、そういうところだ。	Uh-huh. Well, seems that way.
051	Shinako	俊徳さん、どうしました? お母さんが泣いていらっしゃいますよ。	Mr. Toshinori, what happened? Your mother is crying.
052	Toshinori	泣いたからどうしたんです。そんなものは僕に見えやしません。	So what that she cries? I can not see such things.
053	Shinako	でもあのお声はきこえるわね。	But you can certainly hear that sound.
054	Toshinori	なつかしい声ですね。	It's a missed sound, isn't it?
055	Mr. Takayasu	俊儀！わかって来たんだな!	Toshinori! You remembered!
056	Toshinori	何がわかって来たって仰言るんです。ただ僕は人間の泣き声がなつかしいと言ったまでですよ。あれを久	What are you talking about? What did I remember? I only meant that I missed the sound of people crying. I hadn't heard that for a long

		しくきいたことがない。 あれが人間らしい声とは言えますね。この世の終りが来るときには、人は言葉を失って、泣き叫ぶばかりなんだ。たしかに僕は一度きいたことがある。	time. You could say that it is a human-like sound, right? When the end of this world comes, people will be at a loss for words and will only cry out. I have certainly heard it once.
057	Mrs. Takayasu	だんだん思い出して来たのね、俊徳。たしかにきいたことのある声でしょう。	You're gradually remembering, Toshinori, right? This is certainly a voice you have heard.
058	Toshinori	そら又喋る。言葉で何もかも台なしにしてしまう。また人間の声が消えてしまった。．．． ひどく暑いな。まるで炉の中にいるようだ。僕のまわりに火が燃えさかっている。火が輪踊りをしている。そうでしょう、桜間さん。	Here you go, chattering again. You ruin everything away with words. The human sound disappeared again… It's terribly hot, isn't it? It's truly like I'm inside a furnace. Around me, flames are burning brightly. Flames are dancing around. Isn't it so, Miss Sakurama?
059	Shinako *(smiling faintly)*	いいえ、今は夏だからですよ。それにあなたは、そんなにきちんと紳士らしい服を召していらっしゃるから。	No, It is certainly because we are in the summer now. On top of that, it is because you are dressing like a gentleman.
060	Toshinori *(while feeling his body)*	これが世間でいわゆるネクタイというやつ、ワイシャツというやつ、背広というやつですね。言われるままに着ている着物で、どんな格好をしているのかよくわからない。 これが世間でポケットというやつ。燐寸箱からこぼれた燐寸だの、小銭だの、東換切符だの、安全ピンだの、当らなかった宝籤だの、死んだ蠅だの、消しゴムのかけらだの．．．	This is what people call a necktie, what they call a dress shirt, what they call a suit. These are the clothes I wear as I am told to, but I don't really know how I look in them. This is what people call a pocket. [In it,] there are matches spilled out of matchboxes, there are small coins, there is a train line change ticket, there are safety pins, there are losing lottery tickets, there are dead flies, there are pieces of an eraser…

		そいうものが袂糞と一緒になって、いつまでも滞っているやくざな袋ですね。それでこの全体が、背広という安全無類の制服、毎日毎日のくりかえしの生活に忠実だという証文なんですね。	It is a worthless bag that these kinds of things always get mixed up with lint in it. That is how this whole thing, this unparalleled uniform of safety called suit, is a contract that shows faithfulness to the cycle of everyday life, isn't it?
061	Mrs. Takayasu	すっかりひねくれて育ってしまった！あの物の言いよはどうでしょう。	He's grown up all twisted! Just look at how he talks.
062	Toshinori	しかしね、桜間さん、僕にはそんな見かけはどうでもいいですよ。僕にわかるはこの首をしめる感覚と汗だらけのぴったりした下着の感覚しかないんだから。 僕には絹の首枷と、木綿の狭窄衣がはめれている。そうでしょう？僕は裸かの囚人ですね。	However, Miss Sakurama, I don't care about that kind of appearance. All I know is the feeling of this neck being squeezed and the feeling of this sweat-soaked tight underwear. I put on silk shackles around my neck and cotton restraining clothes. Isn't it right? I am a naked prisoner.
063	Mrs. Kawashima	そうですとも。あなたは裸かの囚人ですよ。首枷をはめられている。木綿の囚人服を着せられている。	Of course, it is. You are for sure a naked prisoner. You are forced to wear shackles around your neck. You are forced to wear restraining prison clothes.
064	Toshinori	そうだ。お母さんはいつもわかりがいい。	That's right. Mom always understands well.
065	Mrs. Takayasu	あなた。これが辛抱できるでしょうか。あの子はまだ一度も私のことを母と呼んではくれないんです。	[*(to her husband)*] Oh dear, how can I bear this? This child hasn't called me mom even once.
066	Toshinori	母親と呼ばれたかったら、僕に同意しなくちゃいけません。僕は裸かの囚人ですね、首枷をはめられた。	If you want to be called a mother, you must agree with me. I am a naked prisoner, right? I have shackles around my neck, right?

