Literature, Discourse, and Hegemony

National Narratives of Japan in the U.S. and Spain

Jordi Serrano Muñoz

PHD THESIS UPF / 2019

THESIS SUPERVISORS:

Dr. Antonio Monegal Brancós

Dr. Pau Pitarch Fernández (Waseda University)

Departament d'Humanitats

Acknowledgements

In the fascinating journey that has been undertaking and completing this project, I have had the privilege of receiving the help and support of many different people. First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to doctor Antonio Monegal for agreeing to become my main thesis supervisor on behalf of the Pompeu Fabra University. His open-mindedness and clear formal and structural guidance provided me with the tools to shape this thesis to the best of my capabilities. In the same spirit, I would like to thank doctor Pau Pitarch for accepting the role of co-director. His admirable command of the historical context of Japan and Japanese literature has been of great assistance in fine-tuning my assessment of the same. Dr. Monsterrat Crespín, Dr. Carles Prado-Fonts, Dr. Manel Ollé, and Dr. Raquel Bouso have also provided me with valuable counseling and advice at different stages of this mission. I would like to thank and praise the estimable task of librarians and other researchers who keep working on systematically arranging and making available our long and rich history of documentary knowledge. Particularly, I thank those individuals and institutions in charge of improving the growing archive of digitalized texts from otherwise inaccessible sources. You fight the good battle against the darkness of oblivion.

In my list of acknowledgments, I want to include my appreciation to all those places in which I have been able to work, think, and discuss this project. Their mark is present in these pages the same way that is

engraved in me. I am grateful for the life and light of the streets of Gràcia, the stone-paved streets of Leiden, the rainforests of Ecuador, the nostalgic warmth of Valencia, and all those other spaces that have allowed me the chance to work, think, discuss, and rest.

I would also like to thank my family for always backing my endeavors. I thank my friends and colleagues in Barcelona, Leiden, Quito, and elsewhere who had the patience to listen to my ideas and have cared to offer their generous feedback on them. I cherish and show gratitude for any instance in which I have been able to socialize my thoughts, from intense academic debates to casual chats over food and drinks. I particularly thank the help from my good friend Dimitris Kentrotis for his proof-reading work and his peer advice.

Finally, I would like to express my infinite gratitude to my dear and beloved partner in life and crime, Mireia. Her emotional support has been seminal in making sure I kept my heart safe and my mind clear throughout the long and arduous trek that is a doctoral thesis. I owe to her intellectual brilliance and deep-rooted commitment to the value of a good and honest work many of this thesis' achievements. She has inspired me the courage to find meaning and purpose in doubting my own ideas as a necessary step to improve them. Mireia, you are one of those people who make the world better.

Abstract

This thesis delves into the relationship between literature and power in the construction and reproduction of discourses of national representation, also called national narratives. This project explores the theoretical and methodological mechanisms of this relationship throughout the particular case study of analyzing how national narratives of Japan circulate from the commentary of its literature in translation in the United States and Spain. The focus is set on the reception of literary works by four authors: Kawabata Yasunari, Mishima Yukio, Ōe Kenzaburō, and Murakami Haruki, in the time span between 1945 and 2018. This body of texts is interpreted by searching for underlying themes that travel across critical texts and that shape a particular idea of Japan. Once this literature-based national narrative is extracted and examined, it is framed against hegemonic discourses of representation of Japan in the West to see the spaces of discursive symbiosis between culture and hegemony.

Resumen

Esta tesis explora la relación entre literatura y poder en la construcción y reproducción de discursos de representación nacional, también conocidos como narrativas nacionales. Los mecanismos de esta relación se exponen a través del desarrollo de un caso en particular: la narrativa nacional de Japón que circula del comentario de su literatura

en traducción en Estados Unidos y en España. La muestra se ciñe a la recepción de cuatro autores: Kawabata Yasunari, Mishima Yukio, Ōe Kenzaburō y Murakami Haruki, en el período que va entre 1945 y 2018. El corpus de textos críticos se examina en busca de temas que en su circulación constituyan una idea particular de Japón que viaja intertextualmente. Una vez identificada esta narrativa nacional, se compara con el discurso hegemónico occidental de representación de Japón para ver los espacios de simbiosis discursiva entre cultura y hegemonía.

Statement on Style Conventions

This thesis adopts the conventional order for Japanese names: family name before given name. This principle has been incorporated and normalized in Japanese scholarship, but the Western naming convention still dominates many of the texts here quoted. I do not adopt the order for those instances in which the name appears in a cited passage unless I deem it could lead to misinterpretation.

Following the advice of the Pompeu Fabra University's style guide, I italicize words written in a language that is not English besides personal and geographical names. Exceptions include words that have already been included in a major dictionary (e.g., zaibatsu vs. *Zengakuren*).

The first time a work published in a language other than English is mentioned, I use its original name. In any subsequent instances in which that same text is cited, I use its English equivalent. Japanese titles and names are written in Latin script following the Hepburn Romanization system. I include names in hiragana, katakana, or kanji only in those instances in which doing so has a specific value in the text. Titles in English and Romanized Japanese follow different conventions of capitalization from titles in Spanish (e.g., "*Yama no Oto* [*The Sound of the Mountain*]" vs. "*El clamor de la montaña* [*The Sound of the Mountain*]").

The analyzed corpus of text includes sources in English, Spanish, and just a handful in Catalan. I translate passages from other languages into English whenever it is necessary to include them in the text as quotes. The reader can identify a translated fragment because it is followed by a Roman numeral in superscript. Each original bit is indexed using these numbers in the appendix of original references included at the end of this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .... **i**

Abstract .... **iii**

Statement on Style Conventions .... **v**

TABLE OF CONTENTS .... **vii**

TABLE OF FIGURES ix

Introduction **1**

CHAPTER 1: IT IS ALL ABOUT THE FRAMEWORK **11**

- **1.1 Theory, Methodology, and How to Do This** 11
  - **1.1.1 Theory and Methodology** 11
  - **1.1.2 Approach to the Present Project** 41
- **1.2. A Hegemonic Principle to Bind Us All** 49
  - **1.2.1 From Curiosity to Conflict (1868-1945)** 52
  - **1.2.2 The End of the War and the New Deal (1945-2018)** .. 89
  - **1.2.3 Be As I Say and Not As You Do** 109

CHAPTER 2: IN PEACE WE PROSPER (1945 - 1989) **119**

- **2.1 Historical Context** 119
- **2.2 Kawabata Yasunari** 130
  - **2.2.1 Mass-Audience-Targeted Texts** 134
  - **2.2.3 Academia-Targeted Texts** 154
- **2.3 Mishima Yukio** 170
  - **2.3.1 Mass-Audience-Targeted Texts** 175
  - **2.3.2 Academia-Targeted Texts** 209
- **2.4 A Tale of Two Japans** 222

CHAPTER 3: THE GREAT BEWITCHMENT (1989 - 2018) **237**

- **3.1 Historical Context** 237

3.2 Ōe Kenzaburō 245
3.2.1 Mass-Audience-Targeted Texts 250
3.2.2 Academia-Targeted Texts 277
3.3 Murakami Haruki 297
3.3.1 Mass-Audience-Targeted Texts 301
3.3.2 Academia-Targeted Texts 341
3.4 Reliable Ambiguity and the Familiarity of Missed Expectations 374
CHAPTER 4: READING THE OTHER **383**
4.1 A Zenithal View of the Study 383
4.2 Discursive Symbiosis 390
4.3 The Seeds of the Fruit 425
BODY OF CRITICAL TEXTS **459**
BIBLIOGRAPHY **493**
APPENDIX OF ORIGINAL REFERENCES **503**

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Number of Newspaper Articles on Kawabata per Year and per Country 140
Figure 2: Number of Newspaper Articles on Mishima per Year and per Country 179
Figure 3: Number of Newspaper Articles on Ōe per Year and per Country 254
Figure 4: Number of Newspaper Articles on Murakami per Year and per Country 308

Introduction

Every thesis has its own particular incubation period. The present work started brewing in the fall of 2012. I was attending a course called Comparative Cultural Studies as part of my senior year at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. I cherish great memories from that seminar: an inspiring professor, a small, workable group, regular and engaging discussions, and thought-provoking topics. During one of our sessions, we were invited to reflect on the concept of cultural representativeness, particularly applied to the case of contemporary Japan. When it was time to give examples, a classmate argued for the impossible attachment of the qualifier 'representative' to some of the paradoxically most popular Japanese referents, bringing forward writer Murakami Haruki to illustrate the case. Puzzled by his boldness, I asked him why he thought Murakami failed to represent contemporary Japan. He believed Murakami's use of Western pop culture distanced his literature from representing this country. I replied stressing the fact that those references considered alien to Japan are on the contrary present in the country: pasta, wine, and classical music are not unusual in the contemporary Japanese everyday life experience. The debate moved on to other issues, but I kept wondering about my classmate's reticence to consider Murakami Japanese. It appeared like Murakami's literature was producing an image of Japan in his readers that seemed to clash with at least some pre-established conceptions on this country. How was that? What did it mean?

I have always been attracted by the role of literature in the way it engages as a cultural agent with the construction and reproduction of discourse. This apperceived conflict also pokes at questions involving current ideas of nation and national identities: the recognition and ascription of these artificial definitions as a way to frame how we relate as political, social, and cultural communities. I realize this subject provides with the opportunity to build a bridge between literature and the discursively sustained idea of nation. What does it mean to frame literature within a specific discursive environment of national representation? The interpretation of literature seems determined by a seemingly inescapable semiotic framework of reference intended to describe nations. This paradigm is structured by discourses of national representation called national narratives. Reading and discussing literature engages with this framework of reference but is unclear whether the terms of this mediation support or challenge existing referential definitions. Can a discourse built from literary interpretation question the hegemonic national narrative? Or does it reinforce it? It appears necessary to analyze how the setting of referential definitions relates to a system of ideological structures of power. There is a process in which literature, discourse, and power get entwined, and this thesis is a means to explore it.

I argue that the national narrative of Japan in the West is a great case study to explore this phenomenon. There is a long-withstanding tradition of attempts to define Japan and the Japanese that are always contingent on Western political needs. Japan appears to be for the West a preferred Other. Its discursive construction is so conveniently crafted with differentiating traits that it greatly serves as well to the

distressing purpose of upholding the precarious sense of a cohesive 'Western self.' The artificiality of how Japan and the Japanese have been represented and understood by the West can be grasped and analyzed through a substantial amount of primary sources and critical studies. Japanese culture has been noticeably present in Europe and the United States since the second half of the 19th century, but Japanese literature only reached mass readership after World War II. As the anecdote involving Murakami shows, the mediation of cultural elements does not necessarily translate into an immediate backing of hegemonic definitions. National narratives derived from the mediation of cultural agents may appear to either challenge or support a hegemonic definition. This seems to point to a potentially flexible nature of the threads used to weave the representation of nations.

In order to see the extent to which a literature-based national narrative can either support or confront referential discourses of national representation, the reception of just one author would not be representative enough. I argue that it is necessary to design a study that takes into account three determining factors. First, the nature of the texts through which discourse gets reproduced. Second, the discursive space in which the national narrative circulates. And last of all, the temporal progression of literature's reception. The study of a national narrative's chronological development reveals how these discourses adapt to geopolitical and historical transformations.

I formulate the research groundwork for the present thesis based on those three principles. I explore how the literature-based national narrative of Japan in the United States and Spain relates to Western

discourses of power. This project begins with the hypothesis that there is at least one evolving national narrative formulated by publicly discussing Japanese literature. National narratives are discourses created and reproduced to sustain the image of a cohesive nation. Literature is one of the main agents in the shaping and reproduction of national narratives. Japanese literature in translation has closely contributed to the shaping of discourses that describe the Japanese nation. This thesis examines the construction of a discourse shared and reproduced intertextually that describes Japan through the commentary of its literature in translation. The final aim of this thesis is to disclose how the literature-based national narrative of Japan relates to hegemonic principles of representing this nation.

This thesis aims to provide an exploration of the nature and implications of the relationship between literature, discourse, and hegemony. This relationship is illustrated through the unraveling of the national narrative of Japan in the United States and Spain. I defend that in order to explore the way literature mediates with national narratives, one needs to look away from the literary text and focus particularly on its reception and circulation across specific discursive spaces. The objective of the present work is therefore to analyze texts that in their interpretation and commentary of Japanese literature engage with a national definition of Japan. These texts – called in this thesis 'critical texts' – are book reviews, academic monographs, popular treatises, and pieces of the same nature. I limit this case study to the representation of Japan through critical texts that circulate in the United States and Spain in the period that spans from 1945 to 2018. I draw up further the parameters of my analysis by looking

exclusively at critical texts that discuss the literature of Kawabata Yasunari, Mishima Yukio, Ōe Kenzaburō, and Murakami Haruki. The popularity in academic and commercial terms of these four writers translates to an abundant and diverse quantity of critical texts. These circumstances additionally make the point for considering examining this textual corpus exemplary of the national narrative.

I would like to emphasize that this project is concerned with the creation and reproduction of discourses built to and from a Western space of discursive circulation. This scope excludes therefore Japanese narratives of self-representation. The advent at the end of the 20th century and early 21st century of a Japanese body of discourse that devises an image of Japan as a homogeneous entity, usually bundled around what scholars call the *Nihonjinron* school of thought, deserves particular interest. It falls, however, outside the range set for the present study. This type of discourses is mentioned in this thesis only in those instances in which it mediates directly with my selected corpus of analysis.

Choosing to analyze the national narrative of Japan offers the exceptional opportunity to enrich this study of the relationship between literature, discourse, and hegemony with a test of resistance to the existence of 'the West' as a cohesive discursive space. I argue that the discursive creation and reproduction of the idea of Japan is paradigmatic in revealing how Western hegemony establishes its claim of legitimacy through the monopolization of modernity. The territorial and political subjugation of the project of colonialism requires a stable justification to the paradigm of Western authority over the colonized

Other. The imperialistically enforced post-Enlightenment worldview of considering modernity as the uncontested global civilizing force has placed the West in a discursively assumed position of leadership. Japan, however, was never a formal Western colony. Quite the contrary, Japan developed in the 19th century the sociopolitical structures of Western nation-states, and in the first half of the 20th century it launched its own imperialistic campaign. This enterprise clashed with the interests of Western powers, showing the capacity of Japan to challenge the established hegemonic system. Therefore, the West's hegemonic national narrative of Japan gets shaped in order to disable this country's claims of legitimacy in conflicts of interests with Western powers.

In this thesis, I argue that the discursive structure of Western hegemony requires modernity to be a prerogative of the West. In order to sustain this monopoly over modernity, Western construction of subaltern Others is based on designing essentialized identities exclusively constituted with pre-modern references. This blueprint of representation disassociates modernity from the Other, proposing subaltern identities that are incompatible with modern attributes. This systematized process of representing the Other prevents the subaltern to claim the authoritative legitimacy and sovereignty that the West has associated to the project of modernity. I contend the case of Japan exemplifies this model of designing alterity. Japan's relative political autonomy poses a challenge to Western hegemony, so the way Japan is represented by the West needs to suppress the possibility of contesting this authority. The Western discursive construction of Japan ensures that the commitment to modernity of the Japanese is permanently

questioned by limiting the features that define this nation to pre-modern cultural referents.

I assume skeptically the terms 'West' and 'Western' in this thesis. I work with the premise that 'the West' emerges in the construction and reproduction of national narratives as an acritical, indeterminate, but yet operationally valid identity that serves to bind a shared space of discursive interaction. In order to study and reveal the mechanisms through which 'the West' is formulated as a cohesive identity, it is necessary to overcome the particularities of any individual nation in its one-sided ascription to the Western label. To meet this end, I suggest a comparative analysis of discourses from different national sources that self-embrace the characterization of being part of the West. When read together, texts from the U.S. and Spain articulate a discourse that assumes the existence of a presumed 'Western self' to which both nations claim to belong.

The point of analyzing texts from these two selected national sources is to try out the hypothesis that there is a unique shared national narrative of Japan in the two countries that operates assuming the existence of 'the West.' If that is the case, studying the national narrative of Japan would also provide valuable insights on the mechanisms of a system of representing alterity that has constituted one of the main pillars of Western hegemony. Conversely, if the present study produces two distinctively identifiable national narratives of Japan, one circulating in the U.S. and one in Spain, it would mean that the creation and reproduction of national narratives is determined by the particular discursive environments of each nation. I believe that

any of these two possible outcomes justifies putting forward the present study as an analysis of texts that circulate within two identifiable national spaces. The selection of these two countries is not arbitrary. Both the United States and Spain have a different historical relationship with Japan while simultaneously being presumed nations that fall under the umbrella of Western idiosyncrasy. Comparing the way the national narrative of Japan is generated and circulates in the United States and in Spain creates a suitable combination to test precisely the flexibility and potential vulnerabilities of the West as a shared discursive space.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. I devote the first one to introduce and develop the necessary conceptual and methodological frameworks of this project. It presents the theoretical background of reference for the study of the relationship between literature and national narratives. In this section, I do a state of the field survey of key concepts from nation studies, reception studies, and the relationship between hegemony and discourse. This exercise sets the required definitions to further discuss the way literary texts are placed with regards to a discursively mediated background of reference. I address then the design of the methodology employed in the preparation and development of the selected case-study. This is aimed at elucidating the rationale supporting the study of the national narrative of Japan in the United States and in Spain through the analysis of critical texts commenting its literature in translation. In the next part, I elaborate a historical overview of the hegemonic national narrative of Japan in the West. I develop the argument that the hegemonic definition of this country has been constructed around the

defining axiom of questioning Japan's ascription to modernity. This discourse has allowed the West to claim legitimacy in conflicts of interests throughout history.

Chapters 2 and 3 correspond to the setting up of the literature-based national narrative by analyzing the intertextual discourse built from and transmitted through critical texts commenting the literature of Kawabata, Mishima, Ōe, and Murakami. This analysis is divided into two periods: "In Peace We Prosper," which goes from 1945 to 1989, and "The Great Bewitchment," from 1989 to 2018. A brief historical outline introduces each section and a summary of the main characteristics identified on the national narrative closes it.

Finally, the last chapter of this thesis puts together all the results of the intertextual analysis and draws the conclusions of the study. This section is devoted to dissect and evaluate to a full extent the terms of engagement between the literature-based national narrative of Japan and hegemonic representations of this nation. I believe the present thesis offers the opportunity to push forward significant and substantiated considerations on a rich variety of subjects that orbit around the complex yet compelling relationship between literature, discourse, and power.

CHAPTER 1:

IT IS ALL ABOUT THE FRAMEWORK

1.1 Theory, Methodology, and How to Do This

1.1.1 Theory and Methodology

Before delving into questions regarding the theoretical and methodological framework of this thesis, I would like to make a case for the appropriateness of analyzing discursive dynamics between power and culture through the paradigm of the nation. The debate over whether the time of nations is coming to an end (or has already ended, and we are invited to "think ourselves beyond the nation," as Arjun Appadurai said)[1] was triggered at the end of the 20th century. Discussions on the effect of globalization popularized the ensuing emergence of concepts like 'transnationalism'[2] or 'postnationalism.'[3] Although it can be argued that there is an ongoing process that

[1] Appadurai, "Patriotism and Its Futures," 411.
[2] Robinson, "Beyond Nation-State Paradigms," 561-594.
[3] Bennet, *Multicultural States*, 231-32.

attempts to transfer effective international sovereignty to the actions and decisions made by transnational agents, there are grounds to defend the idea that we still live and act within a system of nations. One has only to take a look at some of the most recent geopolitical issues to come to this realization. As of the year 2019, for instance, the European Union is unable to make any significant steps from economic to full political coalition, mainly due to the clash of interests between its constituent nation-states. The United Kingdom withdrawing its membership illustrates the abiding weight of prioritizing the idea of national self-determination, but it is far from being an exception to the rule. The rise to institutional power of secessionist movements in Scotland and Catalonia questions the long-term stability and even actual viability of multinational states. The rise of xenophobic, far-right parties in regional, parliamentary, and presidential elections across countries like France, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Spain, Greece, or the Scandinavian states endangers at every turn the near future of the so-called European project. Many of these parties are openly Europhobic, protectionist, and spouse policies that are intended to reignite internal debates over ideas of national identity and citizenship. On top of it, the management of the media-styled refugee crisis originated in the Mediterranean coast has meant the confinement or death of thousands of people, raising questions about the feasibility and even morality of not-so-border-free spaces like the Schengen Area.

Recent and ongoing military conflicts such as the civil war in Ukraine had nationalism as one of the main ideological justifications and legitimizing forces mobilizing groups and splitting communities. The

outcome of the last presidential election in the United States has proven the effectiveness in convincing the majority of an electorate under the banner of openly nationalistic rhetoric. The political environment that categorizes the Trump administration is widening the social rift over clashing interpretations of the country's national profile with no closure in sight. In Latin America, the defense of national sovereignty against foreign intervention, particularly from the United States, has been for decades a topic of conflictive concern between the fluctuating power parties in the continent. Several attempts of economic and tame political integration like ALBA have been tested, but the reach and efficiency of these initiatives get contested for the same reasons projects of this nature are not fully crystallizing in other regions. In the East Asian area, optimism regarding the ASEAN initiative has cooled down in the past few years. Apart from periodical summits and conferences, regional politics are again mainly directed and managed on a state-to-state basis. Furthermore, governments have gotten used to the manipulation of national sentiment to put pressure on advancing their own international trade agendas or when they want to distract the attention from domestic controversies. This is shown for instance every time the ever-present ghost of Japan's imperialistic past is brought into question by China, Taiwan, or South Korea.

Academic debate over the concept of nation usually starts by making a distinction between the political definition (which from now on I will refer to as nation-state) and the cultural definition (from now on,

nation).[4] The nation-state is generally defined as a political body with a government recognized by the populations from within and without a geographical boundary. The nation, on the other hand, is a group of people who believe they have bonds based on shared history, values, and in some instances also a shared bloodline. John Hutchinson points out that the nation aspires in principle to achieve political sovereignty by means of acquiring its own state. Each nation seeks this autonomy to ensure that the policies issued to regulate social behavior are based on a common system of norms and have the group's best interests in mind. Nationalism emerges as the nation's expression of the desire to achieve a state of its own and takes the shape of cultural and political activism. Once the nation has already achieved its own state, nationalism surfaces now and then to maintain political sovereignty and assert the nation's identity in times of need (wars, plebiscites, and even sports competitions).

The process through which a group becomes a nation is another subject of dispute. For theorists like Ernest Gellner, the nation is a civic-based community, a political entity that came to light in response to the conditions of modernity. The group gathers around a new set of civic goals and values, which constitute the basis for this new social arrangement. Gellner considers in this regard irrelevant any dispute over cultural and ethnic differences. At odds with this interpretation and in the other side of the spectrum, thinkers like Anthony D. Smith regard the nation precisely as an ethnic community. For them, the group establishes its boundaries on biological descent, shared history,

---

[4] I based this overview of national studies on the works of Hommi Babha, Immanuel Wallerstein, Ernest Gellner, Eric J. Hobsbawm, and Anthony D. Smith.

and a common ethic system. The ethnic-based nation is less inclusive and tends to consider the group as a big family.

This dichotomy should be taken into account merely as a historical inquiry on the origins of the nation. Nowadays, most nations are actually considered "a blend of [the] two dimensions, the one civic and territorial, the other ethnic and genealogical in varying proportions," leaving the issue of group boundaries "problematic and uncertain."[5] Benedict Anderson and Eric J. Hobsbawm go so far as to stress the idea that nations are not essential units but cultural constructions, historically bound as a product of modernity. Terms such as 'imagined communities' (Anderson), 'invention of tradition' (Hobsbawm) or 'daily plebiscite' (Ernest Renan) have become axioms of national studies. Accepting the cultural artificiality of nations should not mislead us into treating the nation as obsolete. On the contrary, highlighting the cultural aspect of the creation and reproduction of the nation proves helpful for the analysis of its inner workings and effects.

The nation, whether ethnic or civil, built on history or a cultural construction, is always sustained as a cohesive group through the generation and reproduction of structural discourses known as national narratives. Renan referred to national narratives as "those traditions of political thought and literary language [that create] a large-scale solidarity."[6] The national narrative, as Anne-Marie Lee-Loy says, "sets out [the nation's] cultural boundaries of belonging"[7] by selection

[5] Smith, *National Identity*, 15-41.
[6] Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" 297.
[7] Lee-Loy, *Searching for Mr. Chin*, 27.

of the preferred nation's classifying attributes. Simply put: national narratives are national identities turned into discourse.

The problem that every nation faces with the creation of a national narrative is precisely the impossibility to incorporate all interpretations into a single version of the nation. The group in power aspires to shape a hegemonic narrative that would support a version of the nation that legitimizes its position of dominance within the community. At the same time, however, the community produces multiple counter-narratives that go against the hegemonic narrative and against each other. This is what Homi Bhabha considers the incomplete signification of the concept of nation which, according to Lewis Wurgaff's interpretation, is trapped in the "ongoing desire for an 'imagined community' undercut by the very conditions of its enunciation."[8] The definition of a national identity is in a state of constant upheaval caused by tensions between the hegemonic narrative and different counter-narratives, all of them trying to cast their own narrative of a nation's identity. It is essential to understand that both national narratives of the self and the Other experience the same tensions between hegemonic and challenging discourses. The differences between narratives of the national self and the national Other are not structural, as both are shaped and reproduced alike through the joint interaction of institutions.

I believe materialist scholarship offers at this point more useful tools to further delve into the analysis of the relationship between discourse and institutions. Where schools of thought like the interactionists

[8] Wurgaf, "Identity in World History," 83.

believe institutions to be the product of society self-regulating their interactions for the sake of operational legitimation, materialists defend that institutions have a more complex and mediated architecture. Institutions are to be understood grouped together as a combination of two branches. On the one hand, coercive apparatuses such as the modern state and its constitutive powers. On the other, the so-called ideological apparatuses, which opt for subjugation and persuasion of public and individual will. Antonio Gramsci's identification and differentiation between the two institutional domains blossomed in his definition of ideological domination through what he called 'hegemony.' Hegemony controls the public sphere through social and cultural agents to ensure the dominance of a class. Raymond Williams extended Gramsci's ideas to introduce performativity in the expression of hegemony:

> [Hegemony is] A whole body of practices and expectations over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values.[9]

Louis Althusser believed like Gramsci that hegemony was forced through a binary system of execution: the state apparatus, which is directly controlled by the ruling class, and the ideological state apparatus, which is constituted by agents of authority that work with apparent autonomy but which exist in a situation of interdependence with the state. Educational organisms, the church, the mass media, and the arts enforce and reproduce the ideology of the dominant class and

[9] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 110.

shape the consciousness of the subject to accept the domination of the existent power. It is possible to include as a relatively recent addition to this list the role of corporations in the reproduction of ideology. Corporations may not author texts that reproduce ideology in the fashion of other traditional institutions, but they have direct ideological influence through their strong ties with state apparatuses and can oppress, promote, or mediate discourse through the economic intervention of circuits of discursive transmission.

Williams took Althusser's ideas and polished around the edges. For him, hegemonic institutions (what Althusser called ideological state apparatuses) do not work to legitimate the dominant class in such an explicit way, but rather operate in manners which legitimate hegemony itself. Hegemonic institutions exist in a self-legitimizing system which naturalizes authority and integrates opposition as part of a stable status quo. Briefly put, it is essential to take into account the ideologically charged nature of institutions and how they constitute the basic structures of modern power. This applies to whether they work as to sustain a vertical system of class dominance or to maintain a system where authority is in itself the only goal.

Based on these definitions, I argue that the relationship between institutions and discourse determines the difference between hegemonic national narratives and counter-narratives. A discourse is to be considered hegemonic whenever it is mediated by state and ideological institutions because its content legitimizes the power that holds the hegemony. National narratives, in their essence as discourses, follow the same logic. A national narrative may legitimize the actions

and decisions of power, but content is not enough for a discourse to be considered hegemonic. It is in its circulation and mediation through state and ideological institutions that the discourse/national narrative reproduces and reinforces the ideology of power and therefore becomes part of the hegemony. Dominant powers change, the decisions and actions of power change, the structure and type of state and ideological institutions change, and the ways hegemony is manifested and exerted change. Discourses of legitimation adapt, and it is only when and if their relationship with institutions is that of reproduction of dominant ideology that they are to be considered hegemonic.

Hegemonic national narratives can be traced and analyzed circulating from and within ideological institutions like the mass media and the education system, but also public official cables and documents. The discourse of the hegemonic national narrative gets shaped and adapts through time and circumstance to keep up with the shifting needs of power. In this sense, it is important to understand that the hegemonic national narrative is not a particular discourse, but a type of discourse.

Any discourse that is not aligned with the power's needs and purposes and tries to challenge its dominance can be considered a counter-narrative. Contrary to what Althusser suggests in considering that ideological institutions (ideological state apparatuses in his terminology) only reproduce dominant ideology, I defend a variation of William's model: counter-narratives, like hegemonic national narratives, also circulate through state and ideological institutions like education or the mass media. In their content and relationship with

institutions, however, counter-narratives do not reproduce the ideology of power, but instead, these discourses offer interpretations that challenge the dominant ideology. They are defined by their confrontation to the interpretation of power, and although potentially constituting of their own ideological body, do not hold the same relationship with institutions that power does. Counter-narratives, however, oppose the discourse of power but are nevertheless integral parts of the same structure. The system of hegemony is sustained and even reinforced by the existence of counter-narratives. These discourses challenge the legitimation of dominant ideology, but because they are also embedded and mediated through institutions, their existence remains within the rules of the system. Counter-narratives aspire to take over the control of institutions. A change in the dominant powers might turn a former counter-narrative hegemonic. This is an important element to take into account when hegemonic and counter-narratives are discussed in this thesis: when I say a discourse/national narrative challenges the hegemonic national narrative, it means the discourse conflicts with the circumstantial ideology of power. Counter-narratives, as they are understood and studied in this work, do not challenge the system of hegemony through which they operate.

To sum up: in order to identify whether a particular discourse/national narrative becomes part of the hegemonic national narrative, one has to analyze whether in a comparative analysis of its content, the relationship with the actions and decisions of state and ideological institutions is that of legitimation. If, on the contrary, the national narrative proposes a challenging and alternative interpretation

to the one defended by the dominant power, we are dealing with a counter-narrative.

One of the most important cultural agents operating with ideological institutions in the construction of national narratives is literature. Literature's intermediate position as a means of simultaneously being a vehicle, a catalyst, and an arguable source of discourse makes it an essential piece in the construction and reproduction of every possible ideological iteration of the nation. Literature and the nation are intertwined by a complex system of production and circulation which can be boiled down to two models. On the one hand, there's the explicit linkage of production and canonization of a literary text to a particular nation. On the other, I suggest there is also a more complex mediation of implicit associations, unavoidable semiotic framings, and discursive circulation that also places literature in dialogue with national narratives.

Explicitly national literature is commonly the first thing that comes to mind when we are asked to reflect on how literature and nationalism are intertwined. This literature encompasses any type of fiction conceived by the author with an open nationalistic agenda that aspires to create or contribute to the telling of a particular national narrative. This literature is natural of emerging nation-states and throughout the 20th century has been present mostly but not exclusively in postcolonial countries. As Fanon describes it:

> National literature takes up and clarifies themes which are typically nationalist […] it is a literature of combat, in the sense

> that it calls on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation. It is a literature of combat, because it molds the national consciousness […] because it assumes responsibility, and because it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space.[10]

We can find examples of this kind of explicitly national literature around the globe: Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, José Rizal's *Noli me Tangere* and *The Reign of Greed*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Lu Xun's *The True Story of Ah Q*, or Clorinda Matto de Turner's *Aves sin nido*.

More often than explicitly nationalistic literary works, we find texts which have been used retroactively as foundational pillars for nationalistic movements. This has been common practice for aspiring and even established nations since the Romantic Germans fused nation, literature, and language in the idea of Volksgeist. The intentions of the author are in those cases disregarded or simply ignored. The text becomes subjected to a historical reinterpretation, a canonical investiture for the collective national imagination which places it in key inaugural moments or paradigmatic turning points of the nation's historical journey. These texts are explicitly national not because at the moment of its conception the author intended them to the cause of nation-building, but because the national community, in its search for cultural and historical legitimation, refers to them as sources of cohesive records and highlighted pieces of a nation's narrative.

---

[10] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 240.

Examples abound and are an interesting endeavor to select. From the works of Homer to Dante, Shakespeare to Cervantes, Murasaki Shikibu to Ahmad Khani, or the 'rediscovery' of *Beowulf*, *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, *The Song of Roland*, and other national epics. Literature and nationalism are joined together through the constantly reevaluated process of canonization.

So far, literature and the nation have established a relationship anchored on the acceptance of explicit and openly established historical foundations or political intentions. The association which I am going to explore now, however, is based on implicit and arguably ineludible connections, and I call it 'unintentionally nationalist literature.' This relationship has as principle the idea that regardless of whether or not the artwork is produced with a nationalistic ambition, the nation remains the unavoidable background and environment of its production and reception. Literature is framed channeling and reproducing the ways the group acts as a nation and is taken representative of its ascribed identity.

Early on I described how nationalism is a process with stages: first, it is the nation's expression of a desire to achieve a sovereign political body – the modern state. Once this objective is accomplished, nationalism remains as a means to sustain this perception of the group as cohesive in the face of challenges and generational replacements. Michael Billig calls the first kind of nationalism, the politically charged, 'hot,' and the second, 'banal.' 'Banal nationalism' is a passive, everyday-grounded representation of nationalism. According to Billig,

nationalism is not only a conscious, openly manifested act of ascription to a particular nation, or the political activities aimed to achieve a nation-state, but a veiled, backstage form of keeping an established national identity. For this author, regardless of whether or not the members of a community are concerned over their nationhood, everyday life habits need to be also understood as expressions of their national identity. Billig refrains from the idea of national identity as an emotional manifestation and places it in the realm of social behavior, a "form of social life rather than internal psychological state."[11] Banal nationalism, therefore, "far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition."[12]

National identity is not only imagined as Anderson suggested but at this point also enters the realm of the performed, the mundane and subliminal of everyday acts and practices. Because we live in a world of national framings, the national is not only expressed but also recognized and experienced in ordinary customs. Even the most unseemly trivial conventions potentially become a manifestation of an identity facet – similar to what already happens with other social identifiers like gender, race, or class.

What is the role of literature in this process? I suggest that readers interpret literary texts through the unavoidable scope of nationalism. Given that texts can be either explicitly charged with nationalistic intentions or unconsciously produced within a 'banal' national frame, the reader's symbolic order ineluctably comprises national

---

[11] Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 24.
[12] Ibid.

(de)codification reactions. Such a reading is then reflected in the shaping of national narratives of the national self and the national Other.

Albeit the process of creation of national narratives of the self and the Other is essentially the same in this system, some differences must be acknowledged. First, national narratives of the self tend to be less homogeneous. The hegemonic narrative is put more often into question by multiple counter-narratives, motivated by the clash of different power struggles in the constant need for the group's identity reformulation, as Homi Bhaba points out.[13] National narratives of the Other, although not always unique, are liable to become more consistent and uniform. This may be due to the relatively minor number of politically confronted parties that are involved in the creation of images of the Other, a fact that is interesting in itself and that would benefit from a dedicated insight. Second, as Billig stresses in his work, once nationalism goes from 'hot' to 'banal,' it becomes almost invisible. The rendering of the in-group's definition into a national narrative is less explicit. Our nationalism is forgotten, but it always remains present through the nationalism of the other. The mere process of identification and formulation of the Other's national narrative is proof of existence of the natural counterpart, the group's discourses on the self.

There has been scholarly work done on how the national Other has been represented in literature. Hugo Dyserinck, Joep Leerssen, and Manfred Beller flagshipped a discipline of comparative literature called

[13] Bhabha, "DissemiNation," 300.

'imagology.' At the end of the 20th century, imagology appeared as the most prominent attempt to systematize into a field the process of representation of national identity through literature. I would like to discuss some of the key points of this discipline, highlight its most useful remarks, and explain why and where my proposed method differs from an imagologist approach to the same issue.

Imagology is the critical analysis of national stereotypes as represented in literature. It studies the origin and function of other nation's characteristics as expressed textually through works of literature, travel books, and essays. Imagology studies the formation and reproduction of stereotypes that take the shape of mental images of the Other (hetero-images) and ourselves (self-images). For the imagologist, stereotypes are not based on reality but on an intertextual net-system to which they refer to and which maintains them.[14] The stereotype's signifier is not the nation it tries to represent but the previously stored image of the same within this intertextual social scheme. In this sense, texts are always contrasted against a background which constitutes the intertextual frame of reference, and from this contrast, one can see whether they endorse or challenge the existing stereotype. A text becomes engaged with this system of stereotypes through the figure of the 'trigger,' which is the textual element that serves as a link between the text and this semiotic system. For instance, a German character in a story complaining about his Italian friend always coming late triggers the system of stereotypes about both nationalities. The origin of this intertextual framework of reference is apparently untraceable; it

[14] Leerssen, "The Rethoric of National Character," 280.

emerges from social consensus and is integrated through the process of socialization.

Leerssen believes the future of the discipline lies in what he calls 'the constructivist turn.' The time of cataloging the stereotype is over, and the scholar should focus on the relationship between text and the intertextual framework. The imagologist should now study how the discourse of national characterization is accepted by the reader, engaging with the triangular disposition of the whole process of national representation: the text, the intertextual framework, and the reader. There are no clear instructions on how to conduct this study. Leerssen sends a warning about the problem of generalizing and advises the prospective researcher to avoid striving to establish a single, model reader, while still acknowledging constant narratives. He does so to stress the dynamism of the phenomenon across history and context and to prevent future scholars from falling as their predecessors did in the trap of essentialism.

There are some useful insights I share with the imagologist approach, but at the same time, there are also some differences that distinguish my proposal from this discipline. First, imagology uses the term 'stereotype' primarily to refer to the represented national identity. I believe however this already defines the breaking point from imagology and a methodology based on the study of discourses. The relationship between literature and national narratives is dynamic and in constant dialogue. The stereotype, however, is a term not only tainted by the implication of conscious falsehood of the national trait, but also static and untraceable to any given point of historical, political,

or cultural reference. Stereotypes defy fluid discourses, and I defend the idea that literature and national narratives are in a constantly reevaluated relationship. I opt then for the term 'narrative' as it aims to reinforce the idea of representation as a discourse in a continuum, while 'stereotype' can be atomized to a single trait and be wrongly isolated from the context. This is not only a question of semantics but of overall approach: by focusing on 'narratives,' I stress not only the constructiveness but also the discursiveness of national representation. Second, while both methodologies rely on the intertextual framework of reference, the one I propose goes beyond the literary paradigm and engages with the narrative of national identity as constructed from different cultural sources. Whereas the imagologist bases its analysis only on what a literary text represents, the proposed methodology traces the national narrative since it departs from the text and circulates within a community of readers. Finally, although imagologists seem to work with the hegemonic narrative, I am also interested in playing out the tension between hegemonic narratives and challenging narratives, as all of them can be mediated by literature-based discourses.

Edward Said's consequential work *Orientalism* is archetypal of another variation on the study of the construction of the cultural Other through literary works. Its influence in the field and in any further attempt to analyze discursive representations has a longstanding reach. In *Orientalism*, Said explores how Western imperialism devised a discursive structure that identified and signified the East in order to justify political hegemony over it. The East is put together from a series of conventional tropes: the exotic, the mystic, or the 'feminine'

(sic). The West (and here Said mainly focuses on the interventions and cultural manifestations of the United Kingdom, France, and the United States) builds at the same time an identity by contraposition – the rational, the modern, and the 'masculine.' Said's work (and by extension, any other that followed his example on the matter) is mainly based on the study of how literary pieces depict 'the Oriental' by a means that he calls 'strategic formation:' "a way of analyzing the relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large."[15] As I will prove later, the same process must be followed to study the national narrative, given that discourses can be retrieved mainly through a process of intertextual analysis very similar in essence to the one Said suggests.

There are, however, three main differences that separate his methodology from the one that I propose, and that in the end suppose a critical divergence between the two projects. First, Said's literary texts are written by Western authors, for a Western audience, about the East. Literary texts from the East and their reception are not taken into account, because Said is focused on the representation of the Other by members of an in-group. On the same line, the reception of literature in translation and the role it plays in the construction of national narratives are mostly – if not completely – overlooked by him. The only gaze that matters is the one forged by local material, without the express influence and impact of cultural imports. Lastly, Said tries to approach Orientalism as an explicit and almost planned

[15] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 20.

construction. Although he is aware that deliberate agency is misleadingly evident with historical hindsight, he works under the assumption that the discourse is, for his argument's sake, a willed work. National narratives are products of a combination of explicit ('hot') or implicit ('banal') nationalism. My focus is on the effects and consequences of discourse explicitly avoiding dealing with the always uncertain field of intentionality.

We finally get to the point in which it is necessary to readdress and answer the two main questions put forward at the beginning of this section and which define the proposed methodology: how is the process through which literature mediates with national narratives? Moreover, how can we identify a literary-based national narrative that circulates within a specific community of readers? In order to do so, I will produce a brief review of concepts and ideas from reception theory that prove helpful in unraveling the mechanisms behind the literary relationship of text, reader, and community.

Where traditional hermeneutics and New Criticism saw that meaning was to be found in the text, and that the task of readers was to identify and reveal it, reception theory emerged to question text-centrism and strengthened the role of the reader in the process of interpretation. Wolfgang Iser believed texts did not have a unique meaning but a relative number of potential meanings that the reader had to grasp through the act of reading itself. This approach offered an initial explanation of why texts can produce different interpretations when approached by different individuals. Iser believed the number of interpretations – that is, the flexibility of subjectivity – was

conditioned by the structure of the text itself. The role of the text changed for Iser: it did not provide meaning but determined the number of possible interpretations a reader could extract. His colleague of the Constance School Hans Robert Jauss, however, thought meaning was not conceived by the phenomenological act of reading as Iser believed, but by the intervention of social and literary conventions. In what Jauss called 'horizons of expectations,' he suggested that readers interpret texts unavoidably conditioned by cultural codes and their particular historical conventions.

Both Iser's and Jauss' approaches base the generation of meaning in the personal interrelation of the reader and the text. For Iser, the structure of the text conditioned the reader to produce a number of interpretations. For Jauss, the conventions the reader establishes with the text when compared to others or with the metafictional nature of the text were the real source of meaning. Stanley Fish brought a spin to these ideas and popularized reader-response theory in the United States by placing the reader as the sole producer of meaning. For Fish, meaning happens neither in the text, nor in the relationship between reader and text, but exclusively in the mind of the reader. Fish defends that readers need besides linguistic and semantic competence what he calls literary competence, and which is, in fact, a culturally taught familiarity with literary and social conventions. These conventions are shared by what he names 'interpretative communities.' According to Fish, these communities pre-structure any possible meaning produced by each individual act of reading.

This led critics to argue that such an interpretation opened the doors of extreme relativism. If the community produces a set of rules and conventions that determine the reader's interpretation, what makes a reader 'decide' which one to impose from the potentially available? Fish's answer circulated around the idea of acceptability to a group. He suggested that readers offer interpretations that would potentially be accepted under the system of internal cannons determined by the community. For Fish, readers cannot escape their communities; they can only change the nature of their statuses. This solution might be perceived too essentialist as it still retains the production of meaning to the relationship between text and reader through the allusion to intertextual conventions and literary codes. In addition, it avoids entering into the more complex question of structural configuration. If we accept that the interpretation of texts is subjected to social conventions, where do these conventions come from?

Reached this point, we need to take into account also the means by which a text is produced and circulates in order to properly understand the processes of reading and interpretation. For literature is a social act and also a social phenomenon, individual readings are conditioned by the way literature is configured within our modern social structures.

Where does literature fit into this system? For the materialists, the institution of literature (production and reproduction of literary texts and literary commentaries) is an agent of hegemony. Terry Eagleton maintains that the conditions of literary production already reproduce and legitimate the functioning relations of the society where they

belong. Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin referred to these structural conditions when they suggested that no revolutionary theme in a novel or a play would change society or confront authority as long as it was produced using the same institutions, means of production, and artistic conventions of the dominant class (the bourgeoisie in their criticism). [16] Etienne Balibar goes even further and asserts that literature acts in itself as an expression and vehicle of the dominant ideology and therefore subordinates the reader to comply with the logic of hegemony. For Balibar, ideological institutions like the school system get empowered and authorized to define and judge literature so that its circulation can reproduce and legitimate the dominant class' claim of power. Readers are passive consumers and reproducers of ideology, as long as literature is subjected and part of the ideological apparatus of the dominant power in a society.[17]

I believe it is possibly too extreme to deprive readers completely from their agency in the mediation of texts. While the acts of reading and interpreting texts have proved to be conditioned by the social nature of literature's production and circulation, whether they necessarily contain and transmit hegemonic discourses can be up for debate. Such a deterministic understanding leaves unresolved the existence of both literature produced and circulating outside the hegemonic institutions and of literary interpretations that appear to confront the hegemonic discourse. Reading must be able to produce alternative interpretations to the dominant ideology so that the stable status quo of integrated oppositions that Williams describes can be possible. This does not

[16] Hohendal, *Building a National Literature*, 29.
[17] Ibid., 22.

contradict literary interpretation's dependence on ideological frameworks, as readings would be defined by their positioning in the engagement with hegemony: either supporting or opposing dominant ideology.

Literature's role in transmitting national narratives is determined by a two-stage process: one of reception and integration, and another of circulation. The first step happens in the private dimension, the act of reading by the individual. I argue that readers willingly or involuntarily produce a national reading of literature by an extension of the aforementioned embedded semiotic system of functional and interpretative meanings that can be called the paradigm of the national. Readers receive and decode texts to contrast their particular interpretation against a background narrative of national references.

Any literary text, just because it is framed in the current paradigm of the national, is susceptible to a national reading. In the case of explicitly nationalistic works, this type of framing is easier to justify, as for the political message to be conveyed, authorial purposes tend to be evident. However, I claim that a national reading is possible also regardless of the original intentions infused in the text. The unavoidable scope of national significance conditions the reception and interpretation of literary texts. Readers interpret texts by their engagement with the social phenomenon of literature and national narratives, which is unavoidably embedded in a system of ideological institutions.

The reader identifies or registers textual performances and associates them with a particular national narrative by contrasting the text against a background of reference. This background is the discursive framework in which the hegemonic national narrative is cast and ingrained, and which serves as a bank of content. This structured cloud of signifieds gets activated by signifiers present in the literary text. What actually makes the study of national narratives an ever-ongoing endeavor – and which is related to the proposed mixed nature of subjectivity and social dependency of reading and interpreting texts – is the fact that this engagement is not *necessarily* of endorsement or an inseparable liaison as traditional semiotics would consider. It works instead as a call for allusion and comparison between what the texts show as typical of a nation and what the reader believes is so. This is based on the tension between knowledge decoded directly from the text and reproduced knowledge derived from the cloud of signifieds – that is, the hegemonic national narrative. This is the process through which readers identify and frame literary texts within or against hegemonic national narratives.

Individual readings, however, can only be understood from a research point of view as a necessary first step. A personal reading would be the basis for justifying a personal interpretation of a piece of literary work. In order to analyze national narratives, however, it is necessary to take an intertextual approach. In this aspect, I use the term 'intertextuality' as a variation of the way Julia Kristeva popularized when referring to the dependence of text for the mediation of social and cultural codes (for instance canonical texts, genre conventions, texts by the same or similar authors) to recognize and ascribe meaning.

This refers to the identification of meaning only present and made visible through the analysis of a selected body of texts. The main stage in the process of transmission of national narratives by literature is, in the end, circulation. For an interpretation to be studied in relation to a broader context of reference and influence, it requires having been expressed as text. Whenever authors establish a link between the piece and national identities they are in fact proving the existence of reading in terms of the national and, more importantly, engaging in the reproduction of national narratives.

There is a second essential premise. Since national narratives in their nature as discourses are socially shared assets, any contribution that could be considered supporting or challenging the hegemonic narrative has to be a text present in an already established circuit of exchange and circulation. In this thesis, I call this kind of documents 'critical texts.' Book reviews, newspaper articles, editorial blurbs, academic treatises, or popular studies are the most common critical texts. In these texts, literature is discussed. In many of them, literature and the nation are linked. When analyzed intertextually as a constellation, a multifocal, multi-source discourse, the national narrative becomes visible. It is the sum of repeated themes, a running argument that could be understood as a picture only visible when connecting the dots.

The circle is completed: national narratives are originated, sustained, and reproduced through not only the creation of literature but its reception and discussion within a system of ideological institutions. National narratives (both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic) can be

traced interceding in the creation of literary texts, in the creation of critical texts, and in the relationship of critical texts with a system of hegemony.

The task of the researcher of national narratives is, under the present scope and sticking to the proposed working framework, a mix of two profiles. The first one is the methodical gatherer, that who systematically and meticulously knows where and how to identify the critical texts that are going to be the perfect sample for a case study from the virtually unmanageable heap of documents. To research, however, is a human endeavor, and no human can read it all. It is of most important significance to be able to recognize and single out those critical texts that can be justifiably referential to the study of a particular national narrative; that is, to add the editorial element of qualitative discrimination. Some authors, because of their popularity or out of circumstantial relevance, create more impact in their reception and generate a larger amount of critical texts. It could be argued that texts that relate to them are more prone to show the nature of national narratives and to mediate in their shaping and reproduction. National narratives are also historically bound, so taking a look at how they evolve through time by way of focusing on the impact of popular authors during specific eras is also a useful criterion to be taken into consideration. In the end, what the researcher wants is to have a relevant, substantiated, and manageable body of critical texts that is able to provide the nature of a national narrative, its relationship to hegemony, and its development as a discourse throughout the years. The second profile is, then, that of the attentive interpreter, the skilled analyzer. The nature of this study is textual, and while texts are the

main source of information, they are always embedded in a context of reference that must never be overlooked. The unearthing of national narratives is, at the end of the day, also a commentary on social, political, and intellectual discourses.

In this section, my argumentation has been devised to move from the general to the particular. It has gone from big, rivers-of-ink-producing concepts like nation or nationalism, to the specific relationship between literature, national narratives, and hegemonic ideological structures. It has also progressed from the abstract (musings about performativity and semiotics) to the pragmatic (how to identify the texts to analyze the circulation of national narratives). I will try anyway to recap the main ideas developed in this section. In order to claim and support any group's cohesive and coherent identity, communities produce discourses of representation called national narratives. I call the national narrative promoted and supported by the structures of power the hegemonic narrative, and those narratives that challenge and contest the definition and position of the hegemonic narrative, counter-narratives. Literature mediates with hegemonic and counter-narratives. On the one hand, there is openly political national literature, which explicitly works for group engineering given either the texts ascribed purpose or due to national canonization. On the other hand, there is 'unintentionally national literature,' which is literature that engages with discourse through the unavoidable interpretation of in-text performances within a paradigm of national codification.

Readers construe textually-encoded signifieds as representative of the portrayed nation's character and identity. The individual interpretation

of a literary text is contrasted against the hegemonic frame of discursive knowledge on each particular national identity. In this contrast, the reader can judge whether a text endorses or challenges the traits proposed by the hegemonic national narrative. Each of these individual national readings is, if expressed in the shape of texts publicly available to the whole of a particular community, part of an intertextual discourse that can in itself be constituted as a national narrative. This literature-based national narrative is its own collective interpretation. It constitutes the shared product of a number of individual readings on a body of literature and on the discussion of this literature. Same as with individual readings, this literature-based national narrative can be analyzed as challenging or supporting the hegemonic national narrative, producing in the study of the relationship between these two discourses valuable commentary on the role literature can have in the shaping of a community's ideological structure.

It is fair to point out the trials and questions that this framework and methodology still has to address. First, one must be always vigilant and try to adapt to every specific situation. This methodology cannot be designed to aspire to universalism, because that is not only impossible but extremely discourageable. It might be obvious but it needs to be stated: specific cases may require specific adjustments in practice. On the other hand, the core concepts of the relationship between literature and discourse are not affected by this cautionary attitude, and a flexible methodology is, in most instances, a positive thing. Second, textual circulation behaves in a different, still unstructured manner in the age of the Internet. A more concise and universal-

aspiring way to approach this question must be carefully thought soon better than late. Scholarship done on the typology and nature of ideological institutions and agents of discursive reproduction has been centered on long-time protagonists of the modern nation-state: the press, the school system, the legal system, the church, and so on. While many of these institutions have taken the Internet as a platform to where migrate their practices, reach, and effect – as this thesis has taken into account when creating its corpus of texts to be analyzed – the wide web has created new spaces and players that mediate in the reproduction and preservation of hegemony whose functions have yet to be assessed. Social media, for instance, could be considered a potential ideological apparatus that produces and puts into circulation texts that can have an impact on national narratives. Ralph Schroeder, for instance, has recently explored in his work *Social Theory after the Internet* its ability to alter an ideological landscape.

The methodological challenge of such platforms and agents is to be found on their relatively short historical reach, as these agents have been around for just a few years. Related to this problem is the issue of volatility. During the advent and popularization of the Internet for the masses, personal blogs, chat rooms, and forums were the preferred media of expression and circuits of transmission of online texts. It can be argued though that these past years their weight and relevance has been decreasing as the spotlight turned to social networks. My impression is that only with time we will be able to discern which agents become and get consolidated as ideological institutions. Texts linked in production and circulation to purely Internet-based hegemonic institutions will then have to be assessed and taken into

account when producing a more accurate analysis of national narratives.

To analyze literature-based national narratives demands from the researcher knowledge on the emitting literature history and tradition, the receiving reader community's idiosyncrasy, and the relationship between both nations at large. The task is testing and the need to provide with the most accurate analysis not short of demanding. However, the reward can be bountiful, for not only there is much to learn from this exercise, but I also believe it is the duty of every contemporary researcher to seek, unveil, and strip naked every discourse that influences our thinking and behavior. For in awareness and understanding, there's a chance for improvement.

1.1.2 Approach to the Present Project

Having explained the theoretical and methodological framework that will be developed and implemented in the present thesis, I would like to offer now a detailed account on the criteria for the outline and execution of the selected case study. This exercise is designed to meet the two research objectives of this project. First, my work will analyze how Japan is depicted and described in the United States and Spain when its literature is discussed, looking for shared tropes that circulate in the problematized discursive space that we call 'the West.' Second, once this national narrative has been revealed and explained, I will move to describe how it engages with the Western hegemonic scheme of reproducing Japan. This last exercise is aimed at exploring whether

the literature-based national narrative is framed supporting or challenging the discourse of power.

My body of texts is composed by pieces that meet three essential criteria: they need to discuss literature at length, establish a relationship between the commented literature and the nation the literary text is assumed belonging to, and be in an already established circuit of transmission. I identify published material such as newspaper and magazine articles, academic journals, academic books, and non-specialized readers as texts that meet these requirements. They constitute the formal type of sources from which I draw the aforementioned national narrative, and I call them *critical texts*.

Critical texts are selected and classified according to the project's particular needs in four subcategories: based on the community where the national narrative circulates, on the historical period of the national narrative in development, on the specific authors discussed in the texts, and on their intended targeted audience. It is according to these criteria that I justify the settings of the current case study.

I have chosen to explore the national narrative of Japan that circulates in the United States and Spain for several reasons. On the one hand, each of the two countries has a differentiated community of readers with its own social and political particularities, along with their idiosyncratic historical relationship with Japan. At the same time, the U.S. and Spain share enough traits to be potentially considered part of a greater discursive space customarily called the West. The United States still holds a strong cultural influence over the Western world,

while hosting the most significant amount of Japan-related literature. Spain serves as a counterbalance to avoid U.S. particularities to pass as universally Western. It is close enough to the U.S. to be entangled in the so-called Western tradition. At the same time, there is a considerable distance that makes each country preserve its own distinctive characteristics. The differences between each country in their historical relationship with Japan prove substantially useful in testing the establishment of narrative motives potentially shared by the West. For instance, whether or not the Spanish think of the Japanese as former foes can be attributed to the U.S. success or failure in defining the national narrative of Japan in the West.

I organize the body of critical texts in two historical periods. This division is based on the political and cultural relationship of the West and Japan and to patterns and tendencies in the publication of Japanese literature in the United States and Spain. I call the first period "In Peace We Prosper" and it spans from 1945 to 1989. During these decades, Japan and the West strengthened ties through the needs of economic and strategic collaboration. The United States occupied Japan during the first seven years of the period (excluding Okinawa, which still holds U.S. military bases). During the 1960s to the 1980s, their relationship was determined by tensions regarding trade imbalance and Cold War policies. In the case of Spain, Franco's disdain towards Japan marked the relationship between the two countries, with relatively lasting effects after his death. Spanish hegemonic position went from indifference to bandwagoning other Western powers' diplomatic agenda with Japan.

The second period, which I named "The Great Bewitchment," begins in 1989. The Shōwa era, an epoch still tainted by Japan's imperial past, ends with the passing of Emperor Hirohito in January of that year. The crowning of his son Akihito started the Heisei era, whose motto has been openly pacifistic. This change of calendar, which may seem merely symbolic, affects how Japan wants to portray itself and how it is indeed represented. Three years into the new epoch, the Japanese financial bubble bursts and sends the country into a spiral of perpetual recession. The export of economic and industrial goods has been gradually replaced by the distribution of cultural products, with literature holding a significant role in the matter. I have selected critical texts published up until the end of 2018, spanning therefore almost completely the reign of Emperor Akihito, as he set on the 30th of April, 2019 the last day of the Heisei era.

In the establishment of this periodization, I have prioritized the reach and existence of Japanese literature in the United States and Spain over the historical relationship these two countries had with Japan. A summary of the political and cultural relationship between Japan and the West since 1868 up until the end of World War II will be explored in section 1.2. In that part, I also take the chance to briefly summarize the way Japanese literature reached these two countries and the most significant texts that contributed to the hegemonic national narrative. Up until the second half of the 20th century, there were very few texts that discussed Japanese literature, as the number of works that disembarked in the West was scarce. This body of texts was limited to the rare historiographic literary work or the more sophisticated and

obscure essay intended for and produced by intellectuals, artists, connoisseurs, and the budding circle of experts on Japan.

The number of works of literature in translation substantially increased throughout the years after the end of World War II, and with it, media attention producing book reviews and articles. Academic interest in Japanese literature flourished especially in the U.S. thanks to the investment put by a wartime need of understanding the former foe. These scholars promoted the creation of new departments of Japanese studies at U.S. universities. This circumstance constitutes the biggest difference between the United States and Spain. Japanology has had a stronger tradition in the U.S., while Spanish scholarship has only in the past thirty years seen its proliferation in the production of autonomous academic work.

I have chosen to analyze texts that discuss the literature of four writers, two for each period. The promotion of Japanese literature in translation has been historically author-oriented, with works promoted based on the reputation and popularity of the novelists – or the similarities and differences between them. There are some exceptions too, like the interest on the Japanese noir or Japanese science-fiction as popular genres, but these are recent trends and so far they hardly constitute a historical pattern. During the "In Peace We Prosper" period, the majority of published works belong to two authors: Kawabata Yasunari and Mishima Yukio. Their popularity among readers and scholars is unparalleled during their time.

A very similar case happens in the second period, "The Great Bewitchment". Despite the hastened multiplication of Japanese authors being translated in the past thirty years, two main figures gather most of the attention: Ōe Kenzaburō and Murakami Haruki. Just like Kawabata and Mishima, they are the most prominent novelists of their generation. The similarities between the two pairs of authors are striking: Kawabata and Ōe received Nobel prizes in 1968 and 1995, while Mishima and Murakami have played the role of favorite horses in the betting pools of the same award. Mishima and Murakami are popular, best-selling authors that appeal to wider audiences. Kawabata and Ōe are considered more complex and cultured reads, with a smaller sales volume but a more homogeneous critical reception. On top of this, while Kawabata and Ōe reached in the peak of their career the status of writers of the literary establishment, Mishima and Murakami have been perceived to an extent as outcasts, more trendy (if possible) abroad than in their country.

In this selection, I must acknowledge the process of ruling out other potential authors. Writers like Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, Abe Kōbō, Yoshimoto Banana, or Ryū Murakami have also been very popular in these two countries during their respective periods. The selected four novelists, however, have produced a larger body of texts than these counterparts. The aforementioned parallelisms one can make across Kawabata, Mishima, Ōe, and Murakami also play a notable role in their selection when projecting a comparison between the national narratives at each period.

The act of reading and interpreting texts is also conditioned by two elements: the social structures of textual production and circulation, and the specific background of each reader. As a basis for the creation of the corpus, this project acknowledges that the target reader of a newspaper article is not the same target reader of an academic work. The present thesis functions under the premise that the target reader of an academic work is a specialized reader and therefore she has or has had access to more critical and in-depth knowledge of Japan. Tony Bennet also points out the importance of academic training and literary awareness when interpreting texts. Although I do not agree with Bennet in considering that popular reading is an untrained exercise, it is safe to assume a possible distinction between the formulation of meaning from texts devised by and for scholars and those written with a general reader as intended target. The insight of a specialized reader could hypothetically influence the placement of Japanese literature in contrast with existing national narratives. As a final criterion in devising this body of texts, I draw a distinction within the mass of selected critical texts by splitting each author-defined corpus into two subcorpora: mass-audience-targeted texts and academia-targeted texts.

In terms of practical scope, I limit the range of each subcorpus to a practical set of sources. For mass-audience-targeted texts, I select pieces that discuss the literature of the aforementioned authors appearing in a confined assortment of outlets singled out following the combined criteria of wide-spanning reach on their respective markets and their tradition of featuring cultural criticism. In the United States, I look at pieces published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*,

The New York Review of Books, and *The New Yorker*. In Spain, I draw my selection from texts appearing in *ABC*, *La Vanguardia*, and *El País*. This selection is supplemented by a review of readers, biographies, and popular treatises published for the general public on the literature of these authors. For academia-targeted texts, the pool of potential sources is narrower. I look at monographs, chapters in collaborative works, and articles featured in peer-reviewed journals.

To sum up: I study the national narrative of Japan through an analysis of motives present intertextually in texts that comment Japanese literature by linking it to Japan. I call this type of documents 'critical texts.' I organize my whole body of critical texts into four corpora. Each corpus compiles the critical texts associated with one of the selected authors whose literature is discussed. The four corpora are arranged into two historical periods: "In Peace We Prosper" (1945-1989) contains the corpora associated to Kawabata Yasunari and Mishima Yukio; and "The Great Bewitchment" (1989-2018) covers Ōe Kenzaburō and Murakami Haruki. This study works with the hypothesis that the construction of the national narrative might be determined by the context of production, circulation, and target readership of critical texts. Therefore, each corpus is concurrently divided into two subcorpora: mass-audience-targeted texts and academia-targeted texts. The intertextual analysis is conducted both thematically and regarding its historical evolution. Once the national narrative is identified, I look closely at its traits, its development, and the differences across corpora and subcorpora. The ultimate step of this work is to see whether the literature-based national narrative is

framed challenging or supporting the hegemonic national narrative of Japan held in the West.

1.2. A Hegemonic Principle to Bind Us All

British best-selling novelist and imperialism apologist Rudyard Kipling left India on 1889 headed for London on a world tour. On his way to U.S. shores, Kipling stopped in Japan, where he wrote for *The Pioneer* a series of chronicles that would be edited and published ten years later in his work *From Sea to Sea and Other Sketches: Letters of Travel.* In these articles, Kipling expressed what he believed was an honest admiration for Japan and the Japanese, established on the aesthetic appreciation of some of the cultural forms he was introduced to during his visit. Kipling was also aware of the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural changes that had been going on in the country for the last decades and publicly admonished them for considering they were 'Westernizing' Japan. He judged Japanese culture must be preserved and the way he proposed to do so was by suggesting a pact between Western powers never to colonize the country. He wished to put Japan in a glass jar, unadulterated in isolation for the rest to gaze at and enjoy:

> It would pay us to establish an international suzerainty over Japan: to take away any fear of invasion and annexation, and pay the country as much as ever it chose, on condition that it simply sat still and went on making beautiful things while our

> learned men learned. It would pay us to put the whole Empire in a glass case and mark it *Hors Concours*, Exhibit A.[18]

Kipling's suggestion, once one subtracts the poetic license, already hints at the three main tropes that constitute the hegemonic Western construction of Japan. First, it questions Japan's association with the project of modernity. Second, it aspires to pin down Japan's national identity on pre-modern cultural elements. And third, it deprives Japan of autonomous political agency through the objectifying effect of aestheticism.

In this section, I produce an overview of the hegemonic national narrative of Japan in the United States and Spain. This outline is necessary to establish the referential framework against which I will set the literature-based national narrative once it has been defined and analyzed in the following stages of this work. As explained previously, the hegemonic national narrative is a discourse that circulates mediated by state and ideological institutions and which legitimizes the existing power. To expose this process of legitimation it is necessary to juxtapose the discourses' traits against a historical unraveling of the policies exerted by the agents in power.

It is important to clarify some conceptual definitions already developed in the previous part in order to have a clearer understanding of what I mean by hegemonic national narrative. One of the main issues when dealing with hegemony is the question of agency. Hegemonic national narratives are discourses that legitimate

---

[18] Rudyard Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, 335, quoted in Lehmann, *The Image of Japan*, 25.

power, but one cannot (and in fact, should not) interpret in this a cause-effect of direct agency in its production. There is no feasible and accurate way to assess intention properly. One should avoid studying discourses with the aim of judging or unveiling a plan or an order. Discourses do not have purposes; the agents that invoke and reproduce them do, at their particular and relative convenience. Throughout these pages, the hegemonic national narrative will be presented as a discourse in evolution. It is hegemonic because it legitimizes the controlling power and in its relationship with institutions reproduces the dominant ideology to the point of being part of it. That should not be mistaken for a pronouncement of origin and intention. I do not defend the notion that the hegemonic national narrative is produced by the governing power, even though the discourse's legitimation of dominant ideology may be a tempting reason to establish a connection. A discourse becomes hegemonic because it legitimizes the dominant power and is transmitted through a system of ideological institutions, regardless of the expressed or unstated intentions of the source's authors. Intention can always be denied. Legitimation, on the other hand, is not subjected to the producer but to the conditions and content of the discourse alone. Those are the safe limits of discourse interpretation and analysis, which are nevertheless extensive and constructive enough to properly meet the objectives of this work.

The present summary, organized chronologically, is divided into two periods: from 1868 to 1945 and from 1945 to roughly the present day. It should not be taken as a comprehensive inquiry on the hegemonic national narrative. Such an endeavor goes way beyond the practical

scope of this thesis. The objective of reconstructing in detail the hegemonic national narrative is indeed attractive, but also too distanced from the questions this project addresses. This exposition is designed instead as a directed and abridged essay. It aims to pinpoint the essential key concepts of the flowing discourse of power in the United States and Spain for the last 150 years. This section will provide the required context for understanding where ideas of the literary-based national narrative may come from, or at least, may be influenced by. It is an essential exercise anticipating the final objective of this thesis: contrasting the unearthed literature-based national narrative against the hegemonic national narrative.

There has been great and exhaustive work previously done on the matter. I base this review of the hegemonic national narrative on these authoritative works. I supplement this with my own analysis of texts that have been consequential in the establishment of the specific constitutive motives of this discourse. I will also take into account how the hegemonic national narrative has circulated in the United States and Spain as independent countries and communities, highlighting their particularities and differences. This section, therefore, is an interdisciplinary exercise of historical synopsis, textual summary, cultural commentary, and discourse analysis.

1.2.1 From Curiosity to Conflict (1868-1945)

The historiography of Japan has found in 1868 a handy and reliable turning point to convey the idea of a new beginning for the country.

Prior to that year, Japan had decided to turn its back to former and normalized diplomatic relations with the vast majority of foreign nations for approximately 220 years. A series of decrees that officially expelled foreign vessels and individuals and banned them from re-entering Japan was issued during the 1630s. These were in contested effect during Tokugawa rule until a sequence of attempts by Western powers to open up Japan during the first half of the 19th century finally saw a breakthrough in 1854 with the signing of the Convention of Kanagawa, when the expedition of United States Commodore Matthew Perry forced through military intimidation the establishment of ambassadorial relationships between the two countries. This parenthesis of two hundred years of apparent reclusion is known as the *sakoku* policy, which literally means 'closed country.' Trade, political, and cultural exchange were made exceptionally difficult during sakoku, but it was by no means impossible as the term might lead to believe. As a matter of fact, since the 1970s an increasing number of historians have been focusing on deconstructing this idea of Japan as an isolated country, studying the many instances in which isolationism was challenged during the time. Trade was possible with the Dutch from the artificial island of Dejima since as early as 1641; with the Chinese and the Koreans from ports in Nagasaki; with the Ainu in Hokkaido; and in the south with the people of Ryukyu. Some sporadic trade delegations were also accepted from time to time in Osaka and Edo. Even the telltale naming of sakoku has been debunked and properly identified as an anachronism. According to Ronald P. Toby, 'sakoku' comes from a translation made in 1801 by trade port interpreter Shizuki Tadao, based on a Dutch version of *The*

History of Japan, written in German by Engelbert Kaempfer in 1727.[19] Prior to the establishment of this name, Japanese referred to these decrees with their Chinese equivalent, *kaikin*, or maritime prohibitions, which is closer to its technical attributes and does not describe the country by its foreign trade policies.

The shadow of sakoku is long in its association with the trope of a Japan that 'closes itself' to foreign intervention. It turns a historical episode into a common trait of the country, a Japan that naturally withdraws into itself whenever it defies Western interests. During the trade tensions of the 1970s, many re-discovered in that trope a useful pretext to make an interested cultural interpretation out of divergence of economic agendas, with titles like *Globalization of Japan: Japanese Sakoku Mentality and U.S. Efforts to Open Japan* as an example of this conceptual framework of reference. I argue the emphasis and survival of a term like sakoku is a token element of a hegemonic national narrative based on two pillars. First, it presents Japan as a country that preserved a sense of uniqueness in its customs and cultural expressions that derived from a pre-1868 era. Second, it frames industrialization, the capitalist society model, the parliamentary state, and other standard-bearer concepts of the 'project of modernity' as a purely Western export and not something that could grow naturally in Japan or even mix with a local version of it.

This is linked to the choosing of 1868 as the starting point for the so-called modern era in Japan: the year the Five Charter Oath was proclaimed and the Meiji period was put in motion. The historical

[19] Toby, "Reopening the Question of Sakoku," 323-333.

chain of events that explains the instauration of the Meiji political project is complex and has too many factors and agents in play to be laid down in this account. It is not my intention to give a comprehensive description of the matter, as there are many and more complete works that accomplish so in greater detail.[20] It is, however, worth mentioning some key elements that become the basis for the construction of a narrative that would support and legitimize the two aforementioned pillars. According to Charles B. Wordell, the United States favored an interpretation of Japan's quest for industrialization and modernization assisted by direct Western intervention:

> Japan was described as self-contained and its people were shown to be frugal craftsmen and farmers, but it also was able to furnish its capital and emperor with fabulous wealth. The government was shown to be tyrannical and isolationist, yet the people were described as civil, curious, peace-loving, and friendly.[21]

This depiction of Japan as a land full of riches came to meet the United States' agenda of economic expansion and imperialism. Foreign intervention in the country was necessary in order for trade and industrial exchange to grow and generate wealth. Jean-Pierre Lehmann emphasizes the oft-forgotten role of the U.S. whaling lobby in putting pressure in Washington for opening up Japan.[22] According to the dominant narrative at the time, the United States, along with

[20] See for instance Andrew Gordon's *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* or Ian Buruma's *Inventing Japan 1853-1964*.
[21] Wordell, *Japan's Image in America*, 6.
[22] Lehmann, "Old and New Japonisme," 760.

other foreign powers, were helping the Japanese to get rid of an oppressive rule and meet their desires of trade and economic development. In this account, an internal revolt overthrew the old government. The new regime, aided by the West, put in motion the necessary measures to transition into a country that would greet foreign exchange – especially, as it was in the Western powers' interest, an active trade relationship.

During the second half of the 19th century, the Meiji state would take shape drawing inspiration from sociopolitical structures present in Western countries. The government took express control over the economy through direct investment, public expending, and cooperation with the *zaibatsu* – the industrial and financial conglomerates associated with historically powerful families. The list of changes is long and recognizable in the Western tale of industrial revolution. The caste society was transformed into an industrial class society (with little change in the pyramid of inequalities). Civil rights movements sprouted with the consolidation of the urban class. Land reforms and the exodus of population to the cities created profound demographic alterations. Endless discussions about how to manage and propel universal education and healthcare systems occupied the public and institutional debate. The *genrōin* or Council of Elders established in 1875 was substituted by a National Diet after the Meiji Constitution was proclaimed in 1889. This constitution, outlined from the Prussian and British equivalents and in force until the end of World War II, defined Japan as an absolute monarchy and placed the Emperor as the head of state.

This process of adaptation to a Western-inspired model of sociopolitical organization was met with both admiration and disdain. The Japanese investment in economic and technological progress was praised by the U.S. for showing what was judged as a commitment to the Western recipe for modernization. This appraisal, however, can be considered at the same time condescending and patronizing. The boundaries between following a model and copying it were blurred in the classic fashion of white supremacist rhetoric. The Orientalist attitude shown by the West towards their colonies also saw a similar expression in the treatment of Japan. A bar of permanent distance was put in place between the West and Japan through the rendering of the Japanese nation as 'exotic.' Japanese culture was presented as a perpetual *alter*, strange and estranged. The movement of japonisme that swept Europe during the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century reinforced this notion for decades to come. It also underpinned one of the axioms of the process of exoticism, the "aesthetic exceptionalization" of Japan. Karatani Kojin identifies this process as a direct inheritance from Immanuel Kant's aesthetic theory pouring out into cultural analysis. Aesthetic exceptionalization disguises the representation mechanisms of Orientalism in what seems a praise of beauty. It also reduces the nation's complex identity to a mere target of fascination that essentially objectifies the subaltern subject.[23]

The West's narrative monopoly over modernity becomes evident through the process of rendering Japan by means of its cultural referents. Japan may have constituted a modern state, society, and

[23] Karatani, "Uses of Aesthetics: After Orientalism," 153.

economy drawing from Western inspiration, but without total cultural assimilation, modernity can only be framed as an estranged attribute in the perception of the nation's identity. The process of integrating modernity to the nation's profile is suspended indefinitely. In order to sustain Western dominance, the Other is not allowed to fully embrace modernity while remaining at the same time independent from the West. The logic of post-Enlightenment imperialist legitimation dictates that there cannot be other models of modernity that would challenge the idea of Western progress. National identities need to be either fully integrated as part of the West or remain excluded to the margins of incompleteness and ambiguity. Therefore, whenever the hegemonic narrative describes Japan as a 'Westernized' country, it acknowledges a sociopolitical reality while rejecting to consider the modernizing processes that sustain this paradigm an organic manifestation of the Japanese nation. In regarding the project of modernization as a 'Westernizing' phenomenon, the West reinforces its monopoly on the idea of the modern by claiming a right to patent it.

The Western hegemonic discourse demands adaptation to – and imitation of – the West rather than to accept alternative blueprints of modernity. This is reinforced in the case of Japan by the repeated belief that the Japanese are incapable of abstract thought and just able to produce but not to have original inventiveness. They are seen as followers and not leaders, because conceding autonomy of theory and thought to a non-Western nation would open the possibility for opposition to the dominant order. To counterbalance this insistence in the imitative and the 'Westernized,' the hegemonic national narrative reifies perceived Japanese cultural particularities to mold and sustain a

subject that is a permanent Other. The praise of particularism is founded on the exclusionary celebration of cultural practices that are identified from a pre-capitalist, pre-modern time, effectively de-modernizing the country. Failing to recognize the contradiction, this narrative of aesthetic admiration emerges precisely as an answer to the modernizing process, and in the words of Karatani, "appearing to be anticapitalist, it attempts to aesthetically sublimate the contradictions of the capitalist economy."[24]

The logic, therefore, unfolds like this: Japan is modern but not quite because its culture is not. It achieves modernity through inspiration from Western structures, but it is also at the same time not 'the West' because of an essentialized as exotic cultural tradition. This tension is at the core of the hegemonic national narrative and has different expressions depending on the moment's particular circumstances.

As seen with the articulation of the sakoku narrative, Japan's foreign policies constitute one of the most important sources in the construction of the hegemonic discourse. In 1871, a group of politicians and scholars was sent to tour Europe and the United States to study how Western political and economic systems work and see which measures could be learned and applied to Japan. What is usually left out in the telling of the Iwakura Mission is that this quest for Western knowledge was ancillary. The main objective of this diplomatic delegation was, as Michael Austin explores, the negotiation and abolition of the unequal treaties that Japan had been forced to sign with foreign powers in the previous decades, an unpleasant legacy

[24] Ibid.

inherited from the last years of Tokugawa rule.[25] The disappointment held by the delegates of the Iwakura Mission in their fiasco to properly revert these treaties was transmitted to the Meiji rulers, who saw more reason to push forward their modernizing agenda. This goes to show that Japan's push for a modern state cannot be simplified to a joyful desire to finally join the West in trade and diplomacy, as the hegemonic narrative put it in the beginning. Instead, modernization emerged as a survival tactic for a country that saw how the Western powers had their way with China and wanted to avoid meeting the same fate.

Japan's national project was interpreted in the hegemonic national narrative as the wish of the Japanese people to reach out to the West in their following and imitation of a modern state. The image of a friendly-defined Japan facilitated cultural and diplomatic relationships while fostering economic investment and advantageous trade agreements. The construction and reproduction of this narrative can be seen in texts related to Japan as direct or indirect source from very early on in the modern history of the relationship between these countries. Algernon B. Mitford, attaché to the British Embassy in Tokyo for three years, prepared a series of stories about Japan and published them under the title *Tales of Old Japan* in 1870. The relative success of a volume like *Tales* represented a starting and referential point for these types of works: anthologies compiled or authored by Westerners under the often dubious claim of being translations or adaptations from Japanese folk tales. These works were entertained beyond their possible artistic or aesthetic value as guides meant to

[25] Auslin, *Negotiating With Imperialism*, 204.

assist in the recent quest to undertand the Japanese. A review published in *The New York Times* considered the stories "comments on the civilization and customs of this very singular people."[26] Similarly, an article in *The Chicago Daily Tribune* judged that the book was able to fulfill the reader's curiosity towards the country by offering descriptions of Japan and the Japanese in great detail.[27]

Chūshingura was also hailed for its supposed description of the Japanese mentality. Best known today as 'The 47 Rōnin,' Edward Greey published with Putnam's Sons in 1880 the most consequential version of the story. Called *The Loyal Ronins*, Greey claimed he associated with Japanese émigré Shiuichiro Saito to translate from the original the story *Iroha Bunko* by Tamenaga Shunsui II. Greey's version also served as the blueprint for the Spanish translation of the same tale. Published in 1908 under the name *Los 47 capitanes*, it was brought to the Spanish-speaking world by Ángel González, Leo Charpentier, and Enrique Gómez Carrillo. The reception of both works and the way they refer to Japan and the Japanese are however quite different. While U.S. texts in the 1880s coupled Japanese loyalty and readiness to sacrifice for a cause with an apparently gentle and meek disposition, Spanish reviews focused rather on a so-called martial spirit of the Japanese nation.

This change of interpretation between the two adaptations reflects the significant transformations experienced by the hegemonic national narrative at the turn of the 20th century. The Japanese attracted

[26] "New Publications," *New York Times*, Sept. 12, 1870.
[27] "New Books," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 13, 1871.

international attention for their military might in 1895 with their triumph over China despite Qing China's meager status at the end of the dynasty. At that time, the Japanese success in modernizing their army and being able to turn the tide of the historic power balance in their favor was read with admiration. In contrast, the Japanese success in ending their war with Russia to their favor in 1905 was interpreted differently. Western powers saw their given supremacy over the region questioned for the first time by Japan's victory. The project of modern Japan, which was until recently considered a cause worth encouraging and supporting, gradually became a menace and a reason for concern. Some of the cultural traits that were assigned as part of those first fifty years of hegemonic national narrative and which identified the Japanese as humble, peaceful, submissive, and friendly were exchanged for another set of attributes that depicted the Japanese as aggressive, deceitful, and power hungry. In many instances, there was no need to search for new or overlooked cultural features. The same characteristics that under different political circumstances were considered positive got spun to be regarded as degrading or to transmit opposite interpretations. This shifting back and forth between different interpretations of cultural attributes, like the two sides of the same coin, reveals the power-bound bias of the hegemonic national narrative. This discourse is not based on descriptions composed for the sake of understanding the Other. Rather, cultural attributes are identified only for them to be judged and interpreted in a way that conveniently legitimates the actions of the dominant power.

These changes can be traced in many different scenarios. Neil Harris studies the change of reactions in U.S. public discourse towards the participation of Japan in world fairs. These events were very popular during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. World fairs were instrumental in the projection of host and guest countries as a show of dominance, technological advancement, and balanced blend of longstanding cultural tradition and commitment to peaceful diplomatic transnational collaboration. In the 1876 Philadelphia World Fair, Japan showcased both traditional artifacts and a sample of their modernizing efforts. The public praised Japanese pre-industrial cultural representations for their exotic value and loathed any display of modern accomplishments. Harris declares that the U.S. attendees "feared that Western patronage might destroy the distinctive Japanese characteristics they claimed to admire."[28] The nature of these reactions seemed to have conditioned the Japanese participation in the World Columbian's Exposition of 1893 held in Chicago. The committee assigned by the Japanese Diet to prepare for such occasion carefully increased the amount of pre-Meiji cultural artifacts. U.S. visitors were delighted by this decision. Those few showings of Japanese industrial and technological progress were downplayed or accepted as craftily paired with their particular tradition.[29] The geostrategic changes happening at the turn of the century shattered this reluctant acceptance of a congruous combination between modernity and tradition. Japan's participation in the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition was determined by the nation's recent show of military strength. The general praise devoted

[28] Harris, "All the World a Melting Pot?" 34.
[29] Ibid., 41, 45.

to pre-modern cultural traits hid beneath the fear of Japan losing its perceived distinctiveness if it tried to imitate the West in going offshore to plunder. The mourning of an exclusively aestheticized Japan disguised an implicit rejection of any manifestations of the country adopting a role of active political autonomy.

Vicente David Almazán and Elena Barlés trace and distinguish this evolution also in the reporting of news from Japan as portrayed by Spanish illustrated periodicals. According to their study, interest and periodicity fired up at the turn of the century, especially after the Russo-Japanese war.[30] Japan was described as superior to its foes thanks to Western modernization. This praise was coupled at the time with cyclic representations of traditional Japan. Indulgent interest waned after the Japanese lost their meek and innocent attributes, as seen by the decrease in reporting of affairs from this country.[31]

Another of the most visible manifestations of this pivoting dynamic in the hegemonic national narrative is the treatment of race. During the 19th century, the Japanese racial status evolved in the Western hegemonic narrative in presence, relevance, and judgment. As Rotem Kowner points out, the West's use of racially charged discourses has been a way to produce and maintain the specific power relations that would legitimize their superiority over the rest of nations, colonies, or competitors.[32] Racial discourse devises and emulates the convenient hierarchical structure of dominant over subjugated based on the

[30] Almazán and Barlés, "Japón y el Japonismo en la revista Ilustración española y americana," 638-9.
[31] Ibid., 642.
[32] Kowner, "Lighter Than Yellow, But Not Enough," 104.

supposedly racial suitability of 'the white' to be more apt to rule. In Kowner's argumentation, the West's delayed racialization of the Japanese was linked to Japan's challenge to this logic of hierarchy in race. The Japanese government and society swiftly adapting to the structures of a modern state without being a colony or a Judeo-Christian nation attacked the foundations of white supremacy. As U.S. clergyman, missionary, and lecturer George William Knox wrote in 1904:

> In our superficial way we have classed Asiatics together and we have assumed our own superiority. It has seemed a fact, proved by centuries of intercourse and generations of conquest, that the East lacks the power of organization, the attention to details, and of master over complicated machinery. Japan upsets our deductions by showing its equality in these matters, and, on the final appeal, by putting itself into the first rank of nations. Here is a people, undoubtedly Asiatic, which shows that it can master the science and the methods of the West.[33]

During the first decades of Meiji, Japanese were depicted in vague racial terms. Some authors even tried to strike resemblances to white phenotypes when describing the fair hue of courtesan women's skin.[34] The Japanese military triumphs changed Japan's ambiguous placement in Western racial discourse. They were described instead with terms associated to what the West considered Mongoloid races and which

---

[33] George William Knox, *Imperial Japan: The Country and Its People*, 7-8, quoted in Kowner, "Lighter Than Yellow, But Not Enough," 104.
[34] Kowner, "Lighter Than Yellow, But Not Enough," 108.

boiled down in the end to the categorization of the Japanese as 'yellow.' This process of racialization happened correlated to the changing needs of the West in maintaining supremacy over East Asia. Japan's dare for regional control and the political push for an autonomous domestic and international agenda triggered a change in the hegemonic narrative. The Japanese became cataloged more openly as an inferior race in order to diminish the country's rising call for power, deemed menacing to Western states. The 'yellow peril' leitmotif was most famously promoted at the time by Kaiser Willem II to encourage tighter control over China after several revolts hurt Prussian interests in the late 1890s.[35] Japan was to be incorporated as a 'yellow peril' player after its victory in the Russo-Japanese war despite the ironic support it received by Western powers during the conflict. This trope would dominate the hegemonic national narrative with different degrees of intensity during the first half of the 20th century.

This moment in time also saw a good number of texts related to Japan published in the U.S. and Spain. Among those, two works stand out: *The Book of Tea*, by Okakura Kazuō (also known in Japan as Okakura Tenshin), and *Bushidō: The Soul of Japan*, by Nitobe Inazō. These two books are great representatives of the contemporary oscillating nature of a discourse that swings back and forth between the idea of Japan as meek and harmless, to then render the Japanese as fundamentally inclined to war and violence. Okakura and Nitobe devised these works purportedly catered to a Western audience, writing them in English while living in the United States. In these texts, the two writers

[35] Editorial, "The Far Eastern Situation From a German Standpoint," 3-4, quoted in Kowner, "Lighter Than Yellow, But Not Enough," 126.

attempt a study on the attributes and history of what they categorize as particularly and essentially Japanese traditions. Okakura and Nitobe frame the Japanese tradition within the tight boundaries of a set of practices and systems primarily rooted in pre-modern times.

Okakura's primary objective in *The Book of Tea* is devising an introduction to *chadō*, or the principles of the Japanese tea ceremony, for Western readers. Published in 1906, Okakura's text establishes a link between the attributes of *chadō* to a so-called national way of conducting for the Japanese: elegance, simplicity, patience, and so forth. He associates these features beyond the practice of the tea ceremony to include other allegedly national disciplines. Okakura mixes all of these considerations with his own musings on Taoism and Zen. *The Book of Tea* strongly projects associations of the Japanese within the conceptual framework of Karatani's aesthetic exceptionalization. As a matter of fact, Karatani notices how Okakura was strongly influenced by the ongoing popularity of Japanese artifacts in the West and the way Japan was aesthetically approached as an object of admiration. According to Karatani, Okakura's framing of Japanese pre-modern art (and the values he associated to it through the vehicle of the tea ceremony as representative of the nation) could only come after the artifacts were widely popular in the West: "appreciating and protecting the pre-industrial form of introduction became possible only after the industrial capital established its hegemony."[36] Karatani suggests with this that Okakura was producing a discourse determined by the logic of Western dominating tastes and

[36] Karatani, "Uses of Aesthetics," 155.

perceptions. The *Book of Tea* is a work that operates echoing the core principles of the hegemonic national narrative.

Written and published between 1899 and 1900, *Bushidō* did not get a Japanese translation until many years after it came out in the U.S. and only because of its tremendous success abroad. Despite the theme and the intentions of the author in trying to provide a faithful interpretation of the 'samurai code,' it is a book crafted at a historical moment in which the warrior samurai had been gone for centuries, and what was left of the class dissolved in the new order of the Meiji society. Nitobe's placement of a 'Japanese spirit' in a series of moral attributes coming from the samurai code was also harmonized within the hegemonic discourse of apprehending Japan as essentially understood from the static and almost ahistorical period of pre-industrialism. Moreover, the publishing and popularization of *Bushidō* would coincide with the increase of the 'yellow peril' trope. This parallel is not surprising if we take into account that it places the essence of the Japanese nation in an anachronistically reconstructed code meant to give transcendent meaning to a life devoted to fight.

The simultaneous advent of these two books shows the mechanics of aesthetic exceptionalistm. Even though the focus on pre-modern Japan had been previously interpreted solely under the de-politicizing view of aesthetic appreciation, military interventions were used to weave into it the trope of the Japanese as a nation of soldiers. The warrior motif was linked to the politically-motivated discourse of 'yellow peril,' but I argue it can also be understood under the same

aesthetical de-politicization scheme used to label the Japanese as submissive and delicate.

Japanese militarism is framed in the hegemonic national narrative as an echo of a model of values that preceded modernity. This was unquestioned despite the technological advances put in place by the Japanese military. These tropes ignored the contemporary colonial design and ambitions of a country that wanted to emulate in this enterprise the strategy followed by Western powers. As discussed before, pre-modern framing and exoticization dominate the hegemonic narrative as they legitimize Western dominance as the only rightful agent of modernity. The image of the Japanese as a barbarous foe whose modernity is only imitative and not a committed essential trait would permeate the narrative and have its fiercest showing during World War II. Before reaching that point, however, the hegemonic narrative went through a process of moderate evolution. Texts published at the juncture of the two centuries grounded the narrative around the idea of an ever-enduring and ever-incomplete process of transition from the pre-modern to a fully modernized state. This unfinished conversion was woven with the pretended explanation that a looming remnant of pre-modern cultural essence justified Japan not finalizing its embracement of modernity as per the Western judgment.

The choice of literary texts published at the time carried and contributed to this narrative. Small Spanish publishing houses and magazines printed Japanese children's stories through the mediation of diplomatic delegates. Spanish diplomats came into contact with these texts through their British, German, and French counterparts, more

closely related to Japan and their cultural scene. These stories, however, went almost entirely unnoticed and their reach is reasonably questionable. The first documented Japanese novel published in Spain was *Nami-ko*, by Tokutomi Kenjirō, named *Hototogitsu* in the original and which appeared serialized in Japan between 1888 and 1899. In an unprecedented scenario that would very rarely repeat itself until the end of the 20th century, both English and Spanish translations appeared simultaneously in the year 1904. It is the tragic love story of a marriage endangered by filial conflicts of interests. It included the novelty for the Western reader of being set in contemporary Japan rather than in a pre-Meiji context. Because of the crucial role that the Sino-Japanese War has in the story, the polemic function of the warrior trope and the still growing presence of a 'yellow peril' rhetoric can also be seen in the reception of this novel acting concurrently in both countries. In a *New York Times* review, the author warns the reader about how the image of "the sweet, gentle, imperturbable, courteous Japanese" was going to be debunked by "men who growl and roar, and women who scold and rage."[37] A few days later, another text points out the way "Nami-ko also embodies the spirit of knighthood in Japan" and establishes a connection between the text and an awakened nationalistic spirit of active militarism.[38] The diegetic context of the war with the Chinese is compared to the then current conflict between Russia and Japan. In a piece published by *La Vanguardia*, the author raises doubts over Japan's complete commitment to modernity:

[37] "Boston Notes," *New York Times*, Apr. 9, 1904.
[38] "Divorce in Japan," *New York Times*, Apr. 23, 1904.

> [The novel] explains the ancient traditions that still survive and those modern that Western civilization brought to them; and how in some instances these were harmonized and in some others they have created conflicts and dissonances.[39] [(i)]

The reception of *Nami-ko* was not an exception in exemplifying the turn in course of the hegemonic national narrative. Exoticism objectified the country by turning it into an entity of wonder and aesthetic appreciation instead of an agent capable of ethic and artistic discourse. Japanese culture existed, was produced, could be valued and analyzed, but it did not dialogue with and was not deemed theoretically capable of challenging Western epistemology. That is why during the second half of the 19th century, Japanese culture reached the West and fed the hegemonic national narrative not through direct intervention of Japanese artists and texts, but by means of the mediation of the freshly minted figure of the Japanologist.

Japanologists were essayists, translators, novelists, journalists, diplomats, scholars and government advisors. Many had a close relationship with the armed forces as several were enlisted during military conflicts or gained their knowledge of the country because of them. The overwhelming majority of them were relatively well-off, male, and white. These authors held prominent positions in Western and Japanese academic and diplomatic institutions, published journals, and founded associations, the oldest of which was the Asiatic Society of Japan instituted in Yokohama in 1872. Besides their own production, their role of translators conditioned the selection and

---

[39] "Bibliografía," *La Vanguardia*, October 7, 1904.

rendering of Japanese texts for the Western general public. In this process, the work of four authors, published at this seminal juncture between centuries, had a considerable impact: from the English-speaking world, Basil Hall Chamberlain, Lafcadio Hearn, and William George Aston; and, in Spain, I would like to rescue the figure of Enrique Gómez Carrillo.

Basil Hall Chamberlain, professor of Japanese and philology at the Imperial University of Tokyo and first translator of the historical-religious classic *Kojiki* into English, wrote and published in 1890 a book about his thoughts and considerations on Japan that he named *Things Japanese* (later changed to *Japanese Things* and inspired, in his words and curiously enough, by the Spanish phrase "cosas de España").[40] This book, whose popularity is proved by the many reprints it has had over the decades, was organized as a selected encyclopedia around loose and chosen topics of his liking. It includes chapters like "Languages" and "Law" to some other less conventional keywords like "Topsy-turvydom:" a collection of anecdotic differences in habits (from the way one treats a horse to how a key turns inside a lock) that – as the name suggests – paints Western means as 'the correct' and the modus of the Japanese as bent. As can be inferred from a book with this mission, Japan and the Japanese are thoroughly judged throughout the text.

Chamberlain makes a case for defending the Japanese modernization project, for at the time the book was written, the new Meiji constitution was just approved and put in place. He praises pre-

[40] Chamberlain, *Japanese Things*, xi.

modern cultural traits as guiding what he calls "the national character […] manifesting no change in essentials."[41] Racially speaking, Chamberlain, based on the works of Imperial Family physician Erwin Bälz, frames the Japanese as part of the 'mongoloids' race.[42] He became according to Kowler one of the first to make an explicit racial link between the Chinese and the Japanese.[43] In this description, he also establishes a dangerous assessment of their physiological attributes with dehumanizing connotations which will have echoes during World War II: "the Japanese have less highly strung nerves than we Europeans. Hence they endure pain more calmly, and meet death with comparative indifference."[44]

Chamberlain, in a later revision and reedition of his work published in 1904, raises in the introduction a consideration on the 'yellow peril' trope as it "has had most vogue of late."[45] He makes a veiled critique of how mistrust of potential contenders only appears when the ascending nation is not Western. Chamberlain even acknowledges the existence of a self-sustaining bundle of contradictions that make up the hegemonic national narrative. His assessment, however, is limited. In that same introduction, he strengthens his consideration of Japan as unfathomable and inaccessible to the Westerner for the mere reason of being part of Asia. In the end, Chamberlain still believes "beneath the surface of the modern Japanese upheaval that more of the past has been retained than has been let go."[46]

---

[41] Ibid., 8.
[42] Ibid., 250.
[43] Kowler, "Ligther Than Yellow, but Not Enough," 128.
[44] Chamberlain, *Japanese Things*, 252.
[45] Ibid., 9.
[46] Ibid., 7.

Lafcadio Hearn reached the archipelago as a U.S. journalist around the same time Chamberlain published *Japanese Things*. Through the latter's intermediation, Hearn started working some years later at the Imperial University, from where he transferred to Waseda University in 1904. Hearn became famous thanks to his adaptations of Japanese folktales and ghost stories. He was known for rewriting popular tales that were set in pre-modern Japan with undisguised affection for long-gone traditions. Hearn claimed his most well-known work, *Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things*, is based on the translation and adaptation of old Japanese texts and oral tales he became acquainted with during his travels around the country. The work was also well received because it fit and fed the discourse on representing and exalting a pre-modern Japan based on which the Western reader could, through Hearn's authority, "understand the essential characteristics of the Japanese nation."[47]

Japanese folk stories were a common genre during this period for the same reason *Kwaidan* became popular among Westerners. A collection called *Sunrise Stories* published at the end of the century was praised for constituting an inside on the Japanese character and for painting feudal Japan as a happy time for the country.[48] In 1911, Grace James published *Green Willow and Other Japanese Fairy-Tales* in clear inspiration of Lafcadio Hearn.[49] In Spain, the trend was very similar. A review in *Llevor* proves the existence of a translation of Japanese folktales from English into Catalan already in 1905. The text praised this collection

[47] "Lafcadio's Fancies," *New York Times*, April 30, 1904.
[48] "Japanese Literature," *New York Times*, March 18, 1896.
[49] "Japanese Fairy-Tales," *New York Times*, Jan. 14, 1911.

for establishing even within cultural differences a shared sense of togetherness "freed from the passions of the moment."[50] (ii) Another translation from English to Spanish by Juan Valera was documented in 1919;[51] and an additional one was reported by *La Vanguardia* in 1934, called *Leyendas y cuentos del Japón* and translated by Franciscan clergyman Pedro José María Álvarez, who lived 35 years in the country.[52] It is interesting to point out how despite the historically tense moment and open imperialist thrust of Japan, there is no mention or allusion to warrior or 'potential foe' tropes in the reception of Álvarez's work. This suggests that the perception of the Japanese as an enemy was more intense in the United States than in Spain at the time. All these folktales and the critical texts that accounted for their reception had in common the placement and origin of the Japanese character in a time preceding modernization.

We can also frame the work and reception of *A History of Japanese Literature* by William George Aston within this discourse. Aston, yet another British diplomat/academic/classic translator (in his case, the *Nihongi*) whose legacy as a Japanologist is felt even today, was incidentally, like Chamberlain and Hearn at their respective turns, president of the Asiatic Society of Japan. *A History of Japanese Literature* was published in 1899 but has been reprinted several times since then. In the introduction to the 1986 edition, for instance, Terence Bullows considers there is still value in Aston's work as a gateway to Japanese literature. His only criticism is aimed at the historically reasonable lack of variety in sources that Aston took from to study Japanese literature

[50] "Contes populars del Japó," *Llevor*, April 29, 1905.
[51] *Literatura Hispano-Americana*, Jan. 1919.
[52] Serra y Boldú, "Leyendas y cuentos del Japón."

at the time. He makes very little mention of the biases, racism, and contextual Orientalism in which the original work was produced.

Aston's essay is divided into different historical stages all building up to the "Tokyo Period," now commonly referred to as Meiji. From this division, his consideration of the time span that goes from Heian to Edo as "dark ages" is worth reflecting upon. This identification seems only based on the relative shortage in production of what he judges aesthetically-alluring works. Japanese literature is in this text continuously compared to Western art forms. In this contrast, Aston makes the point of considering Japanese literature as a reflection of a supposed emotional rather than rational character, aligned with the hegemonic national narrative tropes of the Japanese as incapable of abstract thought, deprived of agency, and more fit to copy rather than to invent:

> The literature of a brave, courteous, light-hearted, pleasure-loving people, sentimental rather than passionate, witty and humorous, of nimble apprehension, but not profound, ingenious and inventive, but hardly capable of high intellectual achievement; of receptive minds endowed with a voracious appetite for knowledge with a turn for neatness and elegance of expression, but seldom or never rising to sublimity [53]

[53] Aston, *A History of Japanese Literature*, 4.

> To their minds things happen, rather than are done; the tides of fate are far more real to them than the strong will and the endeavor which wrestles with them.[54]

> Plagiarism, it may be remarked, is hardly recognized as an offense by the Japanese.[55]

Aston appears ambiguous in his judgment of the modernization project, but he surely mourns a lost, pre-modern Japan that has now its culture scene controlled by Western influence. All these traits shared by the hegemonic discourse are also echoed in the reception of the work, both in the United States[56] but also in Spain. In this country, a review of the original (accompanied by the promise of a translation) by *La España Moderna* described the work sharing Aston's passion for pre-modern Japan.[57] An article on contemporary Japanese literature published in *Nuestro tiempo* in 1913 was most probably influenced by Aston's work, as it reproduces some of its core concepts, especially the praise of pre-modern Japan. The author ends his piece scorning Japan's modernity and wishing for the Japanese people to focus sooner than later on a "re-edition of their old history."[58] (iii)

It is not possible to find a direct Spanish equivalent to the influence and reach British and U.S. Japanologists had in the Western hegemonic national narrative. There were, however, some authors that

---

[54] Ibid., 31.
[55] Ibid., 203.
[56] "Japanese Literature," *New York Times*, July 8, 1899.
[57] "Historia de la literatura japonesa," *La España moderna*, (Madrid, 1899), 154-158.
[58] "La literatura japonesa contemporánea," *Nuestro tiempo*, (Madrid, 1913), 106.

tried bringing Japan closer to the Spanish speaking public. Born and raised in Guatemala, Enrique Gómez Carrillo traveled around the world as a writer, journalist, and diplomat from his homeland but lived and held a strong professional and personal relationship with Spain. He worked for the Spanish newspapers and magazines *El Liberal*, *ABC*, *Blanco y Negro*, and *El Imparcial*. In 1905, *El Liberal* and the Argentinian tabloid *El Nacional* sent him to Japan as a foreign correspondent to inform their readers about what was happening in the country. This decision was triggered by an upsurge in interest sprouted from the surprising outcome of their war against Russia. After this trip, Gómez Carrillo published *El Japón heroico y galante* and *El alma japonesa*, two treatises written in his proverbial bohemian style that tried to explore and explain Japan and the Japanese. These works resemble *Things Japanese* in intentions, scope, and even structure. He also organizes them around thematic chapters that because of the lack of systematic order can be a bit repetitive. His books reveal quite clearly the presence and reproduction of some of the tropes already familiar in the hegemonic national narrative. Small wonder given that he quotes the aforementioned authors in his own texts. Gómez Carrillo's works, however, show some slight but significant differences when compared to the ones circulating in the United States.

Gómez Carrillo approaches Japan as a cultured traveler. He tries to adopt a role of intellectual authority that is a combination of him being up to date with whatever had been written on Japan at the time and the contemporary belief of being able to produce accurate anthropological descriptions of other cultures only by means of observation. Probably in line with his carefree perception of life,

Gómez Carrillo assesses Japan from a constant angle of aesthetic admiration. The object of his praise is a country whose essence derives from pre-modern times and wears the modern state and traces of European culture as a dress or a disguise.[59] He seems to categorize men as samurai and women as geishas almost fundamentally. From this association, he defines Japan as hosting a dichotomist soul that shifts back and forth between the delicate and the brutal. On the matter of patriotism and the fear of Japan becoming a militaristic power, Gómez Carrillo, writing when the trope of 'yellow peril' was getting more pull, praises the 'warrior spirit' and the apparent readiness of the Japanese people to find a will to fight, rejecting implicitly to frame these traits as dangerous or barbaric. He even acknowledges a potential Japanese imperial aspiration but considers this ambition as driven in the name of peace and not enforced necessarily through violent means.[60] Gómez Carrillo, who was writing to and from a European perspective (mostly Spanish but also French), seems to hint with this at a distinction in the needs of different powers that may create a split in a hypothetical cohesive Western hegemonic national narrative. While the United States saw in the 'yellow peril' trope the legitimation of policies that would assure the dominance over the Pacific, this discourse, although still present, did not have the same strength in Spanish texts.

The hegemonic national narrative of Japan unsurprisingly shares traits with the discourses on the Asian identity as constructed and denounced by Said's *Orientalism*. Japan is, however, an Oriental

[59] Gómez Carrillo, *El Japón heroico y galante*, 148.
[60] Ibid., 100.

collected separately from the sphere of Islamic influence that appears in Said's descriptions. The Japanese are described in tension and comparative dissymmetry with the national narrative of China. Harold Isaac pointed out in his chronology of Western perceptions of the Chinese that this narrative is anchored in counterbalance: whenever Japan was despised, the Chinese were exalted as a reference for the Orient to emulate, and vice versa. Sheila Johnson developed further this argument in what she called the 'traveling Asian stereotype:'

> The favorable Asian stereotype includes such attributes as patience, cleanliness, courtesy, and a capacity for hard work; the unfavorable one emphasizes clannishness, silent contempt, sneakiness, and cruelty. There is a good deal of evidence that these two stereotypes alternate between the Japanese and the Chinese and that when one nation is being viewed in the light of the favorable stereotype, the other will be saddled with the unfavorable epithets.[61]

Johnson argues that there is a constant shifting between two main tropes: the Japanese as gentle, peaceful, effeminate, and exotic (bundled under the representation of a geisha), against the Japanese as aggressive, fierce, diligent, masculine, and tireless (the Japanese as samurai). This binary portrayal defines the representation of Japanese in the United States, showing a different face of the coin depending on the historical momentum of their relationship. The seed for this ambivalence can be traced back to some of the first textual renderings of the hegemonic narrative. A long piece published in *The Chicago Daily*

[61] Johnson, *The Japanese Through American Eyes*, 10.

Tribune in 1874 explains how the U.S. convinced the Japanese to open up their country through the promise of economic prosperity. At the end of the text, the author believes that the Japanese are able to achieve success (meaning by that the consolidation of a modern state) through the same attributes that could lead to an opposite scenario:

> We hope for the best, because everything we have lately seen of them assures us that the Japanese have great capabilities for improvement. But, just because they have great capabilities, because they have shown themselves thoughtful and intelligent, with quick feelings and earnest convictions, we can hardly help apprehending the worst.[62]

Away from the deference of being pupil of Western modernity which determined discourses on the Japanese during the 19th century, the 'yellow peril' would dominate the hegemonic narrative in the period comprised after the annexation of Korea to the Japanese empire in 1910 and until the breaking of open hostilities in 1941. As Akira Iriye points out, the perception of Japan as a military threat was mainly fed by a U.S. neo-mercantilist agenda. This saw economic growth as a race between nations, and in this logic, Japan's change from trade partner to bitter rival and competitor favored U.S. interests.[63] It is within this rhetorical environment that the U.S. drafted in 1907 what was known as War Plan Orange, a report outlining the procedures to follow in case of a potential Japanese invasion. The fantasy of a Japanese assault was implanted and nursed in the U.S. imagery in what Kenneth

[62] "Japan," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 18, 1874.
[63] Iriye, "Japan as a Competitor, 1895-17," 75-76.

Hough calls the 'Japanese invasion sublime.' In 1909, a film called *The Japanese Invasion* in which a made-up 'General Noki' conquers the U.S. Pacific Coast was screened in New York. One year later, novelist Jack London, who was a war correspondent during the conflict in Port Arthur and had several clashes with Japanese authorities that probably enhanced his acute inherent racism, published a story named "The Unparalleled Invasion." In this tale, a Japanese-influenced China decides to conquer the West through planned migratory waves until it is eventually stopped by Western powers through biological warfare.[64] The crudity and hyperbolic animosity of U.S. descriptions of the Japanese during World War II are therefore better understood as the corollary of decades of imagining Japan as a prospect enemy. During fifty years, Japan's profile in the United States grew associated with terms of potential threat, rivalry for the control of the Pacific, and a veil of mystery that appeared derived as a branch of the exotic unknown that perpetuated Otherness.

There was, however, a period of exceptional and relative quietness. As pointed out by Wordell, during what coincided with the Taishō era (1912-1926), Japan almost disappeared from popular depictions. The rhetoric of Japan as a potential enemy got attenuated as an effect of the two countries being allies by the end of World War I. In Spain, the number of texts from or commenting Japan that appeared during these years was scarce. There were some notable exceptions, of course. Valencian best-selling writer and politician Vicente Blasco Ibáñez visited Japan during his world tour in 1923-1924, just after the Great Kantō Earthquake. Blasco Ibáñez's impressions were determined by

[64] Hough, "Demon Courage and Dread Engines," 23-39.

the aftermath of the disaster. It is within this context of reconstruction that he described the Japanese as having integrated Western technology and manners, but merely as a "self-conscious" and "clumsy" disguise.[65] [(iv)]

The trope of a Japan that can only be recognized and considered in pre-modern terms is set right from the beginning of his account. Blasco Ibáñez, fresh out of the boat and whilst being carried from the Yokohama harbor to the city, described the attires and practices in the streets of Tokyo sentencing that "Japan is nowhere to be seen."[66] [(v)] It was only when he found himself strolling around the old temples of Kamakura that Japan finally met his expectations. Blasco Ibáñez attempted a brief summary of Japan's history mixing religion with historical records in an overview that never missed the chance to emphasize the supposed violent aspect of the Japanese. When describing his contemporary times, he raised awareness of Japan's believed ambition of domination, always hidden behind apparent tranquility.[67] By the end of his trip, Blasco Ibáñez concluded that Japan had been for too long exalted and seen with condescendence by the West. This mistreatment carried in his view a blind danger, because Japan could react violently if left alone and isolated, giving the country reasons to fulfill a so-called desire to conquer.[68]

Meanwhile, Arthur Walley's translation of the *Genji Monogatari* gathered considerable attention despite the setbacks one may think an

---

65 Blasco Ibáñez, *La vuelta al mundo, de un novelista*, 204.
66 Ibid., 184.
67 Ibid., 196.
68 Ibid., 320.

11th-century Japanese courtesan novel published between 1925 and 1932 divided into four heavyweight volumes might have in arousing the interest of readers at that time. John Carter wrote a very long piece in *The New York Times* analyzing the first tome of the series. In this text, he expressed his desire for Japan to preserve the sensibility of Genji instead of investing so much time and effort in 'Europeanized' artistic expressions.[69] Walley also happened to translate around the same time Sei Shonagon's *The Pillow Book*. Unsurprisingly, Carter reviewed this book in a very similar manner. He hailed the novel for its introduction and description of a Japan that easily fits with the image of a pre-modern Arcadia:

> A unique record of isolation and tranquility […] it was a vacuous, butterfly existence […] when there was no sense of problem of evil to drive the anguished soul on to achievement.[70]

This parenthesis of moderation in the 'yellow peril' aspect of the hegemonic national narrative came to an end because of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931, the withdrawal of Japan from the League of Nations the following year, and the invasion of China in 1937. The seed of conflict that had been planted years before and which had remained underground during this discursive truce sprouted piercing the frozen soil of quiet and transient aestheticism. Iriye considered this inevitable:

[69] Carter, "Japan's Classic of the Golden Age."
[70] Carter, "A Japanese Court Lady of 1000 A.D."

> Once the theme of competition was introduced, it was difficult for some to develop a vocabulary of mutual association in which Japanese would remain friends while becoming competitors.[71]

Japanese were again portrayed as power hungry, militarist warmongers that aroused both suspicion and respect for the rival. The character of Dr. Fu Manchu, created initially in 1913 and commonly understood as an embodiment of the 'yellow peril' trope, saw in the 1930s an energetic revival in terms of depictions in books and movies. The comeback of Fu Manchu is representative of this awakening of a dormant fear of a threat from the East. While it had originally been linked to China, it now became more associated with Japan. As Abigail de Kosnik puts it:

> Fu Manchu is a near personification of the Japan that made many Americans anxious in the first few decades of the twentieth century (an anxiety that only increased in the years leading up to Pearl Harbor and World War II). Fu Manchu, like Japan at that time, was steeped in tradition yet extremely modern, proficient with Western technologies, ingenious at weapons development, and committed to expansionism.[72]

It is in these conditions of discursive animosity that the Pacific War broke out. Japanese were depicted during the conflict as brutal, aggressive, and almost inhuman because of their disposition to sacrifice themselves in battle. Racially prejudiced caricatures portrayed

---

71 Iriye, "Japan as a Competitor, 1895-17," 98.
72 De Kosnik, "The Mask of Fu Manchu, Son of Sinbad, and Star Wars IV: A New Hope," 93.

them with aesthetically ungraceful traits by Western standards that were generically associated with the Asian phenotype: slant eyes, yellow skin, short height, and protuberant frontal teeth. In 1945, the U.S. War Department commissioned director Frank Capra a propaganda documentary that would be screened to soldiers ready to be deployed in the Pacific front. Its clear intention was to describe Japan and the Japanese as to justify the battle and rally them behind the U.S. reasons to go to war. This film, whose production started in 1942, shows in great detail the main tropes of the hegemonic national narrative held by the United States during this specific and highly particular period of time. One should take into account though that the context of production and openly propagandistic intentions of the film infuse the documentary with a self-aware sense of discursive bias. However, precisely the movie's close relationship to ideological institutions makes it a valuable asset in the study of hegemonic discourses. Once one has filtered the most histrionic parts of the documentary's assertions, the core tropes of the ongoing hegemonic national narrative can be seen mediated here as well.

Know Your Enemy: Japan is in line with other visual and textual wartime documents. The movie approaches the task of portraying Japan and the Japanese from an appearance of anthropological and historical knowledge but which would hardly pass tests of actual accuracy. The country is depicted ruled by "warlords" who only modernized for fear of being conquered and that were convinced they could finally achieve an alleged national desire to rule the world. Democracy was "borrowed" as a "cruel joke" and Japanese modernization is constantly explained as not aimed at improving the people's standards

of living. Instead, modernization initiatives are tightly regulated and correspond solely to the agenda of this warmongering elite and its imperialist aspirations. As seen in the movie, the white-collar Japanese works with modern machines but in his house "puts on the kimono and lives as his ancestors in the Middle Ages." The tape describes the Japanese as designed to follow a pre-modern frame of mind that is hierarchical and submissive. Individuality is suppressed and the country is portrayed functioning like a gigantic hive that makes each citizen a devoted automaton compliant with state domination. This process of dehumanization would be set to justify an apparent insensitivity towards death on others and self-inflicted. The trope that the Japanese are indifferent to death and would rather die than surrender builds on longtime previously laid axioms of objectification and deprival of agency.

To enhance the animosity, these ideas are coupled with tropes of treacherousness and unreliability. Japanese and Chinese have been historically portrayed with these traits taking turns as, in Johnson's terms, a 'traveling stereotype'. Bushidō and the so-called 'samurai code,' which had a great acceptance at the turn of the century, was reinterpreted now as "the art of treachery and double cross," while still being appointed as a philosophical foundation for the nation. 'Honor' and 'loyalty,' usually associated with the supposedly 'warrior' spirit of the Japanese, became instead 'deceit' and 'trickery.' This was encountered in the way Japanese fight and also in their trade policies. A segment of the movie is for instance devoted to accusing the Japanese of stealing patents to undersell other nations and feed "their war machine."

Japanese immigrants living in the United States for decades are placed in the movie under suspicion of being spies. Distrust and uncomfortableness with Japanese immigrants, as Iriye mentions, already were boiling at the beginning of the century. [73] The documentary avoids mentioning on this matter the existence of U.S. concentration camps set for Japan-Americans following Executive Order 9066. Around 120,000 citizens and non-citizens of Japanese ancestry were sent to what at the time were called relocation centers. This followed the general assumption that anyone with Japanese links was liable to be suspicious of potentially betraying the U.S. In the words of General John L. DeWitt when he declared in 1943 in front of a congressional committee defending the plan: "A Jap's a Jap. It makes no difference whether he is a U.S. citizen or not. I don't want any of them […] They are a dangerous element, whether loyal or not." [74] In a twist that would homogenize these traits within the hegemonic national narrative, the superficiality of Japan's modernity would be attributed to a national predisposition to duplicity:

> A frenzy of modernization seized upon the land. With a politeness the world has seldom seen, the Japanese invited other nations to build up their military power. And always with the thought, treat with the foreigner, learn his weapons, and then use them to destroy them, the old bushido double cross.

[73] Iriye, "Japan as a Competitor, 1895-17," 76-78.
[74] "Wartime and the Bill of Rights," *Constitutional Rights Foundation.*

World War II ended and the geostrategic needs of the upcoming 'cold' conflict with the Soviet Union and China required Japan to go from former deadly enemy to essential ally. The second greatest turn in the hegemonic national narrative, arguably more significant than the one experienced in 1905, can be traced to this moment. It is so substantial that I argue a new understanding of Japan emerged from this point on. This change was also conditioned by the multiplication of cultural agents in the construction and transmission of discourse that came with postwar mass culture. Despite the adjustments in conditions to the hegemonic national narrative, the same core elements that had been developing since 1868 carried on throughout the decades and until today. These principles were articulated in different manifestations trying to adapt to the fluctuating needs of power.

1.2.2 The End of the War and the New Deal (1945-2018)

The development of the hegemonic national narrative from 1868 to 1945 reveals the process of formation and establishment of the two pillars on top of which the West bases its legitimacy over Japan in conflicts of interests. First, Japan is designed as irrevocably unable to integrate modernity due to the West's patent on the process of modernization. And second, the definition of the Japanese nation is restricted to include exclusively pre-industrial referents and tropes as its constitutive elements. These two axioms ensure the authority of Western hegemony while entrapping Japan in a problematized relationship with modernity. Whenever Japan's agenda is docile

towards Western needs, 'geisha-type' approaches of fascination and praise of cultural particularism de-politicize the nation as an object of appreciation. On the contrary, if Japan wants to inforce economic or political policies that might be confrontational to Western interest, discourses on a national so-called 'warrior spirit' bring to the forefront notions of barbarism to support the idea that Japan's aggressiveness is uncivilized and therefore illegitimate. In the end, both the docile Japan and the violent Japan are sustained by the allusion to pre-industrial cultural signifiers that place the definition of the country outside the parameters of the project of modernity.

Decades of building up the national narrative on 'yellow peril' tropes created a tendency of growing animosity that reached its catharsis during the open conflict of the Pacific War. During this period, ideas of suppressed individuality and collective behavioral homogeneity got incorporated to the hegemonic national narrative. The state would come to be described as inherently authoritarian and Japanese society as exceptionally submissive to this circumstance after centuries of apparent historical acclimation. These discursive parameters determined in turn the way Japan's supervised democracy was assessed and depicted in the national narrative. Western hegemony enshrined liberal democracy as the palmary system of governance for any modern nation. As such, doubts over Japan's capacity to democratize are in fact another manifestation of the perennial questioning of its commitment to modernity. Doubting non-Western nations' pledge to democracy became an integral part in hegemonic discourses of Western dominance legitimation especially throughout the second half of the 20th century. This has been sustained to the present day despite

recent and growing concern surrounding the degradation of democracy in the West.

Hegemonic national narrative tropes would also circulate in Spain although in a particularly different context. In the aftermath of the Civil War, Francisco Franco and his fascist government directly determined the way discourses on Japan were reproduced by means of their exclusive control over Spanish state and ideological institutions. The relationship between Japan and Franco's regime during World War II went through two phases. In the early stages of the conflict, the Japanese were portrayed as friendly and approached with curiosity and amity. The Falangists attempted to stress the similarities between the two countries maybe with the aim of creating a sense of proximity and cultivate affection. They defended the positioning of Spain in more open favor of the Axis alliance. José Millán-Astray, founder of the Spanish Legion, the National Radio of Spain (RNE), and close friend of Franco, was a firm admirer of pre-modern Japan. He authored in 1941 a rendition of Nitobe's *Bushidō* that was based on a French translation of the original. According to Allison Beeby and Maria Teresa Rodriguez, "many of the examples of manipulation in the translation can be related to the ideological pillars of the regime." Certain aspects laid down in the *Bushidō* were glorified and appropriated by Millán-Astray to fit this propagandistic purpose.[75] Japan is set in his version as still anchored in spirit to a pre-industrial era. Fragments from the original that referred to modernizing changes taking place during Meiji were altered or directly censored. Millán-Astray decided for instance to remove Karl Marx from Nitobe's text

[75] Beeby and Rodriguez, "Millán-Astray's Translation of Nitobe's Bushidō," 225.

and replace him for a vague and unspecified reference.[76] He considered the supposed samurai's readiness to sacrifice himself for an ideal compatible with Catholic teachings. Millán-Astray was known to be a man infatuated with the idea of death and martyrdom. He sought ideological motivation in the *Bushidō*'s description of *seppuku* or ritual suicide, which in turn inspired the *Credo Legionario* and the Spanish Legion's most popular army song, *El novio de la Muerte*.[77]

The fondness Millán-Astray, the Spanish Legion, and the Falangist wing harbored for Japan and the Japanese was completely absent in Franco. As a matter of fact, according to Florentino Rodao, Franco was a firm believer of the 'yellow peril' trope and actively despised the Japanese. He considered them an essentially inferior and underdeveloped nation.[78] Japan's successes were an exception, an irregularity that did not fit in a cognitive map that deemed the West (especially the Christian tradition) as the irremissible and exclusive agent of stability, peace, and prosperity in the world. Japan's image in Spain was after the war belittled more out of dread and apathy than actual scorn or hate. As the war went on, Franco decided to woo the United States instead, as he considered them a more suitable ally. He decided to reduce to the bare minimum the already weak ties with Japan. The Japanese invasion of the Philippines – the mourned Spanish colony whose loss was still perceived as patriotically traumatic – enraged those in the Spanish right who saw in the imperial project a reason to empathize with Japan. After the war, Franco adopted a diplomatic position in line with the interests of the United States. He

[76] Ibid., 227.
[77] Ibid., 229.
[78] Rodao, *Franco y el imperio japonés*, 52.

eventually accepted the establishment of an alliance with the Japanese as a necessary step in his crusade against the global spread of Communism. Franco never abandoned, however, his belief that any Western nation was automatically superior by Christian virtue over any Asian country. He also harbored distrust and rancor against Japan because of their wartime aggressions, never giving up on the ghost of a potential 'yellow menace' in the horizon.[79] This did not translate in animosity but in a general lack of interest from his part to really engage in any interpretation different than the one promoted by the United States.

The occupation period and the geostrategic needs brought by the advent of the Cold War, especially during the military struggles in the Korean peninsula, favored a 180º turn in U.S. perceptions of the Japanese. The deployment of Allied troops in mainland Japan officially ended in 1951, although full sovereignty over the Ryukyu Islands was only restored in 1972. During the first years of the occupation, the enforcement of a restructuring process over the Japanese state and their institutions was accompanied by a thorough attempt to de-galvanize discourses of Japan as a potential threat. The new Japanese Constitution enacted in 1947 declared the country a parliamentary democracy and forbade Japan from maintaining armed forces capable of waging war under the famous Article 9.

The success of these rapid changes in perception can also be attributed to the fact that many of the agents, structures, and resources of discourse reproduction were already in place from the time of

[79] Ibid., 525.

wartime propaganda. The United States employed during and after the Pacific War scholars from different backgrounds, mostly related to social sciences, for reasons of military strategy. Some of these scholars would produce works that at the same time became very popular and highly influential on the hegemonic national narrative. The most famous case is Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, published in 1946. The fact that the book was such a success is not surprising given the fact that it aligns harmoniously with the aforementioned axioms of the hegemonic national narrative. Despite Benedict's distinguished background as an academic, an analysis of the conditions of production of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* inevitably raises questions over the accuracy of this work. She was invited by the Office of War Information to research on the Japanese even though she had no previous contact or knowledge of this country. She never visited Japan and did her study based on secondary literature and interviews with Japanese-American citizens imprisoned in concentration camps. Richard H. Minear, analyzing the reception of Benedict's opus, points out the following problems: "her informants were too few and not representative, that her picture, if valid, is grossly out of date, [and] that she overestimates the homogeneity of Japan."[80] Regardless of this, remarkably the book was a hit in Japan, where it sold 2 million copies. C. Douglas Lummis considers it a precursor of the *Nihonjinron* genre: discourses on Japanese particularism developed mainly by Japanese scholars that became markedly popular after the war and up until the 1990s.[81] Previous to *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, Benedict had done work on Native

[80] Minear, "Cross-Cultural Perception and World War II," 564.
[81] Lummis, "Ruth Benedict's Obituary for Japanese Culture."

American peoples and expressed in her book *Patterns of Culture* the belief that cultures were a combination of thoughts and actions that could be explored and understood more or less like an individual's personality. She structured her understanding of Japan as a binary system of grouped tropes. On the one hand, the Japanese were described as meek, delicate, sensible, and lover of the arts, characteristics embodied in the chrysanthemum. On the other, the Japanese were also seen prone to violence, fierceness, and competition, traits represented by the sword. Again we see a Japan that could either be deactivated politically through aesthetic appreciation (chrysanthemum) or be criticized in condescendence for their supposed belligerent and barbaric tendencies (sword).

Benedict was on top of this a staunch believer of what she perceived were the U.S. values of democracy and individuality. These principles need to be assessed, however, more idealistic in her bias than actually grounded on research-based anthropological assessments. She believed, in accordance with the ongoing 'yellow peril' trope, that Japanese imperialism was to be expected from a people she considered predisposed to viciousness. This violence manifested outward in warrior-like enterprises and inwards when taking as representative the supposedly traditional culture of ritual suicide. She was not alone in her reinforcement of the warrior theme trait of the hegemonic national narrative. John M. Maki believed in addition that "the Japanese must be re-educated 'so that they will be able to understand and to make workable a system of democratic government.'"[82]. Edwin O. Reischauer agreed with him and stated that 'a solution' should be

[82] Minear, "Cross-Cultural Perception and World War II," 562.

found for the Japanese, and he believed it could only be democracy.[83] These judgments imply that otherwise it would not be genuine for the Japanese to democratize independently.

Others refrained, however, from this paternalistic condescendence and tried to portray a Japan that was merely reacting to the pressures and economic embargo from the United States and their allies. Helen Mears published in 1948 her book *Mirror for America: Japan*, a treatise on the history of the country intended for a general U.S. readership. In it, she considered Japan's participation in the war as a reaction to the looming fear of becoming a colony if they failed to keep up with their hectic developmental agenda. Charles Burton Fahs and John Fee Embree were also critical of the assumptions the United States were making during the Occupation in their attempts to coerce the Japanese into compliance. They considered too harsh U.S. criticism towards Japan for not committing to democracy right off the bat.[84] None of these authors were justifying or defending Japan in their act of waging war. However, their readings implied conceding Japan some degree of political autonomy and legitimacy to build an agenda that would differ from Western interest, and as such, their texts did not fit the hegemonic discourse. Their works did not circulate as much as those authored by their aforementioned peers, at least during the first decades of the postwar period.[85]

During these decades that followed the Occupation, Japan experienced a great wave of economic and industrial development as a

83 Ibid., 562.
84 Ibid., 573.
85 Ibid., 574.

result of what was known as 'Yoshida Doctrine.' In the second stage of this development, Japan expanded its trade agenda thanks to a policy of 'purchasing' international recognition through foreign investment.[86] During these years of living under the U.S. atomic umbrella, the swift from former enemy to peaceful ally was accomplished through the depoliticizing effect of exoticizing Japan. According to an *Asahi*-sponsored poll conducted by Louis Harris, in 1971, 85% of the U.S. population agreed that despite cultural differences, friendship between the two countries was necessary. Moreover, 66% considered Japan a peaceful democracy.[87] These appreciations, however, were increasingly and paradoxically coupled with a chronic distrust for Japan's commitment to democracy,[88] the contemporary follow-up to the suspicion put on the ability of the Japanese to achieve modernity.

In line with this rapprochement between the West and Japan, a second wave of Japanese aestheticism appeared during the 1950s and 1960s, especially in the United States. The renewed interest on pre-modern Japanese artifacts, architecture models, and practices like ikebana and bonsai care promoted yet again the geisha-like interpretative facet of the hegemonic national narrative. Zen Buddhism attracted the attention of Westerners specifically in the art world mainly through the mediation of figures like Japanese scholar D. T. Suzuki. Similarly to what Okakura suggested with his treatise on chadō, D. T. Suzuki's *Zen and the Japanese Culture* was both produced and interpreted as a referential work that appointed Zen as the vehicle to best understand

[86] Ming, "Spending Strategies in World Politics," 91.
[87] Glazer, "From Ruth Benedict to Herman Kahn," 142-3.
[88] Ibid., 157.

the Japanese national 'essence.' Suzuki's first draft of the book, written in the 1930s, linked Zen to a supposed Japanese warrior spirit, gaining the admiration and following of high-ranking Nazi officials like Count Karlfried Graf Dürckheim.[89] Proof of how far a narrative can change the framing of a particular text, Suzuki's work was reduced to the tame aspects of Zen. Warner Mettler argues in her chapter on the matter that Suzuki's contributions were detached from his previous claims of association with a so-called Japan's samurai spirit.[90] She also makes the distinction between the way the general population understood Zen, emphasizing "the religion's sense of reflective serenity and self-discipline," and how artists from the so-called Beat generation approached it, focusing on what they considered a "confrontational aesthetic" that would allow them to oppose the contemporary mainstream drive for materialistic accumulation.[91] In the end, however, the craze for Zen Buddhism that channeled the 1960s construction of mainstream Japan offered, in any of its variations, a cohesive rendition of the Japanese nation:

> They treated it as an esoteric, distinctly foreign, ancient Oriental way of thinking […] Once again Japan and its culture appeared admirable in keeping with the recently reestablished alliance, but in its seeming strangeness and perpetual antiquity, it appeared out of synch with the twentieth century.[92]

89 For a very detailed account on their relationship, see Brian Victoria's "Zen Nazi in Wartime Japan: Count Dürckheim and his Sources."
90 Warner Mettler, *How to Reach Japan by Metro*, 159-160.
91 Ibid., 179.
92 Ibid.

The turn towards aestheticism in the two decades that followed the Occupation was still based in the insistence on one of the principles of the hegemonic national narrative: understanding Japan by taking sets of perceived cultural phenomena as direct representatives of its particular essence. These cultural elements, like Zen, were explicitly framed as a desynchronized legacy derived from pre-modern times.

Another divide would come with yet a new turn in the hegemonic national narrative towards animosity right after the Nixon Shock and the 1973 oil crisis. Japan's positive trade imbalance is framed throughout the 1970s as an unfair advantage to the countries with whom they were making business. Japanese economic policies had made the country the leading buyer of U.S. Treasury bonds, and by 1984, the possessor of the largest net foreign assets.[93] Western protectionist discourses would resuscitate the old phantom of Japan's desire for world dominance. Instead of soldiers, Japanese businessmen and industrialists were compared and even symbolically attired as samurai. The 'yellow peril' would come back to threaten Western supremacy not with conventional weapons but with economic subjugation. This interpretation was not original: it appeared first at the beginning of the century and again in wartime propaganda. With Japan's militaristic power deactivated and out of the discourse, however, any trace of potential aggressiveness had to be catalyzed through the fear of economic dominance.

The shaking of 'yellow peril' ghosts during the years of trade imbalance emerges in strike contrast to the tone of relative

---

[93] Ming, "Spending Strategies in World Politics," 92.

reconciliation embraced during previous decades. Compared to how hegemonic discourses described the dangers of Japan in the buildup to World War II, postwar discourses of Japanese representation defined the country as a competitor rather than as an enemy. This relationship is defined by Priscilla A. Clapp and Morton H. Halperin as "inevitable harmony." During the immediate postwar years:

> As long as U.S. business is benefiting from the Japanese market, the most convenient view of Japan would be inevitable harmony. As soon as Japanese industry begins to gain advantages over U.S. industry, the two countries are seen to be on a collision course.[94]

Setting up the discourse of Japan as a friendly nation was also critical to hold up an essential alliance in the struggle for regional control against the influence of China and the Soviet Union. This changed with the shift in the geopolitical order that came after Nixon and Mao re-established diplomatic relationships in 1971. Japan stopped being the indispensable Asian partner and the pressure to sustain this 'inevitable harmony' diminished. The new correlation of forces created a scenario that would allow criticism towards Japan's trade policies. Reminisced derogatory tropes came back to taint the hegemonic national narrative in a moment in which Western interests, especially those of the United States, were more confronted.

Trade imbalance 'yellow peril' rhetoric did not turn into the scenario of open confrontation that had been the Pacific War. At the end of the day, those years of economic and political rapprochement were

[94] Clapp and Halperin, "U.S. Elite Images of Japan," 221.

substantially lucrative for both sides. Market profits and Western geopolitical needs indubitably preferred a friendly-defined Japan. The years of bonanza however did not last forever. The country's market crashed between 1989 and 1992 in the old-fashion unrestrained capitalist development way. The pressure put on Japan by Western powers to reevaluate its trade policies during the 1970s had pushed the country to reshape its international agenda, and its weak standing after the financial crisis reinforced this strategy. The way Japan came to be represented during the years of trade imbalance shows how both the old tropes of de-legitimation of Japan's commitment to modernity and the de-politicizing effect of exotic aestheticism, far from outdated or overcome, were ingrained in the fabrics of the hegemonic discourse.

There is no reason to believe the hegemonic national narrative of Japan in Spain differs in the fundamentals from the one I just reviewed above during the same period of time. Franco's decision to adopt whichever diplomatic position the United States had regarding Japan was coupled with a general lack of particular interest in the nation that was being carried for decades. The hegemonic national narrative in Spain reverted from discourses of threat and barbarism to ideas of fragility and sensibility.[95] The idea of the Japanese as both geishas and samurai is present in the Spanish national narrative, but unlike the one in the U.S., it has been uprooted from the historic motivations that activate the switch between the two. The lack of an autonomous positioning regarding Japan and the role of bandwagon nation for Western authority that could be associated historically with

---

[95] Rodao, *Franco y el imperio japonés*, 535.

Spain has as a result the smoothing of differences between national contexts.

The tropes of Japan opening up to the rest of the world and the fears brought by the trade war of Japanese economic conquest circulated during the 1970s and 1980s in a Spain that was establishing again a directly mediated relationship with Japan. Catalan writer Pere Calders published in 1978 an anthology of his then most recent short stories with great critical and commercial success.[96] The story that gives the name to the collection, "Invasió subtil" ("Subtle invasion"), offers us a detailed insight on the contemporary perceptions of the Japanese held in Spain at the time. It simultaneously pokes fun at the constructiveness of a discourse built upon ignorance and feigned knowledge of the Other. A local meets what he firmly believes at first sight to be a Japanese person in a hostel by the Catalan seashore. The stranger is described as portraying evident Caucasian phenotypes instead of Asian traits as the narrator expected. They have a friendly conversation during which he learns the alleged Japanese is employed, as he projected, as a salesman, but doesn't deal with technological equipment as the narrator assumed.

The short story unfolds following the same pattern: any expectation of what the protagonist is convinced a Japanese individual should be (refined manners, extreme politeness, and exotic culinary choices) is shattered at every occasion by the stranger's replies or even by unambiguous deduction. Back in his room, the wife of the narrator asks him why he thought the man was Japanese. The protagonist had

[96] Figueres, *La narrativa curta al segle XX*, 92.

based his assumptions on instinct and intuition because he confesses he essentially cannot trust the Japanese in commanding an open and honest invasion:

> That night I slept barely and poorly. I couldn't keep the Japanese out of my mind. As long as they introduce themselves as they are, with their chuckle, their bowing, and their catty looks, we will be able to defend ourselves. Or so I hope! But if they start coming here with disguises and misleading appearances, we have a great deal of work to do.[97(vi)]

To the added fear and continuation of 'yellow peril' tropes associated with this 'subtle invasion' that the narrator is so afraid of, the story also highlights the need for a Western individual to pinpoint Japaneseness only in estranged and differentiating traits. These attributes have been traveling attached to the hegemonic narrative so that their ambiguity can be interpreted under a positive or negative light, depending on the need of exalting truthfulness or deceit.

The advent of 'yellow peril' tropes emphasized a specific set of changes in the definition of Japan that came with the rapid developments happening since the 1950s. Japan, deprived of genuine and autonomous political agency through aestheticism, was approached and understood based on its economic structures: Japanese technological and industrial exports and an increasingly consumerist social behavior. Closing on the turn of the millennium, the growing relevance of the service industry and the quaternary sector

---

[97] Calders, *Tots els contes*, 527-529.

was highlighted. Tourism, R&D, and a strong media and entertainment business sphere became items associated to 21st-century Japan. Inoguchi Takashi defends the idea that Japan moved from being perceived and acted upon as a free-rider during the 1950s and 1960s, to the role of economic challenger during the 1970s, to finally settle as a 'supporter' country.[98] This new assessment originates from a Japan that sheds former Yoshida Doctrine principles of prioritizing national needs for more open foreign policies in cooperation and collaboration with close and distant neighbors.

That the hegemonic discourse integrates this shift can be interpreted as a reaction to the Japanese diplomatic strategy paradigm put in motion in the 1970s that aimed towards nation branding – and a specific idea of what the Japanese brand needed to be. The Japanese Foundation, a government-managed non-profit organization focused on fostering cultural and educational exchanges between Japan and other countries, was established in 1972. They have funded or distributed since then thousands of translations and have put in motion scholarship and research initiatives that sent Japanese abroad or invited international students and scholars to Japan. This was part of the so-called Fukuda Doctrine, a plan for the internationalization of Japan through the promotion of Japanese culture exports with the aim of bolstering investment and sooth international negotiations through the sustainment of an appealing and friendly image of the nation.

[98] Takashi, "Japan's Images and Options: Not a Challenger, but a Supporter," 113-115.

Koichi Iwabuchi notes how at the turn of the 21st century, and given a belief that earlier soft power campaigns during the 1980s and 1990s offered good results, "Japan's pop-culture diplomacy was firmly institutionalized with the 'Cool Japan' policy discourse, which sought to capitalize on the popularity of Japanese media culture in global markets (notably Euro-American markets)." [99] There is consensus among Japanese institutions to keep up with the effort of promoting the 'Cool Japan' nation branding. This has been an outspoken commitment from Japan's state and ideological institutions since Prime Minister Koizumi discussed it in the Diet, and subsequent cabinets have not shown a desire to change course on the matter.[100] Whether or not these 'Cool Japan' campaigns have actually helped promoting the Japanese economy by attracting foreign investment and smoothing the edges during international summits for more beneficial deals (that is, whether or not they are useful in factual diplomacy) is still up for debate. Regardless of this, the influence of the 'Cool Japan' brand on the hegemonic national narrative held in the United States and in Spain is hardly questionable.

The reaching out to the West through Fukuda Doctrine initiatives and the 'Cool Japan' discourse has produced a more direct rapprochement between Spain and Japan. Even though the same tropes constituting the hegemonic national narrative can be found circulating in the U.S. and Spain alike, there is a time gap between the two countries. Spain lags behind in the reproduction and transmission of ideas first portrayed in the United States, but the breach has been progressively

---

[99] Iwabuchi, "Pop-Culture Diplomacy in Japan,"422.
[100] Ibid., 423.

closing. In 2010, the Japanese Foundation opened an office in Madrid. Amadeo Jensana Tanehashi, chief of economic and political relations in Casa Asia, predicts in the CIDOB report of 2013 an exponential increase of the presence of Japanese culture in Spain, following the trend established during the past twenty years.[101]

The fact that the hegemonic discourse has integrated many of the traits associated to the 'Cool Japan' agenda should not be surprising. The image of Japan promoted through soft power campaigns complied with previously circulating notions constituting the hegemonic narrative. It does not collide with the interests of power or with the legitimation of the West as global authority. There have been instances in which Japan's cultural export campaign has been considered the contemporary version of an enduring desire for conquest after the failure of military and economic approaches. During the most intense years of the Japanese soft power campaign in the 1990s and early 2000s, the popularity of Japan was countered with this particular reaction, with ideas of 'invasion' and 'Japanese wave' carrying on even if more subtly the same perennial fear that instigated the 'yellow peril.' To the military and economic potential threat of assault, a new front was added: the cultural.

These reactions, however, have been tamed if compared to previous responses. Japanese soft power campaigns, in their articulation of a non-threatening Japan, have had a major role in the shaping of the hegemonic national narrative in the past 30 years. 'Geisha' or

[101] Tanehashi, "Las relaciones entre España y Japón," *Anuario Internacional CIDOB*, 2013.

'chrysanthemum' tropes, those better linked to the privation of political agency and more focused on passive appreciation and meekness, have kept the aforementioned pendulum on their side. These have coincided in Japan with the rise in popularity of *Nihonjinron* discourses, which were also institutionally promoted.[102] As a result, the hegemonic national narrative has the West commodifying Japan as a place and an entity of delimited and achievable consumption.

This is not free from contradictions. The tendency of emphasizing a cultural essence of the exotic that comes from pre-modern times clashes with the description of Japan as a hyper-technological, post-industrial, late-capitalist society. David Morley and Kevin Robins argued in 1995 that through the consideration of Japan as an economic being, Western discourse was reproducing the same set of exotic objectification processes linked to Orientalism. They coined this iteration of the narrative with the name of 'Techno-Orientalism.' Techno-Orientalism has since become a key concept for some authors that try to organize the discursive representation of Asia at the turn of the 21st century:

> Techno-Orientalism, like Orientalism, places great emphasis on the project of modernity - cultures privilege modernity and fear losing their perceived 'edge' over others. Stretching beyond Orientalism's premise of a hegemonic West's representational authority over the East, Techno-Orientalism's scope is much more expansive and bidirectional, its discourses mutually

[102] Valaskivi, "A Brand New Future?" 488.

> constituted by the flow of trade and capital across the hemispheres. [...] Western nations vying for cultural and economic dominance with Asian nations find in Techno-Orientalism an expressive vehicle for their aspirations and fears.[103]

Techno-Orientalism offers an addition to the denouncing of Orientalist tradition: through the depiction of Asia as a more economically and technologically developed region which has met and surpassed the West, it posits a future in which Western authority is a thing of the past. This de-Westernized future, however, is a dystopian projection of the worst social and environmental downsides of the project of modernity. Techno-Orientalism, therefore, becomes a new iteration of discourses on the 'yellow peril' that articulates a defense of Western domination through the projection of unrest, defeat, and total alienation if Asia were to lead. In the end, Techno-Orientalism perpetuates the hegemonic discourse of the West to build itself in opposition as authority and at the same time (mis)guide the Asian challenge through a discredit of any potential proposals.

The hegemonic national narrative in its latest stage is sustained upon a stable paradox. On the one side, it considers Japanese culture as essentially rooted on pre-Meiji times. On the other side, it describes contemporary Japanese society as predominantly urban and in a late stage of industrialization. This is a deceptive contradiction, as considerations over Japan's late-capitalist society are linked to ideas of 'Westernization.' In turn, Westernization entails the adjustment and

[103] Roh, Huang, and Niu, "Technologizing Orientalism," 3.

persistence of the permanent core logic of questioning the authenticity of Japan's commitment to modernity. The model of modernity in all its stages from industrialization to consumerism is sustained as a Western monopoly. Any manifestations in non-Western societies of modern traits are therefore a mere incomplete copy that legitimates Western superiority by virtue of creating followership. For Western hegemonic discourse, Japanese copied consumerism the same way they copied industrialization, for there is no alternative to the Western blueprint. Because the definition of Japanese culture is still built from pre-modern referents, this late-stage of industrial advancement if anything reinforces with more emphasis the idea of Japan's incomplete commitment to modern representations. Technological advancements and consumerism are accordingly framed as décor, an external patina that can be isolated, objectified, and admired as an aesthetic eccentricity and not a potential signifier of the nation's identity.

1.2.3 Be As I Say and Not As You Do

Having reached this point in the historical analysis, I believe it is time to make a summary of what constitutes the essence of the hegemonic national narrative as shared and circulating in both the United States and Spain, accounting for the differences in the transmission of the same between the two countries. I argue that the core legitimizing principle of Western hegemony that articulates this body of discourse is the construction and reproduction of the idea of Japan around the assumption that it is unable to fully commit to modernity. This

assumption departs from the notion that the project of modernity in all its dimensions (political, technological, industrial, social, but also cultural) has been embedded as the legitimizing axiom to ensure domination in the post-Enlightenment world.

This body of argumentation is part of a logic of domination developed and ingrained in the West through imperial imposition which was similarly denounced by decolonial scholars like Aníbal Quijano, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Enrique Dussel, Santiago Castro-Gómez, and Ramón Grosfoguel. According to decolonial theory, the project of modernity produces and sustains subalternity in its structural articulation of material subsistence and dialectical legitimation. Decolonial theory goes a step further from other postcolonial works and emphasizes the need to understand colonialism not as a product of modernity but as the very means for its subsistence. Consequently, in order for modernity in all its fronts (extractivist capitalism, Western cultural imperialism disguised as 'universal values,' and liberal democracy, for instance) to keep existing under the system of Western global authority, it requires the construction of a non-modern subject, the subaltern, to sustain a hierarchy of development that would justify material exploitation. In the case of Japan, this same system would be used to enforce not direct plunder of the country but the disabling of potential contenders to the role of authority within this same structure of supremacy.

Any form of suspicion cast upon Japan's modernity ensures therefore Western authority. These suspicions have taken different expressions. The most common can be grouped under the general understanding

of Japan as only adopting modernity not in essence, but superficially. The relationship Japanese have established with the project of modernity is interpreted in some instances as a willed choice. The narrative includes accusations directed to the Japanese elites for allegedly embracing the enterprise of modernizing state and society as a means to acquire and develop a technological level equivalent to the West. This discourse has been nursed especially at times in which Japanese autonomous political agenda clashed with Western powers' interests. The idea of a Japan that 'uses' modernity instead of 'becoming' modern fundamentally entails the estrangement between the formulation of a community's defining identity and the articulation of its policies and institutions.

One of the main pillars set in order to accomplish this de-modernizing shade is sourcing the essence of Japanese culture in a moment that predates contact with the West and the development of a modern state. Geishas and samurai: the reduction of Japanese culture to traits and practices hailed as referential of an essence preordained and fossilized as 'tradition.' Tradition becomes a term that is not only used to describe a historical legacy but also forces suspended asynchrony between the relentless progress of the country and the culture that is supposed to represent it. The trope of a Japan that is modern on the outside and traditional on the inside is coupled by the pinpointing of its cultural identity in pre-industrial referents. The Japanese nation is defined as essentially constituted of non-modern cultural patterns instead of accepting the natural flux and blending of past and present that is culture, as Stuart Hall defined it, in its every contemporary instance.

Following the reasoning of Karatani, this way of understanding Japanese culture is linked to what he calls 'exceptional aestheticism.' This process of mediated appreciation objectifies and reifies the culture as an item to be always admired from an unbreachable distance. Because of this detachment, the analyzed culture is depoliticized and deprived of the agency to define itself autonomously or contradict the viewer's point. This process, inherited from Kant's aesthetic theory, was common under the political project of Orientalism. As the critics of Techno-Orientalism point out, at the turn of the millennium it has morphed to adopt the following needs for an objectified culture that keeps defining hegemonic interpretations. The process of describing Japan as an object seen from the distanced viewpoint of aesthetic appreciation can also be understood throughout more contemporary forms of admiration, institutional but also intellectual and academic, that have a resonance in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's criticism of a subaltern that is deprived of a voice to define itself.

Despite never having turned into a colony and actually having been an imperialistic power on its own, Japan has been subjected to some of the same conventional tropes applied in the discursive construction of the Other – primarily but not limited to the Asian Other – that ensures Western legitimacy. Among those, it is worth pointing out the gendering of Japan as 'male' or 'female' following an ingrained sexist understanding of power hierarchies. Whenever Japan was aggressive and assertive, the country was defined as masculine through the invocation of warrior tropes. On the other hand, Japan appears associated with female figures, especially with images of geishas, every

time its definition has been determined by a need to describe this nation as peaceful, collaborative, passive, and meek. This gendering practice not only exports a depraved logic of inequality that links anything female to a position of naturalized oppression, but also uses the realm of national narratives as a ground where it could take roots and perpetuate its patriarchal paradigm of understanding.

This gendered shifting between the Japanese as 'geisha' to Japanese as 'samurai' and vice versa has been strictly linked to the coming back and forth of each iteration of the 'yellow peril' trope. The hegemonic national narrative described Japan as a peaceful and friendly nation in its first stage in a way it eased the path for economic collaboration. However, once the country proved it could defeat another Western nation and potentially change the regional ruling landscape, the social and technological developments associated with the same project of modernization were interpreted under a different light. During those instances, Japan has been acritically accused of 'using' modernity solely for its own benefit. Japanese successes can be attributed to an acceptable implementation of modernity only as long as they do not clash with the Western legitimate claim for authority. If this condition was not met and Japan pushed an autonomous agenda, their claims are systematically disregarded. The discourse judges Japan's position as an exhibition of a so-called national inevitable inclination to belligerency. This supposed propensity to conflict is then described as a national trait inherited from a legacy of everlasting historic military struggles. Japanese ferociousness, commonly built around the image of the samurai, is invoked not only in times of military confrontation but also when economic and cultural domination is in dispute. The 'yellow

peril' trope was first inseminated and then invoked time and again to frame Japan as a potential enemy of Western interests in disguise. The way this trope is designed disenfranchises Japan's right to contest. It employs pre-modern warmongering imagery to articulate Japan's means to approach a conflict and postulates the West as the only true virtual equivalent of modernity.