067	Mrs. Takayasu	何を言うの。あなたの着ているのは立派な背広よ。	What are you talking about? What you're wearing is a handsome suit.
068	Toshinori	ほら、まるで資格がありはしない。お父さん、僕は裸かの囚人ですね。	See, you really don't deserve it. Dad, I am a naked prisoner, right?
069	Mr. Kawashima	そうだとも、お前は裸かの囚人だよ。	That's certainly right, you certainly are a naked prisoner.
070	Toshinori	高安のお父さん!	Takayasu daddy!
071	Mr. Takayasu *(hesitates a little)*	そうだ。お前は裸かの囚人だ。	That's right. You are a naked prisoner.
072	Mrs. Takayasu *(immediately follows suit)*	裸かの囚人ですよ! 裸かの囚人! たしかにそうです。	You are a naked prisoner for sure! A naked prisoner! It certainly is so.
073	Toshinori *(Laughs until tears come out of his eyes)*	ははは、これでやっと二組の両親が揃ったわけだ。	Hahaha, now I have a full set of two pairs of parents.
Awkward silence.			
074	Shinako	ではここらで本題に入ることにいたしましょう。まず川島さん御夫妻から．．．	Then let's get down to the main issue. First, Mr. and Mrs. Kawashima…
075	Toshinori	桜間さん、あなたは何だって喋るんです。何だって言葉なんか喋るんです。黙っているか、泣いているか、どちらかになさい。 あなたのそんなきれいな声が、言葉なんか喋ったら台なしだ。	Miss Sakurama! Why do you speak? Why do you speak words? Either be silent or cry. Words will ruin that beautiful voice of yours.
076	Shinako	でも．．．	But…
077	Toshinori	でもですって? 僕にそんな言訳はききませんよ。何が僕を納得させると思っているんです。言葉ですか? そんなものは霧か靄みたいなもの。目に見える何かですか? 僕は盲らですよ。手に触れる何かですか? 手に触れるもの	"But," you say? I won't listen to such excuses. What do you think will convince me? Words? They're like fog or mist. Something visible? I'm blind. Something you can touch with your hands? When it comes to touching with hands, I can only feel bumps. Human face is nothing but bumps.

		と言ったら凸凹だけだ。人間の顔、これもただの凸凹だ。	
078	Mrs. Kawashima *(with habitual flattery)*	本当にそう! ただの凸凹ですよね、人間の顔は。	It really is! It's nothing but bumps, this human face.
079	Toshinori	僕の中心から光りが四方に放射している。 それが見えますか?	light shines in all directions from the center of my body. Is it visible?
080	Mrs. Kawashima	見えますとも。	Of course, it's visible.
081	Mrs. Takayasu *(quickly)*	見えますとも。	Of course, it's visible.
082	Toshinori	よろしい。あなた方に目がついているのはひとえにこのためです。これを見るためです。そのためでなかったら、目なんかどこかへ落して来たほうがいい。	Good. This is the sole reason that you have eyes. To see this. If it wasn't for that reason, it would be better if you tossed your eyes out somewhere.
083	Mrs. Takayasu *(to her husband, in a whisper)*	可哀想に!いつも目のことを気にしているんだわ。不憫だこと!	Poor baby! He's always thinking about eyes. What a pity!
084	Toshinori *(rising, fiercely excited)*	何をごちゃごちゃ言ってるんです! 黙りなさい!	What are you chattering about? Shut up!
As if they are all shot at once, they all become silent. Toshinori sits again.			
085	Toshinori	いいですか。あなた方の目はただこういうものを見るためについている。あなた方の目はいわば義務なんです。僕が見ろと要求したものを見るように義務づけられているんです。そのときはじめてあなた方の目は、僕の目の代用をする気高い器官になるわけです。 たとえば僕が青空の真ん中に大きな金色の象が練り歩いているのを見よ	Alright? The only reason you have eyes is to see these. Your eyes are a responsibility, so to speak. They are responsible for seeing what I request them to see. That is when your eyes begin to substitute my eyes and become noble organs. For example, suppose I want to see a huge golden elephant marching in the middle of the blue sky. In that case, you are obliged to see that immediately. A large yellow rose casts itself out of a window on the twelfth story of a building. When I open the refrigerator

		うとする。そうしたら即座にあなた方は、それを見なくてはならないんです。 ビルの十二階の窓のひとつから大きな黄色い薔薇が身を投げる。夜ふけの冷蔵庫の蓋をあけると、翼の生えた白い馬がその中にしゃがんでいる。楔形文字のタイプライター。 香炉のなかの緑濃い無人島．．． そういう奇蹟を、どんな奇蹟でも、あなた方の目は立ちどころに見なくてはならない。見えないのなら潰れてしまうがいい．．． ところで、僕の体の中心から四方へ放射している光りが見えますね。	door in the middle of the night, a white, winged horse is crouching inside. A cuneiform typewriter. A dark green, deserted island inside and incense burner… Your eyes must see such miracles, or any miracle there and then. If they don't, it would be better if you tossed them out… Incidentally, you can see a light shining in all directions from the center of my body, right?
086	Mr. Kawashima	見えるとも。	Of course, it is visible.
087	Mr. Takayasu	ああ．．．ああ．．．見えるよ、私には。	Ah… Ah… It is visible to my eyes.
088	Toshinori *(covers his face, sadly)*	ああ、僕には形というものがない。こうして体を撫でまわしてみても、顔を撫でまわしてみても、どこもただの凸凹なんだもの。これが僕の形でなんかありはしない。地球のおもてのいたるところの凸凹の、そのつづきの凸凹にすぎないんだ。	Ah, I don't have any form. Even if I try to rub my body like this, if I try to rub my face, everywhere is just bumps. This is not my form. All the bumps on this earth are nothing but a continuation of these bumps.
089	Mrs. Takayasu	俊徳!	Toshinori!
090	Toshinori	でも僕には形はないけど、僕は光りなんだ。透明体の中の光りなんだ。	However, I don't have a form, but I'm light. I'm a light in the middle of a transparent body.

091	Mr. Kawashima	そうだとも、お前は光りだ。	That's right, you're light.
092	Toshinori *(opening his coat)*	よくごらん、この光りが僕の 魂 だよ。	Look well! This light is my soul.
093	Mrs. Takayasu	お前の 魂 だって?	Did you say your soul?
094	Toshinori	あなた方とちがって、僕の 魂 は、まっ 裸 でこの世を歩き廻っているんだよ。四方に放射している光りが見えるでしょう。この光りは人の 体 も灼くけれど、僕の 心 にもたえず火傷をつけるんです。 ああ、こんな風に 裸 で生きているのは実に骨が折れますよ。実に骨が折れる。僕はあなた方の一億倍も 裸 なんだから. . . ねえ、桜間さん、僕はひょっとすると、もう星になってるのかもしれないんです。	My soul is different than yours, it walks around this world fully naked. You see this light that is shining in all directions, right? This light burns people's bodies, but it also leaves scalds on my spirit relentlessly. Ah, living naked like this really breaks your bones. It really breaks your bones. Since I am a million times more naked than all of you… Hey, Miss Sakurama, maybe I am already turning into a star.
095	Kawashimas and Takayasus	星ですとも、お前は。	You certainly are a star.
096	Toshinori	そう。何十光年も先の遠い星。そうでなければ、自分の光りの 源 がそんなに遠いところになければ、どうして僕はおちおちここに住みついていることができるだろう。だってこの世はもう終わっているんだもの。	Yes. A star that is tens of lightyears away. If it isn't so, if my light source is not so far away, how can I settle here peacefully? After all this world has already ended.
097	Mrs. Takayasu	何ですって?	What are you talking about?
098	Toshinori	この世はもう終わっているんだから。わかりますか。あなたが幽霊でなければ、この世界が幽霊なんだ。この世界が幽霊でなければ、（ト	Because this world has already ended. Do you understand? If you are not ghosts, then this world is a ghost. If this world is not a ghost, *(points directly at*

		高安夫人をキッと指さして）あなたが幽霊なんだ。	*Mrs. Takayasu)* then you are a ghost.
99	Mrs. Takayasu *(She starts falling, and Mr. Takayasu grabs her)*	ああ！あの子はとうとう気がちがった。	Ah! This child has gone mad.
100	Mr. Takayasu	しっかりおし。お前まで気がふれたらおしまいだ。	Get a hold of yourself. If you lose your mind too, it's all lost.
101	Mr. Kawashima	だから狂人だと申上げたでしょう。でもこれでなかなか気のきいたことも言いますよ。われわれは親子というより、彼のいい友人になったのです。[8]	Didn't I say that he is a lunatic? But he sometimes says things that make sense. Rather than parents and child, we have mostly become his best friends.
102	Mrs. Kawashima	どのみちあなた方には手に負えないことはわかっていました。	At any rate, we knew that you could not handle him.
103	Toshinori	煙草をください。あんまり熱弁をふるったので、口の中に苔が生えちゃった。	Give me a cigarette please. I talked so passionately that my mouth lathered.
104	Mr. Kawashima *(approaches him and opens a cigarette box)*	さあ、どれでもおとり。	Here, take whichever you want.
105	Toshinori	いつもながら僕のために、いろんな煙草をそろえて下さるんですね。桜間さん、見ていてごらん、僕は触っただけでわかるんだ。 （一本をつまんで）これ？こいつはキャメルですね。	As always you have prepared different cigarettes for me. Miss Sakurama, Look at this! I can tell them apart just by touching them. *(Holds one between his fingers)* This one? It's a Camel, right?
106	Mr. Kawashima	そう。	That's right.

[8] The humble and honorific style of speaking between the parents is back again from this point on.