Ironically enough, the idea of de-modernization is accomplished whenever Japan or Japanese culture are described as 'Westernized.' These epithets are applied in cases where Japan exhibits traits of social or cultural phenomena that fail to comply with the understanding of Japanese culture built and formulated only around pre-modern tropes. It mixes qualities and attributes that have a commonly assumed Western origin with others that came into existence during and after processes of industrialization. Modern imagery (cars, suits, factories) has been appropriated as genuine of a Western tradition despite having a more accurate association with the shared project of global industrial and post-industrial societies, including consumerist behavior in its latest stage. This process stems from the understanding of modernity as a Western patent. Any display product of industrialization is interpreted as a copy of the West. 'Modernization' is exchanged for 'Westernization,' and in this tradeoff, the West assimilates and monopolizes modernity and its Hegelian legacy of development and providence. Any other cultural tradition 'loans' or 'wears' modernity, as many satirical illustrations have come to depict this process for the past 150 years.

The hegemonic national narrative has been described as pretty homogeneous and the West has been treated as such in this piece. Although this functional treatment has been preemptively relativized, it needs to be questioned again. There is an important difference between how the hegemonic discourse has functioned between the United States Spain, and breaking these distinctions down elucidates the strengths and challenges of sustaining the West as a shared discursive space.

Before World War II, the 'yellow peril' trope was more present in the conditioning of general interpretations of Japan in the United States than in Spain. The economic and military control over the Pacific has been a matter of reasonable significance to the U.S. and a cause of tensions with Japan throughout the first half of the 20th century. Spain, on the other hand, forfeited its regional stake with the independence of the Philippines and Cuba. The level of geopolitical pressure put on the two countries cannot be matched. National circumstances seemed to be a greater determining factor in the construction of hegemonic discourses. The scenario that emerged after 1945 changed this dynamic. The Allied victory enhanced the United States influencing role in the shaping of the Western hegemonic national narrative, and subsequently, the way discourses in Spain reacted to this new circumstance. During Franco's dictatorship, the country adopted a diplomatic standpoint regarding Japan based on the interests of the United States, as it was understood it would benefit the fight against communism. The lack of strong domestic institutional voices in Spain that could be in a position to shape an independent discourse on Japan was supplied by U.S. agents and sources. The increased

popularization of U.S. cultural products made the circulation of discourses between the U.S. and Spain more fluid and regular. These circumstances led to Spain ending up participating just the same in the echoing of ideas of 'invasion' and potential threat once the 'yellow peril' tropes were re-activated during the 1970s tensions over trade and the 1980s and 1990s Japanese cultural soft power campaigns.

While the content reproduced was parallel, the triggering of these tropes, however, was not immediate. There is an appreciable delay between reactions in the U.S. when compared to the same in Spain. I link this asynchronicity to the different placing in time of the texts that constitute and reproduce the hegemonic narrative. As a direct and more stable interaction between Japan and Spain is being fostered, this gap has been closing up. The fact that there is a greater and more open exchange between countries has not altered the reproduction of hegemonic discourse through texts that circulate in Spain. This phenomenon may indicate that Spain has grown to occupy the role of relay in the system of Western hegemony. It echoes other Western nations' positions and discourses also as a means to claim a place within the Western community, a subject matter that is not free from doubt.

Right at the beginning, I stated that I would refrain from looking for causation and organized purpose in the creation and reproduction of hegemonic discourses. It is important to remind this principle again, especially after having reviewed instances in which state and ideological institutions have been very clearly involved in the creation of the texts, as it is the case of the documentary *Know Your Enemy*.

Certainly, the structures and conditions of their production and circulation must be assessed, studied, and accounted for, but only in a way devised to reveal the intricacies of transmission and reproduction of discourse from and to institutions, disregarding any consideration of purpose or authorial determination. Assuming intention displaces the focus from the implications of a discourse to a realm where interpretation has a weaker standing. When analyzing this kind of discourses, one should limit the scope of the exploration to whether they endorse and legitimate the actions, logic, and dynamics of dominant power in order to fully establish their hegemonic status.

As a concluding remark and in the spirit of this account, I would like to discuss the matter of Japanese meddling in the hegemonic national narrative of the country in the West. The same way one may be tempted to check on the mediation of Western power agents, there are instances in which the actions of Japanese state and ideological institutions are interrelated with the construction of the hegemonic discourse as it circulates in the U.S. and Spain. In the latest historical stage reviewed, we have seen how the project of 'Cool Japan' nation branding has aligned with the hegemonic discourse in a way it resonates with core tropes and arguments of legitimation that had been already developing for over a century. It is, however, not the only time one can identify spaces of overlap between discourses promoted and reproduced through Japanese hegemonic structures to try and influence the West. One can see, for instance, how during the 19th century, Japanese intellectual and political elites wished to articulate the project of modernization as a constant debate over what was later summarized as the tension of wakon-yōsai, or 'Western technology

with a Japanese spirit.' The contribution of Fukuzawa Yukichi and his peers to emphasize the need for Japan to develop technologically to avoid being colonized by the West aligns with the hegemonic argument of a Japan that hosts a divide between a native pre-modern essence and modernity understood only from a utilitarian perspective. Similarly, Mari Yoshihara explores how the Japanese mediated in the maintenance of 'geisha'-like ideas of Japan through the promotion or at least non-rebuttal of extremely popular cultural productions in the West like Madame Butterfly.[104] This fame is not fortuitous; it is not that these texts are directly mediated in authorial production what makes them hegemonic, but the fact they are read and rendered within a system that actually legitimates the agents in power and as such appear circulating through the institutions that comprise it. In the end, I defend the notion that there is a better insight to be gained by focusing not in the intention a text was created for, but in how it is interpreted once it becomes part of the dominant discursive ecosystem.

[104] Yoshihara, "The Flight of the Japanese Butterfly," 976.

CHAPTER 2:

IN PEACE WE PROSPER

(1945 - 1989)

2.1 Historical Context

On the early morning of September 2, 1945, the U.S. battleship *Missouri* received at the Tokyo Bay two delegations. The first one was comprised by representatives of several nations identified under the pact of the Allied Forces. The second boarded the vessel in the name of the government of Japan, headed by the minister of Foreign Affairs, as guests in their own country. In little over half an hour, the official documents indicating Japan's unconditional surrender were signed, putting an end to World War II in terms of open military action. Looking over the table where the Japanese capitulation was being legalized, the U.S. mission had showcased an ominous memento: one of the U.S. flags Commodore Matthew Perry had brought ashore back

in 1853 when he first occupied that same cove to coerce Japan into establishing trade and diplomatic relationships. The flag was stitched and hung backward to ensure preservation, but the message seemed clear: U.S. force yet again undermines Japan's autonomy.

During the weeks that came before and after that moment, open debate over how to approach the occupation of Japan regarding the existing political, social, economic, and even cultural structures draw two differentiated sides among international policymaking intelligentsia. One wanted the total removal of the military, political, and industrial Japanese wartime elites, including the trial and disappearance of the Imperial Household. On the other side, there were those of the opinion that, in order to allow for a smooth transition in Japan, it was important to keep the institutions as steady as possible and just purge or reconfigure whatever was necessary to make way for parliamentary democracy to take place as the new ruling order. The Japanese Emperor must be preserved, but in this new state, all his executive powers had to be abolished. His role in Japan had to reverse to being a symbolic relic and cultural token as it had been prior to Meiji.

On September 27, U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in the Pacific (SCAP), received another delegation at his temporary headquarters inside the expropriated offices of the Dai-ichi Life Insurance Company. The mission was headed this time by Emperor Hirohito himself. A picture of the two men awkwardly standing next to each other was taken by an official military photographer at a time when it was still highly

uncomfortable for many Japanese to look directly at the Emperor. Its publication in *The New York Times* seemed to indicate that MacArthur had opted to support those that advocated for a smooth transition in Japan, discarding the plan for a total reboot. According to William L. Neumann, however, MacArthur was just being consequent with his distinctive unruly behavior and decided in consensus with his close chorus of specialists on Japan to do a mix of the two approaches: he would purge and preserve. This strategy would define Japanese global positioning for years as "what was good for the United States must be good for Japan."[1]

The way the occupation forces devised to transform the whole body of Japanese structures was through the forceful enactment of ad-hoc legislation. The Allied authorities drafted in conjunction with reformist parties from within the Japanese political class a new constitution that would depose the 1889 charter bill. In their determined quest for implementing democracy, these imperious means were justified because of the need to meet the higher end of rebuilding the country in a race against the geopolitical clock. The assumed obligation of transitioning Japan from deadly foe to indispensable ally in the Pacific corresponded to the repositioning of world players in the upcoming scenario of the Cold War. The 1946 elections and the adoption of the new constitution in 1947 were boasted as proof of these measures' success in returning Japan's autonomy, despite the fact that the occupation lasted officially until 1952 in the main islands and 1972 in Okinawa.

---

[1] Neumann, *America Encounters Japan*, 296.

There is debate over whether the occupation measures were actually as efficient in turning the page from wartime era structures as it was promoted within and outside Japan. The SCAP targeted zaibatsu and seized their assets in order to try to dissolve them, but these actions accomplished so only partially and for a limited period of time. Three of the four biggest zaibatsus survived these disassembling procedures, Yasuda being the only one to disappear. An amnesty was granted because of the sudden need to reinforce industrial development in war-torn Japan. The zaibatsu became what it has now known as *keiretsu*, which in appearance lessened the vertical hierarchy of its former composition for a more subsidiary-based horizontal structure. In reality, the same oligarch families that controlled the zaibatsu found in this new model a way to perpetuate their stronghold.

In the political sphere, a very similar process of rebranding occurred. Many of the politicians that led the executive and legislative powers in the war's aftermath, either by appointment from the occupation authorities or as a result of elections, had already been active before or even during the military conflict, some of them having held cabinet positions. With the significant exception of the socialist Katayama Tetsu, who won the elections in 1947 and held the post of prime minister for about a year, the Diet and the government were controlled by conservative forces. Yoshida Shigeru has been credited as the main architect of the postwar Japanese political landscape. He held the prime minister office between 1946-1947 and 1948-1955. He helped found the *Jimintō* or Liberal Democratic Japan, the undisputed power party that controlled the Japanese government and parliament uninterruptedly since its formation until 1993. The composition of the

Japanese Diet and executive cabinets during the decades following 1945 is a rhizome of a genealogical tree with many of the representatives and ministers being related to each other by family ties or through connections to the main keiretsu. The institutional Japan that would emerge from postwar design would be marked therefore by continuity rather than by the result of substantial restructuring.

The consequences of the measures taken by the occupation forces and the Japanese state and ideological institutions in the first twenty-five years after the end of the war can be interpreted as a phenomenon unfolding in two different rhythms. On the one hand, there was pressure put upon the Japanese society to rebuild its industrial network not only for the sake of its own people but also to help fund the fight in the Korean War and become part of the U.S. international free market circuit. To achieve this end, early Japanese administrations focused on a line of policies that were to be known later as the Yoshida Doctrine. Two strategic fronts could define these guidelines. On the one hand, the government unfolded a 'Japan first' plan of investing and spending on industrial and trade expansion under public-led and state-promoted economic development. On the other, Japan developed its strategic policies from a position of heavy reliance on the United States in terms of international security. The government invoked the presence of the Article 9 of the new Japanese constitution, a clause that forbids the country from developing war-making structures, to save on military budget.

The policies undertaken following the Yoshida Doctrine have been interpreted as successful in macroeconomic terms. The so-called

'Japanese Miracle' turned a war-torn country into the second biggest worldwide economy in under four decades. On the other hand, however, the speed rate of these measures and the impact of unhinged sociopolitical changes produced a dissonance gap that required generations of Japanese affected during and immediately after the war to adapt to the changes at a relentless and acritical path. The experience of U.S. presence during the occupation had an improperly digested account that made it harder to establish nationwide narratives of wartime atonement. The pressures put on the Japanese workforce during the investment on heavy industrialization were transformed into a later demand for sudden re-conversion of a big part of the same into white-collar labor. Yoshida Doctrine policies also focused on introducing large-scale consumerist patterns to fuel economic growth and as a symbol of status and national recovery.

Behind the curtain of economic prosperity, tensions over concealed institutional corruption, continued U.S. presence in Okinawa, and Cold War inspired ideological opposition to the imposed status quo (coming from both far-left and far-right proponents) brewed throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The catharsis came first in a series of cross-class demonstrations against the upcoming renewal of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan (or *Anpō* for short) in 1960. The protests were riveted by violent clashes with the police that ended up with the assassination of Tokyo University student Kanba Michiko. This activist uprising was re-edited in 1968 with student revolts that closed down universities and took on conflict with state oppression forces. They happened again in 1970 against the terms of the Okinawa Revision Agreement which

relinquished control of the archipelago to the Japanese government but perpetuated the presence of U.S. military bases. The effective failure to stop or substantially influence the decisions taken by the government meant the eventual giving up to the acceptance of the designed order. Opposition and activist movements have been operational ever since in Japan, but never to the same scale. The narrative of growth and economic prosperity through consumerism trickled down during the 1970s and 1980s, effectively covering up the intensifying layers of inequality and discontent produced by the same.

This second stage of development coincided with changes on the Japanese national and international strategic agenda. In 1971, U.S. president Richard Nixon decided to stop the direct convertibility of dollars to gold. The Japanese central bank started stockpiling U.S. bonds and buying dollars to keep the yen in artificial decreased value. One year later, U.S.-China diplomatic relationships started anew, decreasing the dependence of the United States on Japan for the control of the region. The Oil Crisis of 1973-1974 created more distance between the two allies as Japan wanted to avoid the embargo of crude from OPEC countries. The increased price of oil meant an international revalorization of Japanese cars, which were more fuel-efficient, and a transformation of the Japanese industry towards the production and distribution of electronics. The strength of Japanese exports and the stability of a controlled currency weighted down in the consolidation of an unequal trade balance in favor of Japan. This disproportion would be the source for tensions between allies and became the main reason for a comeback of aggressive anti-Japanese

discourses until the burst of the Japanese economic bubble at the end of the 1980s.

These changes in the international scenario were coupled with a different paradigm of approaching Japan's role in the world. Pressure from conservatives tightened during the years following Japan's economic prosperity. Diplomatic dependency on the United States made trade arrangements harder to sustain and more prone to unfavorable concessions. The constant insistence coming from the "honorable dogs at the gate," as conservative leader Etsusaburo Shiina sarcastically called the U.S., became an unavoidable issue.[2] A strict 'Japan first' policy was not fit anymore to articulate the country's position in this landscape. Japan veered towards a more open and outward-facing diplomatic plan that would embrace cooperation and regional integration. As part of what would be called the Fukuda Doctrine (based on Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo's legacy of setting up an agenda that would nurture foreign relationships), this strategy included opening up to Japan's estranged neighboring countries in order to help seal untreated war wounds via commercial exchange and political compromises. This plan also implied investing in Japan's cultural branding as a way to exert a positive influence through soft power. Besides industrial and technological goods, Japan started treating culture as another export commodity. This transformation followed a designed logic that claimed that a closer understanding and acclimation to Japanese culture in foreign nations would eventually be beneficial to Japanese business and international negotiations.

[2] Pyle, "In Pursuit of Gran Design," 250.

Although the actual effects of these policies would not be properly assessed until the turn of the century, the institutional foundations that spearheaded this process were set already in the United States in the 1970s. Prior to these moves, circulation of Japanese culture happened through private and almost case-based promotion and mediation, like the relative popularity in the West of movie director Kurosawa Akira. Donald Richie justifies Kurosawa's fame by claiming it due to a merry combination of Western cultural exchange and film-making techniques with diegetic settings on pre-modern Japan. According to Edward Fowler's exhaustive analysis on the history of Japanese literature in translation after the war, the appearance in the market and relative success of authors like Kawabata, Mishima, and Tanizaki owed to a similar contextual mix of serendipity and historical convenience. The U.S. literary market has traditionally granted little room to non-Western works in translation and has conventionally left its circulation to small publishers with little reach in terms of audience. In order to study the success and popularity of Japanese literature in translation, one must not downplay the incidence of a powerful editor's tastes. In this case, Harold Strauss, editor-in-chief of Knopf (later acquired by Random House) from 1942 to 1966, knew Japanese, had visited the country, and was friends with the most important Japanologists of the time, people like Ivan Morris, Donald Keene, or Edward Seidensticker. During his time in office, Strauss pushed for the circulation of the first works in translation from Kawabata, Mishima, and Tanizaki. Fowler argues this canonized corpus reinforced through their themes and the personality of these writers the hegemonic national narrative of a perceived-as-exotic, pre-modern Japan whose depoliticization would ease the way for the transition of the Japanese from enemy to ally.

Fowler defends that despite the great commercial success of these authors at the time, ratified and extended because of Kawabata's Nobel Prize in 1968 and Mishima's spectacular death in 1970, these great promotional efforts actually hindered the development of Japanese literature in translation during the 1970s and 1980s. Exoticism and pre-modern settings were favored in a depiction of a Japan that diverged from the reality of a country in rapid transformation. According to Fowler, the works of these authors became metonymic of Japanese culture to the point any other Japanese author not compliant with exoticism was rejected for not meeting expectations. With the death of the triumvirate in the early 1970s, Japanese literature in translation experienced a recession in market presence.

Kodansha International was founded in 1963 as the vanguard of the future soft power campaign that would intensify in the 1970s and 1980s. Despite the apparent disposition to publish works in translation, sales were poor and the project could only go on thanks to the huge profits the parent company was making in Japan. As Fowler describes it:

> Faced with such difficulties in distribution, name recognition, and even design, K.I. has acquired a reputation among publishers outside Japan as a bottomless pit into which translators might drop their manuscripts only at their peril.[3]

[3] Fowler, "Rendering Words, Traversing Cultures: On the Art and Politics of Translating Modern Japanese Fiction," 17.

The failing efforts of the private sector were reinforced by heavily mediated institutional initiatives, some with more success than others. The Japan Foundation introduced in 1972 a program to fund translations of Japanese works. The issue with initiatives like this and others mentioned by Fowler (like CULCON's Library of Japan or the lists issued by the Keene Center) is that all of them ultimately rely on advisory boards that have ideas of what Japanese culture represents still conditioned by the hegemonic national narrative prerogative of pre-modernity. Fowler raises the worth-considering notion that even though exoticism was commercially alluring in the aftermath of the war, if insisted upon it may backfire by strengthening notions of unbridgeable uniqueness that in the end act as a deterrent of mutual understanding. The success of Japanese authors abroad would come again once this predicament was short-circuited (although not completely solved) with a renewed bet by big publishers (Knopf/Random House and Anagrama or Tusquets) on contemporary authors like Ōe and Murakami. This decision showed the move from a literature that transmits traditional exoticism to works that could be sold as at least closer in setting to contemporary Japan.

In Spain, the state of Japanese literature in translation was even in direr conditions. As was common at the time in the country when assessing industry decisions, the works of Kawabata and Mishima reached Spain thanks to their popularity in other countries like the United States, France, or Germany. Given the lack of experts on Japanese and the weak institutional links between Spain and Japan, the

novels by these writers were translated into Spanish from English or French editions. Because of this, their works appeared in the market later than in the United States and only tried to catch up because of the attention gathered on these authors after the Nobel Prize decision and Mishima's suicide. Due to the lack of autonomous criteria, poor academic or governmental support, and the dependence on foreign translations, Spanish readers were limited to whatever was popular in the rest of the West to shape the national narrative. In this regard, it will be interesting to analyze if these two communities were reproducing the same discourse in reading the same authors, with the aggregated condition of Spain's even thinner spectrum of sources. As we will see by analyzing the texts in the present section, Kawabata and Mishima set the literature-based national narrative in ways that would condition the term and parameters of its progressive development.

2.2 Kawabata Yasunari

Looking across the often misleading linear furrows of the closed biography, it is tempting to establish points and themes to articulate the decisions and circumstances which willfully or inexorably shaped the life of an individual. Although it is a useful method to weave a narrative, one must be aware to not reduce it in ways that could erase the shades and ambiguities we all carry in our backs. In the case of Kawabata Yasunari, the experience of loss lurks in his shadow at every episode. Born in 1899 from an affluent household in Osaka, Kawabata lost both his parents at four years old, his grandmother at seven, his

only sister at eleven, and his grandfather at seventeen, after which he moved into a boarding school. Kawabata graduated from Tokyo Imperial University (now Tokyo University) in 1924 after switching majors from English studies to Japanese literature. His young love engagement with Ito Hatsuyo ended abruptly in 1921. In many of his works, especially those most popular and which were later translated abroad, Kawabata explores scenarios, characters, habits, and themes that were later framed as a eulogy of a Japan perpetually perceived at risk of vanishing from the impact of modernity. He kept a low profile during World War II, attempting neither to endorse it nor to oppose it openly. During the postwar years, Kawabata decided to withdraw from his active social life into his house in Kamakura. There, he lost in 1968 his most wanted peace when he received the news that he had won the Nobel Literature Price. Two years later, he lost his pupil and close friend Mishima Yukio after a spectacular suicide. Finally, in 1972, Kawabata allegedly lost his will to keep on living and gassed himself, although the lack of an explanatory note still puzzles some, surrounding the episode in a mist of speculation.

What this chronology of loss hides is a brighter and more positive dimension to Kawabata. In his time in college, he received the patronage of notable personalities in the literary world like prize-founder Kan Kikuchi. Throughout his career, he enjoyed recognition from his peers and a vantage position from which to publish his stories. Many of them were serialized during long periods of time (*Yukiguni* [*Snow Country*] appeared in installments throughout 1935 to 1947) or reached the readers as incomplete texts. Kawabata worked on the side as a reporter for the Mainichi Shimbun, an experience most

notably shown in his novel *Meijin* (*The Master of Go*). He acted as president of the PEN in Japan from 1948 to 1965. Kawabata was appointed with the French Order of Arts and Letters in 1960 and with the Japanese Order of Culture in 1961. His most significant public achievement, however, is the aforementioned Nobel Literature Prize. It was the first for Japanese literature (and the second for an Asian writer after Rabindranath Tagore won it in 1913) and on the centennial of the start of the Meiji era. This award caught Kawabata in a state of ambiguous reception, honored but also baffled by the rate of unwanted attention he had tried to shy away from by embracing a more discrete life in Kamakura. Kawabata offered in his acceptance speech "Utsukushii Nihon no Watashi" ("Japan, The Beautiful, and Myself") a rendition to Buddhist Zen practices, principles, and expression through the poetry of some of the most famous pre-modern authors. He embeds his literature within this tradition and frames this genre of poetry that serves him as inspiration for containing "the deep quiet of the Japanese spirit."[4]

This speech backed up those voices that interpreted Kawabata's literature and personality as belonging to a strict nativist tradition. These interpretations in some instances associated Kawabata's oeuvre with a particular 'national spirit' comprised of a cultural realm insoluble with the impact of modernity and industrialization. Many of his best-known works, especially those written after World War II, can be framed as part of this larger idea expressed in two ways. Some of these novels feature cultural agents conventionally associated with pre-modern Japan. *Snow Country* narrates a love affair between an urban

[4] Kawabata, "Japan, The Beautiful, and Myself," 731.

intellectual and a provincial geisha in a hot spring. *The Master of Go* recounts a months-long match of Go between an old master and a young contestant. The action and message of *Senbazuru* (*Thousand Cranes*) revolve around the tea ceremony. Some others like *Yama no Oto* (*The Sound of the Mountain*) or *Koto* (*The Old Capital*) show the process of decay and fading out of pre-modern familiar structures through powerless and melancholic male protagonists that get involved in new or old love affairs that turn out to be caustic for everybody involved.

The canonization of Kawabata as a writer of a coexisting-at-pains pre-modern Japan collides with a Kawabata who during the 1920s studied Western literary forms and was immersed with his colleagues in the shaping of experimental and avant-garde expressions wishing to revitalize Japanese literature. Together with Yokomitsu Riichi, he confronted both the anti-establishment appeal of proletarian and socialist literature and the conventionalisms carried over by naturalism, which was the movement that dominated the late 19th century and beginning of the 20th century but was already falling out of fashion. Kawabata and Yokomitsu's proposal was known as *shinkankakuha*, which has been repeatedly translated as neo-impressionism (in an effort that seems to suggest a mirroring of European avant-garde movements) but which was more preoccupied with attempting to offer fresh emotional sensations rather than focusing on plot and social landscape descriptions. Despite his deliberate self-framing within a pre-modern tradition, Kawabata's literature was not waterproof to foreign and national experimentation or peer influence. He never rejected opening up to Western influences and to the testing

of innovative ways to tell a story. In *Asakusa Kureidan* (*The Crimson Gang of Asakusa*), "he used collage, quoted fellow writers, added the menu of a cafeteria and advertisements in a way that wasn't common before in Japanese literature,"[5] while at the same time using the description of life in the demimonde very much in the fashion of other acclaimed authors like Nagai Kafū.

Kawabata reached the West in translation during the 1950s. His postwar reclusion and the projection of his work as linked to pre-modern notions of Japanese culture meant eventually that his popularity abroad and assigned role of representative of Japan's supposedly vanishing past were forged together. Dressed with a kimono and photographed in his house of sliding screens in Kamakura, he fit the image of what the hegemonic national narrative had considered the Japanese to be, have been, or even should be. Raised to discreet fame abroad during a time of rapid Japanese economic development, the stark contrast broached between this projection and his social reality calls for attentive evaluation. For Kawabata's insistence in the past, his fame made much sense in his present.

2.2.1 Mass-Audience-Targeted Texts

The following subcorpus contains articles and book reviews offering an interpretation of Japan and the Japanese through the reading of Kawabata Yasunari's literature, spanning from January 1957 to

[5] Cabell, "Kawabata Yasunari," 154.

November 1989. Pieces in which Kawabata is just mentioned but not reviewed are considered outside the selected body of critical texts.

I find it proper to introduce this section with an itemization and an overview of the assembled subcorpus. Following the criteria established in Chapter 1, I have singled out thirty-six pieces. Twenty-five were published in the United States and eleven appeared in Spanish newspapers. In the U.S., *The New York Times* provides the largest amount of texts with a total of fourteen articles, followed by *The Washington Post* with ten, and *The New York Review of Books* with one long piece. In Spain, *ABC* published eight texts and *La Vanguardia* three articles. These texts have twenty-five different authors: Ivan Morris (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*) published three texts, becoming the most prolific. Juan Antonio Vallejo-Nágera (*ABC*) and Richard Halloran (*The Washington Post*) wrote two articles each. There are six articles published without a specific author that can be attributed to the newsroom of each particular outlet. The rest of the authors – all of them listed in the bibliography – published one text each, including a piece by Kawabata himself.

The appearance of these texts is linked in the case of Kawabata to two factors. On the one hand, the arrival of his works in translation in the U.S. and Spanish markets determined the onset of corresponding book reviews. On the other, two major biographical landmarks that happened halfway through the specified timespan and which were inevitably associated to the introduction of Kawabata's literature in the West: the Nobel Literature Prize in 1968 and the author's suicide in 1972. As explained in the historical context, Kawabata was one of the

three favored writers Knopf's editor-in-chief Harold Strauss pushed for a translation into English and the commercialization of his works. According to Fowler, the critical success of Osaragi Jirō's *Kikyō* (*Homecoming*) and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's *Tade Kuu Mushi* (*Some Prefer Nettles*) was behind this decision because it set the grounds for a conflict-free depiction of Japan as distant in time and cultural affinities.[6]

Strauss' circle of acquaintances in Japan later became his most preferred advisors for what to bring to the Western market and, at the same time, his most reliable translators. Edward Seidensticker has a major role in the introduction of Kawabata to the West: *Snow Country* (1956), *Thousand Cranes* (1958), *Nemureru Bijo* (*House of the Sleeping Beauties* (1969)), *The Sound of the Mountain* (1970), *The Master of Go* (1972), and *The Izu Dancer & Other Stories* (1974) were all brought to English through his voice. Seidensticker, a wartime-instructed Japanologist like his colleague Donald Keene, was well respected as a scholar and the success of Kawabata is sometimes attributed in the analyzed texts to his merits in rendering the Japanese attractive to English readers. There are, however, shadows looming over his adaptations. The critic S. Harrison Watson found out that Seidensticker's translation of "The Dancing Girl of Izu" published in *The Atlantic* in 1955 had omitted from the original some scenes that showed Japanese rural poverty:

> At a time when the United States government was committed to fighting communism in Japan and elsewhere in Asia by

[6] Fowler, "Rendering Words, Traversing Cultures," 6.

> promoting positive images of liberal democracy - evidence of selective translation in order to alter the ideological content of the text.[7]

The publishing of Kawabata's works in Spain was probably heavily influenced by the success of other foreign translations in their domestic markets. Due to the real shortage of language experts in Spain and following at the same time a shameful editorial tradition, Spanish versions were not directly translated from the Japanese, but from English and French (with the honorable exception of 1969's *El clamor de la montaña* [*The Sound of the Mountain*]). On top of the debris carried on with the rendering of another edition from an already mediated translation, these works were sprinkled with some very inventive – to say the least – editorial decisions. For instance, the Spanish version changed the name of *Senbazuru* to *Una grulla en la taza de té*, while the English edition preserved the literal cultural reference to the origami practice and called it *Thousand Cranes*. Attesting for the dangers of indirect translation in the loss of original meaning is the fact that the title *Una grulla en la taza de té* took as reference the French version, which already reinvented the Japanese name to *Nuée d'oiseaux blancs* (roughly, *Swarm of White Birds*).

A noteworthy number of works of Japanese literature in Spanish translation were published in Latin America, most of them in Argentina, and while they were made available in the Spanish market, their circulation was more restricted. Although there has been recently an effort to revisit works by Kawabata to offer new editions, the

[7] Cabell, "Kawabata Yasunari," 153.

insistence of some publishing houses to keep commissioning translations from other foreign languages is disheartening. In 2003, a new edition of *Senbazuru* appeared in Spanish, this time with the title of *Mil grullas*, but it was a conversion from Seidensticker's English publication. While some inaccuracies are corrected, the unadvisable decision of not arranging a version directly adapted from the original persists. On top of that, this time it is with the aggravating circumstance of having readily available a larger pool of translators of Japanese compared to fifty years before.[8]

The appearance in the Spanish market of Kawabata's works was almost certainly more conditioned to the previous or simultaneous publishing of English or French translations. This circumstance was due to the general lack of interest towards anything coming from Asia promoted by Franco's regime especially during the 1950s and the lack of big domestic publishing houses betting on Japanese literature like it was the case in the U.S. Moreover, Spanish mass-audience-targeted texts discussing Kawabata's literature are not that strictly linked to the moment these translations appeared in print, but to the awarding of the Nobel Prize and the writer's demise. Texts discussing Kawabata in the late 1970s and 1980s mention him in relation to a broader conception of contemporary Japanese literature, in his association with Mishima, or because of his Nobel recognition. After 1989, in a time of more intense popularity of Japanese literature in translation in Spain

[8] For a more complete cross-study between translations into Spanish of selected Japanese works, I recommend Alba Serra-Vilella's PhD thesis, to this date still unpublished, "La traducció de llibres japonesos a Espanya (1900-2014) i el paper dels paratextos en la creació de l'alteritat." ["The Translation of Japanese Books in Spain (1900-2014) and the Role of Paratexts in the Construction of Alterity."]

and in an effort to catch up with what were considered forgotten classics, the publishing of the remaining part of his oeuvre was completed: *Fuji no Hatsuyuki* (*Primera nieve en el monte Fuji* (2007)), *Tenohira no Shōsetsu* (*Historias de la palma de la mano* (2008)), *Koto* (*Kyoto* (2013)), and *Asakusa Kureidan* (*La pandilla de Asakusa* (2014)).

As shown by Cabell and Fowler, there is a strong relationship between the conditions of production of Kawabata's translations, the historical moment in which his works circulated, and the themes of the selected works for publication, representing a more exotic Japan that was associated with pre-modern cultural agents. Departing from this point, an analysis of the present subcorpus becomes even more suggestive. I aim to eventually unearth whether and to what extent a literary-based national narrative is intertwined with the hegemonic discourse. I also explore the spaces of opposition existing between a literary work's productive and political context and the impact and reception it had as it circulates among readers.

In the next page there is a figure that helps illustrate the relationship in the number of texts discussing Kawabata's literature based on the appearance of the works in translation in each country and the two key biographical moments, the Nobel and his suicide. The great majority of these texts include a brief introduction to Kawabata expecting that their potential reader would not be acquainted with the author. In these expositions, Kawabata appears depicted already as a

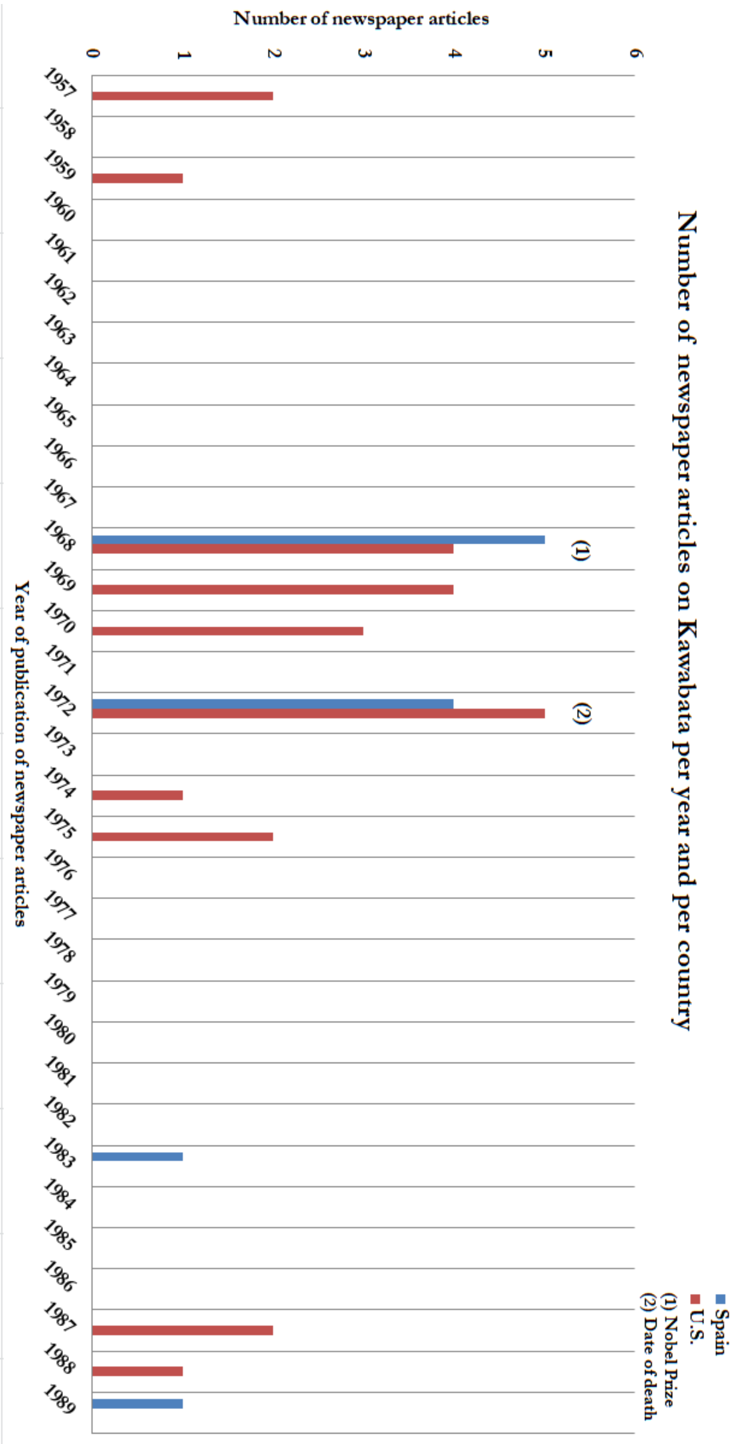

Figure 1: Number of Newspaper Articles on Kawabata per Year and per Country

dean of Japanese letters, an old master that studied foreign literature in his youth but who at the time these texts were published represented a nativist tradition-leaning approach. His figure is judged as detached from politically charged motivations and restricting this longing for the arts and letters with melancholy rather than passion.

He is canonized, and particularly after the Nobel, as a living classic, an undisputed member of the Japanese literary tradition without room for doubts or second-guessing. This assuredness of Kawabata's place in the institutionalized historiography of Japanese literature is exceptional, especially when compared to the rest of the selected authors. Although Mishima, Ōe, and Murakami are framed as Japanese writers, their ascription to a proper canon has been shaded by suggestions of marginal rebelliousness to normalized behavior in conventional literary circles. The attribution of the underdog status varies in time and degree according to each particular moment of their corresponding careers. It is considerably more present in Murakami and Mishima than in Ōe, but in the case of Kawabata it is nonexistent.

Kawabata appeared in the West to a general readership as an already established figurehead and this image of a renowned author cements his canonical descriptive status. Long-lived and veteran writers tend to be eventually framed as authoritative of their respective tradition, although it is not a condition that guarantees such labeling. Early periods of foreign influence may put in doubt, however, their labeling as national representatives. While the four authors are described as having received the influence of Western art and literary forms in the

shaping of their own particular writing styles, Kawabata's canonicity is exempt from being questioned by this circumstance.

I argue that the argumentative structures for the sustaining of Kawabata's undisputed point of reference in a supposedly Japanese literary tradition are the basis to understand how Japan is defined through these texts. His positioning as a figure of authority reinforces the legitimacy of a discourse describing the Japanese through his literature. Moreover, the means and logic constructed to place him in this position already define the national narrative. Kawabata's themes and style are understood as referential and essential to justify his rise precisely because he appears by default described as a heavyweight figure in Japanese literature.

In analyzing the themes of Kawabata's literature, these texts devise the idea of Japan from historical, social, and cultural approaches. The contemporariness of Kawabata's Japan is not understood as a mirror reflection of a present-day reality or a window to postwar Japan. His represented spaces and characters are instead embodiments of the two major national conflicts undertaking the articulation of the country: the alleged tensions between East and West and past and present. His literature not only helps to show this but also acts as a channel in the articulation of these struggles. In the words of Angers Osterling, president of the Nobel Academy at the time Kawabata received the award, his literature "has contributed to a spiritual bridge-spanning between East and West."[9] This idea echoes across many other texts. Takashi Oka explains how Kawabata likes to move back and forth

[9] Halloran, "A Japanese Wins Nobel Literature Prize for First Time."

between his Western-style and his Japanese-style houses "seeming equally at home" in the two.[10] Selig Harrison, for *The Washington Post*, considered that Kawabata, "like Mishima […] believed Japan today is psychologically adrift between East and West."[11] In reviewing *The Master of Go* for *The New York Times*, Alan Friedman discusses the theme of a conflictive coexistence between modernization and an established order anchored in the past:

> It was a classic match, a contest between two men and at the same time two cultures, between the Old Japan and a New one, between conservative tradition and dynamic ambition, between a polite, ailing Master and a young Challenger, neurotic, fussy, complaining and unpredictable.[12]

However, what characterizes Kawabata's mediation of a Japan understood through these dichotomies is that he appears to overcome them and rises as unaffected in his representativeness of a so-called Japanese tradition. He symbolizes a Japan that can integrate Western knowledge but retain a particular essence. This process of definition presupposes the existence of a Hegelian national spirit, a principle of Japaneseness that would be comprised and defined precisely outside any Western frame of designation. In the citation accompanying his Nobel Prize, the committee justified the award because of "[Kawabata's] narrative mastery, which with great sensibility expresses the essence of the Japanese mind."[13] In his piece profiling Kawabata

[10] Oka, "In Literary Mainstream."
[11] Harrison, "Nobel-Winner Yasunari Kawabata Takes Life."
[12] Friedman, "As if Nabokov Had Reported on Bobby and Boris."
[13] Harrison, "Nobel-Winner Yasunari Kawabata Takes Life."

after having been awarded the Nobel, Oka describes the writer as follows:

> Mr. Kawabata is not unique among Japanese writers in this blending of East and West. But today, at 69 years of age, a lonely eminence among younger contemporaries, his writing seems to have assimilated and distilled influences coming from the West into an essence thoroughly Japanese, yet unmistakably within the mainstream of world literature. It was not always so. Mr. Kawabata began his literary career in the exhilarating and confusing nineteen-twenties – a period when Japanese literature, already cut loose from its traditional moorings, was awash in the conflicting tides of proletarian protest, expressionism, symbolism and surrealism.[14]

This fragment underpins the existence of "an essence thoroughly Japanese" but also confronts traditionalism with avant-garde movements. This particularity of taking in from the West but not having that affect this core principle appears repeatedly and consistently throughout the texts. John M. Lee quotes Oka verbatim about four years later in his consequential assessment of Kawabata as having "assimilated and distilled influences coming from the West in an essence thoroughly Japanese, yet unmistakably within the mainstream of a world literature."[15] Donald Keene considers in his article for *The New York Times* that Kawabata's novels are "the return

[14] Oka, "In Literary Mainstream."
[15] Lee, "Kawabata, Japanese Nobelist Who Won Nobel Prize, A Suicide."

gift Japan has offered for its long indebtedness to the West."[16] Ivan Morris, another enshrined Japanologist that was often called to cross the bridge and write pieces for newspapers and other periodicals, told in *The Washington Post* that:

> His writing is intensely Japanese. In it, Western influences, so overwhelming since the Meiji Restoration, are muted and indirect […] though Kawabata has traveled abroad and is attentive to things Western, he has been remarkably unaffected by non-Japanese ways of thinking and behaving.[17]

This same idea appears in Spanish texts. *La Vanguardia* put forward in an editorial that "the new Nobel Prize winner has a deeply rooted sense of the Japanese tradition and […] hasn't let Western influences condition the development of his art."[18] [(vii)] *ABC* sentenced in a text of the same nature: "his work, influenced by modern literary movements, preserves, nonetheless, the essence and more characteristic traits of Japanese literature."[19] [(viii)]

What is this 'tradition,' this 'Japanese essence' that the texts are constantly referring to when devising their description of the Japanese nation? It is never directly described, but it appears articulated around a bundle of references that understand Japanese culture as 'exotic' and 'sensual.' Loosely employed and with what seems a vague resolution to

---

[16] Keene, "Speaking of Books: Yasunari Kawabata."
[17] Morris, "The Nobel Prize Winner: Last Voice of a World of Darkness and Wasted Beauty."
[18] "El Premio Nobel de Literatura…"
[19] "Yasunari Kawabata."

actually commit to a thoughtful definition, the 'exotic' and 'sensual' of Japan's representation is better understood by the depictions of seemingly cultural elements and suggestions of self-acclaimed tradition that accompany it. The 'exotic' and 'sensual' are overlapped with a sense of the 'delicate' that gets transferred from his style to a general understanding of the Japanese way: from Morris' "haiku-like flashes"[20] to Edmund White's comparison of *The Lake* to a Japanese garden.[21] Seidensticker introduces a passage of *Snow Country* published in *The Washington Post* with an explanatory note on the relevance of hot springs for the Japanese and how these places are related to images of geishas, which he clarifies should be taken as artists rather than as prostitutes. The message sent across is that Kawabata's literature is representative of Japanese art; and this art is only defined through culturally particular agents that are, in turn, 'exotic,' 'sensual,' and 'delicate:'

> A centuries-old legacy, family dynamics passed on, traditional submission and, of course, the exquisite courtesy of the Japanese women make up the landscape where Kawabata draws a way of being and a way of living in which everything is coded with an exotic charm. All this eroticism – sexual topics are since a very long time ago not subjected to moral or political censorship – is typical of Oriental postwar literature.[22(ix)]

[20] Morris, "The Nobel Prize Winner."
[21] White, "As Natural and Contrived as a Tea Garden."
[22] Martinez-Ruiz, "Se ha suicidado el premio nobel japonés."

> Of all contemporary Japanese writers, Kawabata is most closely concerned with the objects and landscapes of traditional Japan. […] Kawabata's writings are profoundly Japanese not only in their magical evocations of place or in their descriptions of the textiles, paper or pottery of the old artisans, but in his particular awareness of the emotions.[23]

That these ideas of the 'exotic' and 'sensual' of the Japanese essence are not directly described appears justified through the portrayal of Japanese culture as unbridgeable for Westerners. There is a constant insistence in placing an unsurmountable intangible distance that disables Westerners from fully understanding Japan. Kawabata's indirectness and ambiguity in the rendering of his characters' emotions are transferred to be understood as the 'Japanese' way, which is based on 'suggestion' rather than in telling. This process of describing Japan as sensed and not rationalized reduces its whole complex identity to an object of aesthetic appreciation. Kawabata's combination of themes, pre-modern cultural references, and a reportedly ambiguous or cryptic style amounts to the message of Japan as alien and distant. It is, however, a harmless estrangement, a mystery to the senses rather than a terror of the unknown. This unbridgeable distancing set by the alien and the exoticized, which avoids political interpretation and social commentary, excused a rational approach and displays Japan and the Japanese as so difficult to understand that they better be considered in sensorial terms. There are many and different iterations in the texts that discuss and repeat this point, whenever Kawabata's work is

[23] Keene, "Speaking of Books: Yasunari Kawabata."

involved and in any moment of its publication, right from the very beginning to many years after his death:

> Japanese literature and tradition are difficult for Westerners to understand. […] Kawabata is devoted to Japan's classic literary tradition, in which ideas are rarely stated directly, references to people and events are vague and misty images are preferred to clear description.[24]

> Although the novels are easy to read, they are not always easy to understand. The fault lies not with Mr. Kawabata, but with us. Our response is limited. We want to grasp what is there, but we don't know how or where to find it. [25]

> It may be that the Japanese doubt whether Westerners are racially capable of appreciating a writer so famously delicate and 'Japanese' as this one. Or, less hurtfully, they may feel that a writer so sensitive, so allusive, and so 'Japanese' as Kawabata cannot translate very meaningfully into another language.[26]

> From the first page, however, I was so struck by the inscrutable Japanese quality of the writing that I could never get properly involved with the characters or events. Halfway through I began to toy with the idea that the Japanese are just

[24] Halloran, "A Japanese Wins Nobel Literature Prize for First Time."
[25] Lask, "Gesture and Effect."
[26] Enright, "The Japanese Nobel."

> so different from us that we are unable to appreciate or judge their literature.[27]

Despite the distancing placed and the running doubts on considering Westerners fundamentally unable to understand Japan, these texts make an effort in framing Kawabata as the interpreter closest to convey these nuances to a non-Japanese reader. They insist on a latent capacity by this writer to reach a universal audience in being the most approachable of traditionalists. The texts add another level to the previous introduction of Kawabata as a bridge between East and West by shedding light on the nature of this gap to and from Japan by alluding to the empathic power of emotional conveying. Japan may be distant and difficult to understand, but it is still possible to accomplish so through Kawabata's emotional appeal, which is commonly framed as universal. His former education and knowledge on Western literary forms are also invoked for determining that his work is more accessible to Western readers:

> It is probably the least difficult of recent Japanese importations for the cultivated Western mind to understand and enjoy, perhaps because of the author's schooling in French literary technique and his concentration on the universal subjective limits of love.[28]

> Here and there, the novel seems distant and symbolic to an Occidental reader, resembling one of the haiku that

[27] Rogers, "Pidgin Hemingway."
[28] Staff Book Reviewers, "And Away We Go Into '57 Fiction World."

> occasionally appear in the Western press. But on close study, Kawabata's surface story has a subtext that, if paired with the themes of his other novels, may well be the fictionally evocative text itself. It is that great changes are being made within Japan itself: the Toyota speedup vs the obi culture. In 'The Old Capital,' it is not difficult to guess which side Kawabata was on.[29]

The unexpected suicide of Kawabata in 1972 was conveyed through a lens of cultural interpretation. On the one hand, some authors attempted to justify this act as part of a supposedly Japanese tradition of self-killing, with implied allusions to a culturally-induced frivolous sense of the individual. On the other, there is the conviction that his death symbolized the allegorical process of decay and vanishing of a Japan whose culture, framed and sourced as pre-modern, could not keep up with the swaying stream of modernization and industrialization that came at a higher speed during the postwar economic development:

> Eight of the suicides have taken place since World War II. Japan's defeat, the absence of a spiritual anchor to replace the nationwide cult of Shinto, and disillusion with the materialism of society were factors in most of them. Another was the general acceptance in Japan of the act of self-destruction. Suicide is regarded as an act of purity, particularly if it is done in furtherance of a deeply held ideal.[30]

---

[29] Mitgang, "Books: Culture Clash."
[30] Roderick, "Kawabata: an Obsession with Death."

Kawabata also seemed to endorse this particular view of decline and crisis of a so-called Japanese essence. In the piece reporting on his death, Harrison rescues a quote from Kawabata in which he seems to blame modernization for a crisis of 'values:'

> It is still a question whether we have transplanted Western values into our lives. Materially, yes, we have your things. But spiritually, that's a question. In the state of mind of Japan you will find many contradictions and tensions. We are afraid of these tensions, and of how rapidly they are growing. There are signs that we may be heading for a dead-end.[31]

The Japanese essence, whose existence is always presumed and unquestioned and has been rooted in pre-industrial times and terms, is thus described with more emphasis after Kawabata's death as undergoing through a long-lasting epilogue. The agent responsible for this state of enduring fading away of an essential Japanese culture (also described in terms of 'purity' and 'originality') is the process of modernization. What these texts do not advance is what would become of Japanese culture if these referents are, as they claim to be, in such a danger of extinction:

> The game of Go, in Kawabata's book, becomes a symbol of traditional Japanese beauty; and Shusai's loss (the year 1938 is significant) adumbrated the long-term defeat in which

[31] Harrison, "Nobel-Winner Yasunari Kawabata Takes Life."

> everything Kawabata valued about Japan was to be swept away.[32]

> Here, once again, are orphaned children trying to recapture the souls of their parents; visual games with mirror-images and phantoms; philosophical reflections on the decline of traditional Japanese culture and about how ephemeral love and beauty can be.[33]

> Writer Yasunari Kawabata died, and the old Asian Japan […] dies a little with him.[34 (x)]

In any case, alive and endangered notwithstanding, what these texts establish is the existence of a Japan that may not be a direct representation of a contemporary experience, but which exists underlying this coating of Western-inspired (or Western-imposed) modernization. What can be extracted as a national narrative from the texts that discuss his literature is that Kawabata's life and work are very much entangled with a particular and exclusive idea of Japan. The writer's personal taste for pre-modern artifacts, architecture, and art forms are interpreted as representing an overall of the essence of what Japan and the Japanese constitute. This definition omits any referent associated with the post-1868 configuration of the country. With Kawabata's departure, this idea of a Japanese identity in crisis takes a strong foothold. His life and death are framed as quintessential to an idea of Japan that because of its pre-modern framing is set

[32] Morris, "The Master of Go."
[33] Salter, "Kimonos and Lonely Violets."
[34] Martinez-Ruiz, "Se ha suicidado el premio nobel japonés."

automatically at odds with contemporaneity. As Martinez-Ruiz says, "'geishas' have lost one of their champions and custodians […] who now accomplishes in life and work his fate as 'samurai.'" [35] (xi)

It is worth pointing out the homogeneity in how Japan and the Japanese are described in both texts from the United States and in those published in Spain. In some instances, the influence from the former to the latter is explicitly stated. Carlos Murciano mentions having read Donald Keene's article on *The New York Review of Books* and develops his text around Keene's doubt over whether Westerners can truly understand Japan.[36] The relative inferior number of Spanish texts is balanced by enhanced intertextual consistency. It even reaches the point of having the profiling article of Kawabata that was delineated by *La Vanguardia* when he won the Nobel repeated word for word after his death.[37] It is worth pointing out too at this stage that there are no distinctive mentions of the respective relationships between the United States and Spain with Japan. Texts across the Atlantic use with a certain freedom the denominator of West or Western, allude to the same cultural references attached to the idea of Japan, and transfigure Kawabata's life and literature into embodiments of a national essence.

This analysis discloses two models of Japan. On the one hand, we encounter a Japan whose cultural essence is described as constituted by pre-modern referents. Japan appears defined as 'delicate,' 'pure,'

---

[35] Ibid.
[36] Murciano, "Adiós a Kawabata."
[37] "El Premio Nobel de Literatura 1968…" and "Ha muerto el novelista japonés Kawabata."

'vague,' populated and constituted by an array of vanishing referents of an anachronistic scenario: geishas, old patriarchs, players of go, and masters of the tea ceremony. On the other hand, there is a Japan whose society is defined by the shaping of a process of modernization that the authors at all times considered Westernizing. This process is accused of having alienated, excluded, and endangered a supposedly true identity of what it means to be Japanese. The first definition of Japan is that which the texts explicitly discuss and which appears associated to and emanating from Kawabata's literature. The second narrative, this new in comparison Japan whose identity depends on so-called Western modernization, appears in meaningful absence from the texts that discuss Kawabata's literature.

2.2.3 Academia-Targeted Texts

In this section, I will focus on analyzing how Japan has been described through the intertextual discourse woven in pieces that discuss Kawabata Yasunari and his literature and that are produced for and by academics. As explained in Chapter 1, these are critical texts composed with the preemptive assumption that their potential readers have a foregoing and more thorough knowledge on the subject discussed. In analyzing these pieces separately from mass-audience-targeted texts, I test the hypothesis that the creation and reproduction of a literature-based national narrative of Japan might be affected by the circumstances of textual production and genre conventions.

The subcorpus of academic texts is limited to those pieces that were published and circulated from 1945 to 1989. During this specific period, scholarly work on Kawabata – and on Japanese writers for that matter – was organized mostly through the publication of books which collectively discussed the oeuvre of a set of authors. The most common combination was analyzing the literature of Kawabata, Mishima, and Tanizaki. These three Japanese novelists are Fowler's previously mentioned triumvirate of best-known writers at the time in the West. Academic work on them was customarily arranged around the goal of introducing and discussing Japanese literature as a nationally determined artistic field. Critical texts that discuss the literature of these authors appeared in volumes that delve on the chronologic development of the literary discipline in Japan, as it is the case of Donald Keene's *Dawn to the West* or Shuichi Sato's third volume of his *A History of Japanese Literature*. There were some other instances in which these critical texts were approached by focusing on a particular historical period instead of being included in broad-brush historiographical overviews. Kawabata appears in that sense framed as a postwar writer in works like J. Thomas Rimer's *Modern Japanese Fictions and Its Traditions*.

There were also academic texts that approached Japanese literature and a chosen set of authors through the study of particular shared themes and motives. These works are usually articulated around the idea that there is a certain 'Japanese' style that acts as common ground across all of these novelists. Arthur G. Kimball defends in *Crisis and Identity in Contemporary Japanese Novels* a reading of Japanese literature as

a means to understand postwar Japanese identity. On the other hand, Makoto Ueda adopts in his *Modern Japanese Writers and the Nature of Literature* a more textual and formalist reading. He studies how Kawabata and his peers dealt with ideas of literature, literary composition, and aesthetics without taking into account context or other extra-textual subjects. The majority of critical texts, however, have a more hybrid approach. Miyoshi Masao sets on *Accomplices of Silence* the study of how postwar Japanese authors use silence and absences as a literary resource to convey meaning. At the same time, he combines this formalist approach with his own interpretation of how these literary resources constitute expressions of Japan's national identity.

Another relevant feature of this subcorpus is its acute cross-referential nature. The tight net of citations existing across its critical texts indicates that their authors have read or are aware of their peers' works. I attribute the dependence on a scholar community to sustain and reproduce this subgenre of intertextual discourse to the lack of academic research on Kawabata Yasunari produced in Spain during that same period. The shortcomings and relative youth of scholarly work on Japanese contemporary literature in Spain have been discussed previously, and its effects and consequences can be assessed precisely in this void. The lack of locally produced scholar essays in the Spanish circuit means the national narrative in this specific country was built at the time by the already discussed mass-audience-targeted texts. Once Spanish researchers on Japanese literature started appearing and producing analysis on Kawabata's literature, they would refer to these works in English as their main secondary sources. The

dependence on single-origin local formulation of academic discourse makes the following study significant in the inquiry of a West-spanning national narrative.

There is a strong shared foundation built across both subcorpora in their intertextual description of Japan. Kawabata's life and literary career are introduced with the unquestioned profiling of the author as a veteran referent of Japanese letters. Academia-targeted critical texts, contrary to mass-audience-targeted texts, are less conditioned by the timing of each translated work. The texts comprising this subcorpus appeared after many of Kawabata's books were made available in the West and his popularity had already been established thanks to the fame provided by the Nobel Prize. He is cherished as a competent interpreter that helps establishing a bridge of rapprochement between Japan and the West. This judgment, however, essentializes a supposed distance between the two entities that would reify the idea of Japan as an alienated entity naturally detached from particular Western referents. The ability inscribed on Kawabata's literature to appeal to universal common ground is downplayed by a constant doubt cast over the possibility of actual and substantiated mutual understanding. The process of incomplete comprehension is structured in two levels. First, the texts claim the existence of a basic human connection that allows for sympathy and recognition. At the same time, the discourse nurtures the idea that underneath this universal appeal there is a different layer of unreachable identification that is associated with the notion of Japaneseness, a way of being and doing that is exclusive of the Japanese nation. Gwenn Boardman Petersen describes for instance the main character of *Snow Country* within this logic: "Shimamura is

seen as a contemporary man: universal in implication though intensely Japanese in detail."[38]

The academic discourse on Kawabata's literature defines Japan as a differentiated and circumscribed cultural unit. This entity cannot be fully grasped given its assumed alien and distanced positioning with respect to the West. Approaching Japan appears as an emotional rather than rational enterprise, and this effort is doomed to be always incomplete and unsatisfactory for the Western reader. Covering the gap is an eventually unfulfillable feat:

> This expression of very Japanese attitudes simply cannot be rendered into Western equivalents.[39]

> Because of cultural differences, the Western reader cannot always share nuances of gesture and feeling; and the specific sexuality, even when rendered with technical correctness in the translation, will often have quite different connotations.[40]

Japan is constituted as an aesthetic being that can only be felt and understood through psychological and emotional means, but which is never dealt with as an intelligible body of meaning. This trope, also present in mass-audience-targeted texts, increases in depth and incidence throughout this subcorpus. I argue that genre conventions associated with the structure and approach of academic literary criticism at the time these works were produced conditioned this

[38] Boardman Petersen, *The Moon in the Water*, 154.
[39] Ibid., 143.
[40] Ibid., 188.

construction of Japan. New Criticism and its related formalist Kantian aestheticism determined the way Japan was delineated out of the reading and analysis of Kawabata's literature. Japan goes through the same process of aestheticization condemned by Karatani involving the objectification of the subject to be appraised. Japanese identity gets equated through this practice to a set of specific referents. These referents are in turn based on a loose understanding of pre-modern Japanese ideas on the aesthetic sublime: impermanence, purity, or fragility. The authors limit the definition of the nation outside socio-political contemporary terms by correlating an essence of the Japanese to these pre-ordained aesthetic principles. Moreover, this discourse creates a gradation of affinity based on the presence and adscription of the same in the literary texts. A work is 'very' or 'little' Japanese because of the abundance or lack of these aesthetic ideas. As a result, 'Japan' becomes an umbrella concept to bundle up an oft undetermined collection of aesthetic tropes that represents a grading criterion to determine affinity to itself.

Ambiguity is both a constitutive element of this intertextual definition of the 'aesthetic Japan' and a resource that enables the undetermined delimitation of its representation. Japaneseness is defined by voids, reservations, vagueness, and a desire to be indirect. This conclusion is reached through the interpretation of Kawabata's novels as 'plotless.' Miyoshi considers that Kawabata inscribes his literature in a tradition of silences, absences, and evocation. This interpretation suggests that the more faded the plot, the more Japanese it can be considered to be. This idea has been forged in opposition to the belief that action and plot development are Western literary resources. Following this logic,

recognizing alien and dissonant elements gets the reader closer to a non-Westernized, nativist essence that in the discourse's terms constitutes Japaneseness. Yamanouchi's close reading analysis of Kawabata's prose is drafted from a study of the writer's use of aesthetic resources. Western influence is dismissed in order for the supposedly Japanese essence to be reached:

> In fact, the uniqueness of Kawabata's style is not its imitation of European modernism but rather its use of quintessentially Japanese poetic sensibility in the once prosaic genre of the novel.[41]

Miyoshi also appeals to the existence of this distance from Western literary influences to justify his association between Kawabata's literature and the idea of Japaneseness: "the notion of a cosmopolitan is itself quite specific to modern Western culture. The fact is, in the complexion of their feelings and emotions his characters are unmistakably Japanese." [42] Makoto Ueda's chapter on Kawabata follows the same pattern of examining the novelist's major works as a strictly textual study, framing these resources as part of a Japanese tradition of plotlessness. At the end of her text, he quotes Kawabata directly on the matter:

> The Japanese have been said to be simple-minded and unable to devise too complex a plot, so that the literary works they produce are in the main simple and natural. But, in my opinion,

[41] Yamanouchi, *The Search for Authenticity in Modern Japanese Literature*, 123.
[42] Miyoshi, *Accomplices of Silence*, 100.

> this feature of Japanese literature is due less to national character than to the views of Japanese writers concerning the extent to which logic and artifice may be allowed in the novel. To be natural, to be true to nature - this has been the basic principle pervading all the arts in Japan, both past and present.[43]

Although Kawabata seems to deflect with his words the association of empty plots as a strictly national trait, he deems it a characteristic of Japanese art. This diversion, however, conceals a different type of reification. The aesthetic principles of Japanese art are hailed as representatives of Japaneseness. This principle would have its discursive vindication in Kawabata's Nobel speech, conveniently translated as "Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself," with a defense of art as paradigmatic of national character or 'spirit.'

A list of tropes is grouped together through the description of these Japanese codes. The idea of Japaneseness as closely connected with themes of nature, is one of the main tropes of this body of aesthetic correlations. Keene refers to it with the Japanese compound *kachō-fūgetsu*, "flowers, butterflies, the wind, and the moon."[44] He considers these "poetic evocations of nature [...] typically Japanese features," arguing that Kawabata, Tanizaki, and Mishima combined "their flawless use of suggestion or their poetic evocations of nature" with more modern and West-associated genre forms and conventions "to

[43] Ueda, *Modern Japanese writers and the Nature of Literature*, 208.
[44] Keene, *5 Modern Authors*, 25.

transcend the particularity of being Japanese." [45] He reinforces through this association the framing of Japaneseness confined within the realm of the aesthetic. In some instances, Keene goes so far as to use in this sense the word 'Japanese' as an adjective evocative in its own semantic code, a signifier acting simultaneously as a signified: "despite the exotic touches – Chopin, birds of paradise, kangaroos – Kawabata found something Japanese, even specifically Buddhist, in the scene." [46]

Another feature of this bundle of aesthetic associations is the idea of the Japanese as sensual and, more precisely, as feminine. Kawabata's portrayal of Japanese women as meek and delicate is considered representative of a national archetype. As Keene puts it in *Dawn to the West*:

> *Snow Country* conveys, better perhaps than any other modern Japanese novel, the special charm of the Japanese woman, and not only the geisha [...] sometimes foolish though charming protestations.[47]

Boardman Petersen claims that the Japanese possess a natural tolerance for sensuality and eroticism. She justifies this statement by making a comparison of potential Western reactions to the encounter with the Japanese erotica: "It should therefore be stressed that while explicitly sexual descriptions surprise Western readers of *The Lake*, Japanese readers find these quite natural extensions of the sensual

[45] Ibid., 27.
[46] Ibid., 37.
[47] Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 819.

imagery."[48] Ideas of sensuality and sexuality are associated with the figure of the woman. These gendered portrayals of national character are more accurately embodied through the acritical recreation of the prototype of the geisha. This image carries along a patriarchal rendering of the figure of the geisha as a woman whose identity is molded to serve men both as an agent of artistic (and thus, aesthetic) recreation and also as a channel for their erotic desires.

The idea of Japan that emerges described from Kawabata's literature is constantly associated with the notion of a surviving past, an anachronism which finds itself at odds with the constant push forward involving the project of modernity. This breaking of contemporaneity establishes a coexisting linear progression for the development of the country and a static principle of national identity that is detached from it. There is an observed Japan with a modern sociopolitical reality, and an essentialized Japan that can only be 'evoked' through artistic expression. This, in turn, emphasizes the rejection of a Japan that can be defined in rational terms and reinforces aesthetic and emotional means to comprehend it. This dismissal of modernity is coupled with a supposedly pre-modern heightened closeness with motives of nature and pacific stillness. See, for instance, this fragment from Kimball's *Crisis in Identity and Contemporary Japanese Novels*:

> The something Japanese about Kawabata is a meditative, sympathetic, sometimes wistful, and highly evocative understanding of nature, or rather, of the subtle interplay between nature and human experience. It has deep roots in the

[48] Boardman Petersen, *The Moon in the Water*, 188.

> heritage from Japan's past, both religious and literary, from Buddhist reflection and Shinto mystique as well as their artistic calling card, the haiku poem.[49]

Nature, meditation, art, and Japan's past are constitutive traits of this "something Japanese" Kimball claims to have identified in his reading of Kawabata's literature. Moreover, he maintains that these literary texts are a conduit for the reader (especially the Western reader) to access to its meager and underlying 'true' identity lingering below the thick coating of modern development. He is not alone in his judgment. Keene, for instance, seems to vouch for the same view when he declares the following:

> During the war, Kawabata attempted to understand the special character of a country for which so many men were dying. He drew examples from the literature of the past, intending to demonstrate that the Heian traditions had survived despite their apparent weakness.[50]

The combination of pre-modern referents and aesthetic concerns is also embodied in the use of 'tradition' when discussing Japan. 'Tradition,' in its semantic implication of a canonical methodology inherited from a time gone, becomes in the national narrative a synonym of Japan. In using with debatable freedom the term 'tradition' as a receptacle for a supposed national self, these authors establish a

---

[49] Kimball, *Crisis in Identity and Contemporary Japanese Novels*, 95.
[50] Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 822.

clear distance between a modern present and the nation's identity, introducing them as engaged in strict conflict:

> For Kawabata, who never imagined abandoning the best of that tradition, his advocacy produced a body of work that, for all its homage to techniques and values of the past, remains in many ways the most contemporary among the work of all twentieth-century writers. His inner poetic world, like that of Lady Murasaki's, moves quickly across the spaces of time, out of its own culture and into our own, remaining both accessible and suggestive at the same time.[51]

> So-called influences are apt to reveal themselves as artfully updated versions of centuries-old tradition, while the 'quaint' elements derive their significance not from the ways in which they separate East and West but from the ways in which tradition - as in Kawabata's tea ceremony in *Thousand Cranes* - has been subtly distorted in contemporary Japan.[52]

The parallelism established between Japan and its supposed canon of tradition is conditioned by two elements. First, these texts attempt a comparative exercise that brings out differences in relation to an equivalent so-called Western tradition. This effort establishes the Japanese 'traditional' identity through an exercise of mirrored opposition. Second, 'tradition,' is described in perpetual clash with an unstoppable process of modernization because it is exclusively

[51] Rimer, *Modern Japanese Fiction and its Traditions*, 180-181.
[52] Boardman Petersen, *The Moon in the Water*, 1.

constituted by pre-modern traits. Moreover, the framing of the project of modernity as a Westernizing phenomenon induces the process of creating a modern Japanese identity with the implication of alienating and estranging its historical precedence. Japanese tradition, and by virtue of semantic inference in the national narrative, the idea of Japan, is threatened by two seemingly unstoppable forces in an unsustainable situation of imperilment. The discourse which dictates Japaneseness is comprehended by pre-modern, non-Western features. Therefore, this association brings upon itself the assailing paradox of observing the effects of re-industrialization and global cultural exchange purporting the message that *that* Japan and not *this* Japan is fading, is vanishing, is, apparently, going away:

> The Nobel Committee members who read *The Old Capital* in German or other translations were impressed by the sense of old traditions and the beauty of Kyoto suggested by the novel. But the appeal is chiefly for the tourist, whether Japanese who find the language spoken by Kyoto women of seductive charm or Europeans who yearn for a Japan unaffected by the blight of Americanization. Kawabata was moved to write *The Old Capital* by his fear that the traditional way of life would soon disappear, an apprehension he shared with most tourists.[53]
>
> These cultural memories are becoming increasingly remote even from the younger Japanese reader, who may miss the full

[53] Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 837.

> richness of poetic hints but can still appreciate the delicate feelings that are conveyed.[54]

The mourning of a disappearing Japan clashes with the most obvious fact that this allegation does not mean the end of Japan as a territorial and political entity. The contemporary country known as Japan still exists albeit it is paradoxically ignored in the definition of its identity. Kawabata's Japan is composed as a split body. It is described as a nation at odds in simultaneously hosting the conflicts between new and old, East and West that have been previously associated with Japan. The authors find these conflicts expressed and manifested through Kawabata's literature. Japan may have experienced after the war changes in its economic, politic, and social landscape brought by the effort of reconstruction, industrial development, and incipient consumerist behavior. These practices are however not considered constitutive of the nation's identity. Quite the opposite, the idea of Japan described in these texts comprehends features that antagonize observable reality. This national narrative suggests the somewhat unquestionable assumption of an 'essence' that defies time, changes, and foreign intervention by being both rooted in pre-modern times and composed by pre-modern cultural referents. On top of that, it establishes the idea of Japaneseness within the conceptual structures of emotional and aesthetic considerations. None of these assessments is concerned with the relationship between the individual and its community from a sociopolitical point of view. Keene makes a strong point to defend this detachment, both in describing Kawabata's life and in how contemporaneity is obliterated from the text:

[54] Boardman Petersen, *The Moon in the Water*, 181.g

> Yet despite the evidence of his considerable involvement in the literary (and even the political) world, Kawabata seemed to remain largely unaffected by the developments in the society surrounding him.[55]

> He was interested above all in communicating perceptions, in the manner of the New Sensationalists, rather than in supplying a sociologically accurate description of Asakusa.[56]

The Japanese distilled from this narrative are quiet, melancholic, pensive, frail, sensitive, isolated, and unconcerned by social ills. This assessment is not enriched by an interpretation of the country's historical context. The absence of a reliable and cohesive answer to the question of paradoxical coexistence of the 'two Japans' makes the definition of 'the national' an unstable and irresolute issue.

As it has been shown in this analysis, a unified group of tropes constitutes the national narrative of Japan based on Kawabata's literature throughout the whole corpus. The potential conditioning of being produced and targeted to different audiences does not change the core elements and features of the discourse. The only difference worth considering is a reasonable disparity in the degree of interest and depth put into further describing the Japan from an aesthetic approach. I argue that this differentiation is explained in this case by the historical genre conventions of each body of texts, which favors

[55] Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 787.
[56] Ibid., 797.

aesthetic interpretation in academic texts. In terms of differences across countries where these critical texts circulate, the most notable disparity is the discrepancy in the amount of critical texts. The absence of a tradition of Japanese scholarship in Spain at the specified periodization has hampered the development of an analytical body of academic texts in the country that would discuss autonomously Kawabata's literature. This has also meant that any later appearance and advancement of Japanese studies in Spain had to take for reference other foreign scholar traditions, mainly English sources. As for mass-audience-targeted texts, Kawabata's life and work are reported and discussed in relationship with Japan in both countries to a very similar and coherent degree. This should not be too surprising given that the direct allusions and citations Spanish authors inscribe in their own journalistic pieces prove the explicit influence of U.S. texts.

To sum up, the Japan that emerges from Kawabata's literature-based national narrative is partial by design. It rejects a contemporary socio-political mirroring correspondence. The discourse opts instead to define Japan by a so-called underlying national essence that is endangered by the progress of modernity and the sway of Western influence. This paradigmatic principle refuses to harmonize the precariously assumed Japanese essence with a rendering of the country's contemporary reality. This process normalizes the questioning of any ongoing model of national representation that would not comply with a description of Japan outside a tension with modernity. Because it is built out of conflict, the national narrative of Japan takes pre-modern cultural elements present in Kawabata's literature as representative of a nativist national identity. Japan is

understood and constructed only through aesthetic concepts that predate Western contact and with an approach that equates tradition with nation. It is a definition whose conceptual scaffoldings are set on top of a constant and inevitable decrying of modernity's threat. The proposed solution is to sustain Japan as a perpetual Other trapped outside History which can only be approached as an object of depoliticized aesthetic interpretation.

2.3 Mishima Yukio

Where there are cases in which accident, fate, and serendipity seem to be the major agents in the shaping of an individual's traits and circumstances, the life of Mishima Yukio (1925-1970) appears, on the other hand, held up by the strings of a methodical will of careful and deliberate design. Born as Hiroaka Kimitake in a well-off Tokyoite aristocratic family, Hiroaka was raised until he turned twelve years old by his grandmother in a regime of confinement and isolation. He received from that time the permanent scar of being a witness of his grandmother's physical and mental disorders. Hiroaka excelled in his studies at the *Gakushūin*, the elitist Japanese Peers' School, where besides learning French, German, and English, he fostered his early devotion to writing literature. Shy, introvert, feeble of body but strong-minded, Hiroaka decided to follow the advice of professors and colleagues from literary circles and adopted a pen name before submitting a manuscript for the first time to a serious publication.

Hiroaka Kimitake became thereupon Mishima Yukio: beyond the pseudonym, an identity in public, relentless, and determined construction.

Mishima avoided the war because the day of the draft he was sick with a common cold that the military doctor mistook for tuberculosis. Upon graduation from Tokyo University and pressured by his father, Mishima accepted an entry job at the Minister of Finance. Working by day and writing by night, Mishima crossed his parents' wishes and quit this unbearable lifestyle to devote full-time to literature. During his early years, Mishima mainly wrote short stories that were well received and caught the attention of influential literary personalities. He became Kawabata's protégé and good friend, to whom he always professed a rare and exceptional admiration. Mishima made his real literary breakthrough in 1949 with *Kamen no Kokuhaku* (*Confessions of a Mask*), a semi-autobiographical best-selling novel that tells the story of a young, fragile, and conflicted boy growing up in an oppressive social background trying to give workable meaning to his repressed homosexual and creative pulses.