107	Toshinori	こいつは．．．ネイヴィー・カットだな。これをいただこう。	This one… It's a Navy Cut. I take this one, please.
Mr. Kawashima lights the cigarette with a lighter.			
108	Mr. Takayasu (to his wife)	ごらん。ああなると立派な常人だよ。金持の坊ちゃん然とした態度をしている。	Look! When he is like that he is like a fine normal person. He acts like a rich person's son.
109	Mr. Takayasu *(to Toshinori)*	イギリス煙草が好きなんだね。	You like English cigarettes, huh?
110	Toshinori	ええ。	Yeah.
111	Mr. Takayasu	今度そいつを買って来てあげよう。	Next time I will buy some of those next time.
112	Toshinori	ええ。ありがとう。煙草を吹かしているとね、吹かしているあいだは煙のための時間だからね。	Okay. Thank you. If I'm puffing on a cigarette, the time I'm puffing is the time dedicated to smoking.
113	Mr. Kawashima	平然と享け入れられるというわけだ。	So you can take it in peacefully.
114	Toshinori	そうです。僕は地下鉄に乗ったり、デパートで買物をしたりするのも平気だ。他人の日常生活をとやかく言うには当らない。ただ不幸なことに、目あきには自分の日常生活の絵がまざまざと見え、僕には倖せにもそれが見えないだけ。見えないほうがましですね。それは怖ろしい顔をしているに決っているから．．．僕は平気だ、庭の草花に水をやったり、芝刈り機を動かしたりすることも。怖ろしいことを見ずにやれる！だって、もう終わってしまった世界に花が咲きだすのは怖ろしいことじ	That's right. I ride the subway and go grocery shopping at the department store peacefully. I can't say anything about other people's daily life. The only unfortunate thing is, with their eyes open they can see the image of their daily lives clearly, but fortunately I can't see that. That's the only difference. It's better not to see, right? I can say from their frightened faces… I am peaceful, even while I water the flowers in the garden or use the lawnmower. I can do it without seeing anything frightening. Well, isn't it frightening if a flower flourishes in a world that has already ended? If you water the soil of a world that has already ended?

		ゃないか。もう終わってしまった 世界の土に水を灌ぐのは！	
115	Mrs. Kawashima	そうですとも。怖ろしいことだわ。	Of course, it is. It is a frightening thing.
116	Mr. Kawashima	われわれはみんな恐怖のなかに生きているんだよ。	We are all living in terror.
117	Toshinori	ただあなた方はその恐怖を意識していない。屍のように生きている。	But none of you feel this terror. You live like corpses.
118	Mr. Kawashima	そうだ。われわれは屍だよ。	That is right. We are corpses, for sure.
119	Mrs. Kawashima	私だって屍ですとも。	Even I am a corpse, of course.
120	Mrs. Takayasu	屍なんて縁起でもない！	Corpses are bad omens.
121	Mr. Takayasu	まあまあ、お前にはわからんのだ。	Now, now! You don't get it.
122	Toshinori	その上あなた方は卑怯者だ。虫けらだ。	On top of that, you are cowards. A bunch of insects.
123	Mrs. Kawashima	卑怯者だわ。	We are cowards.
124	Mr. Kawashima	虫けらだよ。	We are insects.
125	Mrs. Takayasu	ああやって子供をスポイルしてしまうんですわ。親は虫けらなんかじゃありません。	That's how you spoil a child. Parents aren't insects or anything like that.
126	Mr. Takayasu	お前も俊徳を呼び戻したかったら、虫けらになる他はないんだよ。	If you want to take Toshinori back, too, you have no other way but to turn into an insect.
127	Mrs. Takayasu *(extraordinarily determined)*	私もそれなら虫けらですよ。その代わりお母さんと呼んで頂戴。	Then I'm an insect, too. Instead, I beg you, call me mother.
128	Toshinori *(emotionless)*	お母さん．．．虫けら．．．	Mother… Insect…
129	Mrs. Takayasu	やっとお母さんと呼んでくれましたよ！	Finally, he kindly called me mother!
130	Mr. Takayasu	そのあとに「虫けら」がちゃんとついてた。	Right after that was an "insect"!

131	Toshinori	あなた方はみんな莫迦で間抜けだ！	You are all stupid morons.
A moment of hesitation.			
132	Kawashimas and Takayasus	私たちはみんな莫迦で間抜けです。	We are all stupid morons.
Deadly silence. The big window at the back gradually catches the colors of the sunset. Toshinori is smoking his cigarette as if thoroughly enjoying it.			
133	Shinako	私の力の至らないせいもございますけれども、いつまでこうしていても埒が明きませんわ。 川島高安両御夫妻が、どちらも立派にご両親の資格をお持ちのことは、これでよくわかりました。 どちらも厚い深い親心を持っておいでなので、私まで目頭が熱くなってまいります。でも今のところは残念ながら、勝負は五分五分でございますね。 俊徳さんを央にした秤は、どちらへも傾きそうにございません。 調停委員として申上げますが、ここはひとつ両御夫妻に別室お引取りいただいて、私が俊徳さんと膝をまじえて、ゆっくりお話したほうがいいように思いますの。皆さん、ご意見はいかがでございましょうか。	It is partly my fault by my lack of power, but if we continue like this we will make no progress. I can clearly see that both Kawashimas and Takayasus have impressive parenting capabilities. The deep, warm parenting love that you possess has brought tears to my eyes. But unfortunately, the contest is a draw right now. It seems like the scale on the center of which I put Mr. Toshinori, is not in inclining toward any direction. As the arbitrator, I believe it is best that both parties retire to another room and let me have a long and heart-to-heart conversation. What do you think?
Both families nod.			
134	Shinako	それではどうぞそういうことに．．．	Then that is what we do…
Both families go to another room. Shinako accompanies them to the door. Mrs. Kawashima comes back on the scene and takes Shinko to the corner.			
135	Mrs. Kawashima	御承知とは存じますが、あの子は危険ですよ。大へんに危険です。あ	I believe you already know, but that child is dangerous. Very dangerous. You must