Mishima traveled at the beginning of the 1950s through Europe and the United States riding a wave of newfound popularity. During that decade, he also wrote novels, short stories, and plays. He supplemented his income with cash-grabbing texts for popular periodicals, working around the clock following a highly disciplined routine. It was at this time that Mishima became obsessed with body-building. On the one hand, he may have wanted to overcome the weakness and illness-prone condition of his childhood and teenage

years. On the other, he seemed attracted to a muscle-chiseled canon of male beauty. Mishima's sexual orientation needs to be mentioned as an element of nuance that gives complexity to his identity and literature given the time, place, and magnitude of his popularity. He never addressed his homosexual tendencies openly, but never quite denied them. Besides *Confessions of a Mask*, *Kinjiki* (*Forbidden Colors*) features another parallel between his life and work. In this novel, Mishima describes the atmosphere of Japanese gay bars during the occupation and narrates the tempestuous relationship between an old writer and a young follower.

As the 1960s unfolded, Mishima became more socially, artistically, and politically active. He was known for his public disregard of Japanese literary cliques and enjoyed throwing parties and inviting guests to his baroquely decorated home. Mishima modeled for photoshoots, took kendo and karate classes to heart, and acted in commercial films. He also wrote, directed, and starred in his own movies, the most famous of which is probably *Yukoku* (*Patriotism*), based on his homonymous text. In his later years, Mishima became more engaged with his partisan views. He abhorred institutional politics and although cultured and well-informed, he was not an academic or a social scientist. Mishima approached politics like an artistic exploration, farther from the rational and the pragmatic and better understood closer to a cultural and emotional exercise of discovery. Partially inspired by *Roman-ha* authors active during the 1930s like Yasuda Yōjurō or Kita Ikki, Mishima's political body of thought entails a denunciation of supposed moral corruption by contemporary Japanese society, especially by its institutional elites, in the aftermath of the war

and in their plan of economic development projection. He advocated for the restoration and revaluation of the Emperor as the prime national axis, although it was unclear whether that meant for Mishima the granting of executive powers to the monarch. Mishima defended the understanding of a new role for the Japanese individual as a model citizen who would reject postwar passivity and meekness to embrace sacrifice for the bigger cause when necessary. He framed these ideas around the sometimes contrived wrapping of so-called samurai imagery and values that established a relationship between body, mind, and the Japanese nation. Mishima wrote about these topics in popular essays which he never shied away from defending in public. In 1969, for instance, Mishima exchanged views with left-wing student activists linked to the *Zengakuren*, with whom he only shared a standpoint of opposition to the Japanese status quo, in a heated debate hosted by Tokyo University.

Apart from developing these ideas in writing, Mishima founded the *Tatenokai* or Shield Society. This private militia group of around ninety members followed his leadership into physical and didactical training, paraded around Tokyo, and were supposed to help the Japanese army assist with their ultimate goal of defending the Japanese Emperor in a hypothetical (and desired by its members) restoration of the social order arranged around his figure. On November 25, 1970, Mishima and a close circle of his *Tatenokai* lieutenants were granted a reception by the commandant of Tokyo's Ichigaya Camp of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. Once the party entered the office, they restrained the commandant and barricaded inside. Mishima requested in exchange for the officer's freedom the opportunity to make a speech in front of

the military forces there stationed. In a grandiose choreographed event, Mishima appeared on the balcony and urged on the troops to enforce a coup against the government and the restoration of the Emperor. To his dismay, the soldiers rejected his proposition. Mishima retreated then to the office and committed seppuku along with political activist and right-hand follower Morita Masakatsu. This striking death was considered a symbolic turning point for postwar Japan. His suicide, coinciding with the loosening of claims from left-wing and student demonstrations, seemed to signal the triumph of conformism and compliance with the established paradigm within Japanese society after two decades of relative social unrest.

In literary terms, Mishima wrote short stories, essays, and plays, but he is best known for his novels. The majority of them use an urban contemporary Japan as setting for the action with the exception of *Shiosai* (*The Sound of Waves*), set in postwar Uta-Jima, an island in the Gulf of Ise. Mishima is particularly studied for the way he developed the psychological intricacies of his characters. He explored in many of them the relationship between an anxious and insecure individual that develops an obsession with a shiny, platonic model of reference. This is the case in *Confessions of a Mask* between the narrator and his classmate; in *Forbidden Colors* between Shunsuke and Yuichi; and also in *Kinkaku-ji* (*The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*) between Mizoguchi and the Golden Pavilion. He made it one of the main pillars of his tetralogy *Hojō no Umi* (*The Sea of Fertility*) too, where Honda gets infatuated with his friend Kiyoaki and his successive reincarnations.

Mishima's popularity abroad grew thanks to the promotion of foreign editions. He was friends with his translators, especially with Donald Keene and John Nathan, who would later write about his life and work. During the late 1960s, Mishima's name was among the favorites to obtain a Nobel Prize of Literature. When it was revealed in 1968 that his mentor Kawabata was the writer to receive the award, he reportedly took the blow with contempt. In the end, it proves difficult to extricate Mishima's life from his work. Under thorough analysis, both seem products of methodical planning and design: crafted with an attention to detail in every of its shown angles and deliberately ambiguous facets. Either by the impact and magnetism of his life, death, or popularity of his work, Mishima greatly contributed to the internationalization of Japanese literature and is an unquestionable agent in the shaping of the national narrative of Japan in the West.

2.3.1 Mass-Audience-Targeted Texts

In the following pages I examine articles, book reviews, and interviews published between August 1956 and December 1989 in the United States and Spain in which authors define and describe Japan and the Japanese based on a reading of Mishima's literature. I also review five relatively popular biographies produced during the selected period of time as relevant mass-audience-texts. Pieces in which the author is just cited but not further analyzed are considered outside the scope of this work and therefore they are not included in the ensuing study.

I start with a breakdown of the metadata from the body of newspaper articles taken and analyzed as source material for the definition of this subcorpus. There are a total of sixty-six articles read and examined, thirty-eight published in the United States and twenty-eight in Spain. In the U.S., *The New York Times* provides the biggest amount of texts with a total of eighteen articles, followed closely by *The Washington Post* with fifteen, *The New York Review of Books* with four, and one long piece in the section "The Talk of the Town" of *The New Yorker*. In Spain, the distribution is practically even between the two periodicals that featured Mishima at the time: *ABC* published fifteen texts and *La Vanguardia* thirteen articles.

These texts have forty-seven different authors: Lorenzo López-Sancho (*ABC*), Luis de Paola (*ABC*), and Selig S. Harrison (*The New York Times*) are the most prolific, with three articles each. Donald Keene (*The New York Times*), Juan Antonio Vallejo-Nágera (*ABC*, *La Vanguardia*), James Clayton (*The Washington Post*), and Philip Shabecoff (*The New York Times*) authored two each. The rest of the authors, listed in the bibliography, published one text. Some texts, especially those that report on the aftermath of Mishima's death, were published without specifying the author, hence only the source and date appear listed.

I find it useful putting back to back the publication dates of these texts against specific temporal markers in order to fully understand the evolution of the national narrative. There are three types of events that coincide with the production of newspaper articles commenting on his literature in the case of Mishima. First, the publication of one of his

work in translation. Second, the reporting done on a major life landmark, which in Mishima's case is his dramatic death. And third, the revival of his figure in the late eighties incited by movie director Paul Schrader's biopic *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* (1985). Even within these categories, there are differences in the moment a text appears in the United States and in Spain, with the evident exception of reports on Mishima's suicide.

The majority of Mishima's works in English translation appeared while the author was alive. *The Sound of Waves* was the first novel to be edited, published in 1956, and nine other books followed suit. This selection included a collection of Noh plays translated by Donald Keene (*Five Noh Plays*, 1957), the modern play *Sado Kōshaku Fujin* (*Madame de Sade*, 1967), and the particular autobiographical literary essay *Taiyō no Terasu* (*Sun and Steel*, 1970), which came out only a few months before his death. Mishima's popularity in the United States was solid enough to ensure a reaction in the press whenever he got a work translated. In Spain it was the opposite case. Only one of his works (*El pabellón de oro*) had been translated into Spanish (and from English) but the time of his death. It came out in 1964 and received a very short commentary in *La Vanguardia* which did not even introduce the author.

Mishima's suicide changed this scenario. The incident at the Ichigaya camp was well chronicled in both countries. In the following years, Spanish publishing houses started offering indirect translations of Mishima's most popular novels. Interest in Mishima was held steady during the 1970s and early 1980s, with a sudden peak of attention between 1985 (a date Ana Salado called "the year of Yukio

Mishima."[57] [(xii)]) and 1987. Five of his works were translated into Spanish. Schrader's movie premiered in Cannes and was withdrawn from the Tokyo International Film Festival after pressure from right-wing groups. A translation of Marguerite Yourcenar's *Mishima ou la vision du vide* (*Mishima: A Vision of the Void*) came out in Spanish. And finally, two adaptations of *Madame de Sade* appeared in theaters in Barcelona and Madrid, one directed by Jordi Mesalles and the other by Joaquín Vida. The illustration in the following page shows more clearly the distribution and correlation between time, number of texts, and publication country when compared to the rhythm of translations to English or to Spanish. It is worth pointing out at the two spikes in the graph, one in 1970 when he died and the other in 1985, as they correspond to an upsurge in publications.

Mishima landed on U.S. shores in 1956 as a very popular writer in Japan. The earliest text discussing his work introduces Mishima with a sentence that could easily pass for a press release from the publishing house: "it is the first book to reach us in English of a prolific, youthful, richly gifted Japanese writer, Yukio Mishima."[58] This presentation would set the tone for the pieces that came afterwards. From early on, Mishima is constructed as a one-of-a-kind author, a powerhouse in Japan regardless of his youth, "the best-represented Japanese novelist

---

[57] Salado, "Mishima, biografía de John Nathan."
[58] Fuller, "For love of a Girl."

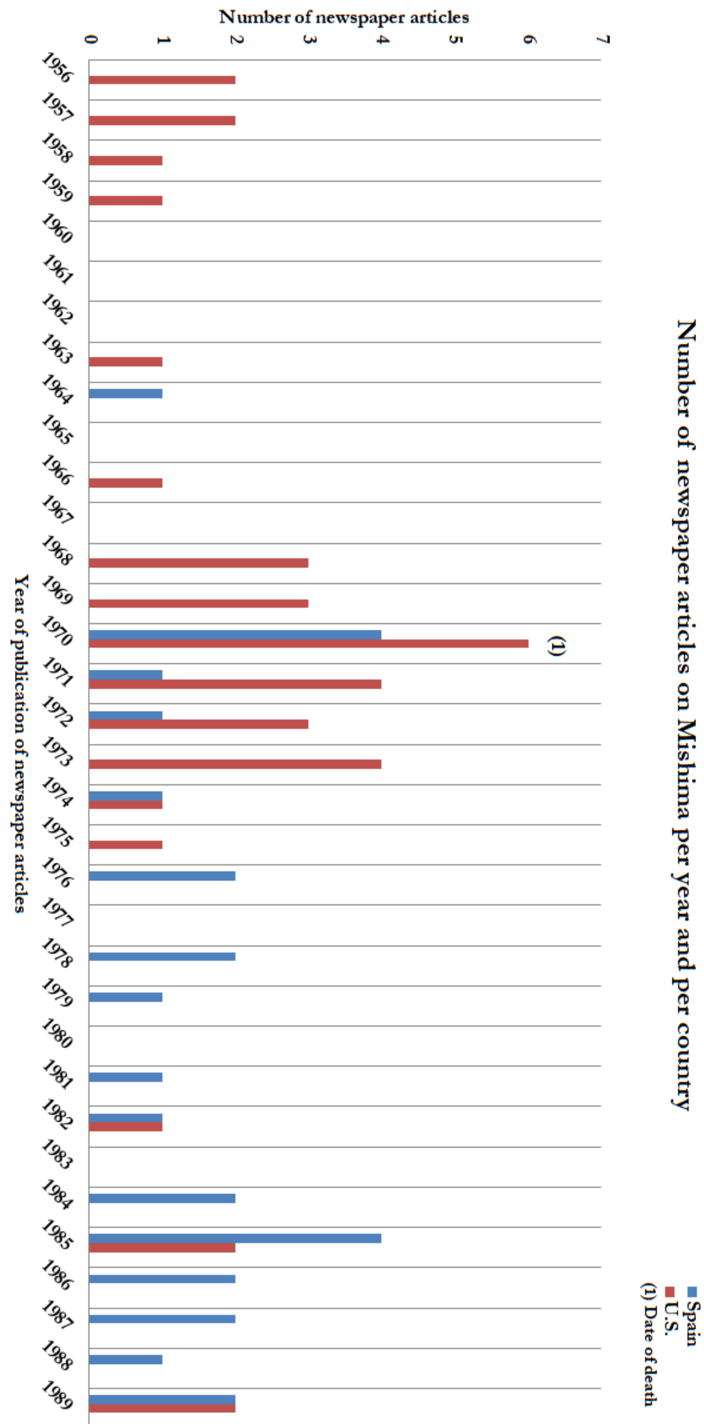

Figure 2: Number of Newspaper Articles on Mishima per Year and per Country

here,"[59] "an intellectual with impeccable credentials"[60] about whom "few writers boast so intense a readership – near idolatrous in the home country and ardent and zealous, if smaller, abroad."[61] His death added a level of perverse allure and tempestuous mystery that eroded his canonicity. It framed Mishima outside conventionalism while easing the establishment of a parallelism between his life and a socio-cultural interpretation of postwar Japan. Because the majority of Spanish translations and critical texts were published after his suicide, this dimension is already present in their introductions. Spanish texts describe Mishima as "their major postwar author,"[62] (xiii) "a genius, a lunatic, and a suicide,"[63] (xiv) "who was considered deserving the Nobel Prize of Literature."[64] (xv)

Around the end of his life, some authors began to frame Mishima as an oddity to a supposedly existent standard of Japanese individuality. His political views, habits, and personality are reckoned as not espoused by many of his contemporary citizens. Philip Shabecoff produced for *The New York Times* a long profile with the colorful title of "You've Heard of Yukio Mishima, Novelist, General, Swordsman, Karate Student, Movie Star, Lecturer, Bon Vivant and Maybe Soon Nobel Prize Winner? Everyone in Japan Has." In this piece, Shabecoff tries to both recount Mishima's eccentric feats while explaining his figure as a product of postwar, post-occupation Japan, a country that follows and competes with the West:

[59] Keene, "Beauty Itself Became a Deadly Enemy."
[60] Clayton, "Nationalism urges Japan to Shed Its Western Trappings."
[61] Flowers, "Politics and Love in Japan."
[62] "Caballos desbocados."
[63] Berasategui, "Vallejo-Nágera o el placer de escribir."
[64] "Un grupo de extremistas asalta un cuartel en Tokio."

> Mishima is, I suppose, about as far as possible from being a typical Japanese. His life and his work, if they reflect contemporary Japan, do so the same way as a funhouse mirror returns a modified, individual view of reality. He feels he has no obligation in his work to Japan, only to his art. Yet there are uncanny echoes of modern Japan in Mishima's life; glints of national aspiration in his private ambitions; broad hints of what it is to have been Japanese in a world dominated by the West, in a country defeated by the West but finally reaching exhilarating parity with the West.[65]

This discourse of uniqueness of the individual when compared to a supposed homogeneity of the Japanese masses is justified through an interpretation of Mishima's failure in successfully bringing to fruition his coup at the Ichigaya Camp. Mishima's exceptionality is upheld years after his death by pointing out the reported lack of actual political consequences to his sacrifice. Japan and the Japanese are in this regard described in opposition to Mishima's views. The discourse categorizes Mishima's position as an accurate diagnostic of Japan's situation while suggesting at the same time that his intended plan of action would not strike a chord with contemporary Japanese. The popularity of his political views was downplayed, for "only a few Japanese seemed interested in joining Mishima's fanciful march."[66] As Takashi Oka puts it in his reported piece on Mishima's funeral, "the

---

[65] Shabecoff, "You've Heard of Yukio Mishima…"
[66] "The Talk of Town."

Emperor-centered Japan that Mr. Mishima sought to restore was an idealized and probably un-realizable vision, not a practical blueprint."[67]

With the passing of time and most notably in his resurgence in the mid-1980s, Mishima's exceptionality is used to describe in contrast the image of post-recovery Japan. This model of national identity is built associated with ideas of submission and acceptance of the late-capitalist citizen-consumer paradigm. Ian Buruma talks about a "feeling of ambivalence" in Japan towards Mishima in which "it is hard to say whether the Japanese are truly uninterested or whether there is a kind of national conspiracy of silence, to blot out an embarrassing memory." Buruma also called to think of Mishima as "not a harbinger, but an anachronism."[68] Japanese of the 1980s are described distant to the image projected by Mishima and what his life and work are thought to represent. Japan is already defined as purely an economy-driven entity that rejected Mishima's so-called romantic ideals. Taylor Gregg believes that the Japanese consider Mishima

> ultimately […] an embarrassment because he rejects the face-saving rationalizations that underpin modern, Western-influenced Japanese life. He is a rebel with a cause, a man out of his time but squarely in the middle of a very Japanese tradition.[69]

This evolution in describing the Japanese as progressively less interested and disengaged with politics runs parallel to a sustained consideration of postwar Japan as a state in crisis. The authors of

[67] Oka, "Mishima Memorial: Some Banzais, Much Skepticism."
[68] Buruma, "Rambo-san."
[69] Gregg, "The Mishima Enigma."

these texts believe this circumstance stems from Mishima's literary themes, style, and what he represents as a polemic yet very popular writer and intellectual. Even though Mishima's literature started to appear in the West over ten years after the end of the war, Japan was still considered a nation dealing with the traumatic effects of the defeat. Ben Rey Redman suggests in his review of *Confessions of a Mask* that

> the younger and middle generations of Japanese writers find themselves […] wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born. Cut off suddenly from the life-giving traditions of their national past, they have not yet been able to find spiritual nourishments in the Western culture that has been thrust to them.[70]

Upon his death, Mishima represented a branch of the Japanese who chose to reject pacifism and materialism out of this general sense of disorientedness and loss of a purpose:

> He argues that fear of violence and denial of power in postwar Japan will lead ultimately to the denial of state authority.[71]

> Mishima deplored the 'soulless life' of the Japanese people today and their 'intoxication' with economic prosperity.[72]

> He expressed his distaste for the grossly material existence of the Japanese today and the utter meaninglessness of their lives.[73]

[70] Ray Redman, "What He Had to Hide."
[71] Clayton, "Nationalism urges Japan to Shed Its Western Trappings."
[72] Harrison, "Suicide of Novelist Mishima Shocks Japanese."

Gore Vidal suggests that "the sun no longer rises in Japan" for "his children are bored with their new prosperity, their ugly cities, their half-Western half-Japanese culture, their small polluted islands."[74] The same type of assessment was being made in Spain. Jorge Edwards describes Japan as "a defeated country, without an army, forced to an accelerated modernization […] with a humiliated emperor turned into a little white-collar bureaucrat."[75] (xvi)

In the construction of this account, there is an implicit acceptance of Japan as a materialistic, consumerism-driven society that exchanged a sense of particular tradition for a bundle of industrial and capitalist tropes:

> The Japan of transistors, atomic clocks, and extremely fast monorails.[76] (xvii)

> This is a society feverish with work, business, and the desire for hoarding goods.[77] (xviii)

> They are materialistic and wealthy and want nothing but to enjoy life without limitation.[78]

---

[73] Keene, "Mishima."
[74] Vidal, "Mr. Japan."
[75] Jorge Edwards, "El fondo oculto de Japón."
[76] López Sancho, "El «No» de Yukio Mishima."
[77] "El hara-kiri de Yukio Mishima."
[78] Philip Shabecoff, "You've Heard of Yukio Mishima…"

As Luis de Paola puts it in his 1984 review of *Caballos desbocados* (*Runaway Horses*), "the soul of the country has been transferred from the Golden Pavilion in Kyoto to the walls of the Bank of Japan."[79] (xix)

This criticism also entails an accusation of superficiality and unsustainability set to be applied only to Japan and not to a global model of late-capitalist society. Mishima also condemned this standard of permanent doubt in an interview published in *The New York Times* little before his death. During a conversation built around the idea of Japan's treatment of modernity and tradition, Mishima compared Japan's postwar development with a two-story house:

> We think we have climbed to the second floor. But can we be sure? Can we really certify that this is the second floor? I believe that Europeans can certify their results and say they have reached the second floor because they built the stairway. But if we borrow the stairway, the second floor is not our second floor – at best it is borrowed.[80]

Mishima's literature is believed to be able to help Western readers understand Japan's cultural idiosyncrasy. Shabecoff quotes in Mishima's obituary his editor Harold Strauss in a statement that seems to place Mishima as the ultimate mediator between two differentiated cultural entities and two distinctive times:

[79] Luis de Paola, "Caballos desbocados."
[80] Shabecoff, "You've Heard of Yukio Mishima…"

> Mishima was torn apart by the Japanese transition to modernism […] he had a foot in the past and one in the future. He was able to articulate this change as no other Japanese novelist was able to do. Older writers such as Yasunari Kawabata can write only of the past and younger writers such as Kobo Abe can write only of the present.[81]

He was constantly interrogated about his Western literary influences – a common question for Japanese writers that are popular abroad. There are authors that established a parallelism between Mishima's simultaneous taste for Western and Japanese art forms as a symbol of "the paradoxes and inconsistencies that plague Japan today, despite the changes that have taken place since World War II."[82] Donald Keene considered Mishima "possessed both traditions and combined them brilliantly," effectively establishing a distinction between the two cultural bodies.[83] Italian writer and friend of Mishima Alberto Moravia also jumps on the bandwagon of contributing to this dualistic and self-sustained paradox of hybrid identity in his eulogy:

> Mishima, as a public figure and as a writer, represented Japan, a dualistic and contradictory country in which a neo-capitalist industrial revolution and the uses and habits of a traditional world still coexist. Even today in Japan, the intermediary between the industrial revolution and feudalism in literature

[81] Shabecoff, "Mishima: A Man Torn Between Two Worlds."
[82] Oka, "Mishima Memorial: Some Banzais, Much Skepticism."
[83] Keene, "Mishima."

> is aestheticism and not Marxism like it was in Europe a century ago.[84] (xx)

This assessment of Mishima's foreign literary choices involves a commentary on the integrative dynamics of Western cultural influence in Japan. Paul Theroux considers in his review of *The Temple of Dawn* that Mishima's use of the theme of reincarnation is "a Nipponese rehearsal of Joyce's 'met-him-pike-horses.'"[85] Ian Buruma seems to agree with this view of cultural cross-pollination:

> Mishima was not the only one of his generation to see parallels between Kabuki and the Elizabethan thirst for theatrical blood, between Wagnerism and Japanese spiritualism, between Baudelaire and teahouse decadence, or between Byron and Japanese artists of action.[86]

These comparisons seem to suggest that just like Mishima was considered to adapt the West, so Japan adapted Western cultural traits. This is based on assuming the existence of a common ground between the two countries. This presumption, however, sidesteps the need of engaging in a debate over how to harmonize the existence of foreign cultural references with a defense of national particularism. As Gregg puts it:

> Mishima's is the story of two cultures – of ill-fated lovers. Like many modern Japanese, he fell in love with the West but

[84] Moravia, "Morir como un samurai."
[85] Theroux, "About Reincarnation (sort of), chickens (sort of), travel (sort of)."
[86] Buruma, "Rambo-san."

> his infatuation wore off and in the end he came to hate his old lover. He felt the relationship had cost him his identity. It is the story of Japan and the West, more particularly of Japan and America.[87]

Japan is described as a country in a cultural transition forced by Westernization and postwar economic development. As the intertextual discourse puts it, Mishima defended an idea of Japan that possesses an 'essence' that is to be found in pre-modern tradition. Some texts suggest that Mishima's postwar settings are to be taken as a superficial background, a landscape that only serves to show how the idea of Japan has to be found disengaged from contemporaneity:

> Until now, most of Mishima's novels have been set in contemporary Japan. But in most of them, time and place are like the scenery and settings of a Kabuki play: they are rich and beautiful and integral elements of the complete work of art – but they always remain the backdrop of the drama.[88]

> The flourished Western fan drops down to reveal an ancient face, a cruel and incomprehensible mask.[89] [(xxi)]

> These captivating industrialization and modernization processes happening in Japan, could they be a mask? Maybe the Japanese obey the magic sound of a whistle cut from the clog of a Western woman. They haven't feared a fascination

[87] Gregg, "The Mishima Enigma."
[88] Shabecoff, "You've Heard of Yukio Mishima…"
[89] Lorenzo López Sancho, "El «No» de Yukio Mishima."

> to anything Western […] seduced by the technique, which in the end turn out to be a trap of material wellbeing.[90] (xxii)

The majority of authors believe however that whether Mishima describes contemporary Japan or not is irrelevant because the only Japan they are interested in identifying is an 'essential,' pre-modern cultural body. They interpret in Mishima's literature and public statements a condemnation of the supposed disappearance of this 'essential' Japan. According to these authors, Mishima considered the West and a supposedly ongoing process of Westernization as responsible of endangering Japan's identity: "he deplored most of the signs of Westernization of Japan. Western influence, he felt, was corrupting a Japan and robbing her of her essential spirit."[91] His criticism aimed at the process of 'Westernization' entailed the disapproval of ideas like consumerism, the attempt to adapt a democratic system of governance, and the imposition of urban and industrial landscapes:

> Most people dismiss the militarist part of his message, but agree with his basic contention that Japan is losing its 'innermost spirit' in its single-minded pursuit of economic affluence.[92]

> Some people, including the writer Shintarō Ishihara, believe that Mr. Mishima was protesting not merely the shallow Westernization and so-called democratization taking place in

[90] López Sancho, "El Japón y su máscara."
[91] Shabecoff, "Mishima: A Man Torn Between Two Worlds."
[92] Harrison, "Novelist's Grisly Death Stirs Japanese."

> Japan since World War II, but also that which was Western within himself.[93]

> Is it worth destroying the nature of Japan, their ancient architecture, their traditional courtesy, their religious serenity, to fill the country with garbage, plastic factories, and electronic equipment?[94] (xxiii)

Mishima's literature is interpreted featuring an assumed ongoing conflict between old and new in which Mishima took sides with the latter because it carries a 'truer' definition of Japan. Miguel Dalmau exposes this idea clearly in his review of *La corrupción de un ángel* (*The Decay of an Angel*) when he considers Toru a symbol of modern Japan and Kiyoaki the representation of a fading, 'pure' and 'eternal' Japan:

> Young Toru represents, therefore, a new race without qualms: an industrial desensitized automaton, unable to host noble emotions. As a result, while Kiyoaki symbolizes the purest of eternal Japan, his last reincarnation is an anonymous monster straight out of the contemporary anthill.[95] (xxiv)

If there is an item that seems to keep this loose idea of a pre-modern identity together is the figure of the Emperor. The Japanese Emperor, deprived by the postwar constitution of executive powers and relegated to a position of emblematic and almost decorative functions,

---

[93] Oka, "Mishima Memorial: Some Banzais, Much Skepticism."
[94] Edwards, "El fondo oculto de Japón."
[95] Dalmau, "Yukio Mishima, la corrupción de un ángel."

is framed in this discourse as the ultimate proof of the decay of a so-called traditional essence. This association is made through the unquestioned and acritical interpretation of Mishima's views. Moreover, the discourse assumes that the degradation of the figure of the Emperor illustrates the disappearance of Japan's alleged pre-modern identity:

> To Mishima, as to ancient Chinese and Japanese, the Emperor clearly seemed more an artistic symbol than a source of power. Mystically, in history, the Emperor linked past to present, the outer universe to his terrestrial domain.[96]

> The Emperor, he believed, is the incarnation of Japanese tradition, the unique repository of the experience of the Japanese people. To protect the Emperor thus meant to protect Japan itself.[97]

The trope of Japan as being both geisha and samurai is particularly present in these texts, a theme reportedly legitimated by Mishima's respect for Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword.* In an interview with Bernard Krisher for *The Washington Post*, Mishima vouches for this essay when asked what books would he recommend to someone who knows nothing about Japan. He validates Benedict's proposal by deeming it "a very cynical, very critical view of the Japanese character but it has some truth in it."[98] Luis Antonio de Villena refers to Benedict's book as a useful reference for describing

[96] "The Talk of Town."
[97] Keene, "Mishima."
[98] Krisher, "Portrait of a Man Reading."

the Japanese literary tradition, considering that Japanese literature is perpetually "moving back and forth between the sword and the chrysanthemum" and asserting that Mishima "had control over" this balance.[99] [(xxv)]

Edmund Fuller, in relating his reading of the lives and settings of Uta-Jima in *The Sound of Waves* considers Japan "an exotic experience, but also a warming one" in which despite the "universal appeal […] the colorful setting is an enchantment […] *The Sound of Waves* is altogether a joyous and lovely thing."[100] James Clayton judges Mishima's *Five Modern Noh Plays* "oriental pictures in black monochrome"[101] and López Sancho considers that these theater pieces describe "a Japan of cherry blossoms, lovers that exchange fans as a wedding charm, magic pillows that bestow marvelous dreams."[102] [(xxvi)] Audrey C. Foote muses about "the change of seasons, the exotic harvest of a Japanese farm and the picturesque annual festivals"[103] of *The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea.* Angela Carter talks about the "good deal of the conventional bric-a-brac of japonaiserie – the bamboo flutes, the sliding screens and so forth"[104] that his novels contain. The list of references is extensive but in the end quite homogenous. These authors insist in reading in Mishima's literature a rendition to a Japanese literary tradition that describes the country through an appeal of the exotic that is aesthetically pleasing and which has its roots in a time that precedes modernization.

---

[99] De Villena, "Mishima, la belleza de la muerte herida."
[100] Fuller, "For Love of a Girl."
[101] Clayton, "Japanese Author Gives Modern Touch to Feudal Era Dramas."
[102] López Sancho, "El «No» de Yukio Mishima."
[103] Foote, "Malevolence in a gracious landscape."
[104] Carter, "Mishima: the Last Samurai?"

While these texts insist on describing Japan as a gentle, delicate, and loving nation, the presence of its counterbalancing trope trait, Japan as warrior, is simultaneously strong. Mishima is quoted supporting this switching back and forth between tropes when he condemned in an interview what he believed was a deliberate plan from the Japanese government to promote a vision of the Japanese as "peace-loving" while ignoring their "rough-soul tradition." In this criticism there is, however, a defense of the supposed anthropological accuracy of this appraisal:

> Since World War II, the feminine tradition has been emphasized to the exclusion of the masculine. We wanted to cover our consciences. So we gave great publicity to the fact that we are a peace-loving people who love flower arranging and gardens and that sort of thing. It was purposely done. [...] It worked [...] but we have also hidden this 'rough-soul' tradition from ourselves.[105]

The Japanese essence is also constituted in this discourse by what authors call 'a samurai tradition.' They describe the Japanese identity as resilient, brave with a shade of recklessness, and obsessed with a mythicized concept of honor. The Japanese are depicted based on this trope as a warmongering people with a propensity towards indifference when faced with individual death. Many of these ideas were active during World War II but had been cornered out of public discussion during the years of U.S. occupation. The previous casting

[105] Shabecoff, "You've Heard of Yukio Mishima…"

off of these themes made precisely for a compelling justification of a 'samurai spirit' that had been forcedly and unnaturally thrust aside. Robert Trumbull says "Mishima suddenly unveils a violent aspect of Japanese character that is supposed to have died with the end of World War II […] the blood-drenched exposition of the old bushido spirit that may not be wholly dead in Japan."[106]

This 'samurai-spirit' comeback, however, did not mean as it happened during the war that the Japanese posit a politically militaristic disposition. Given the lack of following to Mishima's political claims, the discursively assumed 'samurai' facet is solely framed within the realm of cultural interpretation. The discourse establishes a distance between this description and any attempts of producing a sociopolitical commentary on contemporary Japan based on the warrior theme:

> He regarded the militarism as a foreign import alien to the Japanese spirit. What he really was seeking was a return to the samurai tradition, which he saw as the ethical and aesthetic system truer to the spirit of Japan than a modern army.[107]

The political message he tried to send across during the events that happened on the day of his death and through his literature gets intertwined from the year 1970 onwards. De Paola compares Kiyoaki's "aesthetic paradigm" to Isao's "martial alternative face."[108] (xxvii) A the same time, Angeles Maso thinks that "the average Japanese accepted"

[106] Trumbull, "Encounters with Life."
[107] Shabecoff, "Mishima: A Man Torn Between Two Worlds."
[108] De Paola, "Caballos desbocados."

a reality where "liberal democrats got closer to the United States […] [and] the samurai philosophy stayed dormant."[109] [(xxviii)]

The consensus over the role of Japan's so-called 'samurai spirit' falls apart when discussing the topic of Mishima's suicide. Some authors defend the so-called Japaneseness of this act, attributing explicit political connotations to his death. For instance, Alan Friedman considered that "in the Japanese context, Mishima's seppuku […] had political overtones."[110] On the other hand, other texts are quick to dismiss this political motivation and searched instead for personal and psychological reasons, explicitly detaching the event from a national reading. Hide Ishiguro declares that "Mishima's death seemed less connected with such traditional motives for suicide as honor and despair than with the idiosyncratic thoughts and needs of a peculiarly tormented man."[111] He condemns this effort of framing his suicide as Japanese while nobody frames Mishima's famous pictures posing as Saint Sebastian an expression of Christianity.

Both time and place of publication matter in the framing and interpretation of Mishima's suicide. Spanish texts tend to seek for a relationship between the writer's political intentions as expressed in his literature and his ritualistic end. G. Grazzini calls the members of the Tatenokai "the last samurai of old national pride"[112] [(xxix)] and a review published on June 24, 1974 in *La Vanguardia* of *Runaway Horses* describes the work (quite freely and questionably) as an essay on the

---

[109] Maso, "El escritor, intérprete de su propia historia."
[110] Friedman, "A Master of Gorgeous and Perverse Surprises."
[111] Ishiguro, "Writer, Rightist or Freak?"
[112] Grazzini, "El 'hara-kiki' como protesta y desengaño."

causes of his future suicide and an explanation on the method of seppuku.[113] As seen above, U.S. texts are on the contrary a bit more skeptical and avoid establishing a straight correlation between the two events. These marginal exceptions notwithstanding, the majority of texts agree on correlating ritual suicide to a supposed samurai tradition, and this tradition as part of Japan's national definition. Harrison says in 1970 that "most Japanese either admired Mishima as a patriot or viewed his suicide as the gesture of an artist seeking to die in the fashion of his heroes."[114] A couple of months later, the same author reaffirmed this conviction by adding that "the emerging consensus appears to be that while his rightist prescription for Japan is questionable, his hara-kiri was noble demonstration of the selfless Samurai spirit enshrined in Japanese ideals."[115]

In the end, while the act is framed as culturally Japanese, it is also considered not idiosyncratic to the particular stage of the country at the time. Again, the national definition of Japan is split between an ahistorical, pre-modern and assumed 'essence' (the 'samurai spirit' that appears invoked time and again) and the modern-day manifestation of the country. By including the rejection expressed by Japanese society towards Mishima's assumed-as-traditional Japanese act, the narrative creates a distance between national identity and contemporary Japan. The discourse seems to switch back and forth between two positions. On the one hand, Japan's exceptionalism is associated with Mishima's unique identity construction. On the other, Japan is defined as a bridge nation within itself and with the world, trapped in perpetual

113 "Caballos desbocados."
114 Harrison, "Suicide of Novelist Mishima Shocks Japanese."
115 Harrison, "Japanese Attend Funeral for Mishima."

transition from past to present, from an idea of 'feudality' to 'modernity.'

Another of the main jointed axis of this discourse is the question of Japan's unintelligibility for the West. Japan and the Japanese are framed as "somewhat difficult for the Western mind to grasp,"[116] an idea that is rooted in psychological and aesthetic inaccessibility brought by a supposed failure to fully access the so-called Japanese disposition. Thomas Lask refers to this in his review of *Spring Snow*:

> To a Westerner, however, on whom the subtleties of Japanese expression and symbol are lost, 'Spring Snow' appears to be free of morbidity and heroic posturing.[117]

This idea is repeatedly conveyed using the image of a 'Japanese mask,' a resource probably inspired by the title of Mishima's breakthrough novel. His suicide is at the same time clouded in a sense of mystery that estranges his literature and the mere idea of Japanese identity:

> There was a candid suspicion abroad in the West that Yukio Mishima's final work might appear no more than a gesture, a literary ritual as incomprehensible to us as his last-stand and certainly grand-stand act.[118]

---

[116] Clayton, "Nationalism Urges Japan to Shed Its Western Trappings."
[117] Lask, "Consumed in Their Own Fire."
[118] Friedman, "A Master of Gorgeous and Perverse Surprises."

> The demons which possessed Mishima were wild-eyed Japanese ones; so his life, his work, and his death have a bizarre appropriateness that insists on standing.[119]

> This notion of unreachability is at some instances even deemed unresolvable, as Dalmau sentences without a proper quote in his review of *La corrupción de un ángel*: "at some point in his life, Mishima said that a Westerner would never be able to comprehend a Japanese."[120] (xxx)

I argue that the same idea of Japan's inscrutability gets reinforced even when Mishima's role as capable ambassador between cultures is hailed. The consideration of Mishima's capacity to act as a bridge presumes the existence of two separate cultural communities that need to be connected through the intervention of an exceptional mediator. For instance, Enright acknowledges a "sense of remoteness, the resistance to participation, experienced by even the readiest reader in Mishima's work" that, especially in the case of his *Five Modern Noh Plays*, should not be interpreted as "representatively enigmatic, inscrutable."[121] By asking the reader to refrain this time to read Japan from this work as mysterious, he is accepting that the default of Japaneseness *is* the 'enigmatic' and 'inscrutable.' Even the attempts to consider 'universal' Mishima's motives of "tension between tradition and modernity"[122] (xxxi) depart from the basis that it is a Japanese person who is producing

[119] Theroux, "About Reincarnation (sort of), chickens (sort of), travel (sort of)."
[120] Dalmau, "Yukio Mishima, la corrupción de un ángel."
[121] Enright, "Peasants and Poets."
[122] García-Garzón, "Mishima, amor y muerte de un samurai manierista."

them and a Western reader who is at the other end of the interpretative process.

Ultimately, Mishima's suicide articulates in this discourse the idea of a Japan built upon pre-modern concepts of estranged aestheticism and anachronistic so-called samurai spirit. These notions lead to consider Japan's national identity as endangered by modernization, economic development, the intervention of Western (especially U.S.) policies, and the advent of globalization's cultural imperialism. The presumed 'essence' of Japan is laid down as a permanent eulogy of a never-quite-dead but always imperiled national identity. The alleged existence of a 'traditional' Japan is assumed despite the inescapable observation of Japan's marching present. Mishima's death is discursively deployed to justify the construction of Japan as a country whose traditional identity is in jeopardy. Simultaneously, Mishima is also portrayed embodying a generational postwar Japan that had to bear with the discursively assumed cultural contradictions brought by the occupation and early and fierce stages of economic expansion. Japan is eventually defined as a nation forged out an ongoing conflict between its so-called pre-modern essential identity and the present-day social and material landscape of the country.

Mishima's death exerted during the 1970s and 1980s a powerful allure. It had the capacity of pulling in with gravitational strength the articulation of the national narrative through the exploration of an inextricably triangular relationship between life, literature, and Japan. The popularity of his figure was big enough for the market to embrace the production and relatively successful circulation of five standalone

biographies across the two countries aimed at the general public. John Nathan and Henry Scott-Stokes published in 1974 *Mishima: A Biography* and *The Life and Death of Yukio Mishima*. The two books were later surprisingly translated to Spanish despite the fact that Juan Antonio Vallejo-Nágera had put out in 1978 a biography explicitly intended for the Spanish public: *Mishima o el placer de morir* (*Mishima or the Pleasure of Dying*). Mishima's second wave of popularity at the end of the 1980s engendered two more works. Javier Pedemonte authored *Yukio Mishima: el penúltimo samurai* (*Yukio Mishima: the Second to Last Samurai*) in 1987, and Peter Wolfe wrote *Yukio Mishima* in 1989.

In addition to these biographies, two essays appeared authored by renowned, non-Japan related novelists. Marguerite Yourcenar wrote *Mishima: A Vision of the Void* in 1980, translated into English in 1981 and into Spanish in 1985. Henry Miller composed the piece "Reflections on the Death of Mishima" which was published in *Sextet: His Later Writings Under One Cover* in 1977. All of these texts have several points in common. They study Mishima's life in an attempt to give meaning to his suicide by looking at the conditions of his upbringing and mannerisms. These texts assess and dissect the sociopolitical circumstances of postwar Japan in order to frame Mishima and his work in their historical context. Lastly, they also offer an interpretation of Mishima's literature in search for cultural keys that would provide a comprehensive frame of reference for his study.

The same core tropes unearthed and analyzed from newspaper texts prevail across these biographies. Nathan argues that Mishima abhorred mixing the West with Japan and defended looking at them in their

own terms. He believed in the idea of Japanese particularism and accused modernization of diluting the country's national profile: "who, in this day and age, lives in a purely Japanese style? In one corner of the Japanese room there will be a television set, in the kitchen, a washing machine."[123] He seemed to imply that modern imagery had an incompatible incorporation into Japan's identity, which would need to be approached constituted from pre-modern aesthetic principles instead. He echoes for instance Mishima's belief that "Japanese culture as it was understood came from *miyabi*, or court elegance, which built the basis for Japanese aesthetics."[124] Although Nathan makes clear that Mishima's plan of action could not be thought as shared among most Japanese, he uses the novelist's criticism against the status quo to develop on ideas of postwar Japan as a state in moral, political, and social crisis. Nathan grants special relevance to the demands of left and right-wing movements, especially during the student revolts and the *Anpō* crisis in May of 1970, which happened just half a year before Mishima's assault on the Ichigaya camp.

Scott-Stokes' version is, on the other hand, structured in a more prosaic and creative manner. The author's views reflect an approach prone to interpret every single aspect of Japan and Mishima as a struggle between Eastern and Western epistemological experiences. He uses 'Japanese' as a supposedly self-explanatory attribute of specific traits and scenery, many of them straight out of banal and unapologetic stereotypes:

---

[123] John Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography*, 218.
[124] Ibid., 233.

> A charming and captivating man. Quite un-Japanese; fluent in English, gestures, and manner of speaking Western […] his face darkened and went red with the alcohol, at least Japanese in that respect.[125]

> The coast there looked just as Japan is supposed to look: pine trees sticking out at odd angles; savage waves and a brutal coastline; sun sank slowly in the West with oblique rays striking the foam, etc.[126]

He approaches Japan "as a nation of samurai; of course, the samurai spirit survives – but not the forms."[127] This was a country in danger because "everyone ran after money; the old spiritual tradition had vanished; materialism was the order of the day."[128] He echoes with slight skepticism Mishima's condemnation of "the emphasis in Japan itself on 'the chrysanthemum,'"[129] to then insist on a "dual tradition" that gives "a complete picture of Japan." [130] The excess of a deceptively anthropological commentary borders in some instances the ludicrous. Scott-Stokes mentions that "like many Japanese parents, the Mishimas would seem to have decided to have no more children," [131] as if this could be considered in itself a Japanese particular trait. He also blames modernization for Japan's postwar crisis, claiming that "a nation cannot evolve from feudalism to an

125 Henry Scott-Stokes, *The Life and Death of Yukio Mishima*, 6.
126 Ibid., 15.
127 Ibid., 14-15.
128 Ibid., 22.
129 Ibid., 62.
130 Ibid., 56.
131 Ibid., 163.

ultramodern way of life in the short space of time granted to the Japanese and not place great stresses on individuals."[132] Ultimately, Scott-Stokes makes the aforementioned correlation between Mishima's death and the decay of the so-called Japanese 'essence' brought by sustained contradictions: "did his image of an ugly, materialistic Japan in this last novel mirror an unbalanced despair?"[133] This relationship acquires greater impact when one takes into account that Scott-Stokes considered Mishima's literature, especially his last opus *The Sea of Fertility* "a panoramic vision of Japan in the 20th century and tells more of modern Japan than any other work in translation."[134]

Vallejo-Nágera produces a work in which he reconstructs his own interpretation of Mishima's life based on these preceding biographies and other supplemental texts. Given the cross-referential nature of this book, it is not surprising to attest to the reproduction of the same core tropes also present in his sources. Vallejo-Nágera's original contribution is establishing some peculiar connections and comparisons between Japan and Spain. He associates the Bushido with the Legion's 'honor code' but fails to mention accordingly the role of Millán Astray's translation of Nitobe's work on the matter. He also defines the Japanese as "a nation of shame" instead of "a nation of sin like ours," [135] (xxxii) borrowing directly from Benedict's conceptualization. Vallejo-Nágera shares with Scott-Stokes an attempt to offer an offhanded anthropological study out of Mishima's life and oeuvre. He also validates Benedict's definition of Japan as an entity

---

[132] Ibid., 165.
[133] Ibid., 306.
[134] Ibid., 313.
[135] Juan Antonio Vallejo-Nágera, *Mishima o el placer de morir*, 64.

constituted by a binary nature of aesthetic delicacy and fierce assertiveness. Vallejo-Nágera defends the conception of Japan as an entity that cannot be fully understood rationally and can only be approached through emotional rapport: "dear reader, don't kid yourself, in Japan it is not enough with 'knowing,' you must enjoy yourself in a certain and strictly regulated way."[136] (xxxiii) He argues that only the meek and kind aspects associated with the chrysanthemum/geisha tropes have been exposed during the postwar period. Vallejo-Nágera denounces the existence of a creeping layer of violence and aggressiveness that is co-essential to the Japanese identity. The suggestion of Japan as a country with a disguised inclination towards belligerence activates the discursive mechanisms of denouncing a 'yellow peril' in a time when the trade war rhetoric was in full swing.

Pedemonte's and Wolfe's biographies constitute another brick in the wall of the national narrative. There are some key differences in how these works mediate with the reproduction of tropes when compared to the previous memoirs that can be attributed to the differences between two historical contexts of publication. Pedemonte, for instance, includes in his book a judgment of Japan "driven towards the purest form of modernity and 'Westernization,' and called to be a country leader in technology."[137] (xxxiv) The inevitable hindsight shapes these appreciations and depicts a Japan that has already reached a status of superpower "by means of materialism, competitiveness, and

[136] Ibid., 72-73.
[137] Javier Pedemonte, *Yukio Mishima: El penúltimo samurai*, 10.

oligarchy, learned the hard way."[138] (xxxv) Japanese society is in decadence after failing to harmonize progress with a so-called essential tradition, but this conflict is not as crucial in the definition of Japan as it was previously. Wolfe is openly critic towards Mishima's opposition to modernity as an endangering force in Japan. He points out that by the end of the 1980s, very few people believed in Mishima's claims and praises Japan's embracement of materialism:

> Industrial production was also improved in those years; a healthy balance of payments was achieved and maintained; more consumer goods and more leisure time were created for the masses. Life in Japan under this new prosperity was not as squalid as Mishima claimed.[139]

Pedemonte's work wraps up his biography with a guest chapter by Agustín Jiménez Muñoz that is almost shamelessly coated in condescendence. This epilogue boosts a discourse of 'yellow peril' clearly inspired by Japan's economic might and trade imbalance with the West. It depicts the Japanese as voracious, deprived of individuality, collectively driven, and is sure to identify modernization as a Western asset appropriated by the Japanese with an undertone that could be interpreted as malicious:

> In our day and age, Western computers provide them with markets and currencies. Classic theories support the existence of a relationship between politico-economic conquest and

---

[138] Ibid., 29.
[139] Peter Wolfe, *Yukio Mishima*, 186.

> cultural conquest […] The Japanese are still a mystery. They have given us nothing, restricting themselves to overpass their masters in the things we have taught them […] Made out of an internationalism that erases any message that cannot be digested in curious working-class bookshops or in high-brown film archives, we can overlook the particular, or, mouths opened wide, wolf it down raw in the decorated nook of the exotic.[140] [xxxvi]

Yourcenar's *Mishima: Vision of the Void* could be more appropriately considered a literary study rather than a proper biography. It is also less of a novel than *Mémoires d'Hadrien* (*Memoirs of Hadrian*) or *L'Oeuvre au noir* (*The Abyss*), and more a running essay on aesthetic and cultural musings that takes Mishima's life and works as a point of reference. It is built, in point of fact, as an ongoing commentary on preceding biographies and on her readings of Mishima's works in translation. As such, many of the tropes that are familiar at this point appeared reproduced in Yourcenar's text. She considers Japan a Westernized society that carries an endangered pre-modern essence which she associates to images of geishas and samurais. Yourcenar judges the nation as a mystery that needs to be approached emotionally and aesthetically rather than rationally. She undertakes her study from a point of dictation that sets apart two self-defined cultural communities: 'us,' the Western, and 'them,' the Japanese. Lastly, she joins Mishima in considering Japanese 'true' identity imperiled by the unstoppable tide of industrialization.

---

[140] Javier Pedemonte, 155.

In comparison to Yourcenar, Miller produces a shorter, more laid-back text, whose tropes are cut nonetheless from the same fabric. His piece also departs from establishing a point of difference between two entities and assumes Japaneseness is something quantifiable and measurable on a subjective scale:

> I thought immediately of all the contradictions in his nature and at the same time I thought to myself – how ever Japanese! […] the admixture in the Japanese of cruelty and tenderness, of violence and peacefulness, of beauty and ugliness. It is true, of course, that the Japanese are not alone in this respect. But in the Japanese, to my mind at least, this ambiguity exists more sharply and poignantly.[141]

Miller rebounded ideas of Japan in danger for "following our Western ideas" and considered that Mishima wanted "to awaken the Japanese people to the beauty and efficacy of their own traditional way of life."[142] He also describes the Japanese as "working like ants, killing themselves in this rat race which is called earning a living […] and from being work slaves to dying like flies on the battlefield is only a step, an inevitable one."[143] There is in Miller a combination of praise and condescendence which takes him to positions of curiosity and ambivalence. He locates Japan framed within the trade war-promoted 'yellow peril' discourse, but in this occasion Miller downplays Japan's capacity of being a threat:

---

[141] Henry Miller, "Reflections on the Death of Mishima," in *Sextet: His Later Writings Under One Cover*, 26.
[142] Ibid., 28.
[143] Ibid., 39-40.

> Japan is at a crossroads […] can she continue to grow, to dominate world markets, to exceed the production of her competitors without the backing of a formidable military? Can she conquer the world peacefully?[144]

In the end, Miller makes a case for accepting Japan's particularism without alienating the country. He rejects equating Mishima's personal struggles as a mark of national identity: "Japan is no more crazy, no more sane, than the rest of the world […] Her problems are not unique, nor the solution to them either."[145]

There are virtually no differences in the way these monographs describe Japan and the Japanese when compared to the body of newspaper articles. In fact, the most notable divergence can be found in time. The shock of Mishima's death and the sudden peak of his popularity gave at the moment strengthen the rendering of his views as an accurate depiction of national identity. With the passing of the years, however, and the confirmation that Mishima was not inciting the following in his society he and some other authors may have expected, the lens shifted towards a search for reasons of this fiasco. The discourse reproduced throughout the 1980s solidified instead an early construction of Japan as a late-capitalist, conspicuous consumerist society. Instead of looking at Mishima's life and work as a way to cast a mirror-reflection of Japan, it builds the national narrative through what he criticized and opposed of the nation's circumstances.

[144] Ibid., 32.
[145] Ibid., 43-44.

2.3.2 Academia-Targeted Texts

In the following section I produce an exploration of the intertextual discourse present in the delimited subset of academia-targeted texts that discuss Japan through an interpretation of Mishima's figure and his literature. As will be revealed throughout this examination, the aforementioned core tropes articulate the description of Japan again in this subcorpus. There are however differences and similarities in approach and degree that emerge when studying how academia-targeted texts mediate with the construction of the national narrative of Japan in comparison with the same process stemmed from mass-audience-targeted pieces. This contrast must be assessed and accounted for in order to fully understand the implications of genre conventions and textual production in the mediation of discourses of representation.

There is a considerable imbalance in the number of academic texts that explore Mishima during this specific period when one measures it against the size of the previous subcorpus. The situation of academic work on Japan developed in the West that was previously explored in Kawabata also applies to Mishima's case. The critical texts included in this subcorpus are either specific chapters on works that delve into the oeuvre of multiple Japanese writers, or they are book reviews on academic periodicals like *The Journal of Japanese Studies* and *Monumenta Nipponica*. The field of Japanese studies in the U.S. remained quite modest practically until the turn of the century. At the same time, in

the case of Spain it was practically non-existent. These conditions offer, on the other hand, a chance for exploring an interesting angle. This limited range of sources enhances the comparative value of the present exercise, for many of the same authors that discuss Kawabata do so too for Mishima. It deepens the entrenchment of a cross-sourced discourse knitted from texts that by their niche-focused nature already lean towards referentiality and endogamy. Donald Keene, Arthur G. Kimball, Yamanouchi Hisaaki, and Gwenn Boardman Petersen, among others, are revisited here to explore their construction of Japan, this time by looking at how they interpret Mishima's literature. This situation is taken into account further down this thesis when comparing the two writers and the way the national narrative has been mediated by the same community of authors.

Scholarly texts on Mishima sprouted once the writer was already a powerhouse in both Japan and the West, although the bulk of them came out after his death. Keene repetitively expressed his admiration for Mishima's literary faculties, framing him as "more cosmopolitan, more responsive to foreign literary currents than his great predecessors."[146] The acknowledgment of his fame did not, however, mean in every case the recognition of his talent. Marleigh Ryan for instance built her critique from a skeptcial point of view that could even be taken as open distaste for the writer's work. They all recognized regardless his impact on Japanese literature and the relevance of his role as representative of a generation.

[146] Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 1216-17.

Japan is approached through the development of two debates that constitute its two main descriptive dimensions. On the one hand, Japan's cultural identity is built from pre-modern tropes. On the other, Japan's socio-political contemporary reality is constantly problematized at odds with this same cultural identity. Commentary and evaluation of Mishima's stylistic resources employed for literary effect tend to implicate an interpretation of Japan and the Japanese from the same body of aesthetic terms. This correlation between a national style and an aesthetic sensibility is consciously inscribed as detached from any political interpretation. These texts attempt to frame Japan despite or disregarding the writer's explicit political views: "to read Mishima's death as an example of fanatical nationalism is to distort an ethical and aesthetic statement into a political gesture."[147] This suggestion develops, therefore, a description of Japanese culture on the margins of what could be considered 'political.' It brings forward the possibility of discussing Japanese identity as an immanent concept that exists outside history and its socio-political reality.

Mishima's renderings of nature, human emotion, and body are tied up in these interpretations as expressions of a 'Japanese way.' This conception of the Japanese is believed detached from the particular time of Mishima's diegetic settings or his socio-political context. The discourse places the debate over Japan's national identity embedded into an ahistorical conceptual space where Japaneseness *is in itself* and can be understood without having it conditioned by the shifting pains and regular struggles of the country. The open-ended presence of the

---

[147] Boardman Petersen, *The Moon in the Water*, 206-7.

natural world as associated with Japaneseness strengthens this approach:

> Mishima's gift is three-fold; he can simultaneously portray the person, make a generalization on the human level, and also perform the peculiarly Japanese feat of reducing, if not denying, the gap between man and the natural world in which he moves.[148]

> Stylistically Mishima makes excessive use of nature imagery, another quality for which Japanese literature is noted abroad, and for which his early *Sound of the Waves* is so greatly admired.[149]

Boardman Petersen builds her argument in *The Moon in the Water* by echoing Lafcadio Hearn's belief that the Japanese were "the Greeks of the Orient." She suggests that Mishima was proving right that assumption by considering that "the bodies of Japanese youths conform to the aesthetic standards of ancient Greece." [150] This insistence on equating Greek and Japanese aesthetics by framing Mishima as a kind of late artist of the Renaissance reinforces the idea that the Japanese tradition of Platonic ideas could not be found in contemporary times. This gap between an identity-shaping tradition and a historical present that forfeits its representation perpetuates an irresolvable decalage. It repeats and gives legitimation without proper questioning Mishima's claims that tradition was disappearing. The idea

[148] Bracelen Flood, "Review of 'After the Banquet,'" 486.
[149] Ryan, "Review of the Mishima Tetralogy," 171.
[150] Boardman Petersen, *The Moon in the Water*, 213.

of a 'Japan lost' is seen reiterated across texts and never properly defined in its monopolization of outlining the constitutive 'essence' of the Japanese nation, as Mishima defended:

> He concludes that Japan today has lost the external rules of conduct and at the same time an essential 'wardrobe.'[151]

> He deplores the loss of the Japanese Spirit – a term that includes love of the country but also encompasses centuries of ethical and aesthetic values.[152]

> Perhaps the people most deeply affected by Mishima's suicide were, paradoxically, non-Japanese who were profoundly impressed that a man at the height of his career had thrown away his life in the hopes of reminding his countrymen of what they had lost.[153]

There is no dispute in sentencing Japanese cultural identity in a receding and perceived-as-anachronistic traditional body of tropes and practices. This assumption does not mean, as it was more commonly presumed in mass-audience-targeted texts, that Mishima's representation of it is accurate. This casted doubt is seen from different angles. Boardman Petersen, for instance, accuses Mishima of boasting about his knowledge of traditional Japanese martial values while misusing them in what "seems […] profoundly un-Japanese."[154]

---

[151] Ibid., 205.
[152] Ibid., 316.
[153] Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 1168.
[154] Boardman Petersen, *The Moon in the Water*, 204.

Yamanouchi suggests that Mishima created literary worlds out of the revalorization of a so-called Japanese traditional spirit in order to escape from his own personal ghosts and compensate an enmity felt towards a reality that confronted his aspirations. Other authors share this perception of an existing distance between Mishima's represented literature and an assumed contemporary reality of Japanese society. Kimball, for instance, deems Mishima's *Golden Pavilion* traditional in its settings and characters portrayed, but modern in the way it's designed and the behavior shown by them.

These accusations are linked in other instances to an impact of Mishima's so-called Westernization of literary style which according to the authors contradicts his affection for Japanese tradition. Ryan, who makes little effort to disguise her aversion to Mishima and his work, is even more drastic. She charges him with being too Westernized even to be judged as Japanese, to the point of considering him "a Westerner who happens to have chosen an Asian setting because of its exoticism […] we are left with the impression that Mishima did not know, did not truly experience his own country."[155] She correlates these literary resources with those employed by Western authors and dislodges Mishima's literature from representing an 'Asian' reality. Ryan consigns Mishima as an oddity, detaching him from her idea of what Japan is or should be:

> Their [the characters] foibles – and they are legion – may or may not be shared by people in Japan, but they are identical with the foibles depicted by Western European and

[155] Ryan, "Review of the Mishima Tetralogy," 166.

> American twentieth-century authors. The lesbians, the fanatics, the bisexuals, the voyeurs, the sadists – all are by now stock characters in Western fiction. We are tired of them; we find nothing new or enlightening about Mishima's use of psychological aberration, and we fail to see how his handling of human degradation contributed anything to our understanding of Asia or the world.[156]

For others, traits of Westernization in his style manifest precisely a status of paradoxical coexistence of so-called Eastern and Western streams of cultural sourcing in the basis of an actual understanding of the country. This same paradoxical nature, however, is identified as the reason why postwar Japan undergoes a permanent state of moral crisis. Westernization and the aftermath of the occupation years are described as having a negative impact in Japan. Their manifestation is considered "symptoms of the disease of modernity,"[157] and they paint Japan as "overrun by noisy, ugly, obtrusive foreigners."[158] Keene describes how Mishima styled a country that needed to be saved from "the merciless hacking away of Japan's landscapes and […] the superficial adoption of foreign things and manners."[159] In turn, Miyoshi depicts a nation "shaken by a great number of social and political crises signaled by a nearly endless series of demonstrations and protests."[160]

---

[156] Ibid.
[157] Boardman Petersen, *The Moon in the Water*, 311.
[158] Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 1212.
[159] Keene, *5 Modern Novelists*, 54.
[160] Miyoshi, *Accomplices of Silence*, 175.

Mishima's figure and literature are read as a prism where these circumstances crystalize. The are several reasons that explain this. Ryan reproduces with skepticism Mishima's denunciations: "the tetralogy, named with conscious irony *The Sea of Fertility* after the barren wasteland on the moon, is meant to reflect the moral and spiritual vacuum of twentieth-century Japan." [161] Yamanouchi interprets his mere existence as proof and symptom of a larger more cross-sectional malaise: "for despite their different views on such matters as the Imperial authority both Mishima and those students aimed their criticism towards the attainment of spectacular economic growth in the late 1960s."[162] Ueda criticizes his overzealousness and vindicates capitalist prosperity by emphasizing on the lack of following to Mishima's claims: "his stories sprang from his desire to create a sense of order that could be shared by the masses, but the masses were not receptive."[163] In any of these cases, contemporary Japan is eventually narrated as a country first bearing and later overcoming a traumatic process of identity crisis associated with modernity and with an alleged clash of cultural traditions.

The discourse that appears revealed from these texts is a portrayal of Japan through the pulse of different conflicts that are founded on a set of seminal assumptions. This is not surprising given that Mishima is constantly depicted as an individual in perpetual struggle with himself and with his environment. Transplanting this idea of ongoing dispute from the individual to the nation dominates in its articulating force both the themes and approach of this discourse. It assumes the

[161] Ryan, "Review of the Mishima Tetralogy," 173.
[162] Yamanouchi, *The Search for Authenticity in Modern Japanese Literature*, 137.
[163] Ueda, *Modern Japanese Writers and the Nature of Literature*, 247.

existence of two recognizable entities (a 'Japan' and 'the rest,' almost in every case, the West) that are agents, victims, or reasons for an unfolding set of frictions that constitute in its perpetual atomic vibration the elements of an identity associated with postwar Japan. Thus, even when authors disagree with Mishima's political views, they do not question his desire to rise against a status quo. Their criticism is directed to either his intentions (reducing them to the realm of the personal or the artistic) or his means, but never his motives. They assume that Japan is in crisis and a reaction would not be unbefitting to this circumstance. That would also explain why, once Mishima's lack of following is assessed, his figure and literature appear during his second spike in the 1980s out of place and out of time. The national narrative built out of the conflict between modernity and tradition that Mishima represented could not be sustained. It clashed with an expansive discourse that would consider Japan based on ideas of capitalist assimilation and political passivity that could not incorporate tensions of the same voltage level previously assessed in Mishima.

While the core underlying tropes and approach are, therefore, shared across the two subcorpora, it is worth pointing out the differences between them. To the already mentioned imbalance in numbers between mass-audience and academia-targeted texts, I want to go back to the lack of scholarly work on Mishima published in Spain. The later filling of this void by Spanish scholars meant that the establishment of a Spanish specialist community happened through a direct dialogue with English academics instead of with a domestic school of Japanese literature experts. This, in turn, has an effect on style and emphasis on generalist texts. Whereas some of the texts published in U.S.

newspapers are authored by experts on Japan like Donald Keene or Edward Seidensticker, in Spain this circumstance is not repeated. As it has been proved above, the core tropes remain unaffected by this situation, and Japan is constructed from and through the same ideas across countries and conjointly from the two bodies of texts. However, I argue that Spanish newspaper texts, by lack of at least a minimum sense of nuance inherent to academic work or good journalism, tend to definitions with basic colors. They describe Japan with an extensive penchant for Mishima's partisanism. These critical texts take Mishima and his literature as somewhat unquestionably illustrative of a national description. This effort fails to take full shape as it is a victim of its professed dramatism. The way mass-audience-targeted texts describe Japan in Spain, missing the critical trace of specialist work, is too obsessively focused on the flashy and superficial of Mishima's interpretation and is unable to develop a substance that would carry argumentative weight and depth to it.

Another way to evidence this circumstance in Spanish texts is by comparing the means by which the five selected biographies were produced and put into circulation. Nathan's and Scott-Stokes' are quite different from each other but both depart from a sense of self-commended knowledge of Japan and the topic at hand (a sense probably more legitimate in Nathan's claim). Vallejo-Nágera and Piedemonte do not possess this same level of inside knowledge and require their U.S. counterparts' input for it, reproducing their ideas across the Atlantic and taking them for granted. Their works, especially Vallejo-Nágera's, are focused on studying Mishima as a, to their view, psychologically troubled individual. When it comes the

time to produce a national interpretation, they either replicate their peers' views or attempt an explanation that is in any case heavily influenced by U.S.-driven discourse.

As a concluding consideration, I would like to develop some thoughts on the way Mishima's disputed homosexuality is described and associated with Japan. The two subcorpora do not approach the topic in even terms. As a general rule, newspaper pieces discuss Mishima's alleged homosexuality as an artistic manifestation close to open queerness. This swings back and forth between the closeted emotional oppression of *Confessions of a Mask* to the eccentric exhibitionism of his photoshoots, especially his rendition of Saint Sebastian. Academic articles shy away from commenting on the matter. They only address the subject through the analysis of Mishima's use of the body as a means of expression that, in some instances, strikes as an unnecessarily convoluted way to discuss queerness in disguise.

These considerations tend to orbit around the assumption that Mishima's homosexuality was another manifestation of an artistic desire to break barriers or instigate a polemic. In some cases they even hint offensively at a correlation between his sexual preferences and 'social deviancy' or mental instability, either pseudo-psychologically diagnosed or through implying that it is a choice and not an organic reality. Many of these texts argue that the Japanese have a higher degree of tolerance towards non-heteronormative desires. Boardman Petersen considers for instance Japan "a country noted for its relaxed

attitudes towards homosexuality."[164] Some go further and embed this pretended openness regarding homosexuality as a cultural inheritance from pre-modern practices and attitudes. These customs would also involve – predictably enough – courtesan life and especially so-called samurai codes that would establish homosexual relationships between men as common and even regulated behavior. These vocationally anthropological assessments that link together homosexuality and Japaneseness depart and brace the Japanese position as alien by means of implicit or even explicit comparison.

Assuming that the Japanese are more open, tolerant, or complicit with homosexuality means that there is a standard of reference that dictates a 'default' of acceptance or that even deems normal the exceptional status of homosexuality. Given the point of diction of this discourse, the authors assume that ground zero is the West – and that Japanese attitudes are judged only in relation to it. For instance, Nathan assures that "the traditionally 'Japanese' response to homosexuality is not principally one of abhorrence as it is in the West."[165] This indicates that 1) there is a 'traditional' attitude (but missing the corresponding 'modern' or contemporary one), 2) that in the West homosexuality is 'abhorred' (putting aside the potential subtexts of his own personal views), and 3) that because homosexuality in Japan is analyzed only comparatively and in Western terms, the bar of morality set by the West places Japan in a realm of tolerance instead of rejection. Western sexual normativity dictates here too national narratives.

[164] Boardman Petersen, *The Moon in the Water*, 214.
[165] Nathan, *Mishima: A Biography*, 142.

Jasbir K. Puar describes in her work *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* how discourses on homosexual normativity are related to the construction of national discourse. This process is done, on the one hand, by offering an escape from discrimination in exchange for the sacrifice of race, class, gender, and non-normative queerness that would grant a space in the national imagined community. The other way this relationship is strengthened is by constructing a national homonormativity in comparison with what is composed as 'other' national homonormativities. These 'other' homonormativities are simultaneously established as referentially non-normative if practiced within the semiotic confines of the defining subject's nation. Puar focuses on the (de)construction of homonormativity in the United States in the wake of 9/11. She studies the power-charged articulation of the idea of the Arab terrorist as a sexual deviant. Based on a tradition unfolding since Said popularized it, she refers to the cultural structural sway that Orientalist discourses have laid as a pattern in Western discourses on defining sexual normativity by considering 'the East' as a place of unrestricted license.

While Puar develops her case understanding 'the East' from an analysis of Muslim and Sikh experiences, I argue that the same processes have been applied to the case of Japan. Mishima's portrayed homosexuality is deemed non-normative in its descriptions of exhibitionism, staged BDSM desire, and trans-generational or mentor-pupil power relationships. At the same time, this consideration fits precisely with a 'normative non-normative' nature of non-Western homosexuality. Additionally, the aforementioned association of Mishima's perceived homosexual practices with a tradition-born

Japanese explanation holds strong ties with how the national narrative has been constructed so far. It approaches Japan as a site of assumed difference whose national particularities are reified, yet again, by weaving them together as contingent to presumed pre-modern roots.

Based on this discourse, the national narrative builds in the interpretation of Mishima another dimension to describe Japan's cultural basis as essentially pre-Western contact. It ties homosexuality and national discourse together through the association of sexual norms to the cultural pairing of geisha/samurai. I believe one should not downplay the strength of these discursive structures in constituting an additional statement on what is to be instituted as sexually normative. It becomes another stone in the wall for the encumbrance of the Western gay as the homonormative gold standard.

2.4 A Tale of Two Japans

Having concluded the analysis of the two corpora, it is time now to arrange and sum up the already developed tropes of the national narrative of Japan based on its translated literature that was produced and circulated between 1945 and 1989. I put together this cross-examination by looking at the main differences and common points when comparing the particularities of the national narrative based on the author discussed, the country where the text is written and distributed, and the chronological progression of the discourse. I structure my findings on the construction of Japan around three

dimensions that constitute its definition: the cultural, the social, and the political. Grouping them as such helps to expose the traits with more detail, but it should be noted too that this classification does not omit any of the existing overlaps.

The national narrative of Japan during this period is heavily reliant on a complex and thorough development of a specific idea of culture that is thought to define the national identity. According to the narrative, the culture to be understood as nationally Japanese is composed exclusively by elements that are rooted in, coming from, and even belonging to pre-modern times. It is a claim in favor of particularism as the proper and unique lens to accurately characterize the identity of the Japanese nation. It sets modernity-tied, post-1868 cultural features as alien to Japan. Japanese culture is in this sense matched throughout this discourse with two terms that are revealing by themselves of this same pre-modern framing: 'tradition' and 'essence.'

The concept of Japanese tradition is used to refer to an ingrained set of habits and aesthetic conventions that are assumed canonic and particular to the nation. For these practices to be identified as 'traditional,' they also need to have been originated and shaped outside Western influence. On the one hand, 'tradition' is time-conditioned to a history previous to Meiji. On the other, it is 'Japanese' also in comparison with what could be considered 'Western,' occasionally referred to as 'universal.' Whenever 'essence' is invoked to refer to the attribute of being related or belonging to the idea of Japanese, it follows the Hegelian understanding of presupposing the existence of a national spirit that defines origin, traits, and even purpose (with the

potential and dangerous implications this assumption carries). The Japanese essence is also pre-modern and pre-Western, and in its rendering within the national narrative, it appears in opposition with an observable reality of modernity-defined Japan. This contra-essential, superficial Japan is also described hosting cultural elements labeled as 'Western.'

Japanese culture and its metonyms 'tradition' and 'essence' appear articulated in this discourse as a Janus-faced body of elements grouped together around two core defining agents: the geisha and the samurai. This dichotomist conventionalism of reducing the Japanese cultural identity to one of the two sets that would unescapably comprise it, although present before the war, was popularized and legitimized by invoking the authority and popularity of Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Cultural manifestations perceived as genuinely Japanese are either part of the chrysanthemum/geisha facet or belong to the sword/samurai family. The 'Japan as geisha' tropes understand Japanese culture as bound by a sense of the delicate, the ephemeral, the fragile, and the gentle, all of them strongly tied to a gendered understanding of the feminine. An aesthetic order emanates from these tropes. It also channels ideas of religiosity, spiritualism, and dissolution of the human experience, both individually and collectively, in the Japanese relationship with nature. On the other hand, samurai tropes associate Japan with notions of martial life, honor, belligerence, cult for the body, and hierarchy. These concepts are correlated in turn with Japanese masculinity. Although both groupings are described as inherently Japanese, they appear mutually exclusive, as two sides of the same coin. Thus, Japan is simultaneously and paradoxically geisha *and*

samurai when described as a whole, and geisha *or* samurai when the focus is set in giving more detail to a particular cultural element.

There is in the national narrative a dominant tendency towards both the identification of whether a cultural manifestation can or cannot be considered Japanese. This process includes the carrying out of a taxonomical exercise that attempts to fit a cultural element as either a geisha or a samurai trope in order to determine its allegiance to Japaneseness. Both Kawabata and Mishima are labeled using this same set of discursive rules. Kawabata, his literature, and the Japan that appears described out of them are more strongly associated with ideas belonging to the geisha group. On the other side, Mishima and his work are described as expressing the samurai side of the Japanese identity.

The discourse assumes a point before and after Japan established regular contact with the West that serves as genealogy and even teleology of the shaping of the Japanese identity in direct opposition to Western influence. Any developments occurring after that moment, associated with the project of modernity, were suspicious of being foreign and therefore alien to this assumed 'essence.' The 'danger' of Westernization anchors in history the Japanese culture and dwarfs its development. It questions the regular generational progress that would normalize integration and cultural exchange precisely through contact and cross-pollination. In this regard, the discourse acknowledges the inevitability of interaction with foreign cultural spheres when tackling on Kawabata and Mishima's Western influences. In the case of Kawabata, his ascription to the Japanese national identity is less

questioned than in the discussion of Mishima's literature. I argue this is so precisely because of the self-referential nature in which Japanese identity requirements have been formulated. Kawabata's style and portrayed aestheticism are both used to define Japanese culture and to legitimize branding him as nationally canonical. In the case of Kawabata, furthermore, his personal lifestyle and appearance matched the pre-modern imagery he describes in his works and that the discourse identifies as Japanese.

In the case of Mishima, the questioning of his 'Japaneseness' looms over the narrative. While his literature and some of his lifestyle choices appear associated with the description of samurai cultural elements as essentially Japanese, some accused him of being culturally hybrid or directly hands-on Westernized. This indictment was meant to criticize Mishima's alleged hypocrisy in his appraisal of so-called Japanese values. At the same time, it evidenced the fragility and constraints of Japanese identity definition. These accusations work within the same system that legitimizes Kawabata's 'purity.' Mishima is only Westernized when he appears not completely faithful to a recreation of the same pre-modern settings, psychology, and aesthetic manifestations that appear in his literature. He is charged with being unfaithful to the Japanese standard whenever he develops a so-called Western-style action and character-oriented literature instead of devising the structure of his novels in the perceived as nationally traditional way of plotlessness and landscape recreation. Accusing Mishima of Westernization adds another knot to the shawl of Japanese identity narration.

The social dimension of Japan's description develops chronologically in two stages. First, it depicts the nation during the U.S. occupation in timid strokes, predominantly as undergoing a process of institutional reconstruction and the import of foreign practices. During those years, the Japanese are seen described by their eagerness to grow economically, but there is little detail devoted to completing or giving more depth to these portrayals. The landscape changes starting from the 1970s and 1980s to adopt a narrative that would describe Japan as having reached a complete capitalist model. Words like 'materialism' and 'consumerism' become associated with the way Japanese people had become and which designated a new set of national patterns of behavior.

It should be noted, however, that this national narrative takes little interest in explaining how contemporary Japanese society looks like in terms of structure and design. I argue that this lack of interest may be linked precisely to the way Kawabata and Mishima's literature is approached. Especially with the former, his literature is explicitly framed as describing a Japan that does not correspond exactly with the critical text's present-day manifestation of the country. The idea of Japan defined is revealed as coming from times of yore. Kawabata's households are placed as 'traditional' or from a pre-war Japan, slightly out of time but not out of space. This description emphasizes the ascribed valued to a Japan of days gone by rather than a modern rendition of it.

Mishima's literature, on the other hand, is recognized as attempting in some of his works a depiction of contemporary Japan: from *Forbidden*

Colors' occupation-time background to *The Decay of an Angel*'s description of the late 1960s. As a matter of fact, the tetralogy of *The Sea of Fertility* is organized as a chronological exploration of Japan's 20th century from the perspective of the generation that saw the end of Meiji and lived through Taishō, the war, and the reconstruction. Despite this sequential structure, Mishima's account is not taken as an accurate depiction of Japan's social reality. There is, as we have seen especially in the subcorpus of academic texts, a constant skepticism shown towards Mishima's portrayal of Japan. The country's social reality interpreted from his writing is depicted as resembling a distorted mirror and perceived too dependent on and conditioned by the author's personal fixations and obsessions. In the end, Japan's contemporary setting is chiefly taken as an indifferent and superficial landscape against which greater topics (and tropes) of Japan's identity are unfolded. This indifference shown towards elaborating a reading of the authors' contemporary social description from their works parallels the representation of Japan's main conflict of asynchronicity between its perceived identity and the country's ongoing path.

In the political dimension, the narrative swings back and forth between two mutually exclusive definitions. On the one hand, it describes Japan as a site of apolitical sentiment where aesthetic and ethereal concerns occupy the mind of the Japanese individual rather than the trifles of society. On the other, it defines postwar Japan as a country undergoing a state of moral and institutional crisis produced by the war's defeat which economic and industrial development prolonged and aggravated. This swinging is contingent on two factors: the writer whose literature serves as the basis for the construction of

Japan, and the moment when the critical text is produced and circulates. Although the idea of an apolitical Japan appears discussed on interpretations of the two authors, it is substantially more present in Kawabata. The national narrative describes the Japanese as uninterested in politics and the national identity as away from such concerns. This portrayal is based on Kawabata's diegetic representations, on the judgment of his style as detached from modern politics, and – perhaps more importantly – by inferring that his fame and canonization legitimized his representation of Japan. If Kawabata's literature was apolitical, and Kawabata was a figurehead in Japan, Japanese favored apolitical feelings.

While some of Mishima's works were also interpreted using the same criteria of apolitical aestheticism deployed for Kawabata's production, his more openly belligerent activism especially towards the end of his life channeled a political reading of the Japanese. Through this, the idea of Japan enduring a crisis is articulated as being carried by a generation that opposed the Japanese government's status quo, its alliance with the United States, a business-centered long-term agenda of industrialization, and the incorporation of materialistic and consumerist practices. This nonconformist generation is defined as bipartisan in its incorporation of left-wing and right-wing resistance movements. It emphasizes a cross-sectional and systemic situation of Japan in dire straits that is not subject to a specific programmatical alternative project.

The increase in the intensity of a political reading of Japan as a state in crisis reached its peak at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. The

culmination of massive demonstrations and the change of international diplomatic and trade relationships after the Nixon Shock coincided with the deaths of Mishima in 1970 and Kawabata in 1972. The idea of a Japan at a watershed lingered for a few more years, but with the passing of time, the interpretation of the literature of these two authors changed to become a window to understand a bygone turmoil, sacrificing its contemporaneity in the barter. As a matter of fact, texts that discuss these authors in the 1980s describe the country again as a nation disinterested in politics. This time, the agent that depoliticized the country was not aestheticism, but the shaping of a late-capitalist conspicuous consumerism model of community relations. The anti-status quo trait of the Japanese of Mishima's time is deemed outdated and marginal. Ultimately, both Kawabata and Mishima appear as representatives of a Japan that is at odds with the project of modernity. Kawabata's literature because it displays pre-modern settings, modes, and characters that constitutes this idea of Japan. Mishima's work because it represents the opposition to the effects of modernity on the Japanese national identity.

Another core trope shared across the two corpora is a definition of Japan as a conceptual entity partially or totally unintelligible for the Westerner. This assumption of abstract haziness is inherited from the Orientalist tendency of surrounding Asia with a sense of perennial mystery. It appears invoked in relation to Kawabata's style and themes of supposed Japanese aestheticism as a code hard to decipher for the Western reader. It figures again in several attempts to explain Mishima's reasons to commit suicide and the way this act was performed. I argue that the trope of Japan as mysterious and

unbridgeable is set to enclose the nation in an epistemological framework of emotional perception that keeps it away from positivist and rational structures of configuration and understanding. This perpetuation of a one-sided gap in the process of comprehension also strengthens the discourse's assumption that the relationship is established between two clearly outlined entities. Japan is set posited in its particular stance against a West that interacts with it. This association creates narrow room for the development of overlapping attributes and belittles existing efforts to nurture universalist identities.

I defend the idea that the national narrative exposed throughout this series of tropes proposes the construction of the Japanese as an identity split in two paradoxical representations that coexist out of an ongoing historical conflict. The discourse suggests that there is an 'essential Japan' that can only be found and understood by looking at pre-modern cultural and social structures. This 'essential Japan' coexists at the same time with the unquestionable contemporary manifestation of the Japanese country. Because the discourse places the kernel of Japanese identity in a time outside its ongoing representation, the decalage between this past-anchored body of identity-defining tropes and the modern rendition of the Japanese country is bound to be explained as an ongoing conflict. Modernity, the contact with the West, and any other agent that would clash with a consensus on Japanese particularism are defined as elements that are part of the Japanese experience but not defining attributes of its national characterization. If one understands 'country' as a term used to refer also to the political decisions, social configuration, and cultural synergies of operating communities, the national narrative assumes a

breach between the Japanese country and its articulated notion of the Japanese nation. The national identity is framed as historically static. Its definition is withheld from incorporating changes to match the relentless path of the community it is supposed to comprise. Moreover, the national narrative already assumes this is a conflict that the 'essential' Japan is predicted to lose. The discourse calls time and again for the vanishing of 'old' Japan, mourning the disappearance of an identity sentenced to this doom precisely by the narrative's insistence on particularism despite its fossilizing effect in an increasingly interconnected world.

The national narrative establishes in the suicide of these two authors a point of inflection for the development of this chronicle of a death foretold. Kawabata's immolation is judged in these texts as symbolizing the end of a traditional, shaped-by-aestheticism Japan. Mishima's death is considered in turn the failed culmination of any opposing movements to this alleged erasure of a particular identity. From the mid-1970s on, the discourse emphasizes the idea of a materialistic, modern-looking Japan that while the writers were alive was just a superficial landscape to be disregarded in favor of the so-called underlying essence that constituted the core of the nation's identity. After their deaths, however, this modern-looking Japan becomes the main signifier of the country. The national narrative interpreted on the figure and literature of Kawabata and Mishima a reminder of what was apparently lost.

There are, of course, differences that need to be assessed and commented in the development of the national narrative in each

country, between writers, and across corpora and subcorpora. Some of these differences have already been accounted for in the unraveling and summing up of the analyzed tropes, but some others deserve specific mention. I would like to start by comparing the way both Kawabata and Mishima are placed in relation to the idea of canonicity and representativeness of Japan. Kawabata's role as the exponent of the 'essence' of Japan is unquestioned and even gets international legitimation with the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Literature. Mishima's position, on the other hand, is not fully agreed upon as archetypical. In the 1950s and 1960s, Mishima was riding a wave of popularity that hailed him as a spokesperson for his generation. Later, his activism and suicide fueled a revisionist trend that mutated his role of literary spearhead into that of the popular black sheep within the mainstream. His political agenda's lack of following, which was more evident during the 1980s, fed this idea of unconventionalism. I maintain that the main reason why the discourse sets a looming question mark over Mishima's shoulders when addressing the issue of Japaneseness is because of his ambiguous relationship with identified-as-Western cultural forms. His lifestyle and his preference for plot-oriented novels and themes clashed with a standard of Japanese particularism and purity. In those rare instances in which Mishima's Japaneseness is not doubted, the construction of Japan is consistent with the same tropes employed to interpret Kawabata's literature.

The most relevant difference that deserves to be commented upon when putting back to back the four subcorpora is the high degree of intertextual coherence that exists across academia-targeted texts that discuss Kawabata's and Mishima's literature. The limited range of

potentially selectable sources and the historical relatively smaller size of the U.S. and Spanish scholarly community result in the fact that the same group of authors and critical works end up mediating in the reproduction of the national narrative in both countries. While small differences transpire when comparing the texts, these are better attributable to the authors' concessions on the scope rather than to actual divergences on the core mechanics of the national narrative. This lack of textual variety ends up being unsurprisingly balanced by a perceivable level of consistency and referentiality.

In this regard, I would like to briefly mention the omnipresence of Donald Keene. Highly esteemed as a postwar Japanese literature authority by academics and journalists alike, this wartime instructed scholar made his indent in the niche by means of producing an extensive bibliography of essays, reviews, translations, texts for specialist and the masses alike. He also acted as industry manager and intermediator by befriending both international editors and Japanese writers. While some of his views and especially his academic approach have become a bit outdated over the decades, Keene remains a powerhouse in the production of critical texts, especially on postwar authors like Kawabata and Mishima. His contribution in reproducing some of the main core tropes of the discourse across many influential texts should not be downplayed. I believe the following quote from his monumental *Dawn to the West*, for instance, shows at this point the many ways in which his interpretative work mediates with tropes of the national narrative:

> For Kawabata the past meant above all taoayame-buri, the feminine aspects of Japanese culture, which had eventually compelled the allegiance of even the rough soldiers of the Muromachi period; for Mishima the past was typified by masurao-buri, the masculine traditions of the warrior (to which Kawabata was indifferent).[166]

In assessing the differences between the ways the national narrative of Japan circulates in each of the two countries, I conclude that there is a great level of coincidence in the construction and reproduction of the same tropes from and through mass-audience and academia-targeted texts in both the U.S. and Spain. I argue, however, that this is more attributable to an intrinsic dependence of the Spanish side to U.S. sources. The lack of a developed domestic Spanish scholar community on Japan entailed the unmediated redistribution of the discourse as the only possible reference. Similarly, the two biographies that circulated in Spain quote those texts originated in the U.S. as they constitute their main sources to shape their texts. This dependency amplifies the agency of texts from the U.S. in the construction of the national narrative and opens up the possibility of working with the hypothesis of a shared 'Western' discursive space. This common ground appears heavy reliant on the production from the U.S. It is also disproportionally distributed in the weight and contribution of its constitutive agents.

I believe the idea of the 'two Japans' sums up appropriately the construction of the national narrative out of the literature of Kawabata

[166] Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 1183.

and Mishima. It refers to the coexistence of two dimensions on the idea of Japan. One is defined by the assumption of a traditional essence composed by pre-modern themes. The other idea of Japan is recognized as its contemporary representation, marked by the modernization of social structures. Because particularism and pre-Western contact identifiers are deemed by this discourse the only proper attributes to comprise the identity of the Japanese, the 'essential' and pre-modern Japan is reckoned endangered by this later modern and allegedly Westernized manifestation of the country. Their deaths are underpinned as marking a symbolic turning point for this ever-ongoing struggle, freeing the way for the materialistic, late-capitalist reading of Japan to be integrated as predominant. The debate between particularism and contact-bred cultural evolution remains unresolved at the root of what the discourse considers the proper conceptual arguments to build an agreed definition of Japan. It inevitably hauls the question further in time and bequeaths its unsettled nature to the succeeding process of national narrative construction and reproduction.

CHAPTER 3:

THE GREAT BEWITCHMENT

(1989 - 2018)

3.1 Historical Context

Any temporal landmark is a product of social conventions that structures and legitimizes a particular interpretation of chronological records. The ordering and systematization of historical developments, especially a periodization such as the one I am applying in this work, reifies precisely certain elements and apparatuses of national narratives. In order to put this process into question, one should always approach canonical methods of periodization with a critical outlook. Historiographic turning points serve a useful purpose, but they should not be taken for granted as actual thresholds between two distinctive periods. They can be rather thought as points of reference that help conceptualize and understand changes and developments in discourse.

Either history is an unstoppable, continuous stream of un-systematized events, or we parcel and divide time, accepting the artificiality and subjectivity of such endeavor.

Keeping these considerations in mind, I argue that the year 1989 can be interpreted as a symbolic crossroads for Japan. It signals the end of Shōwa and the start of the Heisei era. The death of Emperor Hirohito, in power since 1926, signified for the symbolic collective memory of many Japanese the disappearance of the main representation of their wartime past. Susan J. Napier has developed in her work the notion that even though the emperor's executive powers were very limited, his presence and continuous public appearances during the postwar period created an anachronistic and contradictory narrative within the Japanese psyche.[1] Japan may have leaped from foe to ally within the last decades for the West and other Asian countries, it may have abandoned the idea of being an empire to focus on technological and industrial advance, it may even have an arguably functional democracy, but the Shōwa Emperor was still associated with the atrocities committed during the first half of his reign. His death offered an opportunity to move beyond these ghosts to finally embrace a redefinition of the country's present even though it had to happen with Hirohito's own son in the throne. This ambition, however, was more emblematic and fueled by wishful thinking than actually realistic. Japan has not found yet the proper way to deal with its role as an aggressive, criminal, and colonial power in East Asia. The unsettled status of Japan's historical memory manifests in different episodes and periodic crisis. One of the most symptomatic is the recurrence of

[1] Napier, "Death and the Emperor: Mishima, Ōe, and the Politics of Betrayal," 72.

controversies over Japanese textbooks. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Japanese Ministry of Education censored or sugarcoated the actions of Japan during the Second World War in schoolbooks. Far from being solved the first time this polemic was brought up, the problem of revisionist meddling in the national curriculum has kept re-emerging time and again over the past thirty years. The attempts by ultra-nationalists and war crime deniers to influence the Ministry in the confection of textbooks have been an intermittent – even if poorly effective – event.[2]

Institutional apologetic efforts are most of the time insufficient and halfhearted. The Japanese Diet offered in 1995 an official admission of guilt to the countries it invaded and to its victims, but the honesty and extent of Japan's atonement have been constantly put into question by activists. Territorial disputes over strategically positioned islands in the seas between Japan and Taiwan, the Korean peninsula, China, or Russia are discussed in diplomatic roundtables with the ever looming burden of Japan's colonial ambition and its felonious behavior during the first half of the 20th century. The case of the so-known 'comfort women' (*ianfu* in Japanese, *weianfu* in Chinese, *wianbu* in Korean) also attracted strong attention and condemnation not only from the victims and their countries, but also from other parts of the world. The European Union in 2007[3] or Pope Francis in 2014[4] have – ironically enough – repeatedly requested greater reparations. These 'comfort women' have also been excluded from some schoolbooks,

---

[2] Selden and Nozaki, "Japanese Textbook Controversies, Nationalism…"
[3] European Parliament, "European Parliament resolution of 13 December 2007 on Justice for the 'Comfort Women.'"
[4] Tiezzi, "Pope Francis Meets Korean 'Comfort Women."

forcing the Japanese government to offer several and periodical rounds of official apologies. In the latest episode of the controversy, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe announced in 2015 that Japan would invest ¥1 billion in a fund for victims and survivors of these war crimes with the goal of finally putting the dispute to rest. The following year, however, the United Nations noticed the lack of enforcement of such pledge and prompted Japan to make good on their word. The need of having to issue such warnings hints at the sad fact that the dispute may still re-emerge in the future because of the untrustworthy attitude shown by Japanese institutions.[5]

Official apologies are on top of it ineffectual when addressing the unresolved tension within the Japanese society on how to deal with its wartime past. In his work *Japan's Contested War Memories*, Philip A. Seaton argues that war memories need to be differentiated from the way the legacy of the war has been tackled institutionally in order to properly understand the question. On the one hand, there are the legal and diplomatic implications of Japan's imperial war actions, what is customarily known as 'war responsibility.' These include the signing of international agreements, monetary compensations, and symbolic declarations. These actions, however, do not necessarily articulate the way the conflict is remembered and rendered within Japan. The lack of agreed-upon cultural discourses on how Japan deals with war memories creates a space of conflict between mutually antagonistic interpretations. This state of constant dispute leads to the perpetuation of the idea that the Japanese are unwilling to address their past, while

[5] See for instance relevant chapters in: Roy L. Brooks, *When Sorry Isn't Enough*. Alternatively, Sonya Kuki provides a more recent update on the matter in her article "The Burden of History."

in fact, the problem is that they do not approach war memories from a common position. Local narratives avoid the problem of framing Japan as a responsible entity. Guilt is lost in a self-sustained limbo where responsibility exists but cannot be pinpointed. Local narratives accept the misdeeds of Japan as a nation, but elude extending this responsibility to the deployed soldiers. This mechanism is based on the unspoken consensus of avoiding pointing at the wrongdoings of each of the Japanese stationed abroad. There is a lack of pedagogy on how to deal, grieve, and accept this particular historical episode that gets passed on for generations. Even when veterans or survivors pass away, family bonds make it extremely painful for Japanese people to make critical judgments of their relatives. Time fails to heal all the wounds.

In January 1995, an earthquake hit the Kansai area near Kobe, killing close to 6,500 people and becoming the country's second worst episode of seismic activity of the 20th century after the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923. Just two months later, the sect Aum Shinrikyo attacked the Tokyo subway with sarin gas on a busy workday morning. It was the deadliest domestic attack in Japan after the end of the war. These events, combined with the recent ousting of the Liberal Democratic Party after thirty-eight consecutive years in power, seemed to signal that the time of peaceful bonanza experienced during the previous twenty years might be gone or at least in serious jeopardy. There were strong reasons to believe so. In 1989, the Nikkei went from registering its highest peak in stock prices to abruptly collapse by the end of the following year. The asset price bubble that had been growing during the 1980s and especially at the turn of the decade

finally burst in 1992. In a phenomenon very similar to what would happen in the rest of the world in 2008, many banks, insurance companies, and investors were left stockpiled with big amounts of unfulfillable debt. The neoliberal craze and the capitalist belief that the only possible direction for the Japanese economy to go was up unsurprisingly backfired. The financial burst cursed the country with over twenty years of chronic financial stagnation. The outcome: unstable and precarious job opportunities, dormant real estate asset exchange, subpar GDP growth, low public expense, and permanent deflation. This crisis showed that despite the steadiness of conspicuous consumerism, Japan's economy has new challenges to face in the 21st century that were not present during the postwar economic recovery.

In recent times, the Japanese government has tried to fight back and stimulate the economy to palliate the effects of this recession and the collapse of global markets. A set of aggressive fiscal measures known as 'Abenomics' after Prime Minister Shinzō Abe was put in place. The efficiency of these actions is still up to debate.[6] Besides the economic struggles, Japan faces a series of paradigmatic challenges. First, Japan's demographic projection is trapped by an unsustainable model that shows a low fertility rate coupled by an increasing elder population. Pressure groups close to Prime Minister Abe push him to reform the Constitution and allow the Self-Defense Forces greater range of action, in clear conflict with Article 9. Moreover, anti-nuclear activist movements found new energy and momentum after the Fukushima Daiichi disaster of March 2011.

---

[6] Hausman and Wieland, "Overcoming the Lost Decades?"

At the end of 2017, Emperor Akihito announced that he plans to abdicate the throne in April 2019 in favor of his son, Prince Naruhito. This would mean that, most likely, the Heisei era would comprise exactly thirty years. In terms of this work, his rule comprises the entire second period of the study, which I name "The Great Bewitchment." This nomenclature serves the purpose of highlighting the most noticeable aspect of the national narrative of Japan in the United States and Spain. Even though fascination and allure towards Japan had been going on since the advent of Japonism in the 19th century, interaction with Japanese culture in the West had been almost strictly confined to the exotic and vaguely distant. During the second half of the 20th century, Japanese culture timidly opened up to a larger – albeit still relatively minor – audience. First, it was through the interaction of U.S. occupation officers and intellectuals that later on became translators and advocates of Japanese culture at home. Starting in the 1970s and 1980s, however, the Japanese government began devising a diplomatic agenda that included calling attention to their tourism industry and exporting cultural influence and products as a way to attract foreign investment. The Japanese campaign of soft power, aimed at its Asian neighbors and Western societies, funded translations and publications of Japanese literary authors. Anime, manga, cinema, martial arts, music, and other cultural artifacts were effectively introduced in foreign markets and attracted most notoriously younger generations during the eighties and nineties.

The outcome of what Roland Kelts calls the 'third wave of Japanophilia' resulted in the largest foreign engagement with Japan to

record. As an early outcome of the success of Japan's overseas promotion and a cause that sustains it, the number of students of Japanese in the United States has gone from around 175,000 in 1997 to around 3 million in 2006.[7] According to the Modern Language Association of America, Japanese and Korean are the only two foreign languages that have experienced an increase in the number of enrollments in U.S. institutions of higher education in recent times. In the case of Japanese, this is an upsurge of 3.1% between the records of 2013 and 2016.[8] The number of published works from Japanese authors is similarly on the rise, with new titles and many re-editions or re-translations of pieces made first available during the 1960s and 1970s.

Until now, I have been referring to the national narrative as if there were no differences between the U.S. and Spain. That is true only to an extent; the effects of Japan's softpower campaign were felt in both countries with very similar results. The biggest dissimilarity has to do with the separation between the respective starting points from which both countries experienced this fascination. In the United States, there had been a strong and relatively settled circle of academics, publishing houses, and aficionados that nurtured the relationship during the postwar era. This new wave of Japanese interest broadened their base, reaching to more conventional and casual audiences. As it has been explored in the previous period, in the case of Spain the relative number of specialists in Japan was way lower. The intellectual apparatus and academic institutional structure was weaker and more

[7] Kelts, *Japanamerica,* 179.
[8] Looney and Lusin, "Enrollments in Languages Other Than English…"

disperse. For instance, even though it was possible to follow postgraduate and partial studies in some university departments of the country, the first bachelor's degree on East Asian Studies was made available for students as late as 2009. In the following years, other official curriculums appeared in different centers, with new programs and courses being planned each year.

In this sense, the Japanese wave of the 1980s and 1990s produced in Spain a starker and more visible increase when compared to the U.S., both in terms of regular enthusiasts and a specialized (or prospective specialist) audience. It would seem like this increased interest, along with an upsurge in people in both the United States and Spain that enroll in higher education and pursue a more rigorous understanding of Japan may have an impact on how the national narrative is constructed and reproduced during this period. In the following pages, I put this idea to a test by producing an intertextual analysis of texts that discuss the literature of Ōe Kenzaburō and Murakami Haruki over the last thirty years.

3.2 Ōe Kenzaburō

We sometimes stumble upon the realization that no matter the amount of effort, achievements, or struggles to position oneself in accordance to a series of ideals, there is a pre-established set of premises that determines every attempt at self-definition. I believe that

for writer and activist Ōe Kenzaburō this condition is to be peripheral. Born in the now extinct village of Ōse, located in the western region of Shikoku, Ōe's sheltered childhood during World War II came to an abrupt end when Emperor Hirohito renounced his divinity on radio and admitted the country's defeat. Ōe was at that time only ten years old, but from then on, as his literature, many interviews, and the majority of academics point out, he became suddenly aware of the cripplingly dangerous effects that ideological isolation can have on individuals and entire communities. Scarred by the early trauma of a sudden and unforeseen change of worldview, Ōe devoted his work to denounce how easily hegemonic discourses can creep in and unconsciously manipulate the psyche of a society to make it adopt and support a set of principles that go against the progressive ideals that mankind should attempt to uphold. He calls for the mapping out of a model of moral commitment that demands individual and collective responsibility in the fight against this system.

Ōe was the first member of his family to leave their village. He went to study French literature at Tokyo University, where he graduated with a thesis on Jean-Paul Sartre. Ōe began publishing during his college years and won the Akutagawa Prize in 1958 when he was only 23 years old. He became popular in a flash thanks to the success of his two main early works, *Shiiku* (*The Catch*) and *Memushiri Kouchi* (*Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*), published that same year. The new enfant terrible of the Japanese literary world decided to become more politically involved. In 1960, Ōe visited China with an expedition of communist intellectuals to attend an audience with Mao Zedong. He then crossed the Soviet Union to finally meet Sartre in Paris. The next year, Ōe

wrote two particularly controversial stories, *Sebunteen* (*Seventeen*) and *Seijishōnen Shisu* (*The Death of the Political Youth*). In these texts, he mocks right-wing fanaticism, especially among the youth of the era. He creates a character openly based on Yamaguchi Otoya, the ultranationalist student who killed Inejiro Asanuma, head of the Japanese Socialist Party, during a political debate on October 12, 1960. Ōe and his editor received multiple death threats from right-wing groups for daring to publish these stories. While the editor publicly apologized and agreed to never reprint or allow translations, Ōe held his ground and has never conceded to the threats, standing always by his work.

Ōe's individual and professional trajectory had an inflection point in the year 1963. His eldest son Hikari was born with brain damage and hopes for his survival were slim. If he ever made it, Hikari would be forever dependent on his family. Ōe, tormented by this prospect, fled for a few days to Hiroshima to attend an event of rendition for the victims of the atomic attacks. The experience of listening to the survivors left a deep mark on him. He came back to his family with two resolutions: to undertake the task of taking care of his son no matter the costs and to give a boost to the voices of atomic survivors. From both episodes sprang his two most acclaimed works, *Gojinteki na Taiken* (*A Personal Matter*) and *Hiroshima Nōto* (*Hiroshima Notes*). In the first title, he creates a fictionalized alter-ego of himself, a person faced with the choice of keeping alive his physically challenged newborn child while flirting with the temptation of running away. The character's final resolution of standing by the baby becomes a source of constant and over-reaching commitment. In the second book, Ōe

narrates the lives of many victims of the nuclear attacks and of the numerous doctors and volunteers who went to Hiroshima to offer their help at their own mortal risk. The work helped humanize the episode and was intended to lift the social stigma smeared over the people affected by the catastrophe. Ōe became from then on a vigorous anti-nuclear activist. He has been an advocate for the renunciation of nuclear power in Japan, always invoking the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki while criticizing any attempts to erase their account from Japanese cultural memory.

Ōe's professional career has been irregular. He was hailed in his early years as a spokesman of the postwar generation. Ōe has won many major Japanese literary prizes (the aforementioned Akutagawa in 1958, the Tanizaki in 1967, the Noma in 1973), and his domestic and international projection looked in the 1960s very promising. After *A Personal Matter* was translated into English in 1968, however, his public presence started to wan. Ōe continued writing, but his work became more and more cryptic. The massive success of his breakthrough novel did not hold up and he gradually turned into a niche writer. Many of his works combine the biographical alter-ego trope initiated in *A Personal Matter* with the political and historical denunciation of his activism. There are two archetypical settings in his literature. On the one hand, he depicts the alienating urban landscape of the so-called 'economic miracle,' which he judges prone to de-politicize the Japanese and diverts them from addressing the unresolved legacy of the war. On the other, Ōe also places his action on the idyllic and somewhat surreal pastoral landscape of his birthplace. He embeds his stories in a land of forests and elusive backwardness that serves to

criticize the ills of acritical industrialization. Translations of his works poured into the English-speaking market during the 1970s and 1980s but received a timid reception, far from the interest achieved when he first made an appearance in the 1960s.

Ōe would have remained a writer strictly framed in the postwar narrative if it were not for his second major breakthrough: the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1994. Attention to his work suddenly skyrocketed around the world. His novels were translated and reprinted. He accepted interviews and op-eds in major publications. At only 59 years old, Ōe was still young and had the energy to use his success as a writer to push forward his activist agenda. All of a sudden, his criticism of Japan's treatment of historical memory and his anti-nuclear stance became topics of public discussion. Japan's financial crisis, the Kobe earthquake, and the Aum terrorist attacks at the Tokyo subway in 1995 gave even more momentum to Ōe's admonitions. He rejected the Imperial Order as a condemnation of the continued existence of wartime institutions. During the last twenty-five years, Ōe's popularity as a writer has been modest in terms of readership. His relevance as a public intellectual, however, has invested way more weight to his literature than the volume of book sales would otherwise suggest, as it often happens with Nobel Prize winners.

Three moments in his life are instrumental for understanding his work, as everything is articulated from and by them. First, Ōe's perennial defense of the idea that Japan should never refrain from pacifism. He denounces a system that both unnaturally maintains the emperor as a

symbol of national unity and keeps in power a political class that is a direct inheritor of the imperial government. Second, his visit to Hiroshima and his continuous work with the victims of the atomic bombs and of the nuclear tests in the Pacific have kept him actively militant for world disarmament and against nuclear power, especially in Japan. The Fukushima disaster of March 2011 socially reignited an issue that he personally had never neglected. Ōe became in the wake of the tragedy an unseemly referent of the protests and demonstrations that overtook the country. And finally, the birth of Hikari and the process of learning how to live and foster a person with physical and intellectual challenges is a constant reminder of how the two previous pledges cannot be treated as an easy and fleeting vow. Every commitment is an arduous enterprise that requires patience, devotion, the necessary humbleness to accept limitations, and the reassurance that only by direct engagement can change have a chance to bloom. Ōe's method of direct activism may never become mainstream. He is respected but does not raise a following and has been perceived as a voice of conscience rather than a man of action. His status and worldly success provide him by default with a bully pulpit that he uses to periodically reaffirm his political messages. His incisive works and statements may condemn him in the end to the role of first-class underdog.

3.2.1 Mass-Audience-Targeted Texts

In the following pages, I examine articles, book reviews, and interviews published between June 1968 and January 2017 in the

United States and Spain in which Japan and the Japanese are described from an interpretation of Ōe's literature. Texts in which Ōe is just mentioned but not reviewed are excluded from this subcorpus. According to the criteria established, I have chosen ninety-five pieces. Twenty-nine were published in the United States and sixty-six appeared in Spanish newspapers. In the U.S., *The New York Times* provides the biggest amount of texts with a total of fourteen articles, followed by *The Washington Post* with ten, *The New Yorker* with four, and closed by *The New York Review of Books* with one long text. In Spain, the distribution is more even: *ABC* published twenty-six texts, followed by *El País* with twenty-two, and finally *La Vanguardia* with eighteen articles.

These texts have ninety-two different authors. The most prolific of them is Ōe himself, who has signed six pieces published in *The New York Times*, *El País*, and *The New Yorker*. Mercedes Montmany produced four texts for *ABC*. Robert Saladrigas (*La Vanguardia*), Ramon Mantecon (*El País*), Cecilia Mora (*La Vanguardia*), and David Streitfeld (*The Washington Post*) wrote three each. James Sterngold (*The New York Times*), Jesús García Calero (*ABC*), José F. Beaumont (*El País*), José María Guelbenzu (*El País*), Justo Navarro (*ABC*, *El País*), Norimitsu Onishi (*The New York Times*), Philippe Pons (*El País*), Ricardo Moreno (*El País*), and Xavi Ayén (*La Vanguardia*) all published two articles. The rest of the authors, listed in the bibliography, published one text each.

The flow of newspaper articles is heavily reliant on the date of publication of his works in translation and other major life events.

Ōe's case follows the general editorial pattern of having his works translated first to English and then to Spanish, this time however with a considerable time gap. His debut in the international market with *A Personal Matter* in 1968 received some general attention from U.S. audiences. A Spanish edition was made available in Argentina three years later, but it went almost entirely under the radar. Two translations into English poured out during the 1970s and 1980s: *Warera no Kyōki wo Ikinobiru Michi wo Oshieyo* (*Teach Us How to Outgrow Our Madness*) in 1977 and *Man'en Gannen no Futtoboru* (*The Silent Cry*) in 1986. Ōe was considered at the time an author more attractive to an intellectual minority, with brief notes by book reviewers that seemed to only take him into account because of his fifteen minutes of fame in the 1960s. Readers in Spain had to wait until the last decade of the century to get easier access to Ōe. Anagrama decided in 1989 to publish *Una cuestión personal* (*A Personal Matter*), a choice they were probably happy to have made five years later with Ōe's big leap forward in the international market thanks to the Nobel Prize. Interest in Ōe and Japanese literature shoot up from then on. It is worth mentioning the great media coverage by the three Spanish media outlets on the day of the announcement. They produced a total of fifteen texts published on October 14, 1994. On the other hand, U.S. newspapers preferred to stick to fewer but longer texts.

Ten works were translated into English or Spanish from 1995 to 1998: *Dinos cómo sobrevivir a nuestra locura* (*Teach Us How to Outgrow Our Madness*), *El grito silencioso* (*The Silent Cry*), *Kaifuku Suru Kazoku* (*A Healing Family / Un amor especial)*, *Jinsei no Shinseki* (*An Echo of Heaven*), *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*, *Hiroshima Notes*, *Shizuka-na Seikatsu* (*A Quiet*

Life), *Natsukashii Toshi e no Tegami* (*Carta a los años de nostalgia*), and *Seventeen and J*. This list does not include the reprints commissioned of previously published works. Spanish translations had to catch up with the English versions during the first decade of the century. The only exception was *Torikae ko,* a novel originally published in the year 2000 that got both translations ten years later as *The Changeling* in English and *Renacimiento* in Spanish. During the first decade of the 21st century, Ōe was busy fighting a lawsuit filed by a group of military veterans who considered his complaints against the actions of the Japanese army during World War II depicted in his works unfair. Once the matter was settled in Ōe's favor, he resumed writing and produced two new novels. The first title was translated into English and Spanish almost simultaneously, *Suishi (Death by water/Muerte por agua*) in 2014 and 2015. The second book has only been translated into Spanish, *Routashi Anaberu rī souke dachitu mimakaritu* (*La bella Annabel Lee*) in 2017. Ōe has said several times in the past that he wants to quit writing, but he keeps taking back this pledge. The impact the Nobel had on Ōe's presence abroad and the fact that he has stayed professionally active ever since are the two biggest reasons to frame Ōe as a contributor to the second period of the national narrative, the one that goes from 1989 to present times. He is labelled as a postwar writer, but his literature and impact affect most prominently discourses at the turn of the millennia, as revealed in Figure 3 in the next page.

The way writers are introduced in the texts is one of the most direct and powerful ways to establish an explicit link between their literature and their ascribed nation. These attempts to contextualize the life and

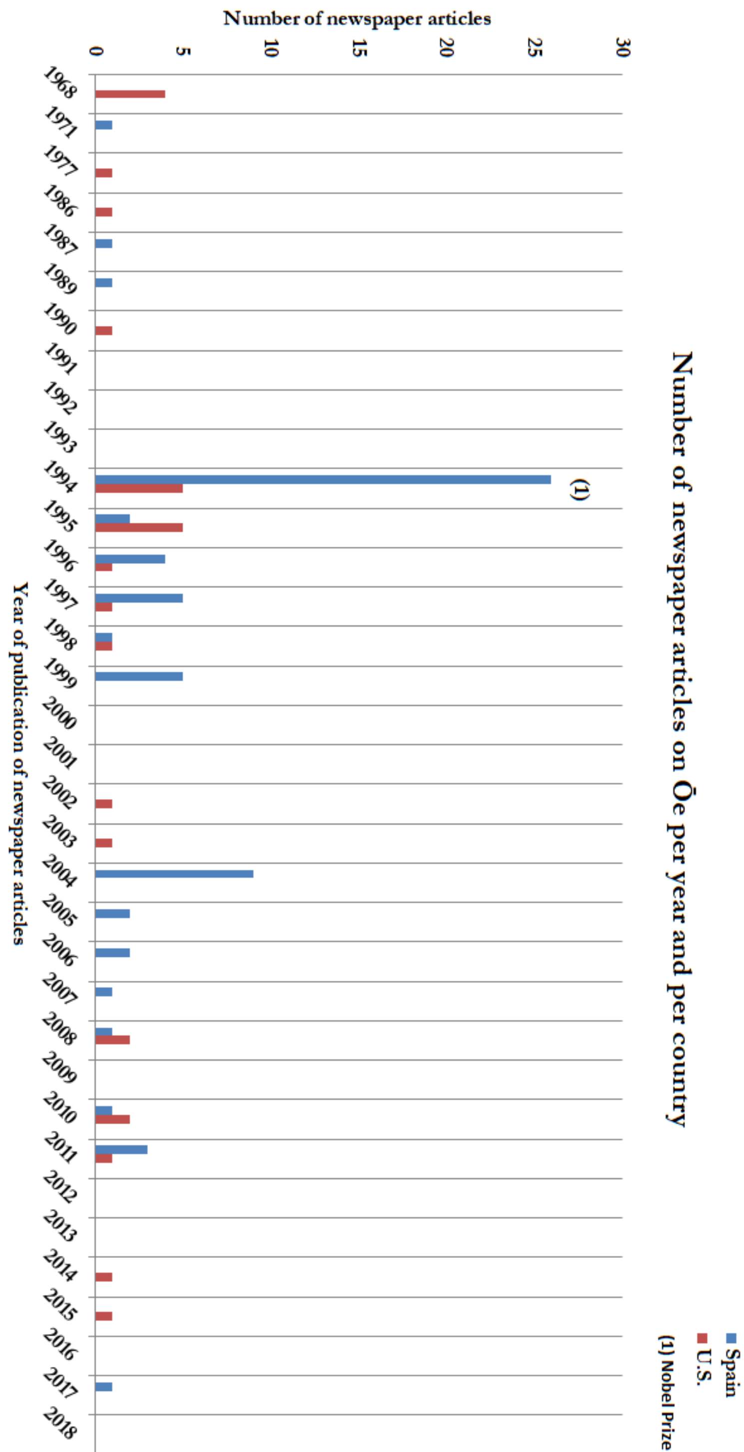

Figure 3: Number of Newspaper Articles on Ōe per Year and per Country

oeuvre of a novelist already frame the terms in which a specific nation and its members are going to be portrayed. Ōe is depicted reaching U.S. shores as an already famous author in Japan: "the most dynamic and revolutionary writer to have emerged in Japan since the end of the War"[9] and "the spokesman of a new generation of Japanese."[10] He was first depicted for being a "radical"[11] "of leftwing political proclivities."[12] (XXXVII) The discourse would stop criticizing Ōe for his ideological inclinations after the failure by the student movements to produce systemic changes in Japan at the end of the 1960s. From the 1970s onwards, he was introduced as representative of postwar Japan, a generation "which grew in the aftermath of the Second World War,"[13] is "filled with anger and a sense of betrayal,"[14] and "knows the most about the old and the modern Japan, the most cultivated and active, the one that integrated the best Western influences and avant-garde advances."[15] (XXXVIII)

When Ōe became a Nobel Prize winner, many in Japan jumped on the international bandwagon and praised his literature as a collective success for the country, conveniently forgetting that during twenty years he had only been read by scholars and brooding intellectuals. Ōe himself became very comfortable assuming this ambassadorial role,

[9] Enright, "Days of Marvelous Lays."
[10] "The Talk of Town."
[11] Ibid.
[12] Pottecher, "Una cuestión personal."
[13] Gold, "A Ray From the Rising Sun."
[14] Sterngold, "Nobel in Literature Goes to Kenzaburō Ōe of Japan."
[15] Pottecher, "Una cuestión personal."

especially after 1994: "the people I write for are people of my own generation, people who have had the same experiences as myself."[16]

The turn of the century revealed, however, the existence of two different groups: Ōe's postwar peers and a younger generation that grew up during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s and had other writers like Murakami Haruki and Yoshimoto Banana as spokespeople. Ōe's representativeness acquires then a different meaning. He becomes from then on the delegate of a past generation living in a Japan that is not theirs anymore: "I have always wanted to be part of the voice of my generation. When I was young I wrote about young Japanese and now I guess I write about desperate old people."[17] [(XXXIX)]

Many mainstays of the narrative are fortified on these grounds. These texts use Ōe's works to depict postwar Japanese as a scarred and traumatized people to whom the change of political paradigm, the military defeat, and the nuclear attacks left devoid of individual and collective meaning. The degree of harshness in the description of postwar Japanese varies depending on the author but they all share a rather bleak and in some instances even morbid outlook:

> With the Emperor's announcement of Japan's surrender, Ōe's world was wrenched from its natural axis as suddenly as the sky burned and the earth shook at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Now his fellows grope in their dim subconscious for the

[16] Reid, "Japanese Writer Ōe Wins Nobel."
[17] Sanchís, "'Nacer con estas orejas me hizo escritor'."

> warmth of a history long ruptured. Their anxiety is ambiguous. The warmth scarred their skin.[18]

> He was the youngest of a generation of authors who responded to the war experience by depicting a world knocked off its center and surrounded by dark, irrational forces.[19]

> Kenzaburō Ōe lived in a homeland destroyed by the atomic bombs, a murderous and murdered homeland, a monstrous homeland.[20] (XL)

> The raison d'être of a demystified Japan, the uncertainty and the pursuit of truth, which is to say the duty to embrace it.[21] (XLI)

> Ōe portrays the youth of our time, kidnapped by modernity, with a strong desire and despair for the future, and existential anguish in constant turmoil.[22] (XLII)

Sturen Allen, secretary of the Nobel committee, mentions Ōe's ability in conveying the trauma experienced by the Japanese during the postwar period as one of the main reasons to bestow the award on him: "he is an author that combines the interest of today's society with unforgettable moments: the atomic bomb of 1945 and the day the

[18] Wolff, "Hiroshima Shadows Novel."
[19] Sterngold, "Nobel in Literature Goes to Kenzaburō Ōe of Japan."
[20] Navarro, "La generación de Hiroshima."
[21] Martinez Ruiz, "Testigo del nuevo Japón."
[22] Porta, "Retrato de los jóvenes de nuestro tiempo."

Emperor, turned citizen, spoke among the mortals."[23] [(XLIII)] This idea of postwar Japan as a country deeply wounded and confused by its wartime heritage and incomplete recovery is supported by Ōe himself. He describes the Japanese postwar generation thoroughly in the second letter of his public conversation with Mario Vargas Llosa, printed by *El País* in February 1999. He repeatedly refers to the existence of 'wounds' inflicted throughout the second half of the 20th century by war trauma and acritical economic development:

> It was inevitable that a process of modernization so violent and spectacular would cause in Japan and the Japanese such deep wounds. During the first half of the current century, Japan was the one inflicting wounds upon other countries and peoples in Asia. As the first victims of the destructive power of nuclear weapons, Japan and the Japanese received fatal wounds that would become hereditary. During the second half of the century, the hurried economic development caused, like a violent accident, domestic and international wounds. For some time, Japan was the only target of all foreign criticism. Today, Japan suffers from its wounds – some have not healed yet and keep bleeding, and you can see that in its people. I hope you understand me when I say that, living in this country and this society, the country and society that I describe in my novels, I use my writing as a means to implement the theory of rehabilitation.[24] [(XLIV)]

---

[23] Villar Mir, "La Academia Sueca premia en Kenzaburō Ōe…"
[24] Ōe, "El poder de la inocencia.".

This description of the Japanese postwar generation puts emphasis on the idea that Japan is a state in a general and perpetual condition of crisis. The "problematic of modern Japan" as Beatriz Pottecher calls it,[25] (XLV) has many different sources and reasons for concern. The discourse is articulated around a generally uncertain clutch of troubles that act as triggers in describing Japan as a country permanently maimed in its core. Any of these challenges articulates "the crisis in the Japanese mind:"[26] the rejection to the idea of an authoritarian state that partially mobilized students during the sixties;[27] the memory of Hiroshima and the bloodshed in Okinawa;[28] the sense of being culturally disinherited;[29] the looming shadow of war crimes;[30] the economic tribulations of the 1990s, along with the earthquake and terrorist attack of 1995;[31] or the Fukushima disaster of 2011.[32] All of these subject matters depict an eternal struggle to keep balance in fighting back Japan's assumed inner demons.

The texts' interpretation of Japan's successful plan of macroeconomic development deployed during the following decades engage with the shaping of the national narrative. This is especially so in the United States given its role as promoter and then challenger of the same. Japan's commercial and industrial progress is rendered throughout Ōe's literature as having the purpose of helping the country cope with its jarring past. The narrative depicts consumerism as a substitute for

---

[25] Pottecher, "Una cuestión personal."
[26] "The Talk of Town."
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ward, "Innocence and Experience."
[29] Pottecher, "Una cuestión personal."
[30] Pons, "Japón ha entrado en una nueva era."
[31] Tanabe, "Letter From Tokyo."
[32] "El Nobel Nobel Kenzaburō Ōe lidera la gran protesta antinuclear en Tokio."

this reported void of meaning left after the disintegration of the wartime imperial system:

> That generation witnessed the physical and economic devastation of the country followed by its spiritual reexamination and fantastic economic growth.[33]

> The Japanese people accepted it positively, and based their dream of recovery, at least for a few years following the surrender, on a future as a democratic nation that had forsworn war.[34]

> Towards the year 1960, Japan's economic recovery was more or less consolidated and the Japanese economy was in a stage of considerable growth. Japanese literature experienced a radical change then. Materialism and frivolity dominated literary works. People did not need to remember the war anymore.[35] (XLVI)

Japan is portrayed as a country that was "brutally modernized."[36] (XLVII) In some instances, some texts disregard basic historical knowledge when describing the postwar period as the time "feudal Japan [...] turns to consumerism"[37] (XLVIII) or "makes a sudden jump from feudalism to contemporaneity."[38] (XLIX) These perceptions move

[33] Remnick, "Reading Japan."
[34] Ōe, "The Day the Emperor Spoke in Human Voice."
[35] Kotazawa, "Literatura a contracorriente."
[36] Caeiro, "Ōe en la literatura japonesa del siglo XX."
[37] Marco, "El grito silencioso."
[38] Saladrigas, "La 'divina comedia' de Oé."

between banal condescendence and blatant Orientalism. The trade-imbalance-induced 'yellow peril' trope is present in some texts. Rafael Conte, for instance, suggests that Japan is taking revenge for the atomic attacks by imposing its cheap commodities, technological products, and cultural exports.[39] In many other instances, however, Japan's embrace of neoliberalism is considered a blessing. Consumerism is judged capable of patching up postwar trauma. Wartime amnesia is considered an acceptable price if it leads to moving on from political apathy. This idea is expressed for instance in Vargas Llosa's second letter to Ōe, published in the exchange cited above:

> I have great admiration for the way the Japanese people, despite the level of devastation that the country suffered after the war, could rise up from their ruins, get rid of an authoritarian tradition that strongly gravitated around them, and become one of the most prosperous and modern societies in the world. I am aware that this modernization had a great price, and that it caused traumas, and that's thanks to people who, like you [to Ōe], described it with such clarity and tact. […] There's no doubt that the Japanese society is less open than what it seems and that in the current crisis this is a reason for industrial stagnation. But, despite all of these necessary criticisms, the history of the last fifty years for Japan has been that of a pacifist feat that should be an example for all the poor and underdeveloped countries in this world.[40] (L)

[39] Conte, "La presa."
[40] Vargas Llosa, "Segunda carta a Kenzaburō Ōe.".

Ōe is described thoroughly as opposing these images of progress, modernization, and consumerism that are channeled through the discourse's representation of Japan. His position of resistance is however regarded as uncommon within the Japanese. Ōe is considered right in his criticism despite not having a big following within Japanese society. These authors interpret his denunciations nonetheless as a valuable and accredited source for understanding and describing Japan, especially its challenges. This portrayal of Ōe as the voice of morality is accentuated at the turn of the millennia. He rises to be represented as the lecturing decrier of topics that "millions of Japanese try to cover with a veil of ignorance." [41] (LI) These uncomfortable issues can be organized into four subjects: Japan as an incomplete democracy, Japan as taunting with a return to militarization, the unresolved memories and open wounds of the war, and Japan as having a complicated relationship with nuclear power.

Ōe's mistrust for the Japanese government has been one of his longest reported criticisms of the system. He is described as a firm defender of the historical need to embrace a more democratic state but believes the commitment of the Japanese elite to democracy is not entirely sincere. Ōe recognizes the United States as the agent that pushed for a restoration of democracy after the war. He considers at the same time U.S. interference as an important factor in Japan retaining power dynamics that still have a reminiscence of past autocratic tendencies. The Japanese state is deemed in this light as fundamentally authoritarian:

---

[41] Mantecon, "Voz discordante en el país de la unanimidad."

Ōe is against the radicals' position of opposing anything with a flair of America. He defends the continuation and amendment of the democratization that came after the war.[42]

As a public figure, Ōe resembles Germany's Günter Grass, a literary provincial (Grass is from Danzig) lecturing his powerful nation on its authoritarian tendencies and the vacancy of its current politics and its cultural scene.[43]

"I was born in the old imperialist Japan but came of age in the new democracy after the war," he said. "But in Japan now, many scholars are expressing beliefs contrary to democracy. There is a reactionary movement," which he disapproves of. It's a message he is also trying to convey in a new novel, which is a warning against cults.[44]

Kenzaburō Ōe says he has been waiting for sixty years for democracy to consolidate in his country, a desire hindered continuously by the submission of the Japanese elite to the 'hegemony of the United States' and, more recently, to the growing militarism.[45] (LII)

This feeling of opposition to the government is paired with a total aversion towards the Japanese imperial system. According to Ōe and

---

42 "The Talk of Town."
43 Remnick, "Reading Japan."
44 Streitfield, "Book report."
45 Sans, "Kenzaburo Oé: "En Japón aún no se puede hablar de una democracia"."

the texts that discuss his figure and literature, the emperor is an anachronism, a dangerous remnant of the wartime principles that used to structure the logic behind the political, social, and ideological frameworks of the country. As he describes it: "the Emperor was a god, the authority of the nation, the organizing principle of reality. The military and the police, our system of social classes the Emperor as a god was at the source of all things."[46] Based on these accounts, the continuation of the emperor's existence, even if in theory from 1945 he lost any policymaking agency, has been fueling right-wing movements and politicians. This continuous denunciation describes Japan as a potentially militaristic nation. The discourse develops the idea that behind technological and economic progress lays a Japan that may at any moment turn a foe again for the West. It also reinforces the impression that concepts of 'nation' and 'nationalism' are the property of right-wing ideologists, suggesting that a 'progressive' Japan should be 'universalistic.' This association leaves unclear how Japan should build its own identity. In this narrative, the Japanese emperor, largely sold as a cultural icon, embodies everything that is wrong with the current Japanese political system. Japanese institutional politics are portrayed as conservative and potentially dangerous to the country's own stability:

> The threat of violence from fanatical rightwing groups, which worship the emperor and have traditionally enjoyed strong ties to ideologically minded politicians, has long contributed to stifling intellectual and artistic discourse in Japan. So it was no surprise that Mr. Ōe — who has relentlessly criticized the

[46] Ōe, "The Day the Emperor Spoke in Human Voice."

imperial system for stunting postwar Japan's democratization and its ability to come to terms with its wartime past — was singled out in the recent battle over Okinawa.[47]

> If they consider me left-wing because I defend a universalist opening of Japan, that is fine, I can gladly assume that position. I am against all kinds of nationalism. I want to take a role that could universalize the nation. The worst thing that can happen to Japan is to turn and focus on its own nationalism. It is worthless. It does not offer any hope for the future of this country.[48] (LIII)

According to Ōe, the most immediate danger to Japan is the aspiration of right-wing lobbies of modifying its constitution to allow for a remilitarization of the country. These initiatives have encountered so far popular opposition and lack of political consensus. Japan is described through the telling of this conflict as a peaceful nation that sees resistance from within by powerful warmongering pressure groups:

> Japan will become a terrible country the day the Japanese stop believing in pacifism.[49] (LIV)

> If we stop attending our duties, the most dangerous and monstrous Japan can reemerge.[50] (LV)

[47] Onishi, "Released From Rigors of a Trial, a Nobel Laureate's Ink Flows Freely."
[48] Mantecon, "Estoy contra todos los nacionalismos."
[49] Pons, "¿Pueden hacerse humanistas los japoneses?"

> I want to be clear when I say that if we do not honor the spirit of the Japanese constitution […] a monstrous and very dangerous Japan can emerge.[51] (LVI)

In a visit to Spain in March 2004, Ōe was asked about the recent terrorist attacks in Madrid. He used this chance to praise Spanish disapproval of the war in Iraq and expressed his wish for the Japanese to follow suit:

> [Ōe] I am gathering data and studying this impressive phenomenon because I want to write something about it. Hopefully, it could help mobilize the Japanese people.
> [Journalist] In what sense?
> [Ōe] Japan has troops in Iraq even though our pacifist constitution forbids us to invade direct or indirectly any country. It is a tremendous tragedy.[52] (LVII)

The shadow of wartime Japan is long and has a strong influence in the national narrative. Ōe wishes for a Japan that could finally be able to reconcile with its Asian neighbors. This reporting depicts, therefore, a failed trajectory of missed attempts of restoration and the futility of wartime compensations. Ōe would like Japan to use its role as an economic powerhouse to redeem itself and establish a new paradigm

---

[50] Moreno, “"Japón todavía tiene que pagar por sus atrocidades", declara el Nobel Oé.”
[51] Mora, “Oé: "Mi hijo autista cree que ha sido él quien ha ganado el Nobel y que recogerá el premio".”
[52] Ayén, “España es el ejemplo a seguir.”

of alliances with other Asian nations that would close historical wounds. This association between Japan's commercial might and its regional responsibilities gives a diplomatic dimension to the process of industrial development:

> For the Japanese to be able to regard 21st-century Asia not as a new economic power rivaling the West but as a region in which Japan can be a true partner, they must first establish a basis that would enable them to criticize their neighbors and be criticized in turn. For this, Japan must apologize for its aggression and offer compensation.[53]

> We must contribute economically to the United Nations when we are asked. Japan should under no circumstances carry on military actions. It's possible that it would be considered then, a bit condescendingly, that Japan is just an economic power. Why not? You can be very effective being just that.[54] [(LVIII)]

Ōe's position projects a sense of hopelessness and frustration. Japanese may be pacifist now, but the pessimism transmitted by these texts suggests the situation may reverse at any given moment. The discourse paints a dreary future for the country. A very similar impression can be extracted when discussing the idea of Japanese antinuclear sentiments. The texts report that Ōe's activism against the use of nuclear power has had little following within Japanese society. Anti-nuclear opposition gained some presence in the narrative after

[53] Ōe, "Denying History Disables Japan."
[54] Pons, "¿Pueden hacerse humanistas los japoneses?"

the debacle in Fukushima. This activist upsurge was framed however entirely as a circumstantial event, a fleeting change of winds in a "traditionally pronuclear society."[55] (LIX)

These pieces build a discourse that portrays the Japanese as politically passive and generally disengaged. They attribute this detachment to a generational indifference towards addressing the challenges of the country. It develops the argument that Ōe's postwar generation was the last politically engaged group in Japan, while contemporary Japanese are described as frivolous, consumerist, and materialistic:

> Mr. Ōe also acknowledged that the seriousness of his generation and its political agenda made it seem old-fashioned compared with young Japanese writers today, who have tended to be more introspective and more concerned with materialism than with war.[56]

> Ōe is not dismissive of either Murakami or Yoshimoto, but is concerned that their work portrays and appeals to Japanese who are politically uninvolved and content to exist within a late-adolescent or post-adolescent subculture.[57]

> Mr. Ōe's real problem is that he found so little public sympathy for his stand, which seemed to leave most people angry or puzzled, but conspicuously unmoved. The thought that an ideal was worth fighting for struck people as quaint.

[55] "El Nobel Kenzaburo Oe lidera la gran protesta antinuclear en Tokio."
[56] Sterngold, "Nobel in Literature Goes to Kenzaburō Ōe of Japan."
[57] Remnick, "Reading Japan."

> […] In Japan, rarely does any public debate stir such emotion. […] Critics complain the lack of tension has taken a toll on the arts.[58]

This trope, one of the most present when defining contemporary Japan, is underpinned in some texts by quoting authority scholars like Donald Keene ("It is a statement on a prosperous country, a country that is very pleased with itself. People don't feel any sense of agitation")[59] or Susan J. Napier ("He troubles them a bit, brings up questions the Japanese don't want to think about").[60] Ōe describes in the same terms Japan's younger generations. He considers Murakami Haruki and Yoshimoto Banana representative of their time:

> In contrast to much postwar writing which fictionalized the actual experience of writers and readers who, as twenty- and thirty-year-olds, had known war, Murakami and Yoshimoto convey the experience of a youth politically uninvolved or disaffected, content to exist within a late adolescent or post-adolescent subculture.[61]

> I remember the youth of the sixties and their protests against the government. At the moment they were very effective, but now I do not see any kind of demonstrations of unity among the free-willed youth of today. That worries me. Atomization

[58] Sterngold, "The World; Japan Asks Why A Prophet Bothers."
[59] Ibid.
[60] Streitfeld, "Japanese Writer Ōe Wins Nobel; Novelist-Activist Depicts his Two Shattered Worlds."
[61] Tanabe, "Letter from Tokyo."

> brings vulnerability, and I am not asking them to get around a party or an ideology, but I would like them to get together to exert criticism spontaneously.[62] (LX)
>
> Q: How is the Japanese youth today?
> A: After the dissolution of the Soviet Union there isn't any ideology left in Japan. There's a void of power and leadership. There aren't any university movements anymore. What influences the youth? What do they seek? […] The lack of leadership and common projects, the idea of creating a new identity through experience, that is what my novels are about in the end.[63] (LXI)

Ōe synthesizes many of these tropes with the coinage of a concept that became widely popular and repeated intertextually because he used it as his main topic during his Nobel Prize acceptance speech: Japan as 'ambiguous.' It primarily refers to an alleged desire of contemporary Japan to establish itself in a permanent state of ambivalence: as an Asian country aligned with Western powers;[64] a pacifist state that nevertheless enjoys the protection of the U.S. military;[65] or a victim of nuclear bombs that relies heavily on nuclear power.[66] It is also described as a nation nurturing the wish of

[62] Doria, ""Sería difícil hacer una lista…""
[63] Mora, ""Japón debe retirar sus tropas de Irak"."
[64] Kato, "Ambiguities of Japan's Nuclear Policy."
[65] Pons, "Japón ha entrado en una nueva era."
[66] Ōe, "History repeats."

maintaining a unique identity, respectful with traditions while embracing Western industrialist models of development.[67]

This trope of the 'ambiguous' Japan becomes particularly attractive for the national narrative as a wildcard concept that could bridge the otherwise unsettled debate over Japan's cultural identity. There is a dispute within the texts on whether Ōe's Japan is traditional or Westernized, and whether a supposedly Westernized Japan can be considered 'authentic' and worthy of a unique identity. Many texts waive Ōe's education in French literature as a way to dismiss any connection with the so-called traditional aesthetic canon. They posit his work away from readers' expectations of what Japan and the Japanese are supposed to be and even unhooked him from his literary peers:

> He has wrenched Japanese literature free of its deeply rooted, inbred tradition and moved it into the mainstream of world literature. In truth, he can only seem revolutionary to someone who still thinks of Japan in terms of priests chanting sutras and elegant geisha entertaining their cultured guests with readings from Lady Murasaki and Lady Shonagon.[68]

> Ōe wants Japanese art to drop its tradition of stylized ambiguity, its vagueness, and help reveal the true faces of its people, without masks. [...] Perhaps that is why many Western readers, seeking in Ōe the sort of exoticism found in

[67] Mora, "Kenzaburō Ōe defiende la renuncia de Japón a la guerra ante la Academia Sueca."
[68] Enright, "Days of Marvelous Lays."

> Mishima's *Runaway Horses*, go away bewildered, as if they had been cheated of reading a 'genuine' Japanese writer.[69]

> The work of Kenzaburō Ōe is located in the opposite pole of the previously awarded Japanese author back in 1968, Yasunari Kawabata, peak of the traditional culture of his country, and it appears as more Westernized, tragic, erotic and terrible, while hopeful at the same time.[70] (LXII)

This idea brings into question whether Western references are actually part of contemporary Japan or, on the contrary, Ōe's depiction is in fact far from Japan's reality. Some authors show skepticism and consider his representations foreign to Japan:

> The things of which Ōe writes are unyielding and unfriendly and very Western: automobiles, whiskey, Cokes, slot machines, juvenile delinquents.[71]

> Its urban surroundings, the classless misfits that populate it, and its vivid sexual descriptions make it seem social and thematically similar to its Occidental counterparts. Unfortunately, it is a disappointment.[72]

[69] Remnick, "Reading Japan."
[70] "El segundo Nobel japonés."
[71] Wolff, "Hiroshima Shadows Novel."
[72] Toback, "Bird in a Cage."

Robert Saladrigas spouses with these authors the idea that translation may be at fault in this rendering.[73] In recent instances, however, the incursion of Western references is accepted and taken as part of a process of integration and naturalization that is not free from conflict:

> The deluge of images, words and sounds from abroad that continually flows through Japan's expanding media seems to have erased whatever cultural resistance may have existed in the past.[74]

> Westernization is since the Meiji era one of the main topics of a literature lost between two trails: tradition and modernity.[75] (LXIII)

> Japan's postwar mistake has been selling its soul to the West along with its cars and computers, several Japanese novelists and critics told an international literary conference here this week.[76]

Whenever an author wants to identify Ōe as Japanese, it has to be *despite* appearances. 'Japaneseness' is built out of a functional and stable contradiction: to be labeled as such even when contradicting expectations is actually debunking the stereotypes that are forcing the need for justification.

> Along with the rest of his generational peers, he rejects traditional rhetoric and his metaphors try to hit its essence.

[73] Saladrigas, "El fin de la historia."
[74] Tanabe, "Letter from Tokyo."
[75] Martínez Ruiz, "Testigo del nuevo Japón."
[76] Gross, "Japanese Says His Country Has Sold its Soul."

> However, the harshness of his images, the existential ornamentation, that is profoundly Japanese.[77] (LXIV)

> The universe of Ōe is a world of crossed cultures, where the existentialist mask hides a background of traditional Japanese morality.[78] (LXV)

> Ōe reached the point of rejecting the literary language of writers such as Tanizaki and Kawabata, to provocatively copy the style of the translations to Japanese of Western novelists, but he has always been faithful to the principles of traditional morality: duty to the old and the new, the moral commitment that is the base for a noble life.[79] (LXVI)

This doubt looms over Ōe despite his commitment to Japan and Japanese society. Ōe even explicitly stated that he considers himself Japanese: "I believe I am a very Japanese writer […] I have always wanted to write about our country, our society and feelings about the contemporary scene."[80] Statements like these are another proof of the underlying strength of an Orientalist tendency to consider discourse produced by the West as more legitimized to establish definitions on the Other than any attempt made by the defined subjects themselves. The propensity to approach Japan with the intention of establishing a sense of 'uniqueness' is an old dispute present also in the hegemonic national narrative. The turning of 'Otherness' into a standalone trait is

[77] Pottecher, "Una cuestión personal."
[78] Navarro, "La generación de Hiroshima."
[79] Navarro, "La cuestión personal."
[80] Sterngold, "Nobel in Literature goes to Kenzaburo Ōe of Japan."

intensified by Ōe's insistence on creating a narrative of Japan as peripheral:

> In Japan – from our, let's say, peripheral position – we ought to rethink our humanism, based on our historically recent negative experiences.[81] (LXVII)

> Humanism is, by definition, a universal category but it is expressed and experienced differently in the West and in Asian countries. Creating a humanism of peripheral countries is essential. Korea, China, Thailand, or Japan have studied humanism and Western culture but they need to create a new humanism that it is both universal and peripheral.[82] (LXVIII)

> Japanese people need to go from center to periphery, which involves a great restructuring of both concepts in order to work towards the dissolution and rebuilding of the community of nations.[83] (LXIX)

Ōe's 'peripheral' idea describes the existence of a systematic accusation towards Japan and other Asian countries of being cultural copycats. It also raises criticism towards any attempts of masquerading ignorance, disinterest, or lack of true efforts to reach an understanding of these nations with the argument of unreachability. This narrative

---

[81] García Calero, "Kenzaburo Oé: 'Cervantes es mi modelo de humanismo moderno'."
[82] Beaumont, "Kenzaburo Oé afirma que las dificultades han alimentado su creatividad literaria."
[83] Trenas, "Kenzaburo Oé espera que en el siglo XXI Occidente y Oriente fundan sus saberes."

funnels the traits in a simplifying logic that renders cultural characteristics as either derivative from Western counterparts or otherwise undecipherable. This correlation inevitably limits the cognitive terms of the narrative to elements that can be translated or adjusted to Western equivalents. Any notion considered too distant from an easily explained Western concept is believed culturally inaccessible. Unintelligibility is in this process equated to Japaneseness:

> [Ōe:] The majority of Japanese images are masks. We followed and imitated Western philosophy and literature, but even today, more than a hundred and twenty-five years after our great modernization, the Meiji Restoration, began and Japan opened to the rest of the world, we are inscrutable in the eyes of Europeans and Americans. You can understand other Nobelists, they are available to you in the United States [...] But there is not much of a Western desire to understand the people who make all those Hondas. I don't know why. Perhaps we only imitate the West or are just silent in the face of European peoples.[84]

> It is hard to imagine how many smells, colors, and shades have been diluted in the transfer between languages that are so different between each other: how many symbols, references, and meanings have been lost or are strange to the sensibility of the Western reader. On the other hand, we find out that some practices and lifestyles, interests or inherent tensions within Japanese society to us are alien and outlandish. [...] I deduce

[84] Remnick, "Reading Japan."

> that in the realm of the Japanese reality this monumental fatalist and fanatic scheme may have a meaning that is unattainable for me.[85] (LXX)

Ōe's 'peripheral' Japan entails, therefore, a remarkable handicap: it asserts a classical center-periphery relationship in which the West comfortably keeps its desired seat as the center of a supposedly universal new paradigm. It articulates a national narrative that fails to overcome rooted colonialist discourses of power. The 'ambiguous' Japan reifies the dispute as connatural without actually having to delve into the implications of this description. Boundaries between what is 'traditional' and what is 'Western,' what is 'autonomous' and what is 'foreign interference,' 'purposed' and 'incidental' are all comfortably covered by the conceptual fog that is linked to the idea of 'ambiguity.' Perhaps Ōe wanted to raise awareness and criticism towards this same position. The way it got integrated into the national narrative of Japan, however, is precisely that of an argument in support of Japan as 'unreachable.'

3.2.2 Academia-Targeted Texts

With Ōe considered a writer for a niche readership, the market has yet to produce monographic works intended for non-specialist audiences that interpret Japan through his literature. In contrast, texts created by

[85] Saladrigas, "El fin de la historia."

and for academics or other specialized readers in which his work is discussed and have an impact on the national narrative constitute a considerable subcorpus worthy of analysis. This body is composed by articles in peer-reviewed academic journals, book chapters, and a couple of monographs: *The Marginal World of Ōe Kenzaburō* by Michiko Wilson, and *El ser y la carne: exitencialismo sartreano en los comienzos literarios de Kenzaburo Oé* (*Being and Flesh: Sartrean Existentialism in the Literary Beginnings of Ōe Kenzaburō*) by Benito Elías García-Valero. The subcorpus also includes two long interviews conducted by Japanese scholars and published in *boundary 2* (1993) and *Manoa* (1994). These dialogues are appealing especially when compared to the previously dissected interviews made available in newspapers. Susan J. Napier's *Escape from the Wasteland*, published in 1996, has been incredibly influential for Western scholars interested in the work of this Japanese writer. Her ideas on Ōe's literature are anticipated in two previously published articles that have also been explored in this work. Napier discusses in *Escape* the work of Mishima and Ōe as a way to understand postwar Japan. It belongs to both the Mishima corpus and its corresponding Ōe's counterpart, but I have chosen to include it in the present corpus in order to make it dialogue with her other pieces that discuss the author at hand.

I have decided to organize the examination of these texts by revealing how the national narrative of Japan is constructed around two main thematic axes. First, the discourse produces a political description and interpretation of Japanese society since the end of the war to this day. Second, the texts attempt to frame Japanese culture within the general discussion on cultural particularism at the age of globalization. These

authors address questions on Japan's relationship with Western-sourced cultural influences and the country's new diplomatic role in Asia. These academic works engage with the national narrative through the same core attributes present in texts intended for a general audience. The textual conventions of these treatises, however, allow the authors to go into more detail when developing their ideas. The purpose of this exercise is to establish and expose the intertextual discursive scaffolds of the national narrative spread across subcorpora. I would like to use the depth of the descriptions of Japan provided in academic texts to improve the analysis of the narrative first introduced in the exploration of mass-audience-targeted pieces.

The texts position Ōe as the representative voice of Japanese who grew up after the war. The discourse depicts a generation that prospered in the 1970s and 1980s but which is now being substituted by a less favored younger replacement at the end of the century. The perception of Ōe's literature as a window to this social reality, combined with his bluntness when it comes to expressing what he believes are Japan's challenges, mistakes, and proposed solutions create a space in which the national narrative of Japan is developed. This space is achieved through an interpretation of postwar Japan and the consequences of its development at the turn of the millennium.

This discourse places as the foremost defining attribute of postwar Japan the existence of a traumatic scar left by the war's defeat, the disaster of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and by the rewriting of the emperor's role in the nation's cultural structure. Postwar Japanese are described as shaped by a reported transition

from an openly authoritarian state to a form of government that was imposed by the U.S. occupation forces through a progressive system of democratization. This shift is accused of producing a generation of Japanese that are debilitated, degraded, humiliated and in chaos, as Michiko Wilson describes them.[86] She later complements this picture in *The Marginal World* by stating that Ōe "has chosen only to portray the apathy, the stagnation, and the cul-de-sac of the postwar generation."[87] Orlando Betancor considers this age group "disconcerted and confused" after "the political and social changes the country experimented when its emperor lost his sacred nature;"[88] (LXXI) John Wittier Treat calls Japan a "demoralized nation" that sought a solution "that could restore some chance of dignity and liberty to its people."[89] Benito Elías García's book *Being and Flesh* departs from the idea that existentialism was particularly appealing to Japanese given the sense of ideological emptiness and confusion that they were experiencing during that time.[90] (LXXII) Yamanouchi Hisaaki directly considers that this generation was "suffering from a loss of identity." He judges Japanese for hoping to "get out of a state of humiliation and restraint."[91] Reiko Tachibana contributes to the painting of this bleak profile when she affirms that "the coming of age of Ōe's generation is […] filled with negative experiences of misery, shame, despair, betrayal, distrust, and humiliation."[92] Lastly, Yoshio Iwamoto

---

[86] Wilson, "Ōe's Obsessive Metaphor, Mori, the Idiot Son," 26, 28.
[87] Wilson, *The Marginal World of Oe Kenzaburo*, 32.
[88] Betancor, "La libertad de elección..."
[89] Whittier Treat, "Hiroshima Nōto and Ōe Kenzaburō's Existentialist Other," 101-2.
[90] García-Valero, *El ser y la carne*, 15.
[91] Yamanouchi, *The Dearch for Authenticity in Modern Japanese Literature*, 153, 165.
[92] Tachibana, "Structures of Power," 45.

highlights the importance of the emperor system's fallout in the process of creating an identity for postwar Japanese:

> It is a cruel question […] but one which tests, in its own perverse way, what it means to be Japanese. It is a question with which Ōe, the author himself, wrestled […] Ōe is obviously suggesting here the damaging psychological effects on a whole generation of Japanese […] the difficulty of establishing an individual identity outside the emperor system which would provide, for those who would submit to its demands, security and a sense of belonging.[93]

The discursive establishment of postwar trauma is complemented by a problematized interpretation of the U.S. occupation. The discourse builds a critical and skeptical review of the re-establishment of democracy during the 1950s and 1960s. This period of transition reached its climax on the failed protests against the renewal of the Security Treaty between the U.S. and Japan in 1969. Ōe's contemporaneous literature is interpreted transmitting the rejection of an important part of the Japanese society that opposed the occupation for two reasons. First, they repudiate U.S. presence for patriotic, anti-colonialist motivations. Second, the opposition is also a show of disapproval and resistance against the Japanese government, hypocritically compliant with U.S. forces. Japan is described during this period as a subaltern nation, dependent and under the direct control of the United States. William H. Bridges IV compares this subalternity in his piece discussing *The Catch* to the struggle black

[93] Iwamoto, "The "Mad" World of Ôe Kenzaburô," 80-81.

communities were having in the United States and the fight for civil rights that was unfolding at the same time:

> Just as it is the fear crystallized by living perpetually under the white gaze that is responsible for black-on-black violence in Atlanta, Ōe's murderous youth living under the disciplinary gaze of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) "has no choice but to revive the frightening illusion that once held all of Japan."[94]
>
> In his analogical rewriting of postwar Japanese identity, Ōe submerges the vexed, complex, historical specificity of the postwar Japanese in the similarity of a shared, transracial "oppression."[95]

Some texts suggest a stronger analogy of Japan's purported subjugation through Ōe's representation of the *panpan*. These authors interpret a parallel relationship of domination between Japanese prostitutes that offered their services exclusively to U.S. citizens and Japanese young males that in Ōe's stories are the target of public or private humiliation. Michiko Willson considers the postwar period as "both submission and liberation at the same time"[96] and explicitly believes that "the humiliation of Occupied Japan is symbolized by an unemployed young man under the sway of a prostitute who caters only to foreigners."[97] She further polishes this idea in her later work by

---

[94] Bridges, "In the Beginning," 330.
[95] Ibid., 340
[96] Wilson, *The Marginal World of Oe Kenzaburo*, 23.
[97] Wilson, "Oe's Obsessive Metaphor, Mori, the Idiot Son," 28.

adding that "the young man […] has neither the power to become a 'political being' nor the courage to commit suicide."[98]

The theme of Japan as both an impotent young man and a pandering, submissive prostitute to the dominant United States is explored in more depth by Margaret Hillenbrand in her article "Doppelgängers, Misogyny, and the San Francisco System." In this critical assessment of Ōe's occupation-themed works, Hillenbrand both criticizes the author's latent sexism and shows how "the potential for popular opposition (symbolized by the young Japanese male) is emasculated by a craven nation (symbolized by the faded prostitute) that has surrendered itself to the United States."[99] Hillenbrand considers Japan possesses a "colonized mindset"[100] for being a country that went from "former imperial glory" to being "a newly inaugurated U.S. protectorate and Pacific outpost of U.S. power."[101] This representation of an oppressed and frustrated Japanese population is used to justify the portrayal of society's unrest at the end of the 1960s. It is framed within a narrative dynamic of positioning Japan and the United States as rivals. From being war enemies during the 1940s they entered into the model of relationship between metropolis and colonized for the duration of the immediate postwar. Once the occupation ended, Japanese experience of subjugation is set to turn against the U.S. through technological, industrial, and commercial competition.