		の子の持っている毒にお気をつけにならなくちゃいけませんよ。	be careful with the poison that child possesses.
136	Shinako	それはどういう？	How do you mean?
137	Mrs. Kawashima *(smiling sweetly)*	どうって……それは申上げられません。私の経験から申上げただけですよ。	How… That I cannot tell. I am just saying based on my experience.
Mrs. Kawashima leaves the scene. Shinako walks toward the window.			
138	Toshinori	みんな行きましたね。	They're all gone, aren't they?
139	Shinako	ええ。	Yes.
140	Toshinori *(with a sneer)*	へへうまく追い払ってやった。	Hee, hee, I drove them all away cleverly.
141	Shinako	情深い御両親のことをそんなに仰言るものじゃありませんわ。どちらも本当に、心の底から、あなたを愛していらっしゃるんですもの。	You should not talk about your passionate parents like that. Because they each love you truly from the bottom of their hearts.
142	Toshinori	養い親たちは、あれはもう奴隷ですよ。生みの親たちは、救いがたい莫迦だ。	The parents who raised me are already my slaves. The parents who gave birth to me are helpless morons.
143	Shinako	そんなふうに仰言っちゃいけませんたら。	I said you can't talk like that.
144	Toshinori	みんな僕をどうしようというんだろう。僕には形なんか何もないのに。	Everyone is asking what to do with me. Even though I have no form.
145	Shinako	形が大切なんですよ。だってあなたの形はあなたのものじゃなくて、世間のものですもの。	Form is important, for sure. After all your form does not belong to you, but to people.
146	Toshinori	あなたもそれじゃ僕の形を問題になさるわけですね。	Then you're concerned with my form, too, right?
147	Shinako	ええ、そりゃあ。目が見える以上、それで判断するほかはありません。	Yes, that's right. Since my eyes see, I have no other way but to make judgments that way.

148	Toshinori	僕にはあなたの形が見えない。 不公平だな。川島の母は、あなたがきれいな方だって言ってましたよ。	I can't see your form. That's not fair. My Kawashima mom was saying that you are beautiful.
149	Shinako	とんでもない。それに私はもうおばあさんですもの。	Far from it! After all, I am an old woman already.
150	Toshinori *(stands up very angrily)*	年齢が何だって言うんです！年齢が！年齢というものはね、一筋の暗闇の道なんです。来し方も見えず、行末も見えない。 だからそこには距離もないし、止っているも歩いているも同じこと、進むのも退くのも同じこと、そこでは目あきも盲らになり、生きている人間も亡者になり、僕同様杖をたよりに、さぐり足でさまよっているにすぎないんです。 赤ん坊も老人も青年も、つまりは同じ場所で、じっと身を寄せ合っているのにすぎない。夜の朽木の上にひっそりと群れ集っている虫のように。	What is this age you're talking about? Age! This age that you're talking about is a dark path. You can neither see its beginning nor its end. That is why there is no difference in there. Stopping is the same as walking, Going forward is the same as going backward. There, seeing people turn blind, living people turn dead. Everybody depends on a cane like me, and only wander about, groping their way with their feet. In other words, the infant, the old, and the young can't do anything but be all huddled together in the same spot. Like insects gathered around on a decayed tree[9] at night.
151	Shinako	そう言っていただくと勇気が出ますね。世間では年齢でしか人を見ないんです、殊に女は。	Your words give me courage. In the society people are only seen by their age, especially women.
152	Toshinori	明いている目は形だけしか見ないからですよ。	Because seeing eyes can't see anything but from.