---

[98] Wilson, *The Marginal World of Oe Kenzaburo*, 24.
[99] Hillenbrand, "Doppelgängers, Misogyny, and the San Francisco System," 385.
[100] Ibid., 402-3.
[101] Ibid., 398.

The United States is however not the only coercive force in the described scenario of postwar Japan. The Japanese government is defined as inherently authoritarian by historical design. The vertical power structures of its portrayed institutions naturalize a supposed continuity of hierarchical structures. This portrayed model encourages discrimination and suppresses dissent. Japanese society is depicted integrating repressive dynamics in a top-to-bottom, center-to-periphery fashion. These authors find that Ōe addresses the issues of Japan in his literature through the telling of the experiences involving agents displaced to the margins: inhabitants of the rural countryside, ethnic minorities, or people with functional diversity. This discourse assumes that socio-cultural centralism is an imposed reality that produces a marginalized periphery. Reiko Tachibana explores in her study of the work *The Catch* the representation of power dynamics in the village where the story takes place. She argues that the patterns and structures of power unveiled in the town are a representation of the whole of Japanese society. Every agent, either human or political, has to report in her described model to a higher authority in a straight up scheme that mirrors the emperor system:

> Within Japan, the prefecture/town/village status differential implies the historical situation of the burakumin. […] In Imperial Japan's patriarchal *ie* system, the head of the household – in particular, the emperor as the head of Japan's household - was the dominant factor in controlling the nation. […] Beyond Japan, the prefecture/town/village relationship parallels that between Japan and the US after the Japanese surrender of 1945, as well as the more 'universal' relationship

> between colonized countries and colonizers or so-called Third World and industrialized nations.[102]

> The power relations exhibited in this story interrogate the moral and political acceptability of a homogeneous society in Japan, or indeed anywhere, that is characterized by internal hierarchies and hostility against outsiders.[103]

Susan J. Napier also believes that Ōe's work, especially his pastoral novels, attack the authority of the central government. She suggests that Ōe's stories claim a space for potential change that goes beyond the purely descriptive of an unfair and ordered system. Napier argues that Ōe's literature opens up the possibility for granting the Japanese the ability to escape this essentialist system of centrality and uptightness by fighting back against authoritarian dynamics.[104] This interpretation, however, underscores the description of Japan as a homogeneous and authoritarian nation, for otherwise she would have considered Ōe's call for resistance an uncalled-for proposition. Napier's problematization of Japan's challenges assumes their existence within the national definition:

> Whether internal or ideological, the ultimate impact of the alien in modern Japanese fantasy is a profound one. Appearing within a society that prides itself on its homogeneity and stability, the disturbing and destabilizing function of the alien cuts across both textual and extratextual boundaries to trouble,

[102] Tachibana, "Structures of Power," 42.
[103] Ibid., 45-6.
[104] Napier, *Escape from the Wasteland*, 26.

> provoke, and emancipate some hidden part of the reader's sense of self and world. Even more than the fantastic female who, as we saw, can perform a compensatory function, the alien in Japanese literature is directly subversive.[105]

> The stratified nature of both traditional and contemporary Japanese society would seem to leave little room for fluidity. But, conversely, it is possible to argue that the very existence of consciously constructed social barriers may actually have stimulated an interest in transformation across them.[106]

> The student-establishment clashes that disordered Japan in the 1960s […] was a time which could be looked upon as either liberating or alarming depending on one's position in the political spectrum. […] the disorder of nature and social anarchy are infinitely preferable to the monolithic, repressive world of modern Japan.[107]

Napier finds the emperor system at the center of this centralist state again. She frames the imperial household sociocultural structures as the paradigm that legitimizes Japanese domestic and international predisposition to be subjugated. The structures of the emperor system vertebrate and perpetuate the permanence of Japan's social verticality:

> The reasons behind this excitement are both obvious and problematic: the emperor is of course tied to the war and the

[105] Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 97.
[106] Ibid., 109.
[107] Ibid., 160-1.

> whole complex of emotions that middle-aged Japanese feel toward it, but on a broader level the imperial house is also tied to modern Japanese history as a whole and thus to the conception that Japanese have of themselves in the postwar period.[108]

> The emperor may be used for immoral – indeed, evil-purposes, but riding on his white horse weeping tears for his warriors or standing at the top of the stairs waiting for a boy's bullet-ridden body to reach him, he remains one of the most powerful and evocative symbols of the fears and yearnings that continue to exert power in contemporary Japan.[109]

Ōe openly agrees with and supports this correlation. In an exchange edited by *boundary 2*, Ōe confirms that he sets his stories in marginalized villages in order to confront canonic, emperor-centric interpretations of Japanese history.[110] Similarly, Ōe identifies in an interview published in *Manoa* one of the goals of his literature as "to 'relativize' Japan's emperor-centered hegemony by depicting, through 'grotesque realism', the country's peripheral regions."[111] He makes this correlation given that "[Japanese] historians always think of Japan as a very static culture whose structure is vertical and so there is very little concern for horizontal heterogeneity."[112] The interviewers introduce Ōe as the "compassionate voice to the marginal, the peripheral, the

---

[108] Napier, "Death and the Emperor," 71.
[109] Ibid., 87.
[110] Bradbury, et al, "A Conversation with Ōe Kenzaburō," 10.
[111] Ibid., 139.
[112] Ibid., 144.

off center, to the unofficial forces of the spirit surging into expression,"[113] picking up this vocabulary of center/periphery and using it to articulate a national definition.

One of the most pressing matters for Japan as described in these texts is the reported opposition in political, intellectual, institutional, cultural, and even artistic domains to accurately and critically approach wartime crimes and their aftermath. Japanese society is portrayed as both suffering and indulging self-imposed collective amnesia that acknowledges past damages without having to actually give them time and space in a contemporary configuration of the country's identity. Guilt and wartime crimes are not denied, but also not explored, and thus merely ignored:

> [Ōe:] I don't think the Japanese have reflected in any fundamental way on the question of Pearl Harbor, and as for the Rape of Nanking, I don't think the Japanese like to talk about it. I think any honest, sensible person is going to feel guilty about it, but it's precisely because they feel guilty that you get these people who insist it never even happened. And although most Japanese refuse to talk about it, I think the Rape of Nanking is, at least to a certain extent, perceived as one of those multifaceted issues and, in any case, is not something that can be so easily grasped as Pearl Harbor.[114]

[113] Ōe, Bradbury, Cohn, and Wilson, "An Interview with Kenzaburō Ōe," 136.
[114] Bradbury, Pease, Wilson, and Ōe, "A Conversation with Ōe Kenzaburō," 16.

Napier gives as one of the main reasons for the legitimation of this portrayed phenomenon the prevalence of the emperor system after the war. The fact that it was both "the symbol of militarism and imperialism [and the] new, democratic Japan" creates an ideological rift in time that consequently hinders any effective going beyond a wartime paradigm.[115] This complex relationship of the Japanese with historical memory articulates contemporary Japan's attitude to ongoing political and social concerns. These considerations add up to the perception of 21st-century Japanese as broadly apolitical and disengaged with their collective challenges. Michiko Wilson elaborates this idea in her monograph *The Marginal World of Ōe Kenzaburō*:

> Ōe is unable to accept the memories of the defeat and postwar Japan cherished by the conservatives and their followers, the kind of 'cleaned up' memories that have resulted in the elimination of other memories – the newborn, free, critical spirit that permitted the masses for the first time to question the validity of the Emperor System. He argued that 'to recall the time' as a period of political liberation is 'to violate a taboo'. It has become a proscription […] I feel what has been suppressing the arts and the minds of the masses of Japan today is nothing other than the emperor system.[116]

The 'economic being' trope depicts Japan as a country that turned economic prosperity, accelerated industrial development, and technological exports into synonyms of the nation. This definition is

[115] Napier, "Death and the Emperor," 73.
[116] Wilson, *The Marginal World of Ōe Kenzaburō*, 79.

however not presented as entirely free from judgment. Many of such descriptions charge Japan's development for being "very aggressive,"[117] modern life is particularized by its "chaos and alienation,"[118] and Japanese society has been "glutted on consumerism."[119] Napier says Japanese double-digit growth was "so successful that even the Japanese themselves were asking whether they might be 'economic animals.'" This discourse reaches the point of considering Japan "in the late 1980s, a society that is arguably one of the most modern, pragmatic, and materialist in the world."[120] The harsh tone of these descriptions matches the aggressive rhetoric of the 'yellow peril' trope developed during the years of trade imbalance. Ōe recognizes this hostility and tries to contest it, if only by doing so he is reinforcing its existence:

> Another popular myth that rankles is the fact that everybody – Japanese and Americans alike – seems to think that the world's most pressing problem is economic confrontation between the United States and Japan. Business and industry feel that it is also the most pressing problem for the rest of the world. I think the attitude is also shared in bureaucratic circles as well. My own thinking on the subject is that it is time the Japanese stop putting economic issues at the center of U.S.-Japan relations.[121]

[117] Ibid., 137.
[118] Napier, "Marginal Arcadias," 49.
[119] Hillenbrand, "Doppelgängers, Misogyny, and the San Francisco System," 385.
[120] Napier, "Death and the Emperor," 71.
[121] Bradbury, Pease, Wilson, and Ōe, "A conversation with Ōe Kenzaburō," 14-15.

Discussions over trade imbalance are very often mixed with a debate over Japan's international role. These texts also show how authors replicate Ōe's attempts to create a new Pan-Asian understanding. In this new projected paradigm, Japan atones for its wartime crimes, breaks from its chosen relative isolationism, and gets closer to China and South Korea to consider them peers and not former enemies, colonies, or current competitors. Japan's transition to include the export of cultural commodities does not escape from being framed within the same dynamics of 'yellow peril' rhetoric. Japan is accused of attempting through its investment in real estate and the promotion of soft power campaigns to become an active player in the business of hegemonic globalization. Ōe's reported opposition of what he believes is a conscious political and industrial agenda of national branding legitimizes this narrative. He is against the idea of "Japan, Inc.," a model of the country that defends exporting culture "like televisions." Ōe wishes instead for Japan to relate more to its neighbors in horizontal cultural exchange.[122]

These discussions engage directly with the understanding of Japanese cultural identity as mirroring Ōe's ideas of a clash between center and periphery. During the postwar years, Japan's center was delineated by state institutions and the industrial oligopoly. These players are blamed for carrying out a series of developmental leaps that increased the inequalities between urban and rural communities. Ōe's pastoral literature is rendered dealing with these issues and represents a Japan that first sacrifices to then "commodify" the "mythical" countryside in exchange for the sole embracement of city landscapes and urban

[122] Ōe, Bradbury, Cohn, and Wilson, "An Interview with Kenzaburō Ōe" 138, 141.

settings.[123] The discourse establishes a process of transformation from the exoticized, traditional-prone image of Japan sustained by previous key figures in Japanese literature like Tanizaki or Kawabata into the ubiquitous metropolitan space of more contemporary writers. This transition articulates the discussion on the so-called Japanese dilemma of having to build an identity between the global and the particular.[124] Western – and especially U.S. – cultural references are sourced outside Japan while recognized at the same time irrevocably embedded in the country's day-to-day life. This correlation entraps foreign-sourced cultural references as familiar imports, customarily alien.[125] Ōe refers to an anecdote in the interview in *boundary 2* where he goes back to his village to visit his mother, who despises Tokyo and urban life, just to find her eating a burger from McDonald's. He realizes then that the 'mythical,' primitive, unique, and pure village of the collective imagery that he had been feeding with his own stories is just a product of the imagination without contemporary counterpart.[126] Japan emerges as the exemplary hybrid of the 20th century, a notion encapsulated for instance in this passage by García-Valero:

> The blend of identities, intensified since the American occupation, produced a country confusedly mixed that has not had the time yet to assimilate all the changes associated with the coming of the West nor the upkeep of the traditions that the East demanded. […] Japan epitomizes many of the

---

[123] Napier, "Marginal Arcadias," 49.
[124] Yamanouchi, *The Search for Authenticity,* 177; Washburn, *Modern Japanese Writers*, 277.
[125] Bradbury, Pease, Wilson, and Ōe, "A conversation with Ōe Kenzaburō," 21.
[126] Ibid., 21.

> historical milestones of the last century: hybridity of East and West; unthinkable human-made tragedies […] a tremendous economic development… That is why we should consider Japan an example (or a counter-example) for the all the other societies, all of them increasingly more plural. […] Its particular history has condensed practically all the traits of modernity in barely a century: until 2010, it was the second biggest global economy […]; it is the cradle of the most developed technological products; and, most of all, it has inherited a significant historical and cultural heritage that just recently is being treated as it rightfully deserves.[127] (LXXIII)

These texts place the country under the peripheral influence of the West while attaching the fabricated need of building its own identity outside this reference. Surprisingly enough, in Ōe's categorical judgment this framework should lead Japan to be considered another "Third World country."[128]

I now sum up the major traits already present in non-specialized targeted texts and pinpointed and enhanced in this second subcorpus. According to the intertextual discourse, undisclosed postwar issues and the advent of globalization are the most meaningful forces defining contemporary Japan. Japan's coexisting generations (postwar and contemporary) are described as sharing the burden of unsolved wartime crimes and the traumatic effects of the atomic bombs. The Japanese state is defined as solidly hierarchical and still dragging

---

[127] García-Valero, *El ser y la carne*, 10-11.
[128] Ōe, Bradbury, Cohn, and Wilson, "An Interview with Kenzaburō Ōe," 138.

authoritarian tendencies. The country is portrayed unable to move on from undemocratic institutional frameworks that are inherited from imperial sociopolitical design. The survival of the imperial system is interpreted as the main representation of this condition. Japan's relationship with the West is presented during the occupation period as one of subjugation and humiliation. It then morphed through extensive and acritical economic development towards integration and naturalization of cultural references. Ōe's promotion of the idea of Japan as 'ambiguous' questions those who defend the existence of a homogeneous Japan but sustains anyway the idea that the nation cannot be fully explained outside a sense of perpetual conflict with itself. The discourse features an attempt to problematize Japan's homogeneity through the constant representation of an unresolved tension between institutionally-promoted discourses on racial and class uniformity and the existence of multiple, 'peripheral' others: the *kokujin* (Black Japanese), the *zainichi* (Japanese of Korean-descent), the *burakumin* (Japanese former 'untouchable' cast), or the *hibakusha* (survivors of the nuclear weapons). This process sheds light and brings attention to displaced narratives and identities.

I would like to comment on the differences between the reception of texts based on their targeted audience and on the country they were published. The most notable dissimilarity can be found again in the number of academic texts that analyze the works of Ōe published in English against those published in Spanish. This circumstance has been already explored in the corpora of Kawabata and Mishima. The same set of reasons explains in this instance the discrepancy. Again we see the relative youth of Spanish academia on Japan as the cause for

this scarcity of scholar work on Ōe. While Japan remained a relatively strong field of interest for academics in the United States since the end of the war, the subcorpus of academic work created in Spain only sprouted near the turn of the century. As we have seen, only during the 1990s translations of Ōe were made available into Spanish. I argue this circumstance has contributed to the exposure of the author to the local audience, which in turn may have led to the promotion of Japanese literature as a more popular field of study. This inferiority in numbers and recent appearance is not translated in a substantially different treatment and contribution to the national narrative. The authors feed and echo the same tropes their peers had previously channeled through their texts. Again I point out at the cross-referential nature of academic texts as the main cause for this parallelism. If, for instance, one takes a look at García-Valero's sources, the same authors and their works here discussed appear listed: Napier, Wilson, Hillenbrad, and the book review authored by John Whitter Treat.

The decalage in size is not present within the mass-audience-targeted subcorpus. Spanish newspapers have produced a more significant amount of pieces than their U.S. counterparts, while the later has put out longer and more exhaustive articles. The existence and number of newspaper articles is very contingent on the publication of the author's works or other major life events. The Nobel Prize justified and explained all the attention received during the 1990s, while the decline in texts over the past ten years is due to Ōe's recession in literary production. As a minor but probably relevant divergence, one can find in texts from the United States a stronger concern on the

aspect of Ōe's literature that deals with Japan's sociopolitical circumstances and challenges during the postwar years. I believe this feature is attributable to the more active role of the U.S. during this historical episode. Conversely, themes on new humanism, Pan-Asianism and the reconfiguration of Japan when facing global contemporary debates – mostly pacifism and denuclearization – are more prevalent in Spanish texts. I argue this is so because Spanish journalists uncritically amplify Ōe's words and interventions, giving his ideas more discursive space and reach at the expense of the journalist's more personal interpretation.

The general axiom of the way this discourse mediates with the national narrative is Ōe's categorization of Japan as 'ambiguous.' I have unraveled throughout this section how this idea of Japan as capable of being two relatively oppositional definitions at the same time has been transmitted throughout texts that discuss his literature. Japan is both described as an authoritarian state to their own citizens and at the same time a country first subjected to the U.S. and later to global hegemonies. Japan is described as belonging to Asia and at the same time closer than its neighbors to the West. Even though Japan's homogeneity is put into question, the texts constantly attempt a definition of Japan and the Japanese through their socio-political and cultural circumstances. I argue this dynamic reifies the discourse of Japan as an effective cohesive nation. Ōe's literature and political activism underpin in the national narrative precisely the statements, attributes, and contradictions that it tries to question or overrule.

3.3 Murakami Haruki

Loved and despised by readers around the world, Murakami Haruki (Kyoto, 1949) has been for over twenty-five years the most popular Japanese author alive. Raised by teachers of Japanese literature, he had his sentimental education in the 1960s listening to the tunes of Art Blakey, the Beach Boys, and the Beatles while reading Kafka, Tolstoy, and pulp novels. Murakami moved to Tokyo to complete his bachelor studies at Waseda University. He experienced in 1968 the political unrest that took over Japanese campuses and which in the end led to the defeat of any idealistic aspiration alternative to the capitalist saturnalia that Japan eventually became. Murakami married young and ran with his wife from 1974 to 1981 a jazz bar called the Peter Cat in the area of Kokubunji. In between peeling onions and mixing cocktails, he wrote his first novel, *Kaze no uta o kike* (*Hear the Wind Sing*) for which he received the Gunzō prize for new writers in 1979. This work kicked off a very prolific and successful literary career: fourteen novels (all of them translated into both English and Spanish), several short stories (many gathered in different collections), and quite a few essays, all available in forty-three different languages. Murakami has been the recipient of a good number of national and international awards, while every year his name is in the polls among the favorites to receive the Nobel Prize of Literature.

Murakami's relationship with the Japanese literary establishment has always been tense. He reached fame without ever winning the

Akutagawa Prize, which is considered the literary baptism in the Japanese industry. During the 1980s and early 1990s, he received harsh criticism for his deployment of themes on social detachment, individual frivolity, and his inclusion of pop culture references. Murakami's writing style got criticized for being unorthodox when compared to the conventions of Japanese highbrow literature: short sentences, direct and without too much ornament, sometimes even repetitive. Murakami has been reported explaining how he found his literary voice by writing the first draft of *Kaze* in English and then translate it to Japanese.[129] He built over his first years as a writer a steady but still shy fan base that expanded significantly in 1987 with the publication of *Noruwei no mori* (*Norwegian Wood*). This novel was a tremendous commercial success that sold millions of copies and which remained for twenty years as the most significant literary hit in the history of the country. Murakami, a renowned introvert, found himself unable to cope with this fame and decided to flee from Japan. He traveled through Europe to finally settle for some years in the United States. He took this chance to adequately reflect on his country's past and use this acquired knowledge to write *Nejimaki-dori Kuronikuru* (*The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*). This book addresses among other subjects a clear-cut denunciation of Japan's military intervention in Manchuria during the 1930s. It meant a first attempt of reconciliation with his most stringent detractors, and he won for it the Yomiuri Prize in 1995. Ōe, a severe opponent to Murakami's early work, was among the jury of this award, a gesture that meant the beginning of a coming together between the two most relevant writers of the turn of the century.

[129] Murakami, *Wind/Pinball*, xiii-iv.

That same year represents, in fact, a pivotal moment in Murakami's career. As I have explained above, the Kobe earthquake in January and the Aum terrorist attacks in the Tokyo subway in March became a turning point for Japan. Murakami came back from his stay overseas pulled by the commitment to explore the underlying and unresolved issues that Japanese society had been carrying for decades and that these incidents had unearthed. He interviewed victims of the attacks and members of the Aum cult to compile an essay called *Andāguraundo* (1997 and 1998, *Underground* in English). As Ōe and Ibuse Masuji did in *Hiroshima Nōto* (*Hiroshima Notes*) and *Kuroi Ame* (*Black Rain*) between 1963 and 1966 with the *hibakusha*, Murakami wanted for this occasion to bring forward the individual voices of those involved in the attack to subvert a narrative that was at the time monopolized by the government and the media. He also published a collection of short stories (*Kami no Kodomo-tachi wa Mina Odoru*, translated as *after the quake*) featuring the earthquake as an ominous albeit indirect presence that coexists with ordinary individuals struggling to understand their inner motivations and suppressed conflicts.

Murakami's relationship with Japan and the way it became represented in his literature veered from detachment and apathy towards commitment and veiled social criticism. Murakami reinforced this position in 2011 by publicly bashing the Japanese government for its handling of the Fukushima Daiichi crisis. He also expressed his desire for Japanese society to learn from its mistakes and to try and find a new shared project not motivated this time by mindless economic and technological progress. Episodes from Japan's unresolved past and modern ghosts of contemporary society – violence towards women,

marginalization of minorities, and the ever-looming threat of corporations in the shadows, to name a few – are increasingly common elements in his work. Murakami's characters work hard across all his texts in their search for meaning in a society desensitized by consumerism and selective amnesia. They all have in common a necessity to establish meaningful relationships outside the socioeconomic logic of late capitalism. While the protagonists of his early works could find hedonistic and apathetic shelter in the windfalls of Japan's 1970s and 1980s economic bonanza, post-1995 heroes are aware that change is needed to overcome their tribulations. Since their discontent fails to morph into activism, private mediation appears as their only path to find peace and meaning in their lives. *Shikisai wo motanai Tazaki Tsukuru to, Kare no Junrei no Toshi* (*Tsukuru Tazaki and his Years of Pilgrimage*), *Onna no Inai Otokotachi* (*Men Without Women*), and *Kishidancho Goroshi* (*Killing Commendatore*), his three most recently translated works, openly explore this approach.

No other Japanese author has aroused as much attention and discussion as Murakami does today. His wide popularity means that the moment his novels get out, they receive reviews in newspapers and magazines, a phenomenon that also pushes scholars to analyze his work in the search for keys of his success and what it represents for Japan and Japanese literature. Because of this, Murakami's corpus is the most extensive among the four selected authors. Readers, culture guides, monographs, and other critical texts that link Murakami to Japan constitute a substantial body of sources from which to analyze the national narrative built and based on the discussion of this author. Murakami's fame goes parallel to the setting up of a new discursive

paradigm where cultural exports have a more significant mediating role. This way of representing Japan however still requires thorough analysis in order to reveal whether it actually represents a change in essence or just a reshaping of the same principles of representation that have articulated the discourse for a century and a half.

3.3.1 Mass-Audience-Targeted Texts

I examine in this segment articles, book reviews, and interviews all published between August 1985 and December 2018 in the United States and Spain in which Japan and the Japanese are described from an interpretation of Murakami Haruki's literature. Texts in which Murakami is just mentioned but not appraised are deemed irrelevant to my research and thus excluded from this study. According to the criteria established, I have chosen one hundred sixty-nine pieces to be read and interpreted. This amount is divided in almost two exact halves: eighty-four were published in the United States and eighty-five appeared in Spanish newspapers. In the U.S., *The New York Times* provides the largest amount of texts with a total of forty-seven articles, followed by *The Washington Post* with twenty-five, *The New Yorker* with nine, and closed by *The New York Review of Books* with four long pieces. In Spain, the distribution is more even: *La Vanguardia* published thirty-one, *El País* thirty, and *ABC* twenty-three articles.

These texts have one-hundred and four different authors: Rodrigo Fresán (*El País*), Andrés Ibáñez (*ABC*), and Xavier Ayén (*La Vanguardia*) are the most prolific, with nine articles the first one and

eight the other two. Robert Saladrigas, Antonio Lozano (both working for *La Vanguardia*), Javier Aparicio Maydeu (*El País*), and Herbert Mitgang (*The New York Times*) produced five texts each. Kunio Francis Tanabe (*The Washington Post*) and Murakami Haruki himself are the authors of four articles (although one by Murakami is the same, published in both *The New York Times* and *La Vanguardia*). Michiko Kakutani (*The New York Times*) and Jesús Ferrero (*El País*) wrote three. Ian Buruma (*The New Yorker*, *The New York Review of Books*), Salvador Llopart (*La Vanguardia*), Jesús Ruiz Mantilla (*El País*), Pablo M. Díez (*ABC*), Jon Michaud (*The New Yorker*), David Morán (*ABC*), Carlos Zanón (*El País*), Elizabeth Ward (*The Washington Post*), Janice P. Nimura (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*), Roland Kelts (*The New Yorker*), Michael Dirda (*The Washington Post*), Deborah Treisman (*The New Yorker*), T.R. Reid (*The Washington Post*), and Janet Maslin (*The New York Times*) all published two articles. The rest of the authors, listed in the bibliography, published one text each. Some articles were made available without specifying the author, hence only the source and date appear listed.

As it has been shown in previous corpora, it is useful to contextualize the volume and location of these texts by taking into account the publication dates of Murakami's books in translation. Between August 1985 and January 2000, six of Murakami's novels and one collection of short stories appeared in translation in the United States: *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* (*A Wild Sheep Chase*, 1989), *Sekai no owari to hādoboirudo wandārando* (*Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, 1991), *Zō no shōmetsu* (*The Elephant Vanishes*, 1993), *Dansu dansu dansu* (*Dance Dance Dance*, 1994), and *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* in 1997. In comparison,

only one novel appeared in Spain during the same period, *La caza del carnero salvaje* (*A Wild Sheep Chase*) in 1991. As a reflection of this reality, out of the twenty-four texts on Murakami Haruki that came out in the press during these fifteen years, only one is from a Spanish newspaper: a review piece by Justo Navarro published in 1992 in *ABC*, making a brief mention to Murakami's novel along with other new releases of books.

The gap got suddenly closed at the beginning of the 21st century. Between January 2000 and January 2005, *Norwegian Wood* (2000), *Kokkyō no minami, taiyō no nishi* (*South of the Border, West of the Sun*, 2000), *Underground* in 2000, and *Supūtoniku no koibito* (*Sputnik Sweetheart*, 2001) appeared in the United States, consolidating and even lifting up his popularity. Meanwhile in Spain, the publishing house Tusquets bought the rights to Murakami's works from Anagrama and published *Crónica del pájaro que da cuerda al mundo* (*The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*) in 2001, *Sputnik, mi amor* (Sputnik Sweetheart) in 2002, and *Al sur de la frontera, al oeste del sol* (*South of the Border, West of the Sun*) in 2003. Murakami sold well, but it was still not the relative sensation that was being reported across the pond.

The advent of Murakami's cross-Atlantic popularity came with the publication in 2005 of *Tokio Blues: Norwegian Wood* (*Norwegian Wood*). Mirroring the success the book had in Japan eighteen years before, *Tokio Blues* became the work that really launched Murakami to fame in Spain. In the meantime, U.S. reception cooled down. Again, publishing rhythms seem to be behind the shaping of these two landscapes: a greater amount of titles appeared with the new century in

Spain, given that Tusquets had to catch up with the translation of previous works that had been in turn available for U.S. readers since the previous decade. In 2006, *El fin del mundo y un despiadado país de las maravillas* (*Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*) and *Mekurayanagi to nemuru onna* (*Sauce ciego, mujer dormida,* the English version of which was published in 2006 with the title *Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman*) came out. *Baila, Baila, Baila* (*Dance Dance Dance*) became available as late as 2012, eighteen years later than the English translation and twenty-four years since it came out in Japan. *Después del terremoto* (*after the quake*) appeared in 2013, and *Underground* in 2014.

On top of due editions, Murakami also published new books between 2000 and 2017. This time and given that Murakami's reputation was well established in both the United States and in Spain, translations into English and Spanish appeared almost simultaneously. *Umibe no Kafuka* was published in 2005 as *Kafka on the Shore* and as *Kafka en la orilla* in 2006. *Afutā Dāku* appeared in the U.S. in 2007 and in Spain in 2008 with the same title, *After Dark*. *1Q84* became available in 2011 in the two countries after coming out in 2009 in Japan. Curiously enough, Spanish translations went from having to chase English editions to overtake them. *Los años de peregrinación del chico sin color* appeared in October 2013, only half a year after the original *Shikisai wo motanai Tazaki Tsukuru to, Kare no Junrei no Toshi* was published in Japan. U.S. readers, however, had to wait until August 2014 to read this novel, appearing with the title *Tsukuru Tazaki and his Years of Pilgrimage*. The same happened with *Onna no inai otokotachi*, coming in 2014, the Spanish translation *Hombres sin mujeres* in 2015, and the English one in the first half of 2017, *Men Without Women*.

Murakami's first two novels, *Kaze no uta o kike* and *1973-nen no pinbōru* are a particular case. They first were published between 1979 and 1980 and to be later translated into English by Alfred Birnbaum respectively as *Hear the Wind Sing* in 1987 and *Pinball 1973* in 1985. They were printed in Japan by Kodansha International as books intended for advanced students of English. Murakami forbid any new editions or authorized translations to other languages for years because he felt embarrassed about the experimental style of these works. At some point of the 2010s, he changed his mind. *Escucha la canción del viento y Pinball 1973* came out in 2015 in a single volume, and Ted Goossen was authorized a revisited translation into English (called *Wind/Pinball: Two Novels*), distributed by Knopf in 2016. *Kishidancho Goroshi*, Murakami's latest work, came out in early 2017. Translations into the two languages appeared simultaneously at the end of 2018 (*Killing Commendatore* and *La muerte del comendador*), just in time for their critical texts to be included in the corpora.

The Japanese soft power campaign to attract foreign investment by shifting the attention to tourism and cultural exports showed its effects at different periods depending on each country. This decalage can be used to better understand why Murakami became popular in each country at different moments in time. The 1980s saw in the U.S. an increase in the amount of Japanese cultural products that were promoted in media and available to a wider audience beyond the specialist or the aficionado. In 1992, Kodansha International asked Alfred Birnbaum to be the editor of a collection of short stories written by new Japanese authors intended for the U.S. market. The

result, *Monkey Brain Sushi*, includes a short story by Murakami and caught the attention of the newspapers. The reviews of this compendium show together with Kunio Francis Tanabe's column *Letters from Tokyo* for *The Washington Post* how Japan's national narrative was experiencing a change in direction from economic and technological prowess to cultural marketer.

In Spain, the effects of Japan's push to send off a more considerable amount of literary works abroad appeared more visible relatively later, mainly during the first decade of the century. As it has been explored previously, the Spanish publishing industry has a tradition of only following on Japanese works and authors that had already been successful abroad. Although in recent years publishing labels have grown bold and daring when choosing new authors to promote in the Spanish market, this behavior is still very present and from time to time they fall again in the habit of betting only on whatever is hot abroad. Some conventions are fortunately changing. In recent times, the vast majority of newly published authors in Spain have been translated directly from the Japanese, putting behind the embarrassing convention of adapting by default French or English translations. Figure 4 helps to visualize Murakami's reception and its progression in both countries.

The following study sticks to the same approach employed in previous corpora. I organize my interpretation around the description and development of tropes, common associations, and questions that arise from conflicting readings throughout the texts about Murakami Haruki, contemporary Japanese literature, and Japan, both in the

United States and Spain. I illustrate, justify, and legitimate these themes through a selection of the most suitable quotes extracted from the selected texts. I reinforce this thematic account of the national narrative by putting it against its corresponding historical background.

The way the popularity of these four writers among Japanese and Western readers is constantly asserted is a consistent feature across the corpora. Murakami is presented as a bestselling author, first one of the most and then *the* most popular writer in Japan, already from the first article throughout the rest. This serves the function of emphasizing their representativeness and to a point *auctoritas* to be a gateway to understand the depicted reality – be it Japanese or, as it is the case in Murakami, also a greater global contemporary identity or sensibility. He is both "a prophet in his land"[130] (LXXIV) and "a writer of contemporary emotions"[131] (LXXV) whose work "appeals to a vast number of readers around the world."[132] This fame has been interpreted to mean Murakami is also the leader or at least the spearhead of a new generation of Japanese writers.

These appraisals, more common at the beginning of his success in both the United States and in Spain, allow for many pieces to take the chance to discuss the state of Japanese literature. And regardless of the country or moment in time where and when the texts were published, the central points of its debate are the same. Murakami is constantly

[130] Lozano, "Murakami y las tristes adolescentes."
[131] Ayén "Canción triste de Tokio."
[132] Caryl, "Gods of the Mall."

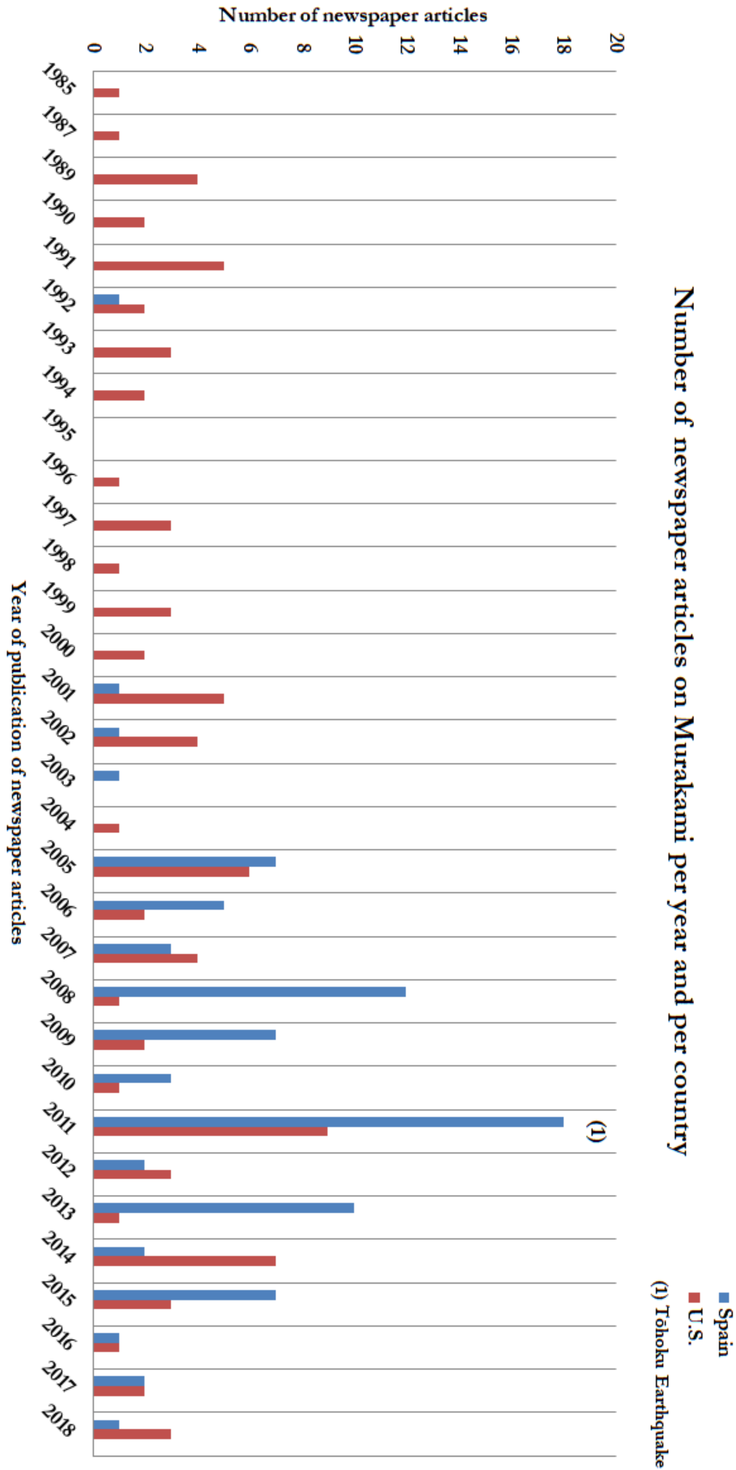

Figure 4: Number of Newspaper Articles on Murakami per Year and per Country

associated with what is considered a change of paradigm in the Japanese letters, the replacement and even a break in style from the postwar generation of authors (Mishima, Kawabata, and even Ōe):

> [*Wind-Up*…] consolidated Murakami as an author for cultivated readers, heir to Yukio Mishima, Junichiro Tanizaki and Kenzaburō Ōe.[133] (LXXVI)

> Mishima, Kawabata, and Tanizaki: […] that was the idea of Japanese literature until Haruki Murakami and Yoshimoto Banana showed up.[134] (LXXVII)

Fernando Iwasaki goes as far as to consider him a direct inheritor of an older Japanese literary tradition, the *kyōgen* theater: comedic interludes that were performed during the breaks of Noh plays and which used absurd and satiric performances to raise awareness of social problems. Iwasaki believes Murakami's style is closer to *kyōgen* than to postmodern tendencies as Western scholars tend to frame him.[135] In any case, he is portrayed as leading this generational replacement along with other bestselling authors like Hiromi Kawakami, Murakami Ryū (no relation), and Yoshimoto Banana. Elisabeth Bumiller called them "The Japanese Brat Pack,"[136] a nickname popular during the early 1990s.[137] With or without this particular term, Murakami was classed as part of this groundbreaking

---

133 Saladrigas, "El señor de las alas desplegadas."
134 Ayén, "El sol naciente de la literatura nipona."
135 Iwasaki, "Comentarios reales: Murakami."
136 Bumiller, "Japan's Fiction Turns a Page."
137 Reid, "Japan's Brat Pack;" Sterling, "Down a High-Tech Rabbit Hole."

group "that defied the poetic and transcendentalist orthodoxy of Japanese literary tradition."[138] [(LXXVIII)]

This fame is also commonly attributed to his popularity among younger generations, a consideration that seems to hint at lasting representativeness. Although taste and approval in youth may change with age, the desires and preferences for new generations are indicative of changes and rifts in society. A profiling exercise of his readership based on what the article authors believe leaves us with the image of the Japanese youth as urban, modern, predominantly white-collar, alienated from and dissatisfied with social conventions:

> More recent books are populated with introverts and social outsiders, the kind of character with whom an alienated younger generation of Japanese can increasingly identify.[139]

> A lot of people are quite lonely […] In Japan he [Murakami] serves as a father figure to young readers […] a lot of young Japanese don't have close relationships with their father figures.[140]

> The great Japanese author Haruki Murakami grew famous writing about the tender melancholy of youth. ("Norwegian Wood" made him so recognizable in Japan that he left.)[141]

---

[138] Lozano, "Murakami y las tristes adolescentes."
[139] Zaun, "Tokyo Tales Onstage."
[140] Roland Kelts quoted in Carpenter, "Haruki Murakami's Advice Column…"
[141] Finch, "Haruki Murakami Turns His Gaze Toward Middle Age."

In the same line and based on this consideration, the fiction of Murakami Haruki is treated as a mirror of the Japan of his days. It is a urban and cosmopolitan country, a mix of new and old, "eclectic, multicultural, postcolonial and perturbing," as Aparicio Maydeu says,[142 (LXXIX)] and a postmodern hub where cultural references from all over the world merge and coexist:

> Murakami echoes the state of mind of the ordinary Japanese, caught between a fading old world and a new one still being invented.[143]

> The Japanese of old mixed with the new one that has succumbed to the American cultural influence […] the poetry of Japanese dynasties and the lyrics of modern songs […] a hybrid outcome that may stun the reader but which at the same time shows the cultural and ethical tensions that have forged Murakami's sensibility.[144 (LXXX)]

> Everything takes place in a society like the Japanese where the conflict between tradition and modernity, conservativism and the ultra modern is yet to be resolved.[145 (LXXXI)]

Many of these articles are published along with pictures of Tokyo and other urban landscapes, reinforcing this idea that Murakami's literature is a mirror to cosmopolitan contemporary Japan. Salvador Llopart's

---

[142] Aparicio Maydeu, "Murakami antes de Murakami."
[143] Ryan, "Wild and Woolly."
[144] Saladrigas, "La chistera de Murakami."
[145] Matías López, "Murakami, dos por uno."

"Takahashi de noche, Murakami de día" ("Takahasi during the night, Murakami during the day") features an image of Japanese executives strolling down Ginza and another of commuters shuttling in Omotesando. *The New York Times*' website combined Sam Anderson's travel story to Tokyo to interview Murakami with an interactive piece with scenes and settings of Tokyo. These are accompanied by short audio clips in which Anderson explains how these scenarios are linked to Murakami's life and work. These pictures include the Jingu stadium (where he reportedly had the epiphany of becoming a novelist), a Denny's franchise restaurant, a Prada store in Aoyama, the luxurious Hotel Okura, or a Nakamuraya Café in Shinjuku.[146]

Japan transitions throughout these texts from being considered a politicized entity throughout the first half of the 20th century to become during the 1990s a country solely understood as the paradigmatic late-capitalist society model. The placement of Japan in a contemporary global landscape is marked by the tension between internationalist and particularist approaches. Tokyo becomes a synecdoche for the whole of Japan. The city is described as a supposed melting pot of East and West and a hyper-technological city that works as a window display for consumerist attitudes:

> The melancholy soufflé Murakami whips up in these pages is decidedly masculine, a rainy Tokyo of unfaithful women, neat

[146] "Murakami's Tokyo."

> single malt, stray cats, cool cars and classic jazz played on hifi setups like the one described in dudeular detail.[147]

Consumer goods and industrial imagery are consubstantially associated with Japan. Aparicio Maydeu qualifies the background of *Killing Commendatore* like "a painting à clef of Hitler's Europe in the Japan of the Toyota Prius."[148] [(LXXXII)] The capital is presented as an ambivalent place, "a disconcerting space" as Janice Nimura puts it,[149] "more international than specifically Japanese,"[150] exchangeable for any other modern megalopolis like London or New York. This consideration strengthens the argument in favor of presenting Japan as part of the global village:

> If it weren't for the author's name, and our awareness that we're reading a work translated from the Japanese, it might never occur to us that the action takes place in Japan.[151]

> When you open the purse of a Japanese girl and we look at what's inside, we find the same things any girl from any other big city around the world would carry.[152] [(LXXXIII)]

There are no claims of uniqueness in the landscape exhibited by Murakami. His international success is attributed precisely to this

---

147 Fielden, "News From Murakami: Tales of Cool Cars, Shinto Spirits and Lost Love."
148 Aparicio Maydeu, "Retrato del artista evanescente."
149 Nimura, "Rubber Souls."
150 Ibid., "Separate Souls:"
151 Caryl, "Gods of the Mall."
152 Ruiz Mantilla, "'Mis libros triunfan en el caos."

ambiguity of space which allows for action and characters to be effectively replaced by individuals living in any other metropolis of the world with the same empathic force. Murakami has claimed in different occasions that he writes about Japan and the Japanese, so the fact that this fiction pulls strings in many different countries is not his explicit will but most probably a consequence of describing life in a globalized society. Ambiguous or not, there is consensus on claiming that Murakami's settings are placed in Japan, a space that emerges with a need of redefinition.

Despite this representativeness and perhaps due to it, Murakami appears depicted as a constant critic of the late-capitalist model. His characters are always described as regular everyday Japanese who function within this system but are openly dissatisfied with it. Ian Buruma calls them "isolated individuals trying to find meaning in a materialist world." This portrayal makes the heroes appear estranged, "adrift in a postmodern, postatomic world," wounded by a sense of "displacement and dislocation" were "identities are provisional" as Michiko Kakutani describes it.[153] Murakami's individuals are framed excluded from a society described as marked by a strict group mentality that entraps them and from which many people dream to break out:

> They are unremarkable men, less driven by the ethic to succeed and less enmeshed in the powerful webs of family and business and community than most Japanese […] this refusal

[153] Kakutani, "Worlds Where Anything Normal Would Seem Bizarre."

to join the group must be tremendously appealing to the contemporary Japanese reader.[154]

Murakami's protagonists are soft, irresolute men, often homebodies with dynamic girlfriends or wives, who go through long, inert periods of ennui -- a blatant renunciation of the frenetic, male-dominated ethos of modern Japan.[155]

The image of Tony [a character in Murakami's "Tony Takitani"] that emerges in adulthood, hunched over his worktable as he painstakingly draws machines, a job for which we are told he is well suited, dovetails with the stereotype of postwar Japan as a country of money and conformity, not art and individuality. It's a stereotype that the story and the film at once acknowledge and obliterate.[156]

Everything is seen in relation to inclusion or exclusion from peer groups, perhaps a very Japanese thing.[157]

In the tedious repetition of every single domestic and bureaucratic trifle […] Murakami draws a precise landscape of the average Japanese working man at the end of the twentieth century: the immense worth of having a job, even if it is poorly paid and terribly monotonous.[158] (LXXXIV)

---

[154] McIerney, "Roll over Basho: Who Japan's Reading, and Why."
[155] James, "East Meets West."
[156] Dargis, "He's an Isolated Individual; She's Addicted to Shopping."
[157] Parks, "The Charms of Loneliness."
[158] Herrsder, "Descenso al abismo."

Their discontent fails to morph into activism and remains as a search for individual mediation. This social model is based on the sacrifice of self-determination by trading it for the false sense of empowerment and security induced by indulging in conspicuous consumerism. Change only happens from within and at a level of the individual. The sense of community, meanwhile, is lost in the barter.

This resistance to comply with social conventions even if only from the personal point of view is welcomed in the articles with surprise. The idea of Japan functioning as if it possessed a hive mentality has been rooted in the national narrative since the Pacific War. A reading that subverts this order is taken therefore with reluctance. It is unclear whether the target of this criticism is the economic system in itself or the social model it produces. Any attempt to pull Japan and the Japanese closer to ideals of individualism would consciously or unconsciously be taken up by hegemonic discourses as a triumph of Western ideals, especially U.S.-centered narratives of Cold War victory. A critique of the capitalist recipe for societal configuration, however, fails to be categorized in the vacuum produced by the alleged defeat of communism. In the end, these depictions seem to boil down to the idea that, for now at least, individuals may complain, but the system regrettably prevails.

This exercise of criticism is one of the main points sustained throughout the national narrative. Japan is defined as a country in crisis, haunted by mistakes past and present, where the Japanese try to look for a new identity that would escape the disaffecting

consequences of late capitalism. Most authors translate Murakami's acceptance by young readers into an expression of the desire by future generations of Japanese to achieve a greater degree of individuality, bending the frame without formally breaking it. The effects of the Japanese financial crisis in the country became more evident as the years passed. The number of texts that identified social criticism in Murakami's plot and style increased concurrently. This change is particularly evident after the events of 1995 and the publication of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, *Underground* and *after the quake*. Aparicio Maydeu sums up this narrative quite vividly:

> Japan staggered after the atomic attack of Enola Gay on the 6th of August 1945 on Hiroshima, when the nation learned that the emperor was not a divine figure but rather a very vulnerable human. And it did again on March 20, 1995, when five coordinated attacks by members of Aum Shinrikyo turned the Tokyo subway in a stifling emotional labyrinth that brought closer to home a sense of apocalypse that was becoming their daily sense of life. […] In his country, occasional terrorist violence is substituted by daily violence at home and in the workplace. He describes an imperialist country that has no pity for the fallen and consents no honor for the defeated. […] And the reader thinks and mixes with all of this the tea ceremony, cherry blossoms, Mishima's katana, kamikaze pilots in their zeros going to their happy deaths, and the Aum leader gassing citizens.[159] [(LXXXV)]

[159] Aparicio Maydeu, "Underground."

The shift is meaningful. Murakami goes from representing Japan through his fiction to critically comment on it. Ian Buruma's "Becoming Japanese," written in 1996, studies Murakami's process of exploration and reencountering Japan, to conclude:

> His political engagement would probably enrich his fiction. For he can look at Japan from the inside, and he also knows what it looks like from the outside. He is detached from Japanese society, yet committed to it. He can fix a cool, dry gaze on his wet native soil. The time for escaping is over. He is closer now to where he came from.[160]

Murakami's literature expresses according to this narrative a generational sense of disapproval of social conventions while revealing aspects of what Elizabeth Ward calls the Japanese "dark society" or "parallel wastelands."[161] Buruma labels in another piece this state of crisis "the Japanese malaise."[162] From the start of the new century, Japan appears in the texts as a lost nation ashamed of its consumerist excesses. This discourse depicts a country repentant of its imperial past, what Rodrigo Fresán calls "the permanently open wounds of the Second World War"[163] (LXXXVI) and Salvador Llopart "Japan's historic sin."[164] (LXXXVII) This interpretation holds weight precisely because Murakami himself supports it. If 1995 was the beginning of his shift towards commitment, I would like to highlight how seminal the year

---

[160] Buruma, "Becoming Japanese."
[161] Ward, "The Long Sayonara."
[162] Buruma, "The Japanese Malaise."
[163] Fresán, "Juguemos en el bosque."
[164] Llopart, "El hombre que escucha en la barra de bar."

2011 was for the establishment of Murakami as a social commentator. In March, the Tōhoku natural disaster and subsequent Fukushima Daiichi meltdown deepened the breach that got opened fifteen years before and emphasized the nation's sense of generational crisis. Catastrophes are a knife that cuts open Japanese society's thin skin, revealing the issues that flow below:

> The earthquake ends up working like an alarm clock that exposes the emptiness and shallowness of a whole society, the Japanese of the 90s, deprived of idealism and with individuals that don't know anymore in what to spend the money they saved during all these years.[165] (LXXXVIII)

Murakami, who spent the year promoting abroad the translation of *1Q84*, openly attacked the Japanese system. This entity is built discursively as a loose signifier of everything that seems to go wrong with Japan: an unapologetic government, big corporations and their uncontested power, and the institutional promotion of a culture of living only to work and consume. Murakami's criticism positively shocked his adversaries in the Japanese old guard, made foreign scholars reconsider their definitions of intellectually-committed Japanese literature, and justified a political and national reading of his work by anyone who was commenting on it. On 2011 he was also awarded the International Catalonia Prize. His texts were read in an official act of solidarity towards Japan held at the Sagrada Família. Murakami blamed upon reception of the award the system for leaving

---

[165] Fresán, "Murakami nos invita a temblar."

the Japanese "shocked and without a compass."[166] [(LXXXIX)] He got interviewed for the occasion by *La Vanguardia*'s Xavier Ayén, where he gave the following unequivocal statement:

> Japanese have regularly undergone adversities during the course of our history; we are a long-suffering people. We have been beaten by all sorts of calamities: wars, bombs, natural disasters… who knows what will be next? Now […] we are without a compass, we are in shock. We dreamt of being rich and Western, we wanted to become the most technologically developed country in the world, and in the end, we were proud of something that we have now lost. I am not sure if we will be able to find a new direction.[167] [(XC)]

Just four months later, Sam Anderson went to Japan to write a long piece for *The New York Times* on Murakami, *1Q84*, and Japan after the crisis. When asked about his kinship with Orwell, he replied: "I guess we have a common feeling against the system." When questioned about his statement above, Murakami's answer contained the same message he had shared back then:

> I think many Japanese people think that this is a turning point for our country. […] After 1945, we have been working so hard and getting rich. But that kind of thing doesn't continue anymore. We have to change our values. We have to think about how we can get happy. It's not about money. It's not

[166] Morán, "'En Japón nos hemos quedado en shock'."
[167] Ayén, "Murakami tras el tsunami."

> about efficiency. It's about discipline and purpose. What I wanted to say is what I've been saying since 1968: we have to change the system. I think this is a time when we have to be idealistic again.[168]

Japan emerges from this discourse as an urban, late-capitalist country in existential crisis, populated by a generation of Japanese more and more openly dissatisfied with the way things have been imposed to be. This generation's discontent identifies a systemic structure that impedes the creation and nurturing of healthy social and emotional dynamics outside the logic of neoliberalism. Murakami's characters establish themselves on the margins of such a society to test their borders and explore the challenges of personal and discrete resistance.

So far, these are the fundamental aspects of Murakami's oeuvre that have found agreement across authors, sources, and countries. I move on now to discuss conflicting aspects and debates that produce disagreement among reporters. The first and most complex subject is the way authors try to frame originally Western cultural references into the national narrative of Japan. The schism appears when determining the cultural ownership of these elements. This decision reveals a lasting conflict between defining cultural globalization as actual Westernization and trying to restrict cultural affinities to national particularism. There are two streams of interpretation over this matter. The first insists on the foreignness of Western cultural references in the context of the Japanese society. Authors like Mitgang or Nimura believe Murakami borrows these references and uses them to appeal

[168] Anderson, "The Fierce Imagination of Haruki Murakami."

to U.S. audiences through the familiar and Japanese audiences through the exotic. They usually refer to Murakami's role as translator of U.S. novelists (mostly Raymond Carver and Raymond Chandler) as one of the main reasons for the inclusion of such references, suggesting they would be otherwise alien to Japan:

> Americanisms dance across the pages of the novel, practically turning Japan into an anchored aircraft carrier for American products and culture.[169]

> His stories […] may exert an initial outlandish charm, but his props […] are as Western as last week's *New Yorker* tossed on the coffee table.[170]

> A strikingly Westernized Japan, one where people listen to Bill Evans, read Thomas Mann, drink too much coffee and sound like refugees from a Raymond Carver story.[171]

Murakami, however, disputes this belief by defending that the Japanese have actually appropriated and seized originally Western cultural references in a way that considers them integral parts of the everyday experience in Japan. According to this writer, contemporary popular culture is not ascribed to a particular nation but rather corresponds to modern common practices in any developed urban society:

---

[169] Mitgang, "Looking for America or is it Japan?"
[170] "Pronouncements, Critiques, Catcalls and Plaudits,"
[171] Nimura, "Rubber Souls."

> To me, popular culture is the biggest natural reserve of resources for writers that want to establish a direct relationship with their readers. It's impossible to escape from it, we practically breathe it. We all eat hamburgers in McDonald's, watch television or listen to Michael Jackson. This is something so common we do not stop to realize that it is culture. That is why if someone wants to write about life in the city, not including these elements would feel fake.[172] (XCI)

Murakami actively disdains the national naturalization of cultural references. When he was asked in a recent interview by the *New York Times* whether he believed *The Great Gatsby* could be interpreted as a tale about the limits of the so-called 'American dream,' he replied defending that Scott Fitzgerald's is

> a book about a dream – and how people behave when the dream is broken. This is a very important theme for me. I don't think of it as necessarily the American dream, but rather a young man's dream, a dream in general.[173]

The second group of authors defies foreignness and is closer to Murakami's interpretation of the role of popular culture in Japan. Instead of naturalization, they defend a model of assimilation articulated in the shape of the hybrid country. Cultural references still wear a label of origin as "Western" or "Japanese," but their presence is thought as the result of a combination between different sources

---

[172] Libedinsky, "Una buena historia está en un libro o en la televisión."
[173] Lyall, "Haruki Murakami Says He Doesn't Dream. He Writes."

entwined while distinguishable from each other. Aparicio Maydeu calls it "the happy marriage between Eastern sensibility and Western consumerism,"[174] [(XCII)] while Christian Caryl asserts that "no other non-Western culture has endured and embraced Western-style modernization for as long and as deeply as Japan."[175] These authors contribute with these readings to the prevalence of Japan as a country used to remodel and re-signify foreign ideas in order to legitimize their appropriation. This phenomenon seems to be at stake when Rodrigo Fresán says for instance that Murakami reveals "the contagious influence of pop culture as another form of Zen."[176] [(XCIII)]

There is consensus on indicating the absence of traditional Japanese features in Murakami's display of his country regardless of whether or not journalists consider originally Western elements as belonging to contemporary Japan. Murakami's explicit framing of his literary settings and characters as Japanese is treated with disdain and skepticism. The network of references that constitute the cultural environment is declared to be not conventionally Japanese because it fails to meet the expectations Western readers have over what has been Japanese:

> In these books, there are no shoguns, no tea ceremonies, no hara-kiri. The stories and novel excerpts here deal with the daily stuff of today's Japan.[177]

---

[174] Aparicio Maydeu, "La marca Murakami."
[175] Caryl, "Gods of the Mall."
[176] Fresán, "El jardín de los sucesos extraordinarios."
[177] Reid, "Japan's Brat Pack."

> Haruki Murakami is a Japanese writer. Of his generation […] he is the most famous, and perhaps the most important, Japanese writer. Yet there is something curious about his work: the almost complete absence of references to Japanese culture. Murakami's characters eat steaks, pizzas, or pasta. They listen to Ella Fitzgerald or Rossini.[178]

> An idle hero – or directly, an unemployed individual – who is a music aficionado and likes to cook all kinds of food. An unexpected character, far from the expectation of what traditional and stereotypical Japanese culture is.[179] (XCIV)

This interpretation over the usage of cultural references echoes two of the most prevalent tropes employed when describing Japan, also present when discussing Murakami: the tension between old and new and the mix of East and West. Cultural references present in Murakami are both 'new' (icons of popular culture and consumerist behavior) and 'West' (independently of whether they have been integrated or not). The failure to meet expectations is not translated into a rejection of the new setting and definitions as not Japanese. In the end, Murakami's Japan may not be traditional, but it is approached and understood using very similar conventional temporal and spatial tropes.

This debate feeds the discussion of the next two major conflicts: the perception of Murakami as culturally Japanese, and whether Japan is a

[178] Buruma, "Becoming Japanese."
[179] Llopart, "El hombre que escucha en la barra de bar."

unique country or part of the global village. Murakami's nationality is never openly contested, and he constantly reaffirms in interviews his identity as Japanese: "I don't want to write about foreigners in foreign countries. I want to write about us. I want to write about Japan, about our life here."[180] These texts reflect however a hesitation when it comes the time to define the level of affinity and 'Japaneseness' of Murakami. For instance, some authors ambiguously either separate or frame him within the literary canon when compared to former generations of Japanese writers:

> Though his works abound with references to contemporary American culture […] his narratives are dreamlike, closer to the viscid surrealism of Kobo Abe than to the superheated but generally solid realism of Mishima and Tanizaki.[181]

> I always miss in his literature not finding traces of Kawabata, Tanizaki or Nagai, artists canonized in the Japanese literary tradition who incorporated elements of the Western avant-garde but preserved the lightness and the use of ellipsis, while Murakami […] feels impelled to tell in detail the whole story.[182] (XCV)

In some cases, the integration into the cultural cloud of signifieds that is 'Japan' is achieved through extra-textual means. Antonio Lozano's "Murakami y las tristes adolescentes" was published along with a photograph that shows a street-shop in Japan where female

[180] Parks, "The Charms of Loneliness."
[181] Updike, "Subconscious Tunnels."
[182] Saladrigas, "El japonés global."

mannequins attired in yukata dresses wear bandanas with the Japanese flag around their heads. This placement becomes a visual reminder of the spatial and cultural arrangement that establishes the belonging of the referenced text in the line of Billig's consideration of flag placement as banal nationalism.[183] In Gerard Bagué's "Depresión japonesa," published the same year, the author describes an embarrassing chat he had with a Japanese friend after reading *Tokio Blues* and getting "Japanese depression." He uses this vague term to link Murakami to a scatter collection of items, stereotypes, and common places that are sometimes associated to Japan and Japanese culture like suicide, hikikomori, the idea that Japanese prefer technique over art, and even a discomforting comparison between the different ethnic traits that one can use to tell apart Chinese from Japanese.[184] This tendency to make puns and allusions to subjects and traits associated with Japan sometimes borders the insensitive and practically tasteless. The frequent wordplays with nuclear power and radiation are particularly objectionable, from Fresán's depiction of Murakami's popularity "with almost radioactive effects,"[185] (XCVI) to Steve Erickson's "Murakami is the first major Japanese author born in the radioactive white light of the modern age."[186] Sergio Vila-Sanjuán reported on the Spanish editorial decision of changing the original's *Norwegian Wood* title (a reference to a song by The Beatles) to *Tokio Blues*. The reason that justifies this decision according to the text is that the readers "would not find attractive or easily identifiable"[187]

[183] Lozano, "Murakami y las tristes adolescentes.

[184] Bagué, "Depresión japonesa."

[185] Fresán, "El guardián entre los árboles como fenómeno."

[186] Erickson, "Murakami's 'Wind/Pinball'."

[187] Vila-Sanjuán, "Murakami, dos cubiertas y un despegue."

(XCVII) the first name. The publishing firm had to fuse both titles after Murakami complained about the alteration.

In some other cases, the task of questioning his 'Japaneseness' is attributed to and to an extent legitimized by external sources, mainly from within the Japanese literary establishment. Some authors take for granted reported doubts and assume that there are actually grounds to hold suspicions, regardless of how undescribed they might be instead of trying to define what is 'being Japanese' and then justify their hesitation to consider Murakami enclosed in that definition. In a 2005 interview by Xavier Ayén, published in La Vanguardia under the name "Canción triste de Tokio" ("Tokyo's Sad Song") after the publication of *Tokio Blues*, the first question already addresses this matter:

> Q: Your books, packed with Western references, are often considered not very Japanese. Why is that?
>
> A: Honestly, I do not know what it means to be actually Japanese. Maybe because I have been all my life and in every moment whether I like it or not a Japanese person, I cannot tell what it is exactly. In other words, I am too Japanese to assess from outside how Japanese I am properly. But if you expect of me that kind of story where people eat sushi and tofu every day and go to see kabuki while wearing a kimono, bowing and kowtowing to everyone they meet, please go read the old classics like Kawabata or Tanizaki […] As a matter of fact, I believe the majority of contemporary Japanese are not interested in that kind of stories anymore.
>
> […]

> Q: But do you inscribe yourself within the Japanese tradition?
> A: That is a subject that doesn't concern me. I also think many of my readers do not care about that. […] I am a Japanese writer. Authentic or not, that I cannot tell.[188] (XCVIII)

Murakami's 'Japaneseness' is constantly contested precisely by the virtual impossibility of properly define such label without falling into the questionable and at this point hardly tenable sense of cultural particularism. If 'Japaneseness' has proven to be a term that cannot be centered exclusively on traits that are considered native of Japan – regardless of whether this perception is accurate to a more critical study of their nature and origin – what is it exactly? Again, authors seem to have troubles defending a stable and consistent idea of Japan that would be compatible with their place in a globalized world where the transfer of cultural influences has been established as a multi-directional process of exchange. In those instances in which they stress the influence of U.S. literature on Murakami's style, suggesting that he is a pupil of Western education, they infer that cultural endogamy and autarchy are the only true ways to identify the Japanese artist. At the very least, they advocate that there are limits to foreign influence that a particular national identity can endure before getting engulfed by it. Where these limits lie and how to measure the purposed purity in both means and content is an uncomfortable step that authors avoid to make, most probably because it is impossible to complete. Japan's particularism and uniqueness seems indefensible, and perhaps more importantly, it appears time and again practically

[188] Ayén, "Canción triste de Tokio."

undefinable. That does not stop many authors however in claiming and insisting on its existence.

This is not a unanimous position. A good amount of authors believe that Murakami's use of ambiguous cultural landscapes is precisely what makes it so close to a contemporary rendition of Japan. Some of them make the effort of highlighting that props and scenario are just a carcass, a theatrical setting that is just contingent to the historical moment in which the work is set. These authors defend the idea that one should look for underlying themes and marks of style to find a presumably Japanese sensibility. Murakami's approach allegedly refuses to mimic traditional conventions. He is regarded as a modernizer of canonic subjects and aesthetic concerns:

> Mr. Murakami's narrative style is as spare and unadorned as a traditional Japanese room, so seemingly empty that it needs to be furnished with the mind.[189]

> Kami pervades Murakami's world, in which, therefore, any Western readers will feel a bit queasily at sea, however many fragments of globalized Western culture – Goethe, Beethoven, Eichmann, Hegel, Coltrane, Schubert, Napoleon – bob from paragraph to paragraph.[190]

> Amada's decision to represent a scene from a pillar of the Western canon in a classical Japanese style seems not

[189] Bernstein, "An Obsessive Attraction that Cripples Two Lives."
[190] Updike, "Subconscious Tunnels."

unconnected with Murakami's own commitments as a reader and translator of Carver, Fitzgerald and other American writers.[191]

There is an even larger group of critics that interpret his culturally ambiguous landscape as a way to represent a global sensibility. According to this reading, Murakami shows how Japan has overcome cultural isolation and exoticism to become an example of the triumph of transnationalism and globalization. Murakami, now raised to the status of "cultural ambassador" of Japan under the category of "the universal Japanese" or "the global Japanese" that Fresán [192] and Saladrigas[193] (XCIX) both like to use, is credited for his ability to convey freshly identified contemporary universal emotions. Andrés Ibáñez describes him as "one of the greatest interpreters of contemporary human condition and also one of the best poets of our time."[194] (C) The equation is simple: if Murakami can both represent the Japanese and depict Japan while being a success around the world it is not because Japan has become 'Westernized' or because the world has somewhat become 'Japanese,' but rather because we are all located in a space in between, a point of 'international identity.' The late-capitalist, urban, reactive-to-an-oppressive-system profile used before to define Japan emerges here too as a common denominator across readers and sympathizers. Cultural ambiguity and representativeness become in this process perfectly compatible. That is why one can read Spanish

[191] Kunzru, "In Haruki Murakami's New Novel, a Painter's Inspiration Is Supernatural."
[192] Fresán, "El jardín de los sucesos extraordinarios."
[193] Saladrigas, "El japonés global."
[194] Ibáñez, "¿Lo mejor de Murakami?"

ex-prime minister Jose Luís Rodríguez Zapatero's words and consider them in line with the intertextual discourse that has been so far unveiled:

> Murakami invites us to look at what's alien with tact and subtlety, with images and references that come from a culture that is very rooted and different from our own like the Japanese, but in which we can all see ourselves reflected and with heroes with whom we can sympathize and recognize.[195] (CI)

Throughout this section, I have used texts from both the United States and Spain at the same time to build my analysis. This is because the national narratives of Japan present intertextually in the two countries share the same essential traits. Putting them together reinforces the idea that there is a common ground from where to assume a national narrative in the West, and this idea prevails above each country's particularities. Differences between the two cases do not affect the core tropes of the narrative but are related instead to the circumstances of its chronological development, already unveiled and dissected at the beginning of this analysis. Before moving on to the study of the next set of texts, I find useful to sum up the essential points and themes extracted from the reading of newspaper articles, as they can help us draw a draft of the core of this national narrative. Japan is presented as a site of modernity, cultural syncretism, and a model for international convergence. Western reader's expectations towards cultural particularities are shattered by the replacement of

[195] Front Cover, *La Vanguardia*, 23 April 2010.

traditionally attributed Japanese symbols for modern cosmopolitan habits. Japan is seen in this light as culturally closer to the West, and these parallelisms as a result of globalization. Japan is also introduced as suffering from an undefined crisis that involves the conflict between the individual and the system.

I move on to briefly discuss the second part of the mass-audience-targeted subcorpus, books intended for a non-specialized readership. Same as with newspaper articles, these critical texts do not presume that the reader is a connoisseur of Japan. They deal with the topic of Murakami's literature and Japan from a didactic and easy to grasp style and approach even when the author is a scholar on Japan. Based on the aforementioned qualitative criteria of discussing Murakami Haruki and being in an already established circuit of transmission, I have selected three as most predominant pieces to discuss. Two books were published in the United States: *Haruki Murakami's The Wind-up Bird Chronicle: A Reader's Guide* by Matthew Strecher (2002 by Bloomsbury) and *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words* by Jay Rubin (2005 by Vintage). As for Spanish texts, I have chosen Carlos Rubio's *El Japón de Murakami: las señas de identidad del autor de Tokio Blues* (*Murakami's Japan: Norwegian Wood's Identity Hallmarks*), published in 2012 by Aguilar. This commentary is used to complement the previously laid down account of tropes extracted from newspaper texts in order to see if the discourse changes when it circulates in a different medium with the same audience target.

A Reader's Guide is part of a series aimed to help a general public understand popular contemporary works of fiction with an accessible

but in-depth approach. Matthew Strecher is a professor of Japanese studies at Sophia University. He has published other works on Murakami which are intended for an academic readership and which are analyzed later in this same section. *A Reader's Guide* is a slim volume that combines an introduction to the author with a literary analysis of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*. It also features a chapter in which Strecher reflects on Murakami's national and international success, providing an interpretation of his popularity and framing him within both the Japanese and the international literary scene.

Strecher introduces Murakami using the same tropes also present intertextually in newspaper articles. He is portrayed as a leader of a generation subversive to the Japanese literary canon, with a style influenced by U.S. writers due to his role as a translator, and the status of insider to the character of the contemporary Japanese and his quest for identity in a globalized world led by consumerism. Murakami is pictured as a breaker of cultural barriers, an antagonist to the vision of Japan as a unique nation. His literature "offers Western readers a view of Japan that demystifies its exotic nature."[196] Strecher argues that despite the accusations of him being "Americanized," Murakami is actually faithful to the role of social commentator that has characterized modern Japanese fiction:

> This is Japanese literature; it is literature that takes into account the radical changes in Japan's surface, popular culture, and permits discerning readers a glimpse of how such influences have meshed with more traditional ones […] the reason

[196] Ibid., 82.

> Murakami has done so well in and out of Japan is the fact that he has brought Japan up to date, offering an alternative picture of Japanese culture that shows how one can affect foreign cultural icons and still be 'Japanese'.[197]

Strecher believes Murakami is interested in talking about Japan, and therefore his observations can be taken as descriptive of this country. Particularly, Strecher focuses on the quest for identity and the tension between the individual and the State. The Japanese state is seen as an oppressive machine that wolfs down the voice of the individual. Murakami's characters fight back on different occasions with unclear resolutions.

As Rubin advises in the foreword, *The Music of Words* is a work by a Murakami fan for Murakami fans. Rubin, who has translated several of Murakami's novels and taught Japanese literature at Harvard University until retirement in 2008, wrote a direct and accessible book for every audience. Rubin explores Murakami's style and themes from a chronological perspective, and thus *The Music of Words* reads as a partial biography. Murakami is introduced again in Rubin's work using the same ideas cited above. Rubin mentions the early criticism Murakami received from old-school scholars such as Miyoshi Masao, who questioned his commitment to Japan and his literary value.[198] Rubin, however, believes like Strecher that Murakami's involvement with Japanese society is archetypical of the Japanese literary tradition, albeit maybe not intentionally. Rubin compares him in this aspect to

---

[197] Ibid., 83.
[198] Rubin, *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words*, 7.

Kawabata, and states that these two writers create works that "are the product of their author's struggles to arrest the flow of time as it sweeps life relentlessly into the past, and both offer detachment as a way of coping."[199] Murakami is a chronicler of his time, and Rubin attributes his success especially in East Asia to his commitment of portraying the struggle between individuals and the system, suggested fiercer in countries with a Confucian background:

> His books sell especially well in other East Asian countries, where his cool, detached, often comical narrator seems to offer an alternative to life in the grim Confucian envelope of State and family.[200]

Rubin's depiction of Japan through Murakami's lens is again that of a country marked by tensions. On top of the conflict between individual and system and the quest for identity also mentioned by Strecher, Rubin adds the image of Japan as a late-capitalist country carrying over a difficult historical relationship with the rest of Asia. Rubin addresses too the issue of how Japan integrates cultural references sourced as originally Western. According to Rubin, the country has been permeated by foreign references for decades already, so it should not be surprising if Murakami reflects this reality with ease in his fiction: "Murakami has been called the first writer completely at home with the elements of American popular culture that permeate present-day Japan."[201] These originally alien references have been integrated as part of the everyday life of urban Japanese. This circumstance, however,

[199] Ibid., 55
[200] Ibid., 5.
[201] Ibid., 17.

clashes with conventional expectations on what Japan is supposed to be. Rubin disguises his judgment on the matter, opting for disclosing the conflict without actively picking a side. In his view, foreign readers "either bemoaned the absence of cherry blossoms and geisha, or found his work a welcome relief from obsessive Japaneseness."[202] By choosing to describe this circumstance as an ongoing struggle, however, Rubin legitimizes the position of Japan's particularism as a valid option in the definition of the national profile.

When comparing these two works, Strecher's stands out for its more openly political reading of Murakami's literature. This difference is revealed especially in his ongoing interpretation of Murakami as a socially committed author that discusses conflicts of the contemporary condition in late-capitalist societies, primarily in Japan but also applicable to the rest of the industrialized world. Rubin, on the other hand, stresses the international emotional appeal of Murakami's literature. He shies away from investing much effort on the particular context of Japan and focuses instead on defending this idea of Murakami's universal emotional treatment as the reason for his global success.

In the case of Spain, where the market for such type of texts is narrower, there is a work that particularly stands up for its relevance to the present study: *Murakami's Japan*, by Carlos Rubio. Rubio lived and worked in Japan between 1985 and 1990. He is nowadays a professor of Japanese and Japanese literature at the Complutense University of Madrid. A favorite go-to authority on Japanese literature for local

[202] Ibid., 232-233.

journalists and uninspired editors in need of a prologue in Spain, he published in 2007 the first book in Spanish about the history of Japanese literature, *Claves y Textos de la Literatura Japonesa* (*Keys and Texts of Japanese Literature*), which combines academic rigor with a style that is intended to be entertaining and suitable for every audience. *Murakami's Japan* is written in an informal and almost casual style, in which Rubio combines academic criteria with personal insights in a fashion that makes it difficult to distinguish between the two. Rubio states the thesis of his book unambiguously in the introduction: he wants to prove that "Murakami is more Japanese than sushi and green tea combined."[203] [(CII)] Despite this author-centered ambition that could suggest a literary study, the book reads most of the time as a travel guide or a culture manual. He uses quotes from Murakami's works as an excuse to talk about a cultural potpourri that includes the role of Japan in World War II, the proper use of chopsticks, different ways of kowtowing, and the meaning of Zen. This handling of the 'Murakami brand' is sometimes unnatural, stretched, and even ludicrous, as the title of chapter 8.6, "Noodles: another national hallmark in Murakami."[204] [(CIII)]

Despite its shortcomings, *Murakami's Japan* is an appropriate text in the context of my research project. It explores the relationship between literature and Japan, creating an explicit link between the two for the Spanish reader. This book is more about Japan than it is about Murakami, but it is a Japan that, according to Rubio, appears in the writer's work. The text is, therefore, a casual treatise on contemporary

---

[203] Ibid., 14.
[204] Ibid., 537.

Japan made by an expert on the country, exploiting the fame of a popular author, and projected towards a wider audience, the Spaniard who wants to learn more about the Japanese.

Rubio's introduction to Murakami addresses the same ideas put forward in the works by Strecher, Rubin, and also present intertextually in newspaper articles both from the U.S. and Spain. Murakami is introduced as an internationally acclaimed author, leader of a generation of writers, polemic by his mixing of 'Western' and 'Eastern' references. Japan is presented as suffering from a crisis that stems from the conflicts between individuals and the system and between individuals and the idea of a group. He also refers to the tension produced by Japan's violent recent history with the rest of Asia and the Japanese society's contemporary challenge of reshaping its collective identity within the late-capitalist paradigm.[205] Rubio uses uncritically key concepts in Japanese anthropology like the binary *honne-tatemae* (private behavior and public behavior), *tate-shakai* (Japan functioning as a vertical society), or the distinction between *Ura no Nihon* and *Omote no Nihon* (roughly 'rural Japan' and 'urban Japan') that have however been associated with *Nihonjinron* discourses on Japan's so-called national essentialism. He also points out the recent fragmentation and consequent adaptation of some social schemes to modern times: the rupture of the ideal family model, the debacle of the Japanese economic miracle, and the emergence of job insecurities and unstable life plans.

[205] Ibid., 86.

Rubio addresses the troubled national framing of cultural references at different points in his book. He describes the Japanese as essentially eclectic with a way of appropriating the foreign that is "taking the mold or the name, but not the substance."[206] (CIV) For Rubio, Japanese particular sensibilities play a vital aspect in defining contemporary Japan, but these have been adapted from tradition to fit in modern times. Rubio's argumentation comes down to the idea that even though Japan is harboring changes and transformations in its social structure and cultural influence, the weight and pull of tradition is impossible to ignore and still pervades and marks the country. Rubio believes Western references are an integral part of everyday Japan, but he is skeptical to whether they will survive the test of time and will become formally integrated as essentially Japanese.

With all the selected texts from this section already examined, it is time to take some preliminary conclusions. The national narratives of Japan present in books on Murakami published in both sides of the Atlantic share the same core ideas. First, Japan is seen as a country in crisis (economic, social, and even moral crisis). Second, Japan appears as a site of cultural confluence and symbiosis between East and West. Finally, Japan is portrayed as a late-capitalist society model. Younger generations of Japanese hesitantly desire to fight back the pressure of a system which silences their voices and asks them to give up autonomy in exchange for the safety of a life paced by consumerism and blind acceptance of the status quo. Given that these and similar issues affect several other developed countries, Japan is brought closer to the rest of the world by stressing on the universal appeal of Murakami's

[206] Ibid., 114.

literature as a bridge between previously perceived as distanced cultures like the West and Japan.

3.3.2 Academia-Targeted Texts

In this section, I analyze texts written for an academic readership published in English or Spanish in which Murakami Haruki is discussed at length. For this section, I focus on monographic books, a criterion that allows me to produce a deeper and more detailed breakdown of each text within the limited formal extension of this thesis.

Despite having been available in bookshelves around the English-speaking world for over twenty-five years, scholars had approached Murakami during the 1990s only for the odd book review or tentative article. He began to attract serious attention from academia at the turn of the millennium, an interest that has been increasing exponentially for the past fifteen years. The first monograph about Murakami came in 2002, *Dances with Sheep: The Quest for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki* by Matthew Strecher. He mentions in the prologue of his work this scarcity of academic texts dealing with Murakami's oeuvre in the West. This shortage appears throughout his judgment in stark contrast with the notable amount of scholarly work produced in Japan about him since the 1980s, which even led to the creation of its own sub-field, *Murakami-ron* ('Murakami theory'). The authors that followed Strecher in their study of Murakami's literature have drawn in their pieces a small cosmology of citations, quotes, and in some cases even

brief reviews of each other's texts that are covering the original gap. This manifest degree of referentiality proves how the authors of the texts here discussed have read and have used each other's work to support and counterbalance their arguments, strengthening the case for an intertextual study as the one here conducted. Strecher revisits in the introduction of *The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki* the state of the field of 'Murakami studies' in the West twelve years after the publication of his first work. Strecher points out at the considerable growth in the quantity of Western academic texts discussing Murakami Haruki experienced in the first decades of the century, sketching a more optimist and complete picture than just a decade ago.

I aspire in this part to analyze each text separately to then weave together the intertextual national narrative of Japan. For that purpose, I produce a chronological examination of monographs published in English and Spanish that have Murakami Haruki as a central point of discussion. As an exception to this rule and for reasons explained below, I include two texts that are not monographies. The first one is a chapter devoted to Murakami Haruki in *Postmodern, Feminist and Postcolonial Currents in Contemporary Japanese Culture*, written by Murakami Fuminobu. The second critical text is the collection of short essays *A Wild Haruki Chase*, edited by the Japan Foundation.

Dances with Sheep – The Quest for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki was the first academic monograph on Murakami Haruki made available in English. Matthew Strecher examines the work published by this novelist up until that moment, focusing particularly on his first trilogy (*Hear the Wind Sing*, *Pinball 1974*, and *Dance Dance Dance*). He

interprets that Murakami engages with themes on social commitment through an approach that differs from the techniques traditionally employed by other Japanese writers. Strecher is interested in showing how Japan suffers from an identity crisis brought in his view by the failure of the Japanese state in providing a common and integrative social project during and after the postwar period. He describes the resistance of a generation against a system that attempts to control private life through the fabrication of discourses on social homogeneity. Strecher attributes a portrayed disenchantment with materialism to Jamesonian late-capitalist consumerism as both means and end of the present-day way of life.

According to Strecher, Murakami's works offer a critique of contemporary Japanese culture and society through three axes. First, he claims Murakami praises the virtues of individuality against a model of society that promotes acritical groupism. Strecher also finds in Murakami's literature a systematic condemnation of ideas on national homogeneity, especially those sponsored by state and ideological institutions. Lastly, he claims that Murakami's suggested alternative comprises a call for emotional empathy as a way to mutually reconnect individuals who have been socially detached from each other because of late-capitalist conditions. Murakami channels this proposal in his work by putting into question any attempt to monopolize reality as unique and absolute through the creation of multiple coexisting realities and the incorporation of magic and paranormal elements to previously assumed realistic diegetic settings.

In *Dances with Sheep*, Strecher does a heavily politicized reading of Murakami's works, even though within the limits of literary criticism. Strecher associates Murakami's model of social commitment with postmodern criticism. Strecher's definition of the postmodern reveals how he interprets Murakami's style, the function of his fiction, and his critical assessment of contemporary Japanese society:

> A preference for multiplicity and plurality over singularity; a strong sense of suspicion toward 'reality' as a concept, particularly in its representation through language; the blurring of cultural borders with the advent of faster, cheaper, and more reliable communication and a new phase in capitalist production that brought new and sophisticated modes of fetish consumerism to the postindustrial marketplace.[207]

Strecher introduces Murakami addressing his position in relation to the international and the Japanese cultural scene. He tackles through this exercise some of the most controversial themes associated with his figure and fiction. Murakami is presented by Strecher as highly popular in and outside Japan, particularly among young readers. He is depicted as an author who breaks the distinction between pure literature and popular fiction, becoming the spokesman of a generation that spearheads a paradigmatic change in Japanese literature. Strecher also deals with two key tropes: the national ascription of originally Western cultural references, and Murakami's unconventional relationship with mainstream Japan. On the first subject, Strecher says:

[207] Ibid., 4.

> His works are usually set in Japan but could almost as easily take place abroad. Part of the reason for this lies in his fondness for images of popular culture familiar to the Western world […] but does this make Murakami 'un-Japanese? Is it really fair to say that these images, though they originate in Euro-American culture (primarily American) have not become Japanese in the sense of being internalized by the Japanese by now?[208]

Strecher calls for the acceptance of Japanese culture away from assuming it as an estranged 'Other.' He proposes the embracement of a new, global understanding of culture that hails Murakami precisely because of the absence of exoticism in his literature. Strecher contends against those critics who have condemned Murakami for his lack of commitment to Japanese society. He sustains that Murakami's "un-political political literature" is a more appropriate way to produce social criticism in keeping with his times. [209] Strecher suggests that while the means might be different, the content of his criticism is consistent with the denunciation of more conventional Japanese intellectuals:

> Murakami warns us, as Ōe seemed to do, that without efforts to help people find alternatives to the mainstream definition of the contemporary Japanese, more such incidents are inevitable. This is the political angle in Murakami's work, and it is becoming increasingly obvious that this approach is not only

[208] Ibid., 1.
[209] Ibid.

socially and politically relevant to contemporary Japan, but also applicable to most industrialized societies in the world. [210]

Japan is understood in Strecher's analysis as the battleground of a constant struggle between the individual and the system. According to Strecher's interpretation, individuals back in Japan "against the temptation to participate in, or collaborate with, this social ideology of state control, materialist, and pleasure-seeking." [211] This tension between the individual and the system is both cause and symptom of a state in dire straits, "the crisis of late-capitalist identity"[212] that makes contemporary Japan "purposeless." [213] According to Strecher's interpretation of Murakami's literature, the nation is in this light a failed project, a functional society that aspired to peaceful cohabitation through conspicuous consumption but is revealing at the turn of the century its cracks and holes. The reluctance or refusal to meet social expectations by younger generations and the fiasco of white-washing Japan's recent past in Asia are two red flags exposing the need for ideological reform. It is unclear, however, whether or not Japan will address these issues in time.

I include the chapter on Murakami Haruki published by Murakami Fuminobu[214] in his work *Postmodern, Feminist and Postcolonial Currents in Contemporary Japanese Culture* for the exceptional relevance of his analysis on the relationship between Murakami's literature and Japan.

[210] Ibid., 17.
[211] Ibid., 61.
[212] Ibid., 12-13.
[213] Ibid., 205.
[214] In order to avoid confusion, in this section I refer to Murakami Haruki and Murakami Fuminobu by their given names (Haruki and Fuminobu).

This piece also appears frequently quoted by other authors like Rebecca Suter or Michael Seats in their monographs here discussed, revealing Fuminobu's influence in the creation of an intertextual narrative.

Fuminobu taught at the University of Hong Kong from 1988 until he passed away in 2011. His research focused on classical and modern Japanese literature and culture, with a particular interest in linguistic analysis and postmodern theory. His book is an attempt to frame Japan in the Western theoretic framework of postmodernism. Fuminobu focuses on the critique of modernity and the collapse of contemporary societies constructed around the supremacy of rationality, a statement already denounced by Nietzsche, Weber, and Adorno. According to Fuminobu, Haruki's first works display this tension between the decaying model of the modern society and the emergence of the postmodern society. He describes the modern Japanese nation as follows:

> Its cult of the intellectual, its pursuit of knowledge and rationality; development of political and economic power; its suppression of the 'Other; its deep love and identification with ideological constructions of Japanese tradition, and its future unity.[215]

For Fuminobu, Haruki's postmodern society is the result of a historical process of disaffection towards the modern, late-capitalist,

[215] Fuminobu Murakami. *Postmodern, Feminist and Postcolonial Currents in Contemporary Japanese Literature*, 23.

industrial society based on rationalism described above. Fuminobu argues that Haruki's literature illustrates the transition happening in contemporary Japan from a questionable model of society based on rational progress towards a more empathic, open, and less centralized paradigm, defined as postmodern:

> Murakami Haruki early works in general allow the reader a glimpse of a postmodern world: a comfortable and cozy, yet mindless and anti-evolutionary world […] we can see the two polarized forces of individualization and totalisation, of identification and differentiation, underlying these features.[216]

Fuminobu's literary analysis refers to political commentaries on the condition of contemporary Japanese culture and society. His exploration of the tension between modernism and postmodernism resembles the conflict between individuals and the system pointed out by other scholars. Fuminobu puts into question the viability of Japan as an economic being. He shares Haruki's condemnation of Japan as a country fueled by the ambition of perpetual macroeconomic progress. Haruki's empathic turn (also known as his shift towards social commitment) is associated to the desire of generations from the 1980s onwards to get rid of the transparent latches imposed by state and family institutions.

When compared to the rest of the major critical texts discussing Haruki's literature, Fuminobu avoids discussing the presence of originally Western cultural references and the process of integrating

[216] Ibid., 57.

them in a definition of the Japanese nation. Despite this difference, Fuminobu's text reproduces the idea of Japan as a state in crisis. He attributes this condition to the collapse of model of institutional control and the inevitable contradictions of late capitalism.

Michael Seats seeks to explore in *Murakami Haruki – The Simulacrum in Contemporary Japanese Culture* "how [Murakami's] first and later trilogies utilize the structure of the simulacrum, a second-order representation, to develop a complex critique of contemporary Japanese culture."[217] Seats endorses Strecher's argument of Murakami as an un-political social commentator, and provides with and argues for the existence of a unified method through which Murakami produces his social commentary: the use of Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulacrum. Unlike Strecher, however, Seats believes Murakami's quest is not the creation of a renewed contemporary Japanese identity, but to criticize modernity as a process that remains incomplete in Japan. He argues that Murakami accomplishes so by appealing in his literature to the discursive effect of the simulacrum: a second-order representation in which the signifier is absent, repressed, and incomplete. He develops this ideas in his work by looking at Murakami's use of pastiche, irony, parody, and the entangled combination of fiction and historiography.

Seats describes Murakami as the most important writer of his generation and an author that is reshaping the Japanese literary and cultural world. Murakami's popularity is attributed to his ability to grasp the zeitgeist of the turn of the century, predominantly from Japan but also from the rest of the post-industrial, late-capitalist world.

---

[217] Seats. *Murakami Haruki – The Simulacrum in Contemporary Japanese Culture*, xi.

Seats cites as reasons for Murakami's success his command in depicting a sense of "emptiness and loss amidst the materialistic hyper-consumer culture of the reader's daily lives"[218] and "the universality of human experiences and uneasiness (*fuan*) and hope (*kibō*) dealt in his books."[219]

Japan emerges in this text with a set of already common associations, most of them related to the idea of the late-capitalist country in crisis that suits Seat's argument of social criticism. Japan is described already in the introduction as "the most informationalized and mediatized of post-industrial societies,"[220] an idea that is reinforced further into the book by depicting the country as "the affirmation of late-capitalist orthodoxies of consumption" and "the complete ascendancy of systems of social control based on technology, information and irredeemably corrupt political practices."[221]

Seats also engages briefly with the problem of cultural belonging. Quoting John Whittier Treat, Seat acknowledges that "it is now impossible to write or even conceive of 'Japanese' popular culture without involving much of the rest of the world."[222] Seats believes the success of Murakami in the U.S. is to be credited to the absence of traditional exoticism in his works. He also attributes his popularity to the existence of a transnational popular culture which can be easily recognized by Westerns because the United States is placed according

---

[218] Ibid., 28.
[219] Ibid., 26.
[220] Ibid., xi.
[221] Ibid., 117.
[222] Ibid., 67.

to Seats as the hegemonic locus of cultural distribution. Seats supports the idea that popular culture references in Murakami's literature become a device to critically comment on the lack of a unified narrative in contemporary Japanese society. U.S. cultural manifestations are, following the spirit of this book, a second-order representation, simulacra whose referents seem solid and familiar but they are actually unclear and hardly traceable in the ambiguous space of international cultural confluence.

Rebecca Suter's book *The Japanization of Modernity – Murakami Haruki Between Japan and the United States* stands out as one of the most valuable critical texts for the purpose of this analysis, as she explores the triple relationship between Murakami, Japan, and the West, particularly the United States. Suter's aim with this work is to analyze the figure of Murakami as a cultural mediator between Japan and the United States, studying how Western references in Murakami's literature have an impact on contemporary Japan, and how Murakami's untraditional style reshapes the perception of Japan in the United States. In this respect, *The Japanization of Modernity* shares a common goal with my thesis, as both works delve into national readings – with the difference that Suter focuses on Murakami's own textual characteristics while I look into intertextual national narratives based on but situated outside Murakami's literature.

Suter exploits in her analysis Murakami's often emphasized position as a mediator between Western and Japanese tradition, studying how his literature influences ideas on the cultural 'I' and 'Other', while avoiding to describe each category as reified or essentially exclusive.

Instead of using Murakami as a figure of differentiation, Suter investigates his position as intermediary in the interrelationship between these two cultural paradigms, examining, as a result, the shared space of confluence that simultaneously explains Murakami's universal empathic appeal and his national and international success. In relation to previous scholars, Suter makes a clear reference to Strecher in which she also brings on the ultimate purpose of her analysis, particularly on the relationship between Murakami and Japanese society:

> I share Strecher's view that Murakami's use of the fantastic is deeply related to his new form of social and political engagement; however, I see it neither as a critique of the loss of individuality nor as an assertion of identity, but as a reflection on the construction of subjectivity in contemporary Japan, which parallels Murakami's reflection on the relation between Japan and Western modernity.[223]

Murakami is introduced using the same traits that have become at this point tropes of his persona: representative of a generation, an agent of renewal for the Japanese literary scene, and an author cherished inside and outside Japan but criticized by old-school Japanese intellectuals. In relation to the United States, Murakami's success is again attributed to "his un-Japaneseness, on his role as the symbol of a 'new Japan,' more technological than traditional but most of all 'completely Westernized.'"[224]

223 Suter. *The Japanization of Modernity*, 13.
224 Ibid., 37.

Suter depicts Japan from different angles throughout her book. She dedicates a whole chapter to trace and define the project of modernity in Japan, particularly in its problematized relationship with the Western claim of regimenting modernization. Suter reminds the reader that "Japan was the only country in East Asia to successfully resist colonization and to aspire to a role of equality with the Western powers, becoming in its turn a dominant imperialist power in Asia."[225] Suter stresses the relevance of having 'the West' as a counterpart in the construction of the Japanese identity. Japanese modernization, despite the undeniable technological and ideological borrowings from the West, preserved its cultural particularities, and this distinction, according to Strecher, "has always constituted a destabilizing element with the Western representation of modernity, causing reactions that range from exoticizing fascination to open hostility."[226]

According to Sutter, the Japanese modernization 'anomaly,' which allowed the acquisition of a stronger sense of national identity in Japan, has been reinforced by Western scholarship interested in portraying Japan as particular and itself as universalistic. Suter mentions Sheila Johnson's work in tracking down the binary representation of Japan in U.S. culture and adds three different interpretative stances the United States has historically held about Japan:

> Through critique and contempt, using Japan as a negative term of comparison to attest superiority of American culture;

[225] Ibid., 3.
[226] Ibid., 20.

> through constant ridicule of difference, in which Americans affirm their own superiority and also neutralize the other […] and lastly by an extensive aestheticization/reification, through which Japan is constituted as an object of aesthetic appreciation that is small, graceful, and harmless.[227]

This process of identity formation is based on neither emulation nor rejection, but on comparison and stimulation through estrangement:

> Each culture becomes an estranging factor for the other, foregrounding the relativity not only of cultural categories but also, more broadly, of both Western and Japanese categories of truth.[228]

These fragments also show Suter's idea that Murakami's literature reflects a Japanese tendency to reevaluate and reshape their own identity through separation and reconnection to a complex and multilayered cultural reality. This process of self-alienation also provides with the means to acquire critical insight into social conflicts. In the case of Murakami and contemporary Japanese society, Suter stresses the need for creating a stronger sense of individuality as "a way to escape the constraints of society."[229]

In the debate over cultural belonging, Suter is quick to label U.S. or Western cultural references as superficially alien to Japanese society but concedes them a familiarity that can be understood as relative

[227] Ibid., 37.
[228] Ibid., 96
[229] Ibid., 150.

integration. Western cultural references are present in everyday Japan, and while their status is apparently recognized as non-native by Japanese, their presence is not perceived as exotic but is described instead as friendly and common custom. For Suter, it is precisely this middle state between foreign and indigenous that makes Western cultural references a powerful tool to define and redefine the contemporary Japanese identity through estrangement:

> American culture is used as something that is familiar enough to be perceived as non-threatening, yet unfamiliar enough to make readers reflect and distance their own culture.[230]

> For the protagonists of Murakami's stories, Western literature is therefore both an instrument to distance Japanese culture in order to acquire an individual identity, for Japanese to 'be themselves,' and a way to give meaning to the outside world.[231]

There are some clear differences between Suter's Japan and the Japan I have been drawing based on previous scholars. Suter refers to Japan as a state in crisis when discussing the need to redefine contemporary Japanese identity, but her interpretation is relatively less politicized. Suter believes however that the Japanese state has failed in providing a flexible collective narrative to which Japanese can appeal to when shaping their individual identities. Murakami's literature denounces uniformity and greets plurality when claiming for new spaces of individuality and the acknowledgment of multiple layers of reality.

[230] Ibid., 133.
[231] Ibid., 139.

Although she avoids directly mentioning a clash between individuals and the system, Suter's portrayal of Japan eventually shares with the previously studied authors the crisis of values proper of and caused by late capitalism.

In 2006, the Japanese Foundation held a symposium at Tokyo University, Hokkaido University, and Kobe High School called "A Wild Haruki Chase – How the World is Reading and Translating Murakami." Several translators and scholars from all around the world got together to discuss diverse aspects of Murakami's oeuvre with the aim of crafting a melting pot in which every speaker would provide a different intake on the author, presumably influenced by her own cultural background. Out of this experience, the same institution co-published two years later *A Wild Haruki Chase – Reading Murakami Around the World*, a collection of articles based on the speeches held at the different venues.

Cultural essayist and literary critic Yomota Inuhiko writes in his piece about Murakami's place in the Japanese cultural scene. Yomota focuses on the shift from a projection of particularism more proper of the Japanese as an economic being during the 1960s, 1970s, and especially 1980s, to the growth of cultural exports that have positioned Japan within a shared space of international cultural confluence. He argues that this environment of expanding cultural internationalism explains Murakami's success and provides his work with the necessary momentum to thrive. Yomota sustains at the same time that Murakami has contributed to promoting precisely this "cultural

scentlessness"[232] that makes his literature so attractive. Yomota believes despite this claim of internationalism a traditional sensitivity still survives in Japan, even though apparently undefined. Murakami's fiction engages with an international sensitivity, "a nature that cannot be attributed to any single place or people drifting and circulating as they do in this globalized world"[233] despite being rooted in contemporary Japanese circumstances. By indirect allusion, Yomota argues for the existence of two cultural environments in Japan, the international non-specific of Murakami, and the "traditional Japaneseness,"[234] existing albeit without any proof or example by his part to contrast with Murakami.

U.S. novelist Richard Powers, whose relation with Murakami is reduced to the fact that they share the same profession, joins in the discussion of cultural belonging by also positioning Murakami in the space of non-identity, "neither wholly Japanese nor wholly Americanized."[235] Powers' article gathers all the tropes related to the late-capitalist model of society and associates them to Japan. He talks about "a contemporary, urban world much like Tokyo, filled with references to mass consumer culture."[236] Powers demonizes the late-capitalist condition and expands Japan's ascribed state of crisis to be understood as a universal disorder: "Murakami's books understand the terrifying disorientation of late, globalizing capitalism and our status as refugees inside it."[237]

[232] Ibid., 36.
[233] Ibid., 34-35.
[234] Ibid., 36.
[235] Ibid., 50.
[236] Ibid., 42.
[237] Ibid., 51.

Roland Kelts was not present in the symposium, but his book *Japanamerica*, in which he had explored the presence of U.S. culture in Japan, and the fact he had commented in the past from media outlets about Murakami, perhaps convinced the editors that he was a suitable contributor to this particular collection. His portrayal of Japan is very similar to Powers' in the description of a late-capitalist society ("able to integrate laid-back contemporary urban malaise and consumerism"[238]) that is also internationalist ("Japan, partly because of its long history as an in-between nation, is perfectly suited for a wired future, a future of kaleidoscopic possibility and range"[239]). Kim Choon Mie, one of Murakami's translators to Korean, and Sato Koji, deputy director of the Japan Foundation, endorse this image of Japan (and other modern countries) as defined by consumerism:

> Employing universal cultural commodities, his works depict not a reality specific to Japan but the urban life of late capitalist society. As such, the more the world grows into a late capitalist society, his novels can be expected to spread with increasing force as transnational cultural commodities.[240]

> To ordinary people who are disconcerted by the rapid urbanization and the system of mass consumption around them, his works seemingly serve as bibles that speak to the isolation of urban life.[241]

[238] Ibid., 59.
[239] Ibid., 62.
[240] Ibid., 71.
[241] Ibid., 128.

It is not surprising that in a book that was born out of a symposium held to celebrate Murakami's worldly success, the image of Japan gets associated with that of a modern, international nation. Most authors agree to draw the image of Japan as late-capitalist, urban, and consumerist, albeit not unique in this aspect but sharing the same conditions as the other spearheading industrialized societies. The absence of discussion over the tension between the system and the individual, although implicit in this opening towards internationalism, may be attributed to this desire to focus on international aspects of Murakami and shying away from Japanese particularities. The fact that this book was also co-published by the Japan Foundation, a cultural institution managed by the Japanese government, should probably be taken into account when pointing out the absence of evident political criticism.

Published in 2013, *Los Mundos de Haruki Murakami* (*The Worlds of Haruki Murakami*) is, as its blurb declares, the first academic essay written about Murakami in Spain. Justo Sotelo is a professor of Political Economy, Literary Theory, and Comparative Literature at the Complutense University of Madrid. *The Worlds* is an adaptation of his doctoral thesis. Sotelo argues that Murakami's fiction is based on the idea of 'possible worlds:' [(CV)] worlds that are between the real and the purely fictional and that are conceivable but not entirely factual. In these 'possible worlds,' elements of connection are essential, such as bridges, tunnels, and passages. Sotelo believes connectivity is crucial in Murakami's oeuvre since the aim of his literature is to denounce the isolation suffered by contemporary individuals.

Sotelo's work is a classic piece of textual analysis. Departing from this main idea of 'possible worlds,' Sotelo selects multiple fragments from Murakami's different novels to comment and cross-examine using concepts of literary theory (mainly the work of Lubomir Doležel and Gilbert Durand). *The Worlds* abounds in long descriptive passages and generous in-text quotes, making the reading rich in references but poor in arguments. Even though the use of theoretical and original concepts is appealing, the examples seem erratic and repetitive, especially due to Sotelo's decision of mentioning cases from almost every novel each time he introduces a new notion.

Despite its limitations, *Los Mundos* is a thoroughly crafted piece of literary analysis by a specialist of the field, and throughout the book, the reader finds several mentions to Japan, the Japanese, and the topics discussed by other authors. These include the ubiquitous conflict between individual and the system, the global need to construct a new individuality that includes empathy and commitment as a reaction against modern isolation, and a critique of late-capitalist society model, a mention particularly interesting coming from a doctor in political economy. These observations are sparse but regular enough throughout the chapters to present them as clear albeit non-central to the author:

> His characters want to maintain their individuality, but reality impedes them to accomplish so. That is the reason behind the constant conflict between their non-conformist attitude and the economic system that surrounds them.

> Japanese recent history acquires tremendous relevance in some of Murakami's novels […] since his characters are marked by the fear, irrationality, and guilt complex that so many Japanese suffer nowadays. [242] (CVI)

Sotelo engages with the debate of cultural belonging with greater emphasis than previously mentioned matters. He recommends readers to avoid considering Murakami un-Japanese because of his apparent lack of traditional sensibility, and just like Carlos Rubio argued in *Murakami's Japan*, Sotelo claims Murakami's 'Japaneseness' runs deep below the surface of his literature. [243] For this author, Murakami represents a contemporary Japan that is a fusion of East and West, modern and traditional, a country that can embrace foreign influences without losing a particular essence:

> Murakami's novels have been able to capture the movement of Japanese society towards openness but also of inwards recession. Their deepest fears dominate his characters, and that is why they open themselves towards others and Western culture and society always without forgetting their roots.[244] (CVII)

Los Mundos is an essay more focused on the textual analysis of Murakami's works than in studying other aspects beyond what would be strictly literary criticism. In those instances in which Sotelo

---

[242] Sotelo, *Los Mundos de Haruki Murakami*, 69, 48.
[243] Ibid., 11.
[244] Ibid., 319.

produces a national reading, however, the topics and treatment are framed within the intertextual national narrative.

In *The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, published in October 2014, Strecher stands behind his previous book *Dances with Sheep* and expands on his exposition of Murakami's critical stance against the Japanese system and engaged appraisal of contemporary Japanese society. Strecher explores in *The Forbidden Worlds* the nature and purpose of the supernatural in Murakami's fiction, also known as 'other worlds' or, as Strecher prefers to call it, the metaphysical realm. It is worth mentioning at this point the high number of texts that refer to multiple 'worlds' when describing the fiction of Murakami. They refer to the author's literary device of using multiple coexisting realities through which his characters can travel. These 'worlds' also function as a way to reinforce the topic of Japan as living simultaneously in different realms: part of Asia and part of the West, part tradition and part modernity. This fixation with the use of different worlds fits comfortably with a national narrative that precisely defines Japan as participating in different spheres of conceptual organization. There seems to be parallelisms in this sense between Murakami's creation of several concurrent realities, and the avoidance of ascribing Japan to a unified 'domain,' that is, to a shared, undivided understanding of the world. As a result, these apparently purely textual readings of Murakami's literary devices acquire an additional discursive interpretation when analyzed along the national narrative derived from his work.

Strecher refers throughout the book to Murakami's social commitment, improving his former arguments and making more explicit Murakami's message. The introduction of Murakami in this book is practically the same as in his former work. Strecher emphasizes Murakami's shift from detachment to commitment as a central point for the second part of his work. Murakami's universal empathy and space of non-particularity, which Strecher refers to as *mukokuseki* (statelessness), is combined with a "deep commitment to Japan, his readers, and their welfare."[245] In line with his prior works, Strecher reiterates his conviction about Murakami's concern in contributing to the establishment of a new and individualist identity for contemporary Japanese. Murakami's agenda, blurred and apparently undefined according to his first critics, emerges as clear and definite for Strecher this time:

> The purpose [of his literature] was to expose, in fictional form, the threat posed to the individual core identity, in constant danger of replacement by the artificially constructed ideologies (what Murakami now terms *monogatari*) of the consumerist Japanese state.[246]

Strecher comes back to one of his main points of discussion in Murakami's literature, and by extension, of critique on Japanese society: the conflict between the individual and the system. Strecher traces back this struggle to Murakami's early works, but only after his turn towards commitment becomes more evident. The tension

[245] Strecher. *The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 12.
[246] Ibid., 6.

between individual subjectivity and state ideology is translated into a confrontation between generations, the dispute between the dying narrative of a harmonious society built around a fatherly state and a younger generation that is not totally convinced by this unique interpretation of reality and aspires to apprehend a broader sense of individuality.

Strecher's most openly political chapter is "Murakami Haruki as Literary Journalist." He analyzes in it the far from objective nature of the Japanese press and Murakami's involvement with mainstream narratives and public debates through the production of his book *Underground*. Strecher protests against the close ties between the Japanese press and the government and business. According to him, "the Japanese press tends to report stories in such a way that society itself is seen to be blameless."[247] This objection goes beyond the mere breaking of a deontological code and evidences the desire to perpetuate unopposed narratives that portray Japan as a homogeneous and compliant society. Individuals that fail to fit into this narrative (for instance criminals and victims) are left outside a functional framework of meaning, lacking the resources to build their own identity beyond the main narrative. These individuals are pushed to the margins to look for alternative discourses, a dynamic that leads to dangerous movements like religious sects. Faced with the indisposition of the Japanese system to provide with alternative narratives, Murakami "challenges [his readers] to look for flaws, the gaps in their own system that force some members of Japanese society to reject its structure and seek something more unique, individual, and

[247] Ibid., 172.

meaningful."[248] Instead of adhering to a different but still group-dependent narrative, Murakami's ultimate message is the pursuit of individuality:

> From his most bizarrely magical realist fiction to his most realistically grounded non-fiction, he has tried again and again to demonstrate to his readers the importance of looking within themselves, engaging their own inner 'voices,' and using these to perceive and remake the world that surrounds them.[249]

The image of Japan in *The Forbidden Worlds* is reduced to that of a country with an internal ideological crisis based on the conflict between system and individual that at this point should be easily recognizable. Besides this well-known dispute, Strecher also paints a picture of Japan using other already familiar tropes: the late-capitalist society, "which fuels and drives forward the 'Japan, Inc' model,"[250] and the country with a problematic historical past with the rest of Asia, especially China. As it happened in *Dances with Sheep*, Strecher tiptoes around the issue of cultural belonging, acknowledging that whether foreign or not, cultural references in Murakami's works reflect the social and cultural diversity of contemporary Japan.

Benito Elías García-Valero is an associate professor at the University of Alicante. He has researched Japanese literature at Sheffield University and Osaka University, especially on the subject of the relationship between arts and the sciences. In 2015, he published *La*

[248] Ibid., 176.
[249] Ibid., 192.
[250] Ibid., 19.

magia cuántica de Haruki Murakami (*Haruki Murakami's Quantum Magic*), an essay in which he approaches the work of this writer by creating two sets of parallelisms: his literature to quantum physics, and quantum physics to Buddhist themes and theories of representation and interpretation of reality. According to García-Valero, the main conflict in Murakami's literature is the quest for individuality in a society that reinforces homogeneity and suppresses dissent. As his characters continuously feel misplaced, misunderstood, and detached from their immediate circles of socialization, they have to reach out to a vast and subtle system of loose references, people, spaces, and times in history. When these references are looked as a whole, they reveal a world that despite the blinders of formal positivism is structurally interconnected, similar to a Deleuzian rhizome. This revelation constitutes Murakami's fiercest critique to a particular model of society. García-Valero points out that even though this model is usually associated with contemporary Japan, by asking the reader to pronounce the Japanese word *shoshiki* (組織) as "system," Murakami is actually inferring that the object of denunciation is rather an international sociopolitical structure that should not be reduced to specific national struggles.[251]

Haruki Murakami's Quantum Magic, given the subject and its approach, offers a detailed national reading and description of contemporary Japan which even has its own chapter in the book. Starting from the prologue penned by Carlos Rubio, Murakami has to be introduced as a representative of this country in order to extol him as a critic with

[251] García-Valero, *La magia cuántica de Haruki Murakami*, 31.

Japan, embedded within the Japanese canon of the modern commentator and decrier of the carryover faults and challenges Japanese have brought into the new century. He has "given the back with disdain to the traditional and exotic Japan"[252] [(CVIII)] to rise as agent and voice of a new country that has integrated pop culture as the new normal:

> How can we dare consider nowadays a citizen of Tokyo who drinks beer and likes jazz less Japanese than his great-great-grandfather who drank sake and loved the koto chords?[253] [(CIX)]

Japan is portrayed therefore throughout the book as a country affected by a "culture that asphyxiates individuality, homogenizes behavior, and sentences its citizens to isolation and loneliness, especially the youth that yearns for novelty, autonomy, and diversity."[254] [(CX)] Post-1969 Japan is defined as devoid of self-criticism, where any romantic notion of political alternatives to capitalism has been buried under the dogma of economic progress at any costs. García-Valero seems to suggest that the current late-capitalist exploitive system may be explained through understanding authoritarianism as a hardwired trait in the Japanese cultural DNA. Even though he never openly claims for deep-rooted cultural essentialism, some of his arguments are also dangerously shared by *Nihonjinron* thinkers who want to establish national identity as integral, intrinsic, and inherited instead of it being basically an ideologically motivated social construction:

---

[252] Ibid., 11.
[253] Ibid., 14.
[254] Ibid., 37.

> Murakami […] links the digital era, conformism, political apathy, and cultural homogeneity with an authoritarian bias that is inherent to the Japanese society and its heavy backpack of scrupulous behavioral rules.[255] (CXI)

García-Valero supports Strecher when in *Dances With Sheep* he endorses the "rice farming" theory that would explain a tendency in Japan towards vertical social structures, in line with Nakane Chie's idea of *tate-shakai*:

> Rice farming in arduous terrains that are challenging for any crops to grow demanded at every moment a great degree of hierarchy in society and a division of labor that gradually brought a progressive homogenization of social roles and an almost unquestionable submission to the community's collective mission.[256] (CXII)

García-Valero portrays Japan again through a familiar trope: the country in ideological crisis that needs to redefine the relationship the individual establishes with the group. Japan is described as endangered and wounded by the effects and consequences of forging its postwar national identity on consumerism and the broken dream of achieving the perfect late-capitalist society.

I decided to choose as the work that will close the analysis of texts that discuss Murakami a selection of articles by different authors

---

[255] Ibid., 40.
[256] Ibid., 39.

studying his career – Rebecca Suter being one of them, and edited by none other than the prolific Matthew Strecher. *Haruki Murakami: Challenging Authors*, printed in 2016 by Sense Publishers, explores several subjects of Murakami's work and the impact his literature has in Japanese and world literature alike with a special emphasis on how to approach this author as a useful tool in classrooms of different disciplines, from history to comparative literature, including Japanese language acquisition. The purpose of this work is then to praise Murakami as a versatile and multifaceted writer whose study can become a gateway to understand matters and subjects that go beyond a strictly textual analysis of his oeuvre. The great majority of chapters in this relatively slim volume refers and produces a reading of Murakami and his work that describes and defines contemporary Japan, in some instances as a specific case study, in some others in relation to the world at large.

As Paul L. Thomas hints at the introduction of the book and Strecher resolves in the epilogue, the argumentative line shared across the chapters is that Murakami's appeal to world readers marks the normalization of a paradigm described as cosmopolitan and transnational. In this scenario, mutual attributes, common spaces, and related activities associated with the late-capitalist condition across the world bring people closer through empathy and acknowledgment. This framing disregards paying much attention to national particularities or exoticizing desires as a way to define the self in opposition to the Other by practically casting them to the bin of the irrelevant and obsolete. Murakami is in this fashion hailed as a spokesman of the level of Ōe or Kawabata. Strecher proposes as a

way to overcome the conflict over his cultural identity the claim that there is no contradiction in considering Murakami both Japanese and cosmopolitan because contemporary Japanese face the same global challenges as many readers around the world.

This idea of Japan and cosmopolitanism is best defended by Tomoki Wakatsuki's "The Haruki Phenomenon and Everyday Cosmopolitanism," the opening chapter of the series and a piece that sets the ground of the rest of chapters, as the editor admits.[257] Wakatsuki stands up for this new idea of Murakami representing the new archetype of Japanese identity, "a new Japaneseness […] that differed strikingly from that represented in traditional Japanese literature."[258] This new identity shies away from exclusive attributes and opens up the possibility of striking resemblances and building bridges beyond the conventional borders of national identities. It is a description that defines both the Japanese and a global, transnational identity. Wakatsuki backs this up by discussing the parallelisms of his popularity among young readers in Japan with the same in South Korea and China. He claims that Murakami's criticism of the system echoes to an analogous situation in these two countries. This consideration reaffirms the idea of Japan as a country in a crisis that has its roots in the establishment of a society based on ideas on conspicuous consumerism. According to Wakatsuki, Japan emerges as a country in a continuous state of recovering from a disaster, a process never completed as the root of these problems, the infamous 'system,' still prevails over the needs and tribulations of individual Japanese:

---

[257] Ibid., 131.
[258] Ibid., 2.

> Reiterating his core message from the Barcelona speech, he [Murakami] attributes the disaster to a propensity in Japan for prioritizing economic efficiency over safeguards aimed at protecting the lives of individual Japanese.[259]

Criticism towards the Japanese system gets consolidated in this volume as a familiar place in the national narrative of the country. Daisuke Kiriyama emphasizes Murakami's proposed resolution to fight back this social condition by restoring connections between individuals.[260] In the same line, Jonathan Dil justifies the success of *Norwegian Wood* by attributing it to how the different characters in the novel experience the issues of this new generation of Japanese as an outcome of the changes economic progress has made in its society.[261]

Rebecca Suter, in discussing *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, acknowledges that its two narratives "can be read as critiques of contemporary Japanese society, its conformism, its capitalist competition, or the encroachment of technology into human life."[262] She echoes simultaneously her own work when mentioning the other great topic of discussion when talking about Japan from Murakami's literature: the presence of Western cultural references. In these texts, there seems to be an agreement that has also been shared with the previously analyzed works of understanding them as integral parts of contemporary Japanese society. Establishing Murakami's literature as a

[259] Ibid., 14.
[260] Ibid., 144.
[261] Ibid., 73-74.
[262] Ibid., 67.

window to the trials and tribulations of the current generation of Japanese entails accepting a level of realism in his depictions of the banal, day-to-day habits and penchants of the represented population, including those that had a Western origin. This association is done by underlining Japan's historical propensity for assimilating foreign cultural influences and adapting them as part of its own, as Yuji Katō recalls. For Suter, this integration can have critical effects in the (re)discovery of issues within Japanese society. He suggests framed-as-foreign cultural references reveal the porous borders of Japanese identity and create in the familiar alterity a safe place from which to explore "different levels of reality and multiple selves."[263]

Deirdre Flynn is the author who delves into more detail on the idea of Japanese culture being accepted more naturally as a hybrid entity. In his chapter, Flynn defends a representation of Tokyo with a set of already well-known conventional tropes: a meeting point between East and West and a city devoid of traditional cultural elements that shatters preconceived notions of Japan. There is an emphasis quite harmonized with the editorial line of the volume on defining this translocated Tokyo as breaking the binary instead of asserting the existence of two distinct parts combined. Tokyo is introduced as a "multinational location for the postmodern experience,"[264] a city that we are reminded is part of the global village. We are invited to approach Tokyo – and by extension, Japan – as through the elements in common with our own urban, cultural, and contemporary daily experience instead of trying to shoehorn uniqueness and exclusivity as

[263] Ibid., 67.
[264] Ibid., 87.

it has been the convention for decades. Ultimately, Japan appears under the light of this work a bit freer from the essentialist formulations that have fettered its national narrative in the West since the modern advent of the country.

Throughout the different analyses here presented, some ideas have emerged time and again regarding the definition and depiction of contemporary Japan and the Japanese. I would like to use these ideas to draw the intertextual national narrative present across both mass-audience and academia-targeted texts that discuss Murakami. This national narrative is based only on common and agreed on concepts and images, while acknowledging the differences across critical texts.

This account of the national narrative of Japan is sorted again into three thematic categories that overlap with each other: the social, the cultural, and the political. The social reading concerns the characterization of the Japanese model for society. In all these texts, Japan appears as the paradigmatic example of a late-capitalist industrialized country, driven by consumerism and predominantly urban. Their citizens are defined by their roles within this system of capitalist consumption as both workers (white collar mostly) but above all as customers. This late-capitalist model is not particular to Japan but shared and applicable to the rest of modern industrialized societies. This inclusion into a common international pattern blurs the social boundaries between countries and weakens the idea of Japan as a particular nation.

The debate over cultural belonging holds an important role in the process of internationalization of Japan. Western cultural references are recognized as such and present in nowadays Japan throughout the texts. These references, however, are deemed as familiar albeit foreign in the context of everyday life in Japan. For authors like Suter, Seats, and Strecher, the existence of these references serves the Japanese to reflect on their cultural identity and question and reshape their contemporary identity. The authors recognize their inability to foresee whether these cultural references will become fully integrated as Japanese or will be considered just part of a global culture tradition.

3.4 Reliable Ambiguity and the Familiarity of Missed Expectations

The last exercise of this part is a summary of all the different traits extracted from the study of the two corpora. This goal is accomplished by comparing each body of text in search for differences and similarities that I use to configure the cohesive post-1989 national narrative. I also crosscheck points of divergence based on country of circulation and textual conventions. I would like to repeat the same system designed for the previous period and sort the reproduced definition of Japan articulated in three categories: the cultural, the social, and the political.

The construction of the national narrative is determined by an unsettled debate around the sourcing and legitimate belonging of present-day cultural references in Japan. The Japanese nation is described as a site of cultural confluence and syncretism, a space of encounter between East and West, new and old. Japan appears also as a place where cultural particularities both shine as modern representations of a new international lifestyle but whose points of origin get blurred with every tracking attempt. The concept of Japanese culture has evolved from the limits of the traditionally particular to include elements of a shared international set of principles which have been sourced and credited as generated from and by the Western world. Japan faces according to this narrative the challenge of deciding whether to integrate these references as part of a new tradition or to concoct an unstable recipe of coexistence that does not challenge inherited discourses on national particularism. The projected paradigm of hybridity shatters expectations and confronts ideas of what Japan and Japanese culture were previously understood to be for U.S. and Spanish audiences. The way Western expectations define the so-called Japanese tradition is a mechanism inherited from Orientalist practices of national designation. The discourse values Western beliefs as somehow more authoritative than reported accounts of cross-border cultural exchange and the identification with a budding global identity. The discourse designs the present as a process of transitions without a clear end in sight. Particularism is no longer defendable, but acceptance of hybridity is still problematic. Japanese identity is considered a distinguishable entity *despite* the loss of expected references. Images of a pretended canonical tradition are still hard to shake off from the national narrative. These pictures have

gone from aspiring to be actual representations of Japanese cultural practices, to become a shadow of what 'true' Japan used to be or has been relegated to the margins.

Murakami generates more debate and dissent in this process of depicting Japanese culture as more hybrid and less exclusive. His literature provokes a more significant effect of bending the borders between what is believed to be Western, what is supposed to be purely Japanese, and what is considered in between. For some, Ōe's literature when compared to Murakami's feels closer to this expectation of what a pre-globalization Japan used to be, even when avoiding defining it. This contrast can be attributed to the generational gap between the two novelists. Murakami during the last 25 years has always been identified with younger readers, while Ōe is linked to his postwar peers. When Ōe was younger, however, he was accused of distancing himself from the so-called 'Japanese tradition' the same way many texts on Murakami have done at the turn of the century. In the end, the two authors, their literature, and what is discussed in the texts that comment their work share a unified descriptive fate. Both novelists are identified with an idea of Japan that takes and integrates Western cultural references while questioning and redefining the limits of what Japanese culture can embrace. It is worth reminding that despite these accusations of unfaithfulness to alleged Japanese cultural conventions, both authors have been indisputably canonized as generational references for other writers and have been framed as ambassadors for the nation they are deemed to represent.

This literature-based national narrative makes a case for the coexistence of two distinct age brackets within the Japanese society. On the one hand, the postwar baby-boomers who had to face wartime and occupation-induced traumas. Ōe's literature represents the experience of Japan's rise up the economic ladder of the capitalist world. On the other hand, this discourse associates Murakami's writings with a younger generation, urban, mostly white-collar, and driven by consumerist attitudes. It includes individuals who despite being born and raised in Japan's peak of prosperity spend their adult lives in a country that suffers from a score-long recession crisis. This generation aspires to fight back against a discreetly vilified system to change or revoke a set of conventions inherited but not entirely accepted. Ōe's postwar Japanese are described as formerly politically charged, alluding to the tensions of the 1960s student protests, inflamed debates against U.S. occupation, and Japan's role in the dynamics of the Cold War. This older generation is illustrated however in these texts as lost and dislocated in present-day Japan, especially when compared to Murakami's contemporary disengaged youth.

There is one powerful common point in the description of both age groups present in the two corpora. Japanese people, either coming from the postwar era or being born in late capitalism, are depicted as suffering from a crisis of identity, a lack of social meaning that deprives them of the grand-scale motivations proper to a shared national project. Ōe's literature is judged as describing the anxiety of individuals having to live through the unsettling consequences of the war and their generational replacement by an apparently apolitical relay. Murakami is interpreted to project the isolationist effect of

consumerism and the disenchantment and instability that the crisis of this system brought onto Japan at the turn of the century.

Japan is therefore identified as a country in crisis, a state with a failing common project that is unable to provide guidance through the several non-lethal but chronic crises that haunt its citizens. During the early 1990s, the main predicament was economical, echoing the previous idea of presenting Japan as a paradigm of consumerism. The capitalist model of society seemed to have been driven to a stage of virtual unsustainability. This sense of urgency and institutional ineffectiveness in providing answers to immediate, everyday problems led to a social and political awakening of Japan's inherent challenges. These issues had been eclipsed by decades of growth and prosperity but now appear laid in the open: the existence of social inequalities, the fallen myth of Japan as a homogeneous society, or the undisclosed status of war memories. The state erects itself as a hierarchical structure that pressgangs acts of individualism into compliance. Corporations, the mass media, and the entertainment circus are depicted to channel and articulate Japan's shrouded authoritarianism. The national narrative incorporates the presence of acts and dynamics of resistance against this systemic oppression, but consigns them to the margins in the case of Ōe or reduces them to the banal of Murakami's individualist struggles.

The study that I produce from the close reading of mass-audience-targeted texts serves first as a useful foundation and introduction to the core premises that comprise the national narrative of Japan. These same topics come up with a greater degree of insight and smoother

argumentative edges in academic texts. Academia targeted texts also delve more openly and in more detail with the political interpretation of Murakami and Ōe's literature. The discourse appears articulated around a central subject across corpora and subcorpora: the signaling of a conflict between the system and the individual. According to this interpretation, the Japanese state has tried to shove up a unique and exclusive narrative for its citizens based on compliance to the capitalist social model of consumerist behavior, the Japanese as a homogenous society, and the revision of conflictive historical episodes to condone Japan's past sins.

My analysis has shown that the same themes comprise the three aforementioned core categories of the national narrative across both countries. The differences between U.S. and Spanish texts lay not in discrepancies within the substance but in a preference by Spanish authors to develop a description of Japan by attempting a definition of its culture. I reason this preference towards the cultural debate derives from the Spanish relatively unfamiliarity with Japan and the Japanese. This ignorance stems from the lack of recent particular historical episodes between the two countries and the small size and relative youth of Spanish academia in Japanese studies.

Regarding the differences across corpora, the intertextual discourse positions Murakami's literary style as defiant of this absolutist vision through the use of multiple coexistent realities. His characters advocate for a greater degree of individualism as a reaction towards pressure to comply with social conventions. The overall consensus of the authors in Murakami's corpus is that his success is based on the

writer's ability to seize the zeitgeist of contemporary Japanese society. Murakami's coveted critical literature is popular and influential because it strikes cords with nowadays Japanese, especially younger generations. Some authors extend this perception to encompass other industrialized societies, both from East Asia but also in the West, hinting to a global need to reflect upon the contemporary condition of late-capitalist societies.

Ōe's Japan is put together around the conceptual axis of 'the ambiguous.' The discourse reproduced through this corpus depicts a country self-placed in uncertainly arbitrary and intangible cultural and political realms. While Ōe's interpretation is charged with unquestionable criticism of this position because he believes ambiguity allows Japan to indefinitely adjourn domestic and international obligations, the narrative created by the texts takes up the concept as a reliable marker upon which to build an essentialist definition of the nation. Instead of Ōe's intended transitive behavior, the ambiguous is conceived as a connatural state of Japan and the Japanese: both modern and traditional, Asian and Western, urban and rural, trapped in a lasting dichotomy that can produce a characterization without actually committing to any permanent component of its definition.

The debate over cultural belonging, which in mass-audience-targeted texts veered from original foreignness to cultural syncretism, acquires complexity through its reproduction in academic targeted texts. U.S. references found in these authors' literature function as an estranging force for Japanese to take some distance and reevaluate their cultural identity. Originally Western cultural notions and international

globalization-born exchanges are framed intertextually throughout the two corpora as present in everyday Japan, familiar for Japanese, but not wholly owned and definitely not thought as part of recent tradition. This association is produced even despite the fact that some of the elements comprising the problematized imagery have been around in Japan for as long as a century and a half. The old habit of forcing a particularistic angle to Japan and Japanese culture resists in this narrative despite its indefensibility.

This argument is often disguised under the premise of 'retaining uniqueness:' the idea that Japan's particularity is its resistance to remain 'unique' despite the homogenizing force of modernization and globalization. This 'uniqueness' is, as I have discussed earlier, a concept devoid of content, a dress of ambiguity and vagueness that is intended only to have worth by itself. The obsession with upholding a sense of uniqueness also pervades the discussion of Japanese literature. Art's discursively attributed role of cultural enlightenment often leads authors to seek 'the unique,' 'the odd,' and 'the special' only by virtue of mention, feeling confident when skipping elucidation. This practice sometimes reaches the point of extreme elusiveness. For instance, in an article published in 2009 in *El País*, Silvia Hernando lists the latest translations of Japanese literature made available at the time in the Spanish market. She dares readers to pick any Japanese book, convinced they would be able to identify that in any case "the Japanese novel is loyal to its own idiosyncrasy."[265] [(CXIII)] What is this idiosyncrasy that she mentions without a previous introduction? Literary artifacts are required by default through the process of being

[265] Hernando, "Japón está aquí al lado: vive en sus libros."

fitted into their respective national tradition to be loyal to their own idiosyncrasy.

Conventional specialists also reproduce this same dynamic of empty designation. Paloma Llaneza, a Spanish university professor of Japanese art history, goes on to consider Tanizaki's story *The Bamboo Cutter* 'very Japanese' without actually providing arguments beyond a personal perception from the reading of a feeling of grace and melancholy.[266] The tendency to exalt an empty 'uniqueness' is restricted neither to literary analysis nor to Spain. Howard French, in a piece for *The New York Times* that reviewed the state of the Japanese publishing industry in the year 2000, asked for instance whether the popularity of the written word would succumb to the arrival of mass communications as it was happening in the rest of the world, "or whether this island nation, always proud of its uniqueness, is a mere oddity."[267] I believe discursive acclimatizing has made us unaware of the inconsistent logic of using the term 'Japanese' as a self-sustainable unit of meaning. It is part and consequence of the historical development of this particular national narrative, to which literature and literary commentary are active contributors. I expect to be able to shed some light and reflect on this process as the last exercise of this thesis.

[266] Llaneza, "Más allá de Murakami."
[267] French, "The Rising Sun Sets on Japanese Publishing."

CHAPTER 4:

READING THE OTHER

4.1 A Zenithal View of the Study

I have worked throughout this thesis on developing the analysis of two sets of discourse. On one side, I produced in Chapter 1 a synthesis of the central tropes comprising the Western hegemonic national narrative of Japan. This exercise was designed as a historical interpretation of the central concepts that were transmitted and circulated across texts present in the U.S. and Spain. These tropes constitute a discourse that legitimizes the actions and decisions of power at each point in time. I never intended for this assignment to be a widespread intertextual endeavor. I focused instead on identifying the central core themes of the hegemonic national narrative of Japan held in the West. These tropes are prescriptive principles that would allow for the legitimation of Western power superiority in the case of

potential conflicts. This way of describing Japan is hegemonic because it is both set to essentialize Western authority and it is reproduced within the system of dominant Western state and ideological institutions.

On the other side, I have explored in Chapters 2 and 3 the way the national narrative of Japan has been shaped and reproduced in the West since 1945 through the reading and discussion of Japanese literature. To accomplish this task, I studied the intertextual connections existing across pieces that review the work of four key Japanese writers contemporary to the development of this discourse: Kawabata Yasunari, Mishima Yukio, Ōe Kenzaburō, and Murakami Haruki. I argue that the study of my selected body of critical texts reveals how Japanese literature has been received and articulated to produce and reproduce a particular discourse of national representation. This national narrative places literature as the cultural agent through which the idea of Japan ends up intentionally or involuntarily defined and interpreted. In this regard, whether the idea of Japan that emerges from this discourse is faithful to a factual rendition of the country or would withstand a test of sociological accuracy is irrelevant for this study. As the exploration conducted on this thesis proves, the national narrative is sustained intertextually uncontested. The authors and their texts develop a set of tropes that attempt a cohesive description of the Japanese nation relying on textual interpretation alone. The nature of the literary texts themselves is likewise not the object of this research project. Even though it is necessary to know what these literary works are about to acknowledge which content serves as the basis for the construction of the national

narrative, the discourse is composed solely on the circulation of tropes across critical texts.

This project departed from the hypothesis that the analysis of this discourse demanded a categorization of its constituting texts based on two criteria: country of origin and textual conventions. I preemptively accepted the functionality of the to some extent homogeneous discursive space known as 'the West' as a common ground for discourses produced and reproduced by U.S. and Spanish texts. However, I also took the precaution of assuming that there might be specific characteristics associated with the particularities of each national circuit that could potentially cause divergences in the way the texts mediate with the national narrative. In order to take this into account, I initially set to conduct the intertextual study gathering the source material and sorting it out based on country of circulation. Once the full body of texts was identified and processed, however, I concluded that the overlapping similarities present in critical texts from the two selected national circuits would have produced a redundant exposition if the results of the analysis were to be presented separately. I decided, therefore, to conduct the breakdown of intertextual tropes assuming the premise of an operational cohesive Western common ground that nevertheless needs to be constantly questioned. This approach accepts the presumption that the West is a shared operative space with a relatively distinctive discursive autonomy. Then again, this premise allows for a more deliberate process of problematization of the West's blurred and porous boundaries when tackling the existing discrepancies and contradictions that emerge from comparing U.S. and Spanish texts and circumstances.

This systematic process of questioning the West's conventional coherence runs throughout the textual analysis and is developed in more depth in the present concluding chapter.

The second hypothetical criterion considered prior to the arrangement of the body of texts has to do with the conventions associated with the circumstances of textual production, circulation, and target readership. I conjectured that the way texts mediate with the national narrative could also be affected by whether the author and potential reader is presumed possessing specialized knowledge on the matter. Based on this premise, the selected texts were organized and surveyed into two groups. First, I explored mass-audience-targeted texts, which included newspaper and periodical pieces, popular essays, and readers. Second, I surveyed academia-targeted texts, which comprised treatises, monographic works, and articles in peer-reviewed journals, all of them written to and from a circuit defined by the academic community. I decided to structure the exegesis of the analytical exercise following this preliminary segregation because I realized it offered critical advantages to the exploration of the national narrative. The arrangement of the textual analysis took shape addressing this composition: four corpora of texts each linked to an author whose literature is discussed in the analyzed pieces, and two subcorpora for every corpus embodying the explanative differentiation between text conventions.

The main takeaway reached from the examination of the formal attributes of this study regarding the relationship between corpora and subcorpora is that the national narrative shows a verifiable and robust

degree of cohesiveness across time, country, and even textual conventions. This functioning homogeneity brings out the shared intertextual traits of the discourse. These attributes have been discussed first in relation to each particular corpus. In this chapter, I put them together and screen them against hegemonic axioms of representation. I cannot point out to a single defining reason that would explain this discursive consistency across corpora and subcorpora. I draw attention instead to a series of combined factors, some attributable to the nature of intertextuality and others specific to the filtering conditions of this body of texts. An element that strengthens consistency across texts is the small and sometimes overlapping pool of authors that penned these critical texts. A set of familiar authors have appeared simultaneously across the selected sources: journalists writing reviews about different novelists or in different media; writers of popular essays on Japanese literature who were invited to write particular reviews in the press; and, perhaps the most relevant crossover, scholars writing for both academic and general audiences. The fact that many of the mass-audience-targeted texts recognize or refer to the authority of academia-targeted texts in their composition indicates the presence of a discursive environment that has integrated bridges of mediation between the two audiences. The inherent exclusionist condition of academia-targeted texts is put into question when one assesses the reach and frequency in which scholars are also requested to share their knowledge with a general audience. Specialists have then the chance to socialize their ideas and perceptions to larger pools of readers that are not assumed educated on their fields of expertise, consolidating a discourse that overcomes textual conventions.

The national narrative has also developed in time in a steady and nonconflicting fashion. The periodization that I employed by dividing the four corpora in two distinctive eras, one from 1945 to 1989 and another from 1989 to 2018, was thought to test the potential effect of particular historical contexts in the development of the literature-based discourse of representation. While it has been shown how the circumstances at each specific moment in time have an impact in the shape of the manifested national narrative, I defend that the underlying tropes are all associated to a series of idiosyncratic axioms that have traveled through time. Therefore, this division into two periods has in the end proven useful for its intended purposes of assuming a non-binding but still effective historical correlation and making the exposition of the corpora easier to lay out in context.

Despite the listed similarities, two main differential aspects across corpora and subcorpora have surfaced during the analysis time and again. First, the volume of texts discussing Japanese literature in translation increases exponentially in time. This is translated into a disparity in size between the corpora of the first period and the corpora of the second period. This increase in the quantity of critical texts evidences the growth in presence and popularity of Japanese cultural artifacts in Western circuits, particularly the export of literature labeled as Japanese. This upsurge is even more dramatic in the case of critical texts appearing in Spain. This development evinces among other things the impact of the 'Cool Japan' campaign of soft power launched by Japanese institutions and ran parallel with the

particularly late process of diplomatic rapprochement between the two countries.

The second main difference is also linked to this disparity in volume. While U.S. researchers on Japan and Japanese literature produced texts from very early on in the periodization, it took longer for their Spanish peers to form a community that would work to and from a specialized audience. Only during the second period there could be a more substantiated body of texts by Spanish scholars on Japanese literature that might be considered for an intertextual analysis. Moreover, this gap between communities engendered a dependency from Spanish Japanologists to U.S. sources, given that Spanish scholars lacked a consistent intellectual environment to which they could draw from or appeal to. Moreover, this lack of domestic authorities led to a situation of enhanced referentiality that reinforces the circulation of a unified set of tropes across circuits, time, and countries.

In the end, despite the differences in time, volume, and particular experiences of the U.S. and Spain regarding Japan, the same tropes and themes have constituted a shared literature-based national narrative. I argue that this success proves the usefulness of choosing these two countries as samples to explore the constructiveness of a shared West that overlooks internal discrepancies. It has also shown the national narrative's tendency to prioritize discursive integration and reproduction when it comes to ensure the expediency of a common grammar of power that would ensure the strengthened and widespread reach of hegemonic legitimation.

4.2 Discursive Symbiosis

Having dissected and examined the formal processes through which I produced the intertextual analysis, I am now ready to address the second main research question of this thesis: how does the literature-based national narrative engage with the hegemonic discourse of Japan held in the West? I deal with this issue refusing to reduce the challenge to a direct, clear-cut answer that would position the literature-based national narrative exclusively in one side of the struggle for power legitimation. There is not a clear threshold, a bare minimum that would need to be surpassed for a body of discourse to be considered committed to support or oppose the hegemonic order. Instead, I understand correlations between discourses as placed within a spectrum of affinity. I have explored the instances in which the literature-based national narrative designs its description of Japan through a series of fundamental concepts. These ideas are now going to be juxtaposed with the two cornerstone notions that make up the hegemonic national narrative. First, the understanding of modernity as a Western patent deprives the Japanese of fully acquiring such status. And second, the placement of Japanese national particularism in pre-modern cultural references dispossesses the Japanese subject of political agency, reifying the national identity as a fossilized object to be approached and appreciated only in aesthetic terms.

The following is an exercise of interpretative analysis that invites the reader to approach these tropes as areas with porous borders. They could be imagined as Venn-diagram circles laid out atop the common

ground of attempting a discursive description of Japan. One must conceive these associations as intersecting correlations. These correspondences can be found harmoniously similar with each other, revealing how close some attributes present in both discourses are to each other once analyzed. There are other instances in which the relationship shows contradictory correlations: the literature-based national narrative also includes ideas that enter into conflict with hegemonic prescriptions. Additionally, there are also cases in which the correspondence between discourses reveals tropes that are neither parallel nor opposed to each other. These distinctive instances should be treated instead as singular tropes that are idiosyncratic to each discursive body.

I design this task with three objectives in mind. The first one is to dissect and present the literature-based national narrative across time, authors, and texts from what I identify are its central core questions. The second objective is to review how these core questions engage with the hegemonic national narrative, paying attention to the degree of endorsement or opposition of each of the featured themes. The last goal is performative. I reject conforming to a reductionist classification that would adjudicate the literature-based national narrative condition of affinity or opposition to hegemony in unambiguous terms. I argue that the connection between these two bodies of discourse should be approached instead with the idea of intersectionality in mind. Atomizing the literature-based national narrative dangerously disparages the complex and sometimes contradictory processes of power dynamics. This thesis aspires to engage in the end with the

more honest and open-ended debate on how spaces of discursive overlap either reinforce or weaken the logic and orders of hegemony.

I devise this comparative breakdown around the discussion of a selection of topics that, as I have found throughout this thesis, articulate the national narrative of Japan. These themes are not to be understood as watertight compartments. Ideas flow across each other in a crisscrossing manner that reinforces the need to grasp the correlation from an intersectional perspective. Presenting this exploration parceled out in representative subject matters is a rhetorical resource employed to arrange this explanation in a more comprehensible manner. Rather than arranging the results of this research around the other potential indexing categories of period, author, or textual corpora, I believe thematic composition brings these elements together in a way that facilitates a more complete, dynamic, and heterarchic manner. It also assists me in the task of emphasizing the underlying nature of this correlation between the disclosed literature-based national narrative and the fundamental logic of hegemonic order.

Modernity

The kernel of all disputes, the foundation of Western global legitimacy, and the familiar conundrum at every attempt by the West to define Japan: I argue modernity is one of the most consequential concepts we should take into account when assessing the nature of the relationship held between the literature-based national narrative and the Western

hegemonic discourse on this nation. Japan's disruptive association with the idea of modernity has been a source of constant tension in the construction of a cohesive national narrative. The country's 19th-century systemic development of political, economic, and social structures as a reaction to the increased pressure put by Western powers ensured its relative autonomy. Because the hegemonic discourse began taking shape while this transformation was taking place, the relationship Japan establishes with these structures (industrialization, parliamentary democracy, the concept of citizenship, state-run healthcare and education systems, all of them identified loosely with the project of modernity) became seminal in the construction of the nation's distinguishing traits. This debate is found time after time throughout the 20th and 21st century when interpreting Japan's actions through its so-called national attributes. It emerges repeatedly on different points in history. First, it appeared during Japan's imperialist expansion following the Western-popularized modern colonial oppression. It came out again during Japan's role in the opening and unfolding of World War II. It was present throughout its postwar economic recovery and 1960s to 1980s explosive growth. Lastly, it has been featured at the turn of the millennium when assessing Japan's global or domestic challenges as a late-capitalist society. I have found the same defining and elusive question carried along (almost dragged and hauled as a periodic chore) in discourses attempting a rendering of the Japanese nation: is Japan modern?

I believe we should be asking instead why this is still a question instead of providing a direct answer to it. Why is the doubt over this aspect

more predominant when describing Japan than in attempts to describe, for instance, the United States or Spain? I argue that the presence of a debate over the modern designation of a nation is a resource for ensuring hegemonic legitimacy. The aforementioned structures associated with the project of modernity sustain a specific model of wielding and upholding power at national and global dimensions that is asymmetrical by design and oppressive by necessity. Extractivist capitalism, military might, cartographic trading monopolies, and the convention of international bureaucratization and policing are all consequences of modernity – or rather, as decolonial epistemology suggests, a necessary condition for its continued existence. This is a global system that has been enforced through the historically supported superstructures of imperialism. Because the grammar of hegemony requires a hierarchical design, and the project of modernity has been formulated as the recipe for acquiring and sustaining power, 'modern' becomes a metonym for 'legitimately powerful.' Therefore, questioning Japan's modernity casts doubts on the legitimacy to act on behalf of their particular interests in a system designed by the West to be perpetually on top.

The mechanism of questioning ascription to modernity clashes with the unavoidable recognition of Japan as a country that nevertheless presents modern structures. The logic of the hegemonic national narrative circumvents this paradox by creating a split between the Japanese country and the Japanese nation. The first is the ongoing contemporary representation of the sociopolitical entity that is 'Japan.' Meanwhile, the idea of the 'Japanese nation' is set to embrace the 'essential' definition of the community. This essence of the nation is

then approached and built from pre-modern cultural references, effectively establishing that anything 'modern' is not a substantial part of the nation's definition. Modernity and all its expressions are restricted from being associated as a subjective part of the Japanese nation. Japan is limited through this argumentative logic to interact with modernity through the pragmatic and operational of a subject-object relationship. The idea of 'Japan' and 'Modern' are substantially detached from each other. Japan *uses* modernity, leaving the question of *being* modern suspended in limbo.

This topic appears perhaps unsurprisingly in the literature-based national narrative. The circumstances and contexts for which Japan and modernity seem linked throughout the discussion of these four authors feature different particularities, but they all share a common understanding of the relationship as inscribed in conflict. One of the central themes in the articulation of the national narrative during the decades that followed the end of the Pacific War is the description of Japan as harboring an ongoing struggle of self-definition because of the allegedly traumatic fading away of its pre-modern world. In this account, Japan's revamping of its institutions and the fast-tracked plan for re-industrialization and economic recovery were associated with a process of 'modernization' that clashed with a purported Japanese national identity paradigm. This conflict is established based on the elemental clause that 'modernity' is a radically alien condition to the Japanese, which is constructed in turn from the evocation of pre-modern elements. This incompatibility both generates and maintains a conflict in a closed circuit of self-perpetuation: the portrayed tension

between modernity and Japan is as much irresoluble as it is unavoidable.

The work of both Kawabata and Mishima is read and interpreted as representing this assumed tension with modernity, each from different perspectives. In the case of the former, the emphasis is placed on crafting an historical asynchronicity. It places what is commonly identified as 'Old Japan' coexisting in permanent jeopardy by the inevitable force of modernity. Kawabata and his literature are considered representative of a pre-modern Japan that in its declared particularism is framed more legitimate of representing the national identity. While pre-modern elements are rendered part of a presumed essence of Japanese subjectivity, the modern is estranged and set antithetical to it.

This association is especially evident in the treatment of Kawabata: even when accounting for his literary style during the 1920s, the discourse treats 'modernity' as a set of tools with which the writer experiments. Kawabata 'uses' modern literary techniques, borrowing them for a while as a device instead of experiencing the natural acquisition of artistic influences. The national narrative also accentuates Kawabata's description of settings and characters that are sourced and framed in a pre-modern paradigm. Taking into account that the plot develops nonetheless in the writer's contemporary Japan, this decalage accentuates the divisiveness of modernity's impact on the country. In order to frame Kawabata's 1920s vanguardism as a phase of youth, the national narrative at the time eludes referring to the fact that he never stopped playing with genres and writing experimental

fiction. The short story *Kataude* ("One Arm"), for instance, resembles other more famous texts like *House of the Sleeping Beauties* but dares to question more boldly the limits between fantasy and reality. The plot revolves around a man who receives the arm of a woman, gets obsessed with the limb, and decides to replace his own with it. This text was written in 1964 and could hardly be used to reproduce the pre-modern aesthetically composed tropes that the national narrative associated to Japan through Kawabata's literature.

The intertextual discourse that circulates from the discussion of Mishima's literature also depicts an impossible integration of modernity into a naturalized definition of Japanese nationhood. It does so by hailing Mishima and his literature as representative of a 'modern' postwar Japan, to later interpret his fall from grace as a telltale sign of Japan's elemental incompatibility with modernity itself. Mishima and his literature are intertextually associated with two ways of interpreting Japan: a hybrid of the country's contemporary so-called mix of a pre-industrial essence with modern, Western-brought structures; and the resilience of 'pure' Japanese characteristics only if described in pre-modern terms. None of these identities were deemed stable. Mishima's alleged hybridity paralleled Japan's perceived postwar embracement of modernity and was interpreted as an eccentricity, a market stunt for Western audiences, or even an indicator of psychological anomaly. Mishima's assigned exceptionalism problematizes Japan's relationship with modernity, establishing a correlation with perceptions of unreliability. Mishima and his literature represented the attempt of merging modernity with Japan. His death and the ensuing deterioration of his popularity, in some instances read

even as repudiation of Japan's most pervasive author, was interpreted however to legitimize those who questioned hybridity as a useful and stable label for the country.

The problematization of Japan's relationship with modernity is carried on throughout the decades and it takes different expressions at the turn of the century. The mourning of a perceived-as-lost 'Old Japan' appears in stark contrast with the description of the late-capitalist society model identified especially in Murakami's but also Ōe's works. Their literature was associated featuring scenarios that related with Japan's re-industrialization efforts and with themes of conspicuous consumerism. This circumstance, far from rendering the conflict obsolete, serves as a re-edition of the same. It rewrites the manifestation of this tension while preserving its elemental terms of justification. Japan's impossible integration of modernity appears now represented by the writer's denunciation of the dire consequences linked to having developed a late-capitalist model of society: individual apathy and detachment from communities, corporate concealed power within political institutions, or repressed criticism towards status quo agents that uphold preserving the economic peace as a guiding principle. Ōe's intellectual quest for denuclearization is contrasted intertextually with tales of rural Arcadia that suggest a better coexisting formula for Japan outside modern conditions. Murakami's correspondence of boundless urban landscapes with individual ennui and institutional decadence appears framed within the same conceptual tenet.

In the reporting of this relationship, there are several points of convergence between the hegemonic axiom of Japan's questioned ascription to modernity and the way modernity is rendered in the literature-based national narrative. For once, the troublesome aspect of modernity is not identified as a connatural attribute of the project itself, but of its application in Japan. Both discourses avoid criticizing the project of modernity as a legitimate enterprise, focusing instead on the compatibility of its terms with Japan's attributed fossilized national particularism. The discourse that emerges from reading this body of literature does not offer an interpretation of Japan where modernity is not a topic that breeds disagreement and sustains identity-related contradictions. The two sets of discourses share the fundamental grounds of understanding the relationship between Japan and modernity as tied together by a sense of irresolvable yet inescapable conflict.

This concurrence is significant in the understanding of the correlation between the literature-based national narrative and the hegemonic discourse, but there is also a significant space of disagreement between the two conceptual bodies. Despite its capital relevance in constituting the core element of the hegemonic national narrative, questioning modernity is not as effective as a bonding agent when the discourse built upon literary critical texts describes Japan. The topic of questioning Japan's ascription to modernity in itself is not directly addressed as a central subject of textual or intertextual discussion. Although I argue it is still relevant to assess its underlying presence to better understand the terms in which this discourse needs to move in order to engage the principles of hegemony, in practical terms the

national narrative is better approached by looking at the ramifications and multiple expressions of this conflictive relationship.