[9] A metaphor for meaningless life

153	Shinako *(staring at the window)*	まあ、すごい夕焼(ゆうやけ)！	Wow! What an amazing sunset!
154	Toshinori	日(ひ)が沈(しず)むんですね。	The sun is setting, isn't it?
155	Shinako	入日(いりひ)の影(かげ)が窓(まど)いちめんに舞(まい)を舞(ま)っているようですわ。	It's like the image of the setting sun is dancing on the face of the window.
156	Toshinori	あなたの今見(いまみ)ているその窓(まど)は、東(ひがし)へ向(む)いているんですね。日(ひ)は今(いま)東(ひがし)へ沈(しず)んでゆくところでしょう。	The window that you're seeing right now faces east, doesn't it? Isn't the sun about to set in the east right now?
157	Shinako	何(なに)を仰言(しゃべ)るの。日(ひ)は西(にし)へ沈(しず)むんだわ。窓(まど)の下(した)の裏門(うらもん)は丁度西向(ちょうどにしむ)きで、ひろい道(みち)を隔(へだ)てて、その向(むか)うの公園(こうえん)の森(もり)の梢(こずえ)に日(ひ)が沈(しず)むのが見(み)えるんですわ。 公園のおかげで空(そら)は広(ひろ)くて、こんなにたっぷりした夕映(ゆうば)えが見渡(みわた)せるのよ。	What are you talking about? The sun is setting in the west. The back gate beneath this window faces directly west and is in the middle of a wide road. From the treetops of the park across it, I can see the sun setting. Thanks to the park, the sky is open, and it gives me the view of such a full sunset glow.
158	Toshinori	だから東(ひがし)へ沈(しず)んでいるわけだ。あなたは今西(いまにし)の門(もん)と言(い)いましたね。そこの古(ふる)ぼけた西(にし)の門(もん)は、丁度地獄(ちょうどじごく)の東(ひがし)の門(もん)へ向(むか)っているんです。 その見(み)えない東(ひがし)の門(もん)は、入日(いりひ)の彼方(かなた)から、こちらへ向(むか)って、あんぐりと暗(くら)い口(くち)をあけ、掃(は)き清(きよ)めた門前(とまえ)の黒(くろ)い砂(すな)が、いつでも新(あたら)しい客人(きゃくじん)の蹠(あしのうら)で、踏(ふ)まれるのを待(ま)っているんです。	That is why it's setting in the east. You just said the west gate, right? That rotten west gate directly faces the east gate of hell. That invisible east gate faces this way from beyond the sunset, with its dark mouth wide open. The black sand before that gate, swept and neatly arranged, is always waiting for the footprint of new guests.
159	Shinako	あなたのからかい方(かた)は人(ひと)を怖(こわ)がらせるのね。あ、今公園(いまこうえん)の外燈(がいとう)がひとつのこらず灯(ひ)をつけましたわ。	Your way of teasing frightens people. Oh, right now all the lights outside the park have been turned on.

		空は燃えさかる炉のようで、森の緑はひときわ明るいのに、一列のあかりが磨かれない青い宝石みたいに、おずおずと光っていますわ。走っている自動車の窓まで夕日を映して真赤なのに。	Even with the sky burning like a furnace and the green of the trees being noticeably bright, the line of lamps looks like unpolished blue gemstones, shining faintly. Even the moving cars' windows have turned bright red, reflecting the sunset.
160	Toshinori *(facing the window for the first time)*	僕にも見えますよ。	I can see, too.
161	Shinako	え？あなた．．．見えるの？	What? You… can see?
161	Toshinori	見えるんですよ、あの真赤な空が。	Of course, I can see that bright red sky.
162	Shinako	あなた！見えるんですか？どうして今まで．．．	Toshinori! Can you see? Why haven't you so far…
163	Toshinori	これだけが見えるんです。はっきりと、事こまかに。	That is all I can see. Clearly and in detail.
164	Shinako	まあ．．．	Oh dear…
165	Toshinori	あなたは入日だと思っているんでしょう。夕映えだと思っているんでしょう。ちがいますよ。あれはね、この世のおわりの景色なんです。	You think that's the sunset, right? You think it's the sunset glow, right? That's wrong. That… That is the landscape of this world's end.
(Stands up and puts his hand on Shinako's shoulder)			
166	Toshinori	いいですか。あれは夕日じゃありません！	Do you understand? That is not the sunset!
Shinako withdraws herself from his reach fearfully and looks up at Toshoinori's face. Toshinori stands beside the window and talks facing the audience. Eventually, Shinako turns her back to the audience and stares at the window. Gradually, the deep red color outside the window mysteriously intensifies.			
167	Toshinori	僕はたしかにこの世のおわりを見た。五つのとき、戦争の最後の年、僕の目を炎で灼いたその最後の炎までも見た。それ以来、いつも僕	I have certainly seen this world's end. When I was five years old, in the last year of the war, a flame burned my eyes and I even saw that last flame. From then on, in front of my eyes, the flames of this