Westernization

Both the hegemonic and the literature-based national narratives share a description of 'Westernization' as the manifestation in Japan of cultural elements and sociopolitical structures preliminarily associated with the West. Even though the name suggests a process of transformation, I argue its meaning within the two discourses forestalls development and impedes bringing the process to completion. The discursive environment conditions a depiction of Japan that suggests that the country not only should avoid becoming part of the West, but is essentially unable to. This interpretation of 'Westernization' is trapped suspended in the moment of identifying and recognizing the phenomenon, withholding any possible movement forward from that point. It recognizes the existence of these so-called Western elements and traces them to a pretended dynamic of implantation from the West to Japan. There is, however, little follow-up done beyond recognizing their origin and claiming they are taking a foothold in Japan. This process of admonishing Japan's so-called 'Westernization' has been recurrent in the hegemonic national narrative since the country first entered into contact with Western powers. Despite the time and amount of changes that have passed since then, Japan is still considered undergoing a perpetual phase of 'Westernization' which cannot be stopped nor follow through with a complete incorporation to the West. This pattern

suggests that the debate over Westernization is not so much a historical phenomenon but rather a discursive trope which pinpoints and reifies key ideas of the national narrative of Japan.

The process is stalemated precisely at the stage of moving forward the yet unreached threshold of conversion to the West. This deadlock implies, on the one hand, that becoming the West is not a feasible objective and, on the other, that in fact it should not be a goal under any circumstance. Japan's alleged 'Westernization' is discursively constructed as a reprehensible and undesirable outcome. The national narrative positions 'Westernization' as a danger to Japan's national identity because it bases 'Japaneseness' in cultural particularism. It considers Western-come referents incompatible with Japanese idiosyncrasy. There are several implications in the way Westernization is used and reproduced as the national narrative unfolds. First, it functions under the undisputed assumption that Western and Japanese cultural elements are distinguishable from each other. Moreover, it infers that they are mutually exclusive, suggesting that Westernization is the replacing of original Japanese references for Western ones. It does not deny coexistence, but in implying the possibility and even fear of substitution, it questions congenial cohabitation. This replacement is, on top of everything, one-sided: Western cultural references are presumed capable of supplanting their Japanese equivalents. In this assumption, 'Westernization' is part of a discursive lexicon that presumes the existence of a system of cultural hierarchies in which Western elements can trump over others.

As to the matter of what cultural elements 'Westernize' Japan, there are three closely linked sourcing criteria used to set them apart. First, there is an explicit ascription of the cultural agent to a 'Western' tradition. Second, there is a placing in time of the apparition and positioning of the foreign cultural element during and after Meiji. And third, there is an association of these cultural referents to the project of modernity. The repeated reproduction in discourse across the decades of a 'Westernizing' Japan reinforces by opposition the existence of a particular, non-Western Japan that undergoes this process. This 'particular' Japan is also to be constructed only from a moment previous to the establishment of a normalized relationship with the West. Ultimately, 'Westernization' is also used in the national narrative to refer to the integration of modern references in Japan, reinforcing the West's projected conceptual symbiosis with modernity.

The theme of 'Westernization' appears linked to the idea of Japan in the literature-based national narrative consistently throughout the analyzed texts. In the cases of Murakami, Ōe, and Mishima, 'Westernization' is more evidently associated with the cultural references present in the idea of Japan identified from their literature. Musical, literary, and cinematographic pieces have an alienating effect when and because they are presumed Western-come and thus unnatural in a 'Japanese' context. Practices, habits, and landscapes of industrial and post-industrial societies are also deemed part of the 'Westernization' of a nation only because the assumed Japanese identity is woven mismatched with it. Whenever Murakami and Mishima are either judged to describe a 'Westernizing' Japan or considered themselves directly 'Westernized,' the aforementioned

associations of particularism, asynchronicity, and estrangement of modernity are strengthened. In the case of Kawabata, it is precisely his literature's perceived lack of 'Westernized' landscapes and references which emphasizes by opposition a de-Westernized background used to develop the national definition of Japan. One way or the other, the critical consideration of these four writers' literature inscribes in its articulation of the national narrative the idea of 'Westernization' as a theme whose meaning shapes the understanding of Japan.

The use of 'Westernization' throughout the intertextual discourse and especially in relation to the tracing of cultural elements as identified in literature uncritically assumes the West as a cohesive generator and reproducer of discernible tradition. By pigeonholing all cultural references under the label of 'Western,' it draws a circle around a set of diverse sources and simplifies them. It disregards their mutual differences to unify them through a reduction to their credited lowest common denominator, being part in some way of 'the West.' Through this method, 'Westernization' not only endorses by opposition Japan's reduction to particularism, but also reduces 'the West' to a bona fide category, when in fact this leap must be put into question. Using the West as a denominator should be done precisely through the doubting of its usefulness and by acknowledging its weaknesses and permeable borders instead of by assuming it a consolidated entity.

In the end, 'Westernization' is not a simple process whose consequences are assessed in the description of Japan's cultural environment. I believe that the moral judgment overtone of reproving this phenomenon acquired in the national narrative indicates two

things. First, that particularism is a definitive force in the articulation of the national narrative. Second, that fearing the effects of 'Westernization' cannot be reduced to a desire to protect Japan's presumed national idiosyncrasy. This apparent concern is also a euphemism for legitimate worries over cultural imposition. It also becomes an attack on the possibility of accepting a system of organic cultural interchange. Articulating the dynamics of cohabitation of supposedly different cultural traditions by rendering them as a process of imposition of one over the other is an appropriate response when opposing imperialism's tendency to dismantle plurality. However, calling this process 'Westernization' – although it points at the main responsible actor in conducting such deeds – legitimizes in turn the West's hold of modern cultural referents and disables other national realities from redefining them. Questioning the act of defining these processes as 'Westernization' would allow the creation of spaces of confrontation against the established order by co-opting the hegemonic grammar of power that places legitimacy in modernity.

Tradition and Essence

The construction of the hegemonic national narrative of Japan as sourced in pre-modern times can be analyzed mediated in the uses and ascription of meaning to two mutually associated yet still distinctive terms: 'tradition' and 'essence.' These concepts are uncritically deployed to articulate a sense of historical continuity and discernably permanent attributes. Because the national narrative is a discourse built to reproduce the idea of group cohesiveness, it needs arguments

to cement this claim. Ideas of national essentialism derived from the 19th-century profusion of phenomenological methods and principles which sought the unbiased understanding of previously perceived as relativistic or subjective matters. In this regard, national essentialism claims that the members of a nation are tied together by a series of collective, extemporal traits that set and explained the group's course and role in history. The configuration of this concept was heavily influenced by Hegel's Geist and its consequential impact on Western thought. This idea fit into previous Enlightenment-time interest in systematizing the description of peoples like Voltaire's *esprit des nations*. This 'spirit,' also referred to as essence, acts as a fundamental bonding agent in the assumption of group characters. It serves to consolidate the boundaries of a national subject and secures its identification from the swirls of history.

The Japanese nation is discursively assumed possessing an essence precisely as a resource to pin down the attributes which would define it outside the changes of historical progress. 'Essence' and 'tradition' are combined with the reasoning structures of phenomenological and Eurocentric historiography which require them to solidify particularism. The creation of essential Japanese traits correlates then with the invention of a national tradition that comes out of the 19th-century dynamics of exchange with the West. Japanese tradition is forged and branded out during the Meiji-period paradigm of powerful and inescapable cultural exchange dynamics.

Out of the many ways and angles this Japanese tradition is imagined and constructed, I focus on how it was discursively adapted and

devised by the hegemonic discourse to refer to a set of practices that preceded the encounter with Western nations. The need for cohesiveness meets with a sense of particularism which was fueled by the early ascription of Japan to the loose and ambiguous 'Asian' identity. Thus, 'essence' and 'tradition' mediate with the discursive construction of the Japanese national identity signifying the same set of pre-modern references. These references constitute the 'essence' when referring to a supposed sense of 'being' of the national identity. 'Tradition' is in turn used to articulate the performative consolidation of pre-modern practices shared, carried out, and inherited within a group. These two concepts are deemed defining in the national narrative because they are enmeshed in a mutually legitimating logic. The essence of the Japanese is pre-modern because of its tradition, and the Japanese tradition is pre-modern because it is essentially so.

As shown in Chapter 1, these ideas, along with the general axioms of national essentialism, have long been questioned and problematized for their uncritical assumption of a group's immutable substance by authors like Hobsbawm or Anderson. The presence and reproduced formulation of these concepts, especially in their presumption of effectiveness when attempting to build the national narrative, suggests however that the critical work done to rebut the premises in which they were laid has little effect on both the hegemonic and the literature-based national narratives. These discourses assume a position of active or subliminal support to the interpretation of the Japanese nation as possessing an essence. In turn, this essence can be discerned by focusing on traits sourced in pre-modern times, usually articulated by practices packaged as a national tradition.

I argue that the literature-based national narrative formulates its description of Japan within these terms given the assumed correspondence of 'tradition' with cultural practices. Because of the conventions of modern literary criticism and commentary, the discussion of literary texts often includes an explicit framing exercise of their relationship with the art form's canon. This correlation is in turn delimited by the discursively drawn boundaries of so-called national tradition. Contrasting the author's literature to a perceived (and seldom explained in detail) national 'tradition' plays on the narrative in two levels. First, it acts as a metonym using the attributes associated with it to serve as features of the nation. Second, it establishes pre-modernity as the default point of reference. Additionally, because of the rooting of tradition in this paradigm preceding Meiji which cannot be accessed, replicated, or changed, 'tradition' gets fossilized in its enshrinement, becoming the only possible vehicle to understand the national essence.

This use of 'tradition' to explain Japan is best seen in the articulation of the discourse when discussing Kawabata's literature. As seen in section 2.2, Kawabata is rendered representative of a Japanese 'essence' because of his alleged fidelity to the canon of aesthetic rules and manifestations that were established in pre-modern times. His literature, while faithful to the alleged tradition, appears intertextually described in conflict with his contemporaneous Japan. The fashioning and development of a conflict triggered by imposing 'tradition' and 'essence' shapes the discursive definition of Japan in two ways. Whenever it matches 'tradition' because it does, and whenever it does

not because it *should* in order to harmonize with the correlated 'essence.' Kawabata's Japan is described embedded in a transitional period that accounts for the end of the Japanese 'essence' being expressed through their cultural tradition.

From then on, the literature-based national narrative would take 'tradition' as a confrontational term, mostly referred to in order to highlight the absence of commitment to it. It therefore paints two images of Japan: one that was represented through contemporary literature which would not correspond to the 'essence,' and this absent Japan of ideal reference. This evolution from correspondence to conflict appears first in Mishima and his disputed legacy of perceived Westernization and simultaneous following of a 'samurai tradition.' It comes again in Ōe's ambiguous Japan, although without the high voltage of divisiveness of Mishima. Finally, Murakami reignites the spark of the debate within the intertextual discourse. The national narrative converts a questioning over his alleged foreign literary style clashing with 'tradition' into an argument to reproduce the legacy principle of contemporary Japan's troubled relationship with a pre-determined national essence. Discussing the spaces and instances of affinity or opposition of a literary text to a national tradition actively or passively engages with the assumption of a pre-existing 'essence' that dictates the terms of comparison.

I claim this discursive use of 'essence' and 'tradition' generates the outlines for the idea of 'Japaneseness.' This word appears echoed across the texts and is intended to turn the culturally factitious of Japanese national identity into a fundamental substance. It plays on

the belief that national attributes can be reduced to a differentiating kernel of features that set apart individuals from other possible communities. 'Japaneseness' is intended therefore as a degree that marks affinity of itself. Its comparative and descriptive deployment rests on the preliminary assumption that there is a fixed and unquestioned substance that determines the being and acting of Japanese. I believe the role of 'Japaneseness' in the national narrative is not so determined by the supposed set of attributes that may constitute it, but because it assumes and legitimates the existence of a national essence. As a matter of fact, I argue that 'Japaneseness' is constructed as a floating signifier, a term without a proper definition whose semiotic role in discourse is to condition the perception of pertinence or distance of an individual to a loose and ambiguous idea of what 'Japanese' could really mean. In the end, the main takeaway obtained from analyzing the relationship between the two bodies of discourse through the mediation of 'essence' and 'tradition' is that their uncritical assumption of a preset substance for the national identity prevails over their hypothetical associated attributes.

The Unbridgeable

Despite all the efforts put into effecting a discourse that aspires to interpret Japan and the Japanese cohesively and comprehensively, the intertextual weaving of the national narrative harbors the tension of a doubt on whether it is actually possible or not for Westerners to fully understand the Japanese nation. This questioning on the feasibility of effective cross-cultural understanding is what I call *the unbridgeable trope*.

It makes explicit the discursive attempt of the national narrative of unraveling a definition behind the national identity. It designs these processes as a mental cartography where the assumed speaking voice in the discourse (the West) and the object of interpretation (Japan) are placed at an arbitrary distance from each other. The practice of identity interpretation is rendered as a one-sided movement from the speaker to the object. This shift is, however, at all times limited to remain approximate, a struggle of reaching out that falls short in meeting its objective. The Japanese nation is articulated as an entity that can be approached and surveyed, but not fully understood. This condition is recognized proper to the process of cultural contact *from* the West *to* Japan, and not something intrinsically problematic for Japanese individuals in their relationship with their assigned national identity.

Whenever the discourse expresses doubts over the intelligibility of Japan's national traits, both the idea of 'Japanese nation' and its definition come into existence automatically by connatural polarization. This impossibility to acquire complete understanding is sustained by a permanent bar of distancing that reifies particularism as the unsurmountable condition of alterity. Nations are assumed each as their own independent and bordered entity whose qualities can be approached and apprehended throughout a comparative praxis. This method focuses on what makes them different or similar to the enunciator's national position. Western discourse assumes a condition of universalism or 'zero hubris point,' as Santiago Castro-Gómez calls it. This comparatist structure is deemed by design to sustain difference, but this difference is not autonomous or self-represented. It emerges

contingent of the established point of reference, which is usually – as in this particular case – the West. Thus, the assumed 'target' entity (Japan) is actually a conditional identity, reliant on the agent that creates the comparison (the West). The *altern* becomes *subaltern* in the moment not only its attributes are determined by the speaker's criteria, but also by its self-assumed (in)capacity to understand and explain them.

In the case of defining the Japanese, the incapacity of reaching a satisfactory understanding is attributed to the Western tendency of attempting the exegesis of the national Other through rational processes. The discourse proposes as a solution to overcome this perceived difficulty the putting aside of rationality in favor of approaching Japan as an emotional endeavor instead. It suggests that attempting an understanding is more effective when Westerners suspend reason and fact-searching to seize the task of grasping 'the Japanese' as an emotional undertaking. This scheme effectively frames the parameters of what constitutes the articulation of the Japanese national identity at least partially outside the Enlightenment paradigm of rationality. Instead, it puts forward as not only legitimate but even more efficient a sensorial approach that advises sentiments and passions over logic and reason.

The discourse engages with this appeal to emotional means for those instances in which Japan is associated with a pre-modern paradigm. For instance, the unbridgeable trope has a strong presence in the articulation of the national narrative that emerges from the discussion of Kawabata because it presumes two aspects. First, it suggests that

Kawabata's Japan is strongly linked with this idea of a 'tradition' as described above that predates Meiji. Second, it proposes that this national paradigm, because it antecedes the arrival of so-called Western structures of modern reason, cannot be interpreted with the same tools. The unbridgeable trope normalizes a space and a degree of nescience in the interpretation of Japan that ensures a system of alterity, stigmatizing the establishment of potential equivalences. Despite introducing this difficulty in understanding as a product of joint responsibility, it legitimizes a model of interpretation where instead of a dialogue between peers, there is an agent that needs to decode an object. By defining Japan as at least partially 'unexplainable' through rational means, it subverts subjectivity by pairing it with absolute relativism. This argument advocates that some aspects can be described while others are the prerogative of senses and emotion, a no-space of false common ground where empty signifiers can take root. The 'sensuous,' 'delicate,' 'courteous,' and other popular tags are stitched to the idea of Japan through this means in a fashion that becomes impossible to challenge because it is devoid of content and only relies on subjective emotional appreciation.

Kawabata's Japan is not the only one where the unbridgeable trope appears mediating in its discursive definition. It is deployed as a resource to justify differential themes and aspects that would fall outside a strictly Western-bound model of rationality. It re-signifies ideas posited as incomprehensible for the West passing them as universally perplexing. It assumes the exception of the national context where the inexplicable belongs. In doing so, not only particularism ends up – yet again – reinforced, but it disallows the

particular national context from aspiring to universalism. This is seen for instance in the case of Mishima. Whenever his suicide is considered puzzling and disconcerting, an answer is sought by appealing to an assumedly Japanese way of *being* and *doing* which would explain the apparently 'unexplainable.' This is then transmitted to a re-reading and re-visiting of his life and work to include this gap of impenetrability to the definition of Japan. The unbridgeable trope is associated with debates over cultural particularism but also in defining the performative role of Japan in shaping its definition through the relationship it establishes with the rest. Ōe's calling of Japan as an 'ambiguous' nation echoes also in the conceptual chambers erected by the unbridgeable trope. While it challenges a notion of particularism by defending the interpretation of Japan as a model of hybridity, it justifies this condition as a connatural state of Japan. This correlation evades the debate affecting cultural boundaries in processes of exchange. It renounces to overseeing the systemic connotations of this phenomenon as a manifestation of an unequal structure of cross-influences. The unbridgeable trope harmonizes with hegemonic frameworks because it essentializes particularism and plays down the relevance of universalism in the construction of Japan by claiming spaces of unreachability.

This is seen in how the discourse judges Murakami's mediation on the construction of Japan. The questioning of Murakami's Japan (Westernized, uncomfortably modern, and unfaithful to Japanese 'essence' and 'tradition,' to mention some of the axioms already developed) finds room to discursively develop precisely because it comes from a precedent of essentialized inscrutability of the Japanese

identity and experience. Murakami's characterized universalism positions Japan and the Japanese in a more open and less abstruse dialogue which imperils particularism by effectively suggesting that the bridge can, in fact, be crossed. The ways the intertextual discourse deals with the perception of Murakami's Japan as universal disprove it. The discourse either actively looks for particularities or questions the legitimacy of Murakami's literature as a representation of Japan. This reaction makes, at the same time, more difficult to properly question this assumption of universalism without justifying the discursive logic of ingrained particularism.

Ultimately, the literature-based national narrative sees in the naturalization of spaces of unavailability a justification for the need to permanently revisit and redefine the Other as a problematic endeavor. The nation to be defined is not a subject but a mystery, a problem to be solved through the agent that embodies the creation and reproduction of discourse. The unbridgeable trope becomes in this system one of the cornerstones of a paradigm that naturalizes alterity. It reinforces particularism, conceptual difference, and limits empathy through the establishment of the figure of the *alter* as something ultimately incomprehensible. In doing so, it entraps the construction of Japan and the Japanese in a dialectic system that disguises the creation of subaltern identities under the rubric of cultural relativism. This process makes the Other heavily dependent on Western epistemological modes of expression and understanding.

First it was the trauma of the end of the war, followed by the turmoil produced by the U.S. occupation. Then came the stress generated by reindustrialization and the rapid economic development. This led the way to trade tensions, the burst of the financial bubble, and lately, the strain of a long-lasting recession at the turn of the century. The national narrative of Japan has found different agents, reasons, and contexts to depict Japan as a state enduring a permanent crisis since 1945. This idea of an abiding predicament is settled in the definition of Japan in a way that resonates with previously explored tropes of conflict: economic, political, and social unrest are associated with an ingrained situation of cultural identity in contradiction. The frictions that emerged from the transformations happening during the immediate postwar period in terms of institutional reconfiguration and darning of the Japanese industrial fabric are interpreted in the national narrative as a manifestation of a larger, quasi-paradigmatic struggle between an 'Old' Japan and a 'New' Japan. This clash is also fueled by a pugnacious reading of cross-cultural interaction and dissemination, as seen above under the rubric of 'Westernization.' These considerations are constructed as both correlated and constrained to a specific historical moment that gives them expression during periods of crisis. However, they are also simultaneously introduced and developed as ahistorical, connatural conflicts that shape and determine Japan as open and perpetually yet-irresolute identity disputes. In the end, the narrative establishes a discursive bridge between contextual crises and a problematic/problematized identity that normalizes the struggle and makes it an effective attribute of the nation's definition. It

avoids settling a dispute that would define it more clearly in favor of the uncritical acceptance of Japan as undergoing a somehow stable process of contradictory premises within the structure of its national identity definition.

This closed system of circular logic that renders Japan as perpetually in crisis profusely appears in the intertextual commentary of the selected literature. During the "In Peace We Prosper" period, the crisis associated with postwar changes is found looming over Kawabata's and Mishima's literature, although each with their own particularities. In the case of Kawabata, the national narrative specifically considers that his works avoid depicting Japan's contemporaneous sociopolitical conditions as a way for the writer to frame himself within the so-called conflict of two coexisting Japans. These texts consider that Kawabata's literature appeals to an idea of Japan that they believe more homogeneous and less strained by issues because it is perceived preceding the conflict brought by modernity and the contact with the West. Mishima's literature is positioned precisely within its historical time and conditions. The national narrative considers that Mishima's works dialogue with a background that gives them reason and meaning. The intertextual consensus points out at Mishima's rebelliousness in his work and life as a reflection of a generation that struggled with a simultaneously planned and unavoidable imposition of a new reality enacted by the factual powers of postwar Japan status quo. His death and following decrease in popularity of his literature are connected argumentatively with the end and defeat of reformist and defiant movements within Japanese society.

The crisis gets transferred from a clash between a pre-war (often confused in discourse with pre-modern) and a post-war paradigms to the brewing and late exposition of the inner contradictions existing in the model of late capitalism that Japan of the 1980s and onwards becomes for the national narrative. This shift, however, happens without a proper settlement of the issues previously laid out. The discourse takes on this unfinished business as a justification to explain the relative and late success of Ōe's activist literature. Japan comes across during "The Great Bewitchment" period as more hierarchical and authoritarian as a result of the described as apathetic and apolitical sentiment that pervades Japanese society at the turn of the century. Opposition to the status quo is sent to the margins. The dominant message of the national narrative on the matter is that the Japanese crisis has been for the past thirty years a big elephant in the room. The literature of both Ōe and Murakami is interpreted in this matter as pointing out at the veiled ripples of opposition and resistance that would destabilize an assumed idea of Japan as homogeneously conformable and submissive.

The trope of Japan in crisis at the beginning of the 21st century carries the open-ended matters over past/present, East/West that dominated the idea of crisis in the postwar-era national narrative. It turns this unsettledness into a reason to be in permanent struggle with itself. The discourse interprets that Japan is in crisis out of three elements. First, there is an unresolved dispute over conflictive interpretations on how modernity fits in an assumedly pre-modern national 'essence.' Second, this dispute is fueled by an open debate on how foreign cultural references integrate with the definition of the nation and its ongoing

manifestation. And third, the fact that these two discussions are still open fronts in the discursive configuration of the Japanese nation is read as a signal that a desire to settle these discussions is missing. Framing Ōe and Murakami's Japan as undergoing a process of neglected recognition of pending matters constitutes an organic continuation in the rendering of the nation as harboring the same familiar tensions from yore. These are in turn entrenched so deep in the fibers of the nation's discursive definition that a solution is never expected. It leaves only the lingering and naturalizing power of the problem as the force that shapes the definition of the country. The national narrative ends up interpreting from the reading of Japanese literature the projection of Japan as a nation fundamentally in crisis.

This is something that I recognize has developed in dialogue with structural hegemonic axioms, but it has taken a more defined outline particularly after 1945. Interpreting a series of tensions closely associated with the implementation and development of modern institutions as an unavoidable reason for Japan to enter into contradiction and crisis reinforces the questioning on whether the nation is capable of becoming modern. The discourse has preserved this debate over the decades as a static and unresolvable conundrum, as seen in how this trope travels from the commentary of the literature of one author to the other with relative ease. This turns an examination seemingly enclosed in the terms of a specific milieu into an underlying national attribute. Moreover, the way the debate is conceived and conducted strengthens the connection to a national reading. The determinants for political, social, and economic crisis are not to be found in the model itself, but in its particular application in

Japan. The inherent conditions for the cyclical collapse and devastating repercussions of capitalism are not honestly assessed in this discourse. The focus of attention is placed on and blindly reduced to the particular experience of Japan, shifting the blame from the model to the case. Similarly, the hegemonic geostrategic implications of processes of cultural globalization are grossly overlooked. The debate has been downgraded to a consequently partial and flawed discussion on the perceivably unwanted disappearance of national particularism.

The limits between what can be more clearly identified as a discursive construction and the justified sociopolitical commentary are perhaps in this trope less evident than in other explored axioms. One must be cautious therefore when taking them into account. For instance, it is possible to find the discursive theme of a supposedly 'disaster culture' that shapes and portrays the Japanese nation derived from this notion of Japan as defined by a crisis of internal contradictions. This idea creates a link between natural and man-made cataclysms and a way of understanding the conditions and reactions of Japan through the prism of the national paradigm. This same association of Japan with catastrophes is also rendered through the commentary of literature. Each of the four authors is being related to a particular traumatic moment in their contemporaneous history. Kawabata's and Mishima's works are read as products and manifestations of postwar trauma. Ōe's literature is framed quite clearly in close association with the process of mourning and accountability with the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Murakami is judged writing first about the incidents of

1995, and then marked by the Tōhoku Earthquake and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant's meltdown in 2011.

As a matter of fact, this last event has ignited the production of many texts that relate to the idea of using literature as a means to cope and give meaning from the principle of loss and recovery. Linda Flores explores for instance the use of intertextuality in Kawakami Hiromi's "Kamisama 2011" and Furukawa Hideo's "Horses, Horses, The Light Remains Pure" as a way of reinterpreting and redefining how trauma is represented and dealt with in contemporary Japan that marks a change of paradigm:

> As scholars reflecting on the meanings associated with a "post 3.11" have indicated, declaring an "after" simultaneously creates a "before." A "post 3.11" creates a "pre 3.11," and what the 2011 texts by Kawakami and Furukawa highlight are the transformations in our way of looking at the world before and after 3.11.[1]

Flores also quotes Kimura Saeko's proclamation of 3/11 as "the harbinger of a new literary genre."[2] Similarly, Rebecca Suter discusses how the momentum of this wave of new and revisited literary voices grouped together for their interest or association with the 3/11 disaster have challenged the conventions of Japanese national literature in both theme and style. However, this controversy clashes with the prowess of an institutional discourse over the 'Japaneseness' of the reaction to disasters that has many echoes in the hegemonic national narrative:

---

[1] Flores, "Matrices of Time, Space, and Text,"164.
[2] Ibid., 142.

> A central component of institutional post-3.11 discourse was the notion of a supposed uniquely Japanese 'collective spirit' that is activated in times of crisis, as embodied by concepts such as *kizuna* (bond) and *gaman* (endurance) […] Kizuna soon became shorthand for the Japanese response to the 3.11 disaster. While the term evoked a general sense of national, and international, solidarity in the face of hardship […] the concept of kizuna was also portrayed and perceived as coterminous with stereotypes about the Japanese national character, such as a group-oriented mentality, a unique ability to withstand adversity, and a strong sense of community. Official discourse on the disaster, both in Japan and outside Japan, praised the exceptional cohesion of the Japanese people in the face of the disaster, and the media was soon filled with heart-warming stories of 'uniquely Japanese' self-sacrifice and solidarity.[3]

In the end, the relationship between literature, disasters as proponents of crisis, and the idea of a Japanese experience appears tied together as part of the historical, trans-discursive construction of the national narrative within the structures and logical configurations of hegemony.

Having exposed and developed its constitutive points, I believe it is possible already to put forward a final assessment of the relationship between these two bodies of discourse. I argue that the intertextual discourse built from and in relation to the critical analysis of Japanese literature shares enough with hegemonic propositions to consider its

[3] Suter, "Beyond *Kizuna*," 305.

reproduction and circulation a dialect of the West's hegemonic representation of the Japanese. While it has been possible to identify the independently-drawn outlines of a literature-based national narrative, the themes and mechanisms pinpointed in the construction of Japan do not challenge the hegemonic principles of representation. It does not contest the questioning of Japan's adscription to modernity in all its forms and manifestations. It builds an understanding of Japan that echoes the consideration of a national identity split into an essential, fixed, pre-modern sourced self and a heavily-mediated, perpetually problematized articulation of contemporaneous circumstances. And finally, the literature-based national narrative also conforms to the objectifying and de-politicizing effect of 'aesthetic exceptionalization' through exoticism. This renders Japan and the Japanese deprived of agency to have a stake in their projection as independent subjects, a process echoing the West's configuration of the global subaltern.

The literature-based national narrative's engagement with hegemonic axioms should not be understood as a process limited to the direct endorsement of their principles. Instead, I believe this relationship must also be framed including the less obvious but yet distinctively relevant element of conformity to status quo structures and grammar proposed by power to legitimize its position. The national narrative of Japan that emerges from discussing its literature in the West eventually does not provide an alternative to how Japan and the Japanese have been described, both in content and approach, by the hegemonic discourse. This is the most remarkable aspect of the correlation between the two discourses. Either by affirming or refusing to offer a

different path, the literature-based national narrative underpins the epistemological structures of hegemony.

This process of consenting legitimation can be ascertained both when analyzing the discourse taken as a whole and when looking at how each of its constitutive corpora shapes it. The four authors are framed within a shared scope and language that articulates the hegemonic interpretation and rendering of the Japanese. Kawabata Yasunari and his literature are built around ideas of a Japan that needs to be searched outside modernity and into traditional expressions of a so-called 'essential' national identity. These manifestations are taken as exotic and exoticized interpretations of nativist aesthetic principles. These tropes become metonyms of the nation, reinforcing particularism out of understanding that only differentiated attributes can constitute cultural identity. The works of Mishima Yukio are discussed as exemplary of an assumed dichotomy within the definition of the Japanese nation. The discourse that interprets his literature embodies the tension between pre-modern particularism and Western-associated modern cultural and sociopolitical realities. However, this debate in the case of Mishima ends up with the acceptance of pre-modern particularism as genuinely legitimate to stand for the nation in accepting Mishima's perceived 'traditional' exposition of values associated with a loosely defined 'samurai' canon more accurate to an idea of Japan.

In the case of Ōe, the intertextual commentary takes the author's projected concept of the ambiguous Japan as a valid lens through which it is possible to interpret his literature and the country it then

explicitly represents. This notion reproduces debates present in Kawabata and Mishima, extending in time their appropriateness for constructing an idea of a permanently irresolute nation. It reproduces hegemonic terms of conflict between East and West or New and Old which effectively maim any attempt of properly accepting archetypes outside this string of dichotomies. As a result, the way Murakami's national narrative is designed inherits these terms and conditions. The doubting of his 'Japaneseness' appears fueled by the same disputes that have previously formulated the description of Japan. The Japanese identity has been constructed as perpetually in a state of internal conflict and unsettledness. The discourse has designed a proposed resolution, national particularism, which is however inevitably questioned by the irrefutable reality of a hybrid, transcultural identity. The discourse sustains this paradox by denying the naturalization of modernity's conditions and consequences to the definition of Japan's national identity. Therefore, for those instances in which Murakami's Japan appear to contradict particularism, his literature stops qualifying from representing Japan and shifts to be classified as international or world literature. The national narrative shows in this process its limits and weaknesses. The terms and tropes developed to describe a nation are a straightjacket that sacrifices stability and flexibility for the sake of internal coherence.

In the end, I argue that the most interesting outcome taken from this study of intertextual relationships is that the literature-based national narrative mediates with hegemonic structures not by openly repeating its tropes, but because it refrains from contradicting the logic of power. Discourses that in their circulation and reproduction evade challenging

the fabrics of power eventually reinforce their claim of dominance. By not daring to confront the proposition of hegemony, these discourses consent to the idea that their concurrent paradigms provide the right language, tools, and design for a common, referential, and operative system of representing the Other. In the light of this discursive symbiosis, I believe it is imperative that we question to what extent cultural agents, and especially the way they are mediated in public discourse, can be considered effective in the process of auditing and holding power accountable for its deeds and means.

4.3 The Seeds of the Fruit

The process of conducting research is a journey marked by planned concessions and unexpected compromises. The project and the researcher get entangled together in a relationship that has mixed and undistinguishable parts of design and inspiration. I suggest the understanding of this process as the organic growth of a potted plant. The seed of an idea, a hypothesis, or a pressing concern is sowed and taken care of during the long period of incubation, nurturing, and eventual curation of results. During the course of this procedure, the original idea grows, transforms, and takes more concrete shape. The intake of copious amount of reading, discussions with peers, individual conscious (but mainly subconscious) meditation on the matter, and the act of getting down to business have a decisive albeit almost impossible to track influence on the sculpting of the project. At the

same time, a thesis is not a wild, impromptu essay. The conventions of the genre demand the project to be defined and crafted within a clear theoretical and methodological framework. It is contained by this conceptual scaffold that the procedure for introducing, breaking down, and determining the conclusions of a case study can be more transparent and put available for the scrutiny and validation of peers. This is the way to ensure a due process of checks and balances.

Despite the advantages of this model, there is the corollary implication of having to trim the branches that grow naturally out of the development of a body of texts or a set of ideas but which do not fall within the settled scope of the defined project. There is at the same time the danger of conceiving research as a dead-ended task limited to the resolving of a postulated question. I believe it is important to take into account not only the range, interests, and objectives of a thesis' constitutive case-study, but also the subjects and issues it engages with for they could represent the kernel of potentially larger and more encompassing projects.

In the previous metaphor, the research task was understood as a potted plant. The thesis is, following this image, the fruit that ripened as a result. It represents both the final stage of maturation in exploring a particular question while it simultaneously hosts the seeds for different congenital themes, inquiries, and topics. These are not necessarily derived from a case study, but should be interpreted instead as ideas, premises, fields, inquiries, conceptual bodies that are associated with this project. I have chosen to very briefly discuss what I consider is a selection of the most inciting questions that can be

derived from this project. They are but a limited token that should not be treated as the only potential offshoots of this enterprise. Similarly, I would like the reader to consider the brief exposition I produce below of each of them as an extended invitation. They are an encouragement to pursue further, to spread beyond like a rhizome, and a humble lesson at the end of this work: to seek and reproduce knowledge is, fortunately, a never-ending endeavor.

Canon, Power, and National Narratives

The study of the complicated and polemic conditions of canonization and its consequences in the weaving and consolidation of certain patterns and structures of power has been thoroughly approached in the past decades by many scholars, especially from Marxist and Postcolonial backgrounds. Their concerns are pointed at showing how the process of instituting and sustaining a canon through the institutionalization of authoritative and referential works and authors is not free from legitimizing and reproducing a system of hegemony. This claim, derived from the understanding of cultural artifacts as inextricable from their social and political conditions of production and reception, has clashed with advocates of a supposed intrinsic aesthetic value to the literary work. The dispute, although reignited in the 1990s after the publication of Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon*, has grown weary most probably because it is based on a poorly sustained conflict. While there are clear incompatibilities between materialist and aesthetic hermeneutics in proposing their ways of analyzing an artifact, their discordances do not necessarily translate to

the process of canonization per se. One can defend the desire and usefulness (at this point, however, mostly historiographical) of designing a canon out of self-legitimizing aesthetic criteria, while at the same time acknowledge the sociopolitical repercussions of validating and reproducing the authority of such canon outside the confined realm of textual interpretation.

Similarly, one can focus on denouncing and deconstructing the effects of canonization and the ways institutionalized literature reproduces the ideology of power, but it would be naïve to consider that criticism stops at revealing the scaffolds of the system. Projects on counter-canons or pluri-canons still rely on a system of generation and circulation where literature not only relates to hegemony, but is in itself a vehicle of ideology. Any process of selection and taxonomy implies exclusion. Alternative-leaning criticism may act in a sense as a counter- instead of anti-hegemonic force. The problematization of canonicity seems to be more determined by the way literature is understood as a cultural agent and simultaneously institutionalized to be dissected than by disputes on textual commentary. As John Guillory asks, "if opening the canon means changing the syllabus, what precisely is the difference between the canon and the syllabus?" [4] This points out the limits of canon revisionism and requests to expand the debate beyond the purely literary and academic and into systemic and structural reconsiderations.

The issue of canonization takes a key position too in the stage of the debate around the question of what has been known as 'World

[4] Guillory, "Canon, Syllabus, List," 37.

Literature.' This paradigm refurbished the 19th-century idea of *Weltliteratur* to an English contemporary equivalent in the late 1990s and early 2000s to frame comparative literature in the age of globalization. David Damrosch, one of the most visible voices behind the attempt of institutionalizing this paradigm, describes World Literature "not [as] a set canon of texts but [as] a mode of reading."[5] World Literature is defined by its supporters as a way of producing, interpreting, and understanding literature that tries to overcome the national compartmentalization of literature at every stage. It can be argued, however, that World Literature not only fails to overcome the political stakes of canonization dynamics, but rather accepts and even enhances them. World Literature, as Emily Apter maintains, "bolsters neoliberal pluralism in the humanities curriculum and international publishing"[6] and dwindles literature and literary studies' capacity to question the capitalist sociopolitical status quo by two means. First, it praises the publishing industry as the harbinger of a new era of mutual understanding by giving 'translatability' value to itself. World Literature's viewpoints play in the hand of a way of understanding literature most of all in commercial terms:

> I conjecture that one reason why literary studies falls short as anti-capitalist critique is because it insufficiently questions what it means to "have" a literature or to lay claim to aesthetic property. […] Literary communities are gated: according to Western law and international statute, authors have texts, publishers have a universal right to translate (as long as they

[5] Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* 281.
[6] Apter, "Untranslatability and the Geopolitics of Reading," 195.

> pay), and nations own literary patrimony as cultural inheritance.[7]

Apter suggests cherishing what she calls 'untranslatability:' the effort to avoid opaque absolutes and depoliticized universalisms. This idea prizes those spaces of unreachability as the seed of a modest need to understand – rather than integrate – the Other:

> I wanted a cosmology that recognized the universe of comparison as more dark space than connective constellation, a cartography that added voids and subtracted from solids. This would entail critical practices that did not just substitute diference for crosscultural equivalencies but also generated a way of thinking language opacity as philosophically, spatially, and temporally everywhere.[8]

The second way in which World Literature supports a neoliberal status quo, according to Apter, is found in how the applause of likeness disguises the inherently unequal distribution of global cultural hubs and the historically-bound and unresolved discriminatory structures in cultural production and representation. Plurality is diluted and commercially branded in a way that favors an impossible 'point zero' of global identity (which is unsurprisingly close to what the West spouses to signify), instead of a more humble and transformative dialogue between equal partners. On top of that, Apter also warns us that so-called writers of World Literature could rather be closely

[7] Ibid., 18.
[8] Apter, "Untranslatability and the Geopolitics of Reading," 196.

associated and grouped transnationally by class affinity rather than by cultural plurality. She calls it a "cosmopolitan project better suited to privileged émigrés than to immigrant, second-generation minority cultures,"[9] and regrets that it pushes us away again from reaching a fairer consensus on how to deal more honestly with historical and cultural particularism.

Taking these points into consideration, I believe World Literature as a paradigm does not help us overcome the burdens of canonization. It even entrenches to some extent the debate by updating its consequences to neoliberal terms. It is, however, a useful plane of debate that is fresh, active, and whose relevance in assessing the state of literature today could still be felt for some years to come.

As I briefly explored in Chapter 1, the process of canonization has a relevant place in how literature mediates with the construction and reproduction of national narratives. The ideas of canon and nation are conceived as joined by the hip. The two are constructions that aspire to overcome history in claiming a legacy of the past and a projection into the future. Both a canon and a nation consolidate affinity by the weaving and highlighting of traits and attributes that would justify that claim. In addition, they exist by opposition to other perceived counterparts, and the fabrication of a world canon is stumbling upon the same challenges and contradictions as the attempts of uncritical proponents of a 'global' identity. The construction of a national canon has indeed had a close relationship with hegemonic structures as it is

[9] Apter, *Against World Literature*, 224.

shaped and deployed to articulate a body of cultural reference that would not oppose the interpretation of corresponding agents in power.

Kawabata, Mishima, Ōe, and Murakami are unquestionably framed within the dominant canon of Japanese literature. Is it then surprising that the discourse generated by commentary on their work is so close to the hegemonic national narrative? I decided to build the body of critical texts by focusing on these authors because they have occupied a central position in the circulation and articulation of Japanese literature in the West. Their popularity and recognition generated a mass of critical texts significant enough to be considered potentially representative of the literature-based national narrative. This principle of potential representativeness based on their puissance on the publishing market and academia entails a noteworthy bias. By accepting to work based on the artificial – albeit nevertheless operational – parameters of the canon, this study was revealing but also reproducing its structures of enshrinement. However, acknowledging the close relationship between hegemony and processes of canonization does not necessarily imply the automatic validation of power's interpretation by discourses that discuss canonic literature. This discursive correlation offers a greater level of complexity whose nuances have been explored precisely by the work conducted in this thesis. The apparent interdependence between canon and power must be exposed and accounted for. It would be however dangerously reductionist to assume correspondence without analyzing the circumstances of the original texts and their reception and placement within the greater frameworks of literary tradition and national narrative construction.

In order to test to what extent the state of canonization of literary works determines the hegemonic affinity of their derived discourses, a suggested approach would be to conduct a separate study of creation and reproduction of a literature-based national narrative. This time, the researcher would put together a body of critical texts based on the work of non-canonic writers. By following the same methodology tested in this thesis, it would be possible to compare the outcomes of the two investigations to find out to what extent the position in relation to the canon of a literary source text influences the shaping of an intertextual discourse. In principle, this would help to clarify with more accurate detail the relationship between canon, power, and discourse.

There is, however, an additional layer of complexity to this experiment that has to do with the particular conditions of working with a canon in translated literature. To the controversial nature already associated with the creation, upholding, and regular revisiting of a 'national' canon, it is important to take into account the potential decalage between canonization by domestic and foreign national communities. Not every author who is deemed part of a national canon gets translated and made available for other communities of readers. Instead, literature in translation forges its own parallel canon via the mediation of translators and publishing houses in choosing what (and whom) to translate. There are indeed spaces of correlation and overlap between domestic and translation-based canons, but in the end, to the foreign reader only what is made available can become representative.

Therefore, we need to accept the state of inevitable intervention in the shaping of a canon that is connatural to the structures of publishing literature in translation. Being so, the previously suggested comparative study is also biased by design. Any selection of literary texts in translation would be part of a canon, either a 'national' canon or one molded by the logic or conditions of the publishing circuit, commercial or otherwise. Literature in translation also engages in the shaping of domestic national canons in ways that blur distinctions. It questions to what extent the national framework is useful in cataloguing culture if it disguises transcultural transference. This point was raised and developed by thinkers such as Itamar Even-Zohar, who explored the role held by translated literature within what he calls the literary polysystem as a struggle between center and periphery that can be revealing of greater dynamics within a community. The role of canonization in the articulation of national narratives remains therefore a challenging topic to the researcher, a subject that would benefit from further development and analysis.

The Threshold between Production and Circulation

I believe one of the most stimulating aspects of studying discourse as it has been explored in this thesis is problematizing the space of interaction between the different agents that are involved in its mediation. It is particularly worth mentioning the friction generated by the differences in contexts of production and circulation between literary and critical texts. The model of studying discourse proposed in this project focuses on examining the role of literature as a cultural

agent by shifting the magnifying glass from looking at the original work as basis for the analysis, to focusing on the critical text as primary source. It argues that the way to approach how literature mediates with the national narrative should not be sought in trying to find ways to assess a potential direct intervention of the literary work in the community of readers. Instead, it endorses the idea that the nature of discourse is revealed by exploring the intertextual construction and reproduction of a series of tropes in the public discussion and commentary of literature. This approach gives precedence to reception over production, circumventing thornier questions on the teleology of literature and vague and eventually partial concerns over authorial purposes and textual traces. However, attempting to assume and even claim the autonomy of critical texts in the articulation of discourse would also be misleading and shortsighted. These are in the end pieces inextricably linked to the literary works they discuss. The content of literary texts can be suspended for the purposes of the exercise, but their conditions of production and circulation should be taken into account, at the very least to put in context how critical texts relate to it.

The differences between the production and circulation of literary and critical texts need to be acknowledged to get a more honest and detailed account of this decalage. The literary text is published within a specific sociopolitical, historical, and also commercial context that anchors it. The way the literary work mediates with discourse is determined therefore by the background of its production However, critical texts respond primarily to literary work sand the footprint of their production varies according to the conditions of circulation. For

instance, a novel by Kawabata is a unique text whose mediation with discourse will be determined by its historicized context of production. A piece reviewing the same work by Kawabata engages with discourse from different angles. It can appear at different points in time, for different target audiences, and in different circuits. The critical text expands the role of literature in its mediation with discourse by breaking the undeniable constraints of the original's metadata and making it dialogue across time and media.

Given that critical texts emerge in this dynamic as the main agents in the articulation of discourse, we should ask whether the nature of the literary text really matters in the shaping of national narratives. Critical texts become the atoms of an intertextual corpus with its own conventions and dynamics of self-referentiality. They engage in the construction and reproduction of meaning through the generation of an enriched reading of the literary text. However, the tools deployed to achieve the interpretation of literary works are determined by the text's embedment in a larger discursive framework that charges intertextual conventions with ideological connotations. The weight of the relationship between the critical text and the literary work ends up being minimized in this dynamic. In wishing to identify and analyze a literature-based national narrative, the focus is set on tropes that are built and reproduced across critical texts, but that should not automatically make us assume they are present in the literary works. The critical text becomes a hybrid product comprised of three sources: the original interpreted piece, the larger hegemonic framework of reference, and the critical and thematic conventions of genre and medium. The discourse built of critical texts occupies a space of

juncture between agents that is autonomous and at the same time codependent. It cannot be shaped by only one stream of influence and it cannot be tied to its subject either. Being so, the paradoxical conclusion is that the literature-based national narrative is constructed and reproduced in a necessary distance from the literary work.

Discourses of national representation create spaces within the conventions of literary criticism that downplay the relevance of the object of study for the sake of the interaction with extra-literary discourses. Reception studies already developed the idea that the text is not the center or the unique player in the construction of meaning. I suspect, however, that exploring the implications of discourse formation based on literature might lead to the identification of models where the nature of the literary text is irrelevant for the construction of a discourse derived from it. Would the literature-based national narrative be different if it were based on the works of other writers?

The homogeneity of an intertextual discourse as the one identified and analyzed in this project could be attributed a priori to two potential explanations. On the one hand, one could assume the existence of the so-called Japanese literary tradition as constituted by a series of recognizable features. These characteristic traits of Japanese literature would then be gathered and identified by critical texts, which in their reproduction and intertextual arbitration would reveal the structures of a discourse. On the other hand, it is also possible to claim that the connections critical texts produce between literature and the nation are more determined by a series of expectations and circulating tropes that

articulate meaning instead of by a direct interpretation of literary texts. In an extreme scenario, the critical text would produce a commentary on Japan and the Japanese without really taking into account the literary text, for the tools and language to engage with discourse operate outside of it. The role of literature in the shaping of discourses could ironically get by without the literary text.

I believe it is inadvisable to assume such a radical position in order to assess this dynamic properly. Even if we accept that the intertextual dialogue between critical texts sustains the national narrative, the nature of these is in turn entirely dependent on the existence and conditions of the literary text they are interpreting. The tropes constituting a discourse might be sourced and reproduced outside the literary text but they still need to be linked and adapted to it or otherwise they would simply stop being critical texts. In the end, tropes might not be directly inferred by the interpretation of literature, but literary texts determine nevertheless the way a critical text justifies their deployment. The study of this problematized relationship between original works, criticism, and the event of discourse shows how even operational research methodologies like the one deployed in this thesis can provide windows for exploration of concerns beyond the prescribed thematic objectives.

Bottling the West

I have assumed the use of 'West' and 'Western' for this thesis in order to question its validity as a cohesive and coherent entity and discursive

space. This decision was not free from internal debate. I am aware that even when problematized and subjected to critical revisionism, the sole deployment of the term already confers it with an unavoidable glow of operational legitimacy. However, I do not believe we are at a stage in which we can afford to disregard the sway of the idea of 'the West' when the process of its deconstruction has not been fully accomplished. Projects wishing to reveal and analyze structures of power need to (re)appropriate the terms constituting its grammar of authority before a new and reviewed paradigm can come in its place. The critical usefulness of declaring that an idea is 'invented' or 'a construction,' like the concept of 'West' or that of 'nation,' remains entrapped in the anodyne realm of descriptive rhetoric if the denunciation of its constructiveness is not transformed into an attack on its legitimating attributes.

The critical study of 'the West' as a functional concept appears determined by the same challenge of any process of identity construction and reproduction: the lack of clear boundaries that would encompass its ascribed members. Furthermore, the limits of its definition are even vaguer and more imprecise than those outlining the idea of nation. Administrative and state-regulated criteria cannot apply as there is not a body of explicit Western institutional representation. It cannot even be encircled in a map as a clearly established and undisputed regional reference. The West inhabits instead the realm of discourse. This allows it to acquire a more flexible but also more ambiguous characterization. It also hinders attempts of embracing an exploration of its hypothetical attributes, for representativeness cannot be thought of as a clear-cut process when its substance is marked by

uncertainty. This ambiguity would not be solved by trying to infer essentialized general attributes from the study of particular cases and use them to comb and group together the basis of affiliation.

I propose approaching the idea of 'the West' by concentrating on its discursive deployment. For instance, in looking at the way national narratives of Japan unfold separately in Spain and in the United States it is possible to identify how each of them integrates and applies a position of acritical belonging to the West if only by opposition to the idea of Japan in construction. These discourses position both Spain and the United States as speakers for the West and members of a naturalized community whose belonging is not put into question. Moreover, as this study has shown, the two discourses share a great number of similarities in the mechanisms and scope of representing Japan and the West to the point it is possible to treat them as a shared space. That, however, should not be taken as proof that the West exists as an entity on its own. It indicates nevertheless the design of an operative framework that determines the points of enunciation and reference of agents and discourses to tie them to a particular system of hegemony. The concept of 'the West' is historically derived from the creation and reproduction of the modern imperialist epistemology of power. The idea of a cohesive West is only sustained as long as the discourses which spouse it do not contradict its legitimating logic. It is context-bound, unreliable, and doomed to ephemerality.

To visualize this idea, the West can be pictured like a substance trapped in a bottle. If the vessel stays motionless and at a distance, the West projects solidity and consistency. If at a closer look the bottle is

stirred up, the substance shows unexpected fluidity and adaptability. If, however, the seal in the bottle is opened, the element evaporates leaving nothing behind. The cohesiveness of the West can only be sustained in discourse precisely because it is approached and deployed acritically. It does not hold well to inspection because its apparent cohesiveness is only circumstantial and too entirely dependent on the projection of an opponent against which to build itself at every occasion. If one tries to tap into what really constitutes the idea of the West outside the game of mirrors and the need to create a body of authority for dissimilar agents that share a common system of hegemony, the concept becomes little else than hot air.

Working with the acknowledgment of a functional shared discursive space that we can customarily name 'the West' also entails the responsibility of elucidating its consequences. One must be wary of misjudging cohesiveness for horizontality in the shaping of this identity. As it has been shown in this thesis, for instance, the flow of detected influences in the molding of a common Western position has been unidirectional from the United States to Spain. The two discourses assume a position within the umbrella of the West that produces and reproduces a collective set of tropes, but the occurrence of these themes in time and in association with the particular interests of power shows an irregular, practically asymmetrical disposition. The ability of discourses generated and circulating in the United States to then pour over representations in Spain discloses the existence of different roles within the dynamic of identity construction: one of composition and another of collaboration.

While it is indeed accurate to consider the West a shared discursive space even despite the disproportionate arrangement of its constitutive members, assuming so would need to be followed by a conscious assessment on the implications of its deployment. In studying the dynamics of a common discursive space, it is equally important to certify the reproduction and circulation of themes as it is to scrutinize the movements and directions taken by the streams of narratives. Just like in a hegemonic system of discourse propagation, the monopolization of terms and channels of dissemination consolidates a binary scheme that either demands reciprocity or sentences alternative voices to the margins of the counter-narrative. The national narrative in Spain can pretend to produce a discourse that frames itself as a Western voice, but this identity is a loan. Control and sovereignty are lost in reproducing the tropes and means of legitimation that have been put together in the United States. Being so, it is necessary to question again the extent to which the West is really a collective identity and not the legitimating echo chamber of particular powers. Can the idea of the West become a prison for some of its most willing members, a term to which affiliation would not involve transformative agency?

Decolonial Epistemology, Discourse, and Literature

This thesis has been conceived with the design and application of a methodology and framework of study for discourses on national representation that derive from the public commentary of literature. Once this body of discourse has been identified and analyzed, the

second objective of the study has been to frame it against the set of hegemonic tropes of the particular national narrative to see the spaces of legitimating interaction that underpin certain argumentative structures of power. This subsequent exercise of comparing sets of discourses has shown the entrenched degree of synergy between hegemonic axioms and the way literature in reception is shaped as a cultural agent in public debate. It underscores the mediation of literature as a cultural agent in the reproduction of a discursive structure that legitimizes Western hegemony through the systemized design of peripheral national identities whose ascription to the project of modernity is continuously put into question. I believe a follow-up on the dynamics of this discursive interaction would greatly profit from being produced and integrated within the scope of decolonial studies.

Decolonial theory builds its criticism by challenging the way the project of modernity has been understood and considering it complicit with the current system of global hegemony. Aníbal Quijano calls 'coloniality of power' the idea that colonialism and capitalism are not historical consequences of the project of modernity but consubstantial elements of its configuration. Without them, the idea of modernity as it has been deployed globally cannot be sustained. They constitute the necessary foundations for the perpetuation of hegemony. The system of coloniality underpins this configuration of power in a complex system of interventions that determine and hierarchize knowledge, the means to interpret and understand knowledge, and the way identities are built and perceived for the self and for the Other. Ramón Grosfoguel expanded on Quijano's coloniality of power to add

Kontopoulos' idea of 'heterarchy.' These are multiple horizontal hierarchies that include social imaginary and which explain how global power structures were built and are being maintained to this day:

> Going a step further from Quijano, I conceptualize the coloniality of power as an entanglement of multiple and heterogeneous hierarchies ('heterarchies') of sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic, and racial forms of domination and exploitation where the racial/ethnic hierarchy of the European/non-European divide transversally reconfigures all other global power structures. [...] Contrary to the Eurocentric perspective, race, gender, sexuality, spirituality, and epistemology are not additive elements to the economic and political structures of the capitalist world-system, but an integral, entangled, and constitutive part of the broad entangled 'package' called the European modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system.[10]

The notions put forward by decolonial thinkers share evident links with postcolonial theory but establish a crucial difference from it in its epistemological proposal. They criticize the fact that postcolonial theory suggests critical transformations within the same matrix of coloniality that produces and sustains it, deploying theoretical tools from and to a circuit of transmission that ends up restricted to Western academia. Decolonial thinking is not just a tool of exegesis of causes and consequences of the world-system. It also incorporates the programmatic aspiration of suggesting the de-colonization of

[10] Grosfoguel, "World-System Analysis…," 172.

epistemology which would stop prioritizing knowledge from and by the West as the only legitimate source and means to interpret the world. In this argumentation, criticism that wishes to disassemble the entrenched logic of coloniality must embrace the need for a new intercultural communication. Decolonial epistemology rejects the Enlightenment-derived idea of universalism as it has been founded on the concealment of the subject of enunciation. This idea that knowledge should not be sourced to a particular voice reinforces the perception that unique and irrefutable truths exist. According to Grosfoguel:

> By hiding the location of the subject of enunciation, European/Euro-American colonial expansion and domination was able to construct a hierarchy of superior and inferior knowledge and, thus, of superior and inferior people around the world.[11]

Quijano contends that in order to overcome this system of coloniality of power, one must get rid of ('*desprenderse de*') this paradigm of unique associations between knowledge, modernity, and universalism. He suggests adopting instead a framework that highlights the existence of multiple points of enunciation. Walter Mignolo believes that the decolonial turn means focusing less on the subject of a discussion to concentrate on "changing the terms of the discussion (and, most of all, hegemonic ideas on what is knowledge and how we get to understand it.)"[12] (cxiv) He calls this a shift from ego-politics of knowledge (defined

[11] Ibid., 169.
[12] Mignolo, *Desobediencia epistémica*, 34.

by Grosfoguel as "the privileged myth of the nonsituated Ego")[13] to corpo-politics of knowledge, "an epistemology that disposes of the 'I think, therefore I am' to affirm 'one is from where one thinks."[14] (cxv) This new epistemology is targeted to replace the current paradigm of modernity for the project Enrique Dussel called 'trans-modernity.'[15] Trans-modernity is envisaged as an alternative configuration for how subaltern alterities can relate to modernity without having to buy a grammar of power that perpetuates hegemony and reifies their dialectical and factual state of oppression.

Decolonial scholarship is vast and it keeps growing since the turn of the century particularly for the social sciences in Latin America. I believe the methodology and fields of concern developed in this thesis could also be re-introduced to a greater interpretation within decolonial epistemology that would provide more tools of analysis for the discipline and the case at hand. Many of the tropes that have been developed in the analysis of the discursive symbiosis between the national narrative and hegemony can be found denounced by decolonial studies as part of this coloniality of power. The articulation of modernity as a source of legitimation only available in its discursive configuration for the West can also be rendered within the critique to coloniality.

As Mignolo puts it, Dussel considers modernity a European narrative that disguises a world phenomenon as a Western patent. Therefore, any attempts conducted by peripheral nations of accepting the terms

[13] Grosfoguel, "World-System Analysis…,"168.
[14] Mignolo, *Desobediencia epistémica*, 17.
[15] Dussel, "Sistema-Mundo y 'Transmodernidad.'"

of the recipe of modernity as it has been deployed in the West will never challenge hegemony because they function within the same system, or, put it plainly, "there cannot be modernity without coloniality."[16] (cxvi) The matrix of power appropriates history to hail modernity as the cornerstone of any possible understanding of civilization. The project of modernity and its consubstantial structures of domination establish a 'before' and an 'after' that essentializes subaltern alterity for not being able to claim a modern status that is inaccessible for them. In the words of Mignolo, "modernity is placed in the center of time and space."[17] (cxvii) The enforcement and naturalization of this paradigm effectively configure a paradoxical rupture between space and time, for 'developed,' 'developing' and 'under-developed' coexist spatially as agents in the same world-system but the last two are trapped outside the tide of time for being constituted previously to modernity. The rooting of Japanese identity in pre-modern times responds to this same logic. The ripples of unsurmountable contradiction produced by Japan's status as a 'developed' agent with an identity framed before modernity appear exceptionalized to avoid suggesting a real alternative to the system of coloniality. In order to do so, Japan's identity, like that of other subaltern identities as denounced in decolonial thought, is built and reproduced as an object in a classification system for which they cannot rise to acquire capacity of enunciation. Sirin Adlbi Sibai puts it lucidly in her remarkable attempt of applying the decolonial gaze on Islamic identity to devise an alternative proposal of feminism outside Western epistemology:

[16] Ibid., 50-51.
[17] Ibid., 61.

> When the West represents us and talks for us by invoking the power bestowed in having physically and materialistically colonized us and having erected itself the 'center of the world,' at that moment we die, we stop existing. 'We do not exist' and 'we are not' because being is only possible when one has the faculty to 'speak' and exert self-representation […] The *others* (below the abysmal line) have their channels of communication blocked because ontological knowledge is generated and disseminated from *being*. We will perceive ourselves and the rest of non-Western communities, cultures, and individuals from those discourses and images.[18] (cxviii)

She refers to the capacity of coloniality in distorting the perception of history to create and entrap subaltern identities in a perpetual contradictory tension. The construction of identities using a supposed conflict between tradition and modernity, as it has been shown predating the national narrative of Japan, "constitutes in itself and gives shape to the crisis it decries."[19] (cxix) The sway of ego-politics of power is the masquerading of a Western-led hegemonic order as objective, accurate, and universal means of producing and interpreting knowledge. The acceptance and legitimation of discourses on representation of the Other by and from hegemonic positions that do not assume their locus of enunciation devises a dialectic cage from which it is not possible to break out.

---

[18] Adlbi Sibai, *La cárcel del feminismo*, 85.
[19] Ibid., 88.

The study of national narratives can also engage with decolonial propositions in a way it expands the understanding of all the terms involved. Grosfoguel expresses disdain for nationalism as a tool to claim back epistemological sovereignty for peripheral and subaltern subjects. He believes it "provides Eurocentric solutions to a Eurocentric global problem. […] Nationalism is complicit with Eurocentric thinking and political structures."[20] Grosfoguel however acknowledges that it would be naïve to discard the nation-state as a space where there can be attempts to confront the sway of coloniality of power. At the same time, "a system of domination and exploitation that operates on a world-scale such as the capitalist world-system cannot have a 'national solution.' A global problem cannot be solved at the nation-state level. It requires global decolonial solutions."[21] The challenge is therefore to find a balance between a commitment with domestic, national-level struggles and trans-national efforts. I believe the incorporation of critical analysis into how national narratives operate in the representation of the self and the Other can reveal new angles for approaching the mechanisms that support or oppose systems of power.

Finally, both Mignolo and Grosfoguel suggest that Japan is an exception to the system of coloniality of power. They claim that Japan needs to be considered an agent of hegemony because of its imperial enterprises deployed in the rest of Asia. I will not disagree with the way Japan re-appropriated the logic of coloniality of power to impose its rule on the territories and people it subjugated. I argue it is

---

[20] Grosfoguel, "World-System Analysis…,"178.
[21] Ibid., 183.

deceptive however to believe that just because Japan was not a colony of the West, it does not suffer from the same systematical representation as a subaltern nation by Western hegemonic discourses. I suspect this conclusion was reached without having devoted specific effort to look at the case from the perspective of Western representation of Japan. Sentencing that Japan is an exception to the rule plays directly into the logic of undermining the legitimacy of non-Western agents even if they simultaneously act as hegemonic authorities in their own sense. A more thorough and enriched analysis on some of the tropes and correlations already introduced here would provide the necessary tools to develop the nuances the case of Japan provides to the configuration of coloniality. It would also help to bridge between decolonial thinking done from and to the case of Latin America with the circumstances experienced by identities in Asia. Moreover, decolonial studies have focused its efforts in producing criticism from a more sociological, materialistic, and historical field of inquiry. If explored from methodological studies like the one deployed in this thesis, it would contribute to include the perspective of literature as a cultural agent in the discursive mediation of the appraised world-system.

Responsibility in the Face of Hegemony

I would like to devote the last pages of this thesis to discuss ideas that involve precisely the locus of enunciation. The research questions developed in this dissertation have raised a series of concerns that should not be confined to the realm of sterilized academic discussion.

If these findings and considerations are to prosper and evolve into further subject matters, it is important that we as individuals and members of a community feel appealed and decide to engage in honest dialogue with them. I believe the study of discourse that derives from the discussion of cultural phenomena reveals the importance of taking into account the active placement of all the different agents in the process of creating and reproducing discourse and what those positions entail. The journey of national narratives is determined by the arranging in time and place of texts that mediate their reproduction. The process of locating, identifying, and analyzing a discourse can give the false impression that its inscription in a system alienates our personal capacity to intervene with it. This is so especially when taking into account that instances of involvement with discourses and hegemonic structures are not limited to reply or reproduce but also need to include the critical appraisal of it. In that sense, it could be argued that this thesis is also a text that engages with the shaping of literature-based national narratives of Japan. It discusses the definition of the nation (albeit judiciously) departing from the commentary of its literature in translation. In the spirit of corpo-political epistemology, I acknowledge that the present piece is a text produced in the environment of Western academia by an author that would like to challenge the discursive symbiosis between power and literature, but speaks about the representation of the subaltern from the privileged position of being the enunciating agent instead of the represented subject. Recognizing our position of utterance is important in order to be able to formulate our concerns. It exposes the origin and route of the exercise in an effort of transparency and accountability. As readers and authors, we need to feel invited by texts

to become complicit in a dynamic that brings critical findings to question our respective positions of elocution and reception.

If – as it has been shown in this work – a literary-based national narrative can end up establishing its discursive tropes in symbiosis with hegemony, are we right to expect the possibility of it being otherwise? Can a discourse that is built and reproduced mediated through ideological institutions challenge the basis of legitimation of the power that holds them? Reflecting on these questions moves the focus from discourse to system analysis and falls outside the proposed scope of this methodology. It would suggest that national narratives are subjected to the system of hegemony in which they are embedded in a deterministic relationship that would not allow for the construction of opposing interpretations. There are reasons to support this rather bleak proposition. The impact of the structures that comprise the hegemony can indeed be found shaping this determination in different dimensions of the national narrative's ecosystems. The cultural artifacts that travel outside their community of origin and become representative of it do so through either the mediation of private commercial enterprises that follow specific profit-making incentives or through government-backed initiatives whose autonomy from the interests of power should at least be questioned. Similarly, critical texts are produced and put in mainstream circulation by way of the arbitration of institutionally tightened agents. Their symbiotic relationship with hegemony could justify the mass media and academic publishing companies' wider reach. Counter-narratives can hijack hegemonic institutions, but only to the extent to which they aspire to take over the power that controls hegemony and

thus ensuring the sustenance of the system. Anti-hegemonic discourses would not use these institutions and therefore the analysis of their discourses would require a different approach. National narratives are conditioned to engage with hegemony by bound of design.

The discursive symbiosis that has been expounded in this work corresponds to the framework of construction of a national Other. The locus of enunciation for this discourse has been found only outside the represented subject. The authors of the critical texts that constitute the national narrative describe the Japanese without framing themselves, their pieces, or the circuits where these will appeal to their readers as part of that particular national community. In a hegemonic system, power and counter-power agents contend to cast their own interpretation of the nation in order to justify the suitability of one of the agendas in a situation of perpetual conflict. National narratives of the self generate more dissension because the shaping of a particular definition for the in-group constitutes the basis for the legitimation in a contender's bid for control over the national hegemony. These discourses share a locus of enunciation and a represented subject. Hegemonic and counter-hegemonic agents can engage in the construction and reproduction of different national narratives through the same channels but offering content in dispute.

In the case for national narratives of the Other, however, the represented subject is absent from the locus of enunciation. The critical text coerces the represented Other's voice first by ascribing national representativeness to a particular cultural artifact (a literary

work, for instance). It then bases the legitimacy of their interpretation of a nation through the validity of this designation. The cultural agent loses its voice in this process. The interpreter seizes the artworks' capacity of mediating meaning and re-appropriates it to pass judgment as faithful representability. The national narrative of Japan is not built from Japanese literature, but from literary criticism. In the end, what becomes discourse is not the artwork's direct articulation but a critical text's rendition of it. This entails a change in the agent of utterance: while the artwork carries the voice of the represented subject, the critical text is produced by a voice outside the signified identity. The role of the Other in the process of its construction within literature-based national narratives seems to fade away, forcing us to reconsider the capacity of criticism to erode an artwork's political voice.

The void left by the missing voice of the represented leads the national narrative of the Other towards homogeneity. Because of this absence, it becomes more difficult to create spaces that would challenge hegemony. Counter-powers within the community of enunciation are potentially less inclined to contradict hegemony if the basis of legitimation present in hegemonic tropes harmonizes with their interests. That is why, for instance, Mignolo considers Marxism falls short in providing a decolonial solution: it functions within the same logic of modernity. Grosfoguel points out the shortcomings of 'identity politics.' He believes it is shortsighted to narrow the struggle to a specific group's goals instead of aspiring to contribute to the design of an anti-hegemonic system that would not silence the voice of the subaltern. It can be argued that the way literature in reception is rendered representative of a nation represents another manifestation

of Spivak's questioning on the capacity of the subaltern to speak for itself.

I believe that when we discuss the importance of identifying the effect of the locus of enunciation in the articulation of national narratives, we need to include an evaluation on the capacity of the individual to position itself in reaction to acknowledging hegemonic discourses. The ideological semiotic scaffolds of hegemony allow for the acritical permeability and reproduction of discourse, for it is not necessary to consciously and actively support the argumentative grounds of legitimation to engage with its endorsement. The gist of the question would be to reflect on the ways individuals address this embedment within the hegemonic system with a transformative ambition. An option would be to engage with the intertextual discourse with texts that challenge or contradict these tropes. By producing literary criticism that is aware of the claims and consequences of hegemonic symbiosis, it would be possible to offer a description of Japan that rejects these common tropes and builds an alternative counter-narrative instead. This option understands the conflict as a battle for the control of the discourse. It entails therefore the approving of the current system of hegemony and ratifies ideological institutions as the media through which meaning and power are forged together. In decolonial terms, it would imply insisting on minding the content instead of the means through which knowledge is created and interpreted.

Is it possible to use this awareness of the hegemonic axioms to position ourselves as individuals not against its content but aiming

instead at the framework that sustains them? The suggestion of decolonial studies that orbits around the concept of *desprendimiento* when discussing alternatives of opposition to the coloniality of power includes this dimension of consideration. Changing the content of discourses with a counter-narrative can only postpone the emergence of a conflict, for it only affects the situation of agents in the structure but leaves the system unaffected. As it has been shown, the locus of enunciation determines the scheme of articulating alterity in a way that naturalizes the arrogation of the represented Other by a mediating interpretative agent. If we wish to address this mechanism of systemic asymmetry, we need to broaden the scope of our concerns and move beyond a change in discourse to pay particular attention to the conditions and circumstances of our locus of enunciation. Otherwise, discourse criticism only holds particular agents of power accountable instead of taking on the more imperious task of auditing the system that enables them.

Ultimately, these are questions that should lead us to reevaluate literature's relationship with power. I claim that the study of this relationship offers a great opportunity to reflect on the nature and implications of both literature and power in a way that cannot be constrained to theoretical rumination. It demands an active transformative engagement for criticism to be effective. I vindicate with this approach literature's capacity as a cultural agent in providing the means and opportunity to probe the structures of power that determine how we relate with the world. In order to accomplish so, it is essential that we reconsider and reconceive the way literature engages with discourse through the production of any kind of literary

criticism. The way we look at the relationship between a cultural artifact and its mediation with structures of power needs to transcend the purely textual to incorporate a dimension of discursive awareness. It is not only what is said, but how it is structured, where it circulates, and from which locus it is uttered that matter. The legitimacy of power is called into question when we all take responsibility in scrutinizing the way our texts are turned into discourse.

BODY OF CRITICAL TEXTS

Kawabata – Corpus

Barr, Donald. "For Love of Geisha." Review of *Snow Country*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *New York Times*, January 6, 1959.

Boardman Petersen, Gwenn. *The Moon in the Water: Understanding Tanizaki, Kawabata, and Mishima*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1979.

Broyard, Anatole. "An Untranslatable Sexuality." Review of *Beauty and Sadness*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *New York Times*, February 21, 1975.

Cabell, Charles. "Kawabata Yasunari." In *Modern Japanese Writers*, edited by Jay Rubin, 149-163. New York: Charles Scribner's & Sons, 2000.

Culligan, Glendy. "Renewal is For Novels, Too." *Washington Post*, February 22, 1959.

"El Premio Nobel de Literatura 1968 ha sido concedido al escritor japonés Yasunari Kawabata." *La Vanguardia*, October 18, 1968.

Enright, D. J. "The Japanese Nobel." Review of *Snow Country* and *Thousand Cranes*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *New York Review of Books*, March 27, 1969.

Friedman, Alan. "As if Nabokov Had Reported on Bobby and Boris." Review of *The Master of Go*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *New York Times*, October 22, 1972.

"Ha muerto el novelista japonés Kawabata," *La Vanguardia*, April 18, 1972.

Halloran, Richard. "A Japanese Wins Nobel Literature Prize for First Time." *New York Times*, October 18, 1968.

Halloran, Richard. "Japan's Nobelist." *Washington Post*, February 5, 1969.

Harrison, Selig. "Nobel-Winner Yasunari Kawabata Takes Life." *Washington Post*, April 17, 1972.

Katō, Shūichi. *A History of Japanese Literature. Vol. 3: The Modern Years*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983.

Kawabata, Yasunari. "A Wintry Sample of a Nobel Laureate's Work." *Washington Post*, October 20, 1968.

Keene, Donald. "Speaking of Books: Yasunari Kawabata." *New York Times*, October 29, 1968.

Keene, Donald. *Japanese Literature: An Introduction for Western Readers*. Tokyo: Tuttle, 1977.

Keene, Donald. *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era*. New York: Holt, 1984.

Keene, Donald. *The Pleasures of Japanese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Keene, Donald. *Five Modern Japanese Novelists*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Kimball, Arthur G. *Crisis in Identity and Contemporary Japanese Novels*. Rutland: Tuttle, 1973.

Lask, Thomas. "Gesture and Effect." Review of *Snow Country* and *Thousand Cranes*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *New York Times*, February 11, 1969.

Lee, John M. "Kawabata, Japanese Nobelist Who Won Nobel Prize, A Suicide." *New York Times*, April 17, 1972.

Martinez-Ruiz, Florencio. "Se ha suicidado el premio nobel japonés." *ABC*, April 18, 1972.

Mitgang, Herbert. "Books: Culture Clash." Review of *The Old Capital*, by Yasunari Kawabata. *New York Times*, July 21, 1987.

Miyoshi, Masao. *Accomplices of Silence: The Modern Japanese Novel.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

Mojtabai, A.G. "Japanese Triangles." Review of *Beauty and Sadness*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *New York Times*, March 2, 1975.

Morris, Ivan. "The Nobel Prize Winner: Last Voice of a World of Darkness and Wasted Beauty." Review of *Snow Country* and *Thousand Cranes*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *Washington Post*, January 5, 1969.

Morris, Ivan. "From in Back of His Garden Came the Rumble of Approaching Death." Review of *The Sound of the Mountain*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *New York Times*, June 14, 1970.

Morris, Ivan. "The Master of Go." Review of *The Master of Go*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *Washington Post*, Sept. 24, 1972.

Murciano, Carlos. "Adiós a Kawabata." *La Vanguardia*, May