		の目の前には、この世のおわりの焔が燃えさかっているんです。 何度か僕もあなたのように、それを静かな入日の景色だと思おうとした。でもだめなんだ。僕の見たものはたしかにこの世界が火に包まれている姿なんだから。	world's end is always burning. Just like you, I have thought a few times that I'm seeing the quiet scene of a sunset. But there is no point in that. Because what I saw was certainly the form of this world being embraced in flames.
168	Toshinori	ごらん、空から百千の火が降って来る。家という家が燃え上る。ビルの窓という窓が焔を吹き出す。僕にはっきり見えるんだ。空は火の粉でいっぱい。 低い雲は毒々しい葡萄いろに染められて、その雲がまた真赤に映えている川に映るんだ。 大きな鉄橋の影絵の鮮やかさ。大きな樹が火に包まれて、梢もすっかり火の粉にまぶされ、風に身をゆすっている悲壮なすがた。小さな樹も、小笹のしげみも、みんな火の紋章をつけていた。 どんな片隅にも火の紋章と火の緑飾りが活潑に動いていた。世界はばかに静かだった。静かだったけれど、お寺の鐘のうちらのように、一	Look! Countless flames are raining down from the sky. Every house is burning. Every window of every house is spouting out flames. I can see clearly. The sky full of fire sparks. The low-hanging clouds have turned into the color of poisonous grapes, the same clouds are mirrored in the river that is already burning bright red. The brightness of the silhouette of a huge steel trestle. A grim form, a big tree embraced in flames, the treetop completely covered in sparks, wind shaking its trunk. Small trees and bamboo grass thickets were all wearing emblems of fire.[10] In every corner, the emblems of fire and border decorations of fire were moving briskly. The world was absurdly quiet. Even though it was quiet, just like Buddhist temples' bell strikes, one bellow echoed, and then echoed back from every direction. A sound like a strange wind's howl, a sound like

[10] The change in the verb tense is in original text.

		つの唸りが反響して、四方から谺を返した。 へんな風の唸りのような声、みんなでいっせいにお経を読んでいるような声、あれは何だと思う？　何だと思う？ 桜間さん、あれは言葉じゃない、歌でもない、あれが人間の阿鼻叫喚という奴なんだ。	everybody is reciting a sutra all at once, what do you think that is? What do you think that is? Miss Sakurama, that is not talking, that is not singing, it is what is called the agonized cry of humanity.
169	Toshinori	僕はあんななつかしい声をきいたことがない。あんな真率な声をきいたことがない。この世のおわりの時にしか、人間はあんな正直な声をきかせないのだ。	I haven't heard any voice that nostalgic. I haven't heard any voice that sincere. Because humans never raise such honest voices except at the end of this world.
170	Toshinori	見える？　見えるだろう？　あちこちで人間が燃えているのが。落ちた棟木の下、石材の下、とじこめられた部屋の中、いたるところで人間が燃えているのだ。 そこかしこに真裸の薔薇いろの屍がころがっている。まるで恥かしさのあまり死んだように薔薇いろの、罌粟いろの、それから後悔のうように真黒の、色さまざまの裸の屍．．．そうだ。	Can you see? You can see, right? people are burning here and there. Under fallen ridge beams, under building blocks, inside blocked off rooms, everywhere you go people are burning. Everywhere rose-colored corpses are rolling. As if died of embarrassment, Rose-colored corpses, poppy-colored corpses, and as if [died] of regret pitch black corpses, there are naked corpses of every color… That's right.
171	Toshinori	川も人間でいっぱいだった。川が見える。川のおもてはもう何も映さな	The river was full of people, too. I can see the river. Nothing of the river's surface can be seen anymore.

		くなり、ぎっしり詰って浮んだ人間が、少しずつ海のほうへ動いていた。葡萄いろの雲が垂れ込めている海のほうへ。	Closely packed and floating people are moving slowly toward the sea. Toward the sea above which purple clouds hang.
172	Toshinori	どこにも次々と火が迫り上っていた。火が迫り上っているじゃないか。見えないの？桜間さん、あれが見えない？	Gradually, one by one every place was beginning to burn in flames. Aren't the flames gradually rising? Can't you see? Miss Sakurama, can't you see?
Suddenly runs toward the middle of the room.			
173	Toshinori	どこもかしこも火だ。東のほうも、西のほうも、南も北も。火の壁は静かに遠くのほうにそそり立っている。その中から小さな火が来る。やさしい髪をふり立てて、僕のほうへまっしぐらに飛んでくる。僕のまわりをからかうようにぐるぐるとまわる。 それから僕の目の前にとまって、僕の目をのぞき込むような様子をしている。もうだめだ。火が！僕の目の中へ飛び込んだ．．．	Flames are everywhere. From east, from west, and north and south. A wall of flames is quietly soaring up closer. From the middle of that, a small flame comes. Swings up its kind hair and flies toward me at full speed. Runs in circles around me as if mocking me. Then stops in front of my eyes, it looks like it is staring right into my eyes. This is it. The flame! It jumped in the middle of my eyes…
With that, he covers his eyes with both hands and collapses. *Shinako looks back but stays dazed for a moment. Then, she quickly runs over to him, kneels, and grabs hold of him. At that moment, the sunset outside the window begins to fade away.*			
174	Shinako	しっかりしてよ、俊徳さん、しっかりして！	Get hold of yourself, Mr. Toshinori. Get hold of yourself!
175	Toshinori *(finally regaining consciousness)*	この世のおわりを見たね。ね、見ただろう、桜間さん。	You saw the end of this world, right? Right? You sure saw it, Miss Sakurama.
Long pause.			

176	Shinako *(after some hesitation, determined)*	いいえ、見ないわ。	No, I don't see it.
177	Toshinori	うそだ。見たのを隠しているんだ。	That's a lie. You're denying what you saw.
178	Shinako *(gently)*	いいえ、本当に見ないわ。見たのは夕映えだけ。	No, I really can't see it. The only thing I saw was the sunset.
179	Toshinori	うそだ。	It's a lie.
180	Shinako	私は嘘は言えません。	I can't lie.
181	Toshinori *(violently brushing her aside)*	あっちへ行け！僕はそんな女はきらいだ。嘘ばかりついている。早くあっちへ行け！	Get away from me! I hate women like this. You only lie. Get away from me now!
182	Shinako *(stands up quietly)*	私はここにいますよ。	I am staying here.
183	Toshinori	あっちへ行けと言ったろう。けがらわしい！	I said get away from me. You're disgusting!
184	Shinako	いいえ。	No.
185	Toshinori	けがらわしいと言ったのがきこえないのか。	Can't you hear I called you disgusting?
186	Shinako	でも私はここにいますよ。	But I'm still staying here.
187	Toshinori	なぜ。	Why?
188	Shinako	．．．あなたが、少し、好きになったから。	…Because I come to like you a little bit.
189	Toshinori *(after a long pause)*	君は僕から奪おうとしているんだね。この世のおわりの景色を。	You're trying to snatch away the landscape of this world's end from me, aren't you?
190	Shinako	そうですわ。それが私の役目です。	That's right. That is my duty.[11]
191	Toshinori	それがなくては僕が生きて行けない。それを承知で奪おうとするんだね。	Without that, I can't live. Knowing that, you're still trying to snatch it away, aren't you?
192	Shinako	ええ。	Yes.

[11] Or function.

193	Toshinori	死んでもいいんだね、僕が。	It's ok if I die, isn't it?
194	Shinako *(smiling)*	あなたはもう死んでいたんです。	You were already dead.
195	Toshinori	君はいやな女だ。本当にいやな女だ。	You're an unpleasant woman. You're a really unpleasant woman.
196	Shinako	それでも私はここにいますよ。私を行かせるには、．．．そう、教えてあげるわ。何かつまらない、この世のおわりや焔の海とは何の関係もない、ちっぽけな頼み事をして下さればいいんだわ。	Yet, I am staying here. If you want me to leave… Yes, ask something of me. Something boring, something that has nothing to do with this world's end or the sea of fire, it's ok if you ask something tiny of me.
197	Toshinori	君は行きたいの？	Do you want to leave?
198	Shinako	いいえ、ずっとあなたのそばにいたいわ。	No, I want to stay near you forever.
199	Toshinori	何かつまらない用事をたのめばいいんだね。	So, it's ok if I ask something boring of you?
200	Shinako	ええ。	Yes.
201	Toshinori	手を貸して。	Give me your hand.
202	Shinako *(Gives him her hand)*	こう？	Like this?
203	Toshinori	やわらかい手をしているんだね。もっと苦労している人かと思った。	Such soft hands you have. I thought you would have experienced more hardship.
204	Shinako	そう、私は苦労を知らないわ。あなたと比べたら。	That's right, I don't know any hardship. Compared to you.
205	Toshinori *(with an arrogant laughter)*	頼めばいいんだね、召使に言うように。	So, it's ok if I ask something of you, like of a servant, right?
206	Shinako	お姉さんに言うように、と仰言い。	Rather like of an older sister.
207	Toshinori	ふふ、僕、腹が空いちゃった。	Hee, hee. I'm hungry.
208	Shinako	そうね、もうそんな時間だわ。	Oh yes, it's almost time to eat.
209	Toshinori	何か食べるものをくれないかな。	Don't you give me something to eat?

210	Shinako	店屋物(てんやもの)しかなくってよ、それでよければ。	We only have delivered food if that's ok.
211	Toshinori	何(なん)でもいいや。すぐ出来(でき)るものを。	I'm ok with anything. As long as it gets ready fast.
212	Shinako	いいわ、委(まか)せておおきなさい。	Alright, leave it to me.
Shinako holds Toshinori's hand and helps him sit on his chair. The room is already dark.			
213	Shinako	ここで大人(おとな)しく待(ま)っているのよ。	Wait here like a grown up.
214	Toshinori	うん。	Ok.
Shinako begins to leave the stage from a door other than the one that the parents exited from and presses the light switch beside it. The room suddenly brightens up.			
215	Shinako	待(ま)っていてね。すぐかえるわ。	Wait here, ok? I'll be back soon.
216	Toshinori	うん。	Ok.
Shinako starts to leave, smiling.			
216	Toshinori	ねえ．．．	Say…
217	Shinako	え？	Yes?
218	Toshinori	僕(ぼく)ってね、．．．どうしてだか、誰(だれ)からも愛(あい)されるんだよ。	I… I don't know why, but everybody loves me.
Shinako exits, smiling. In the brightly lit room, Toshinori remains, all alone.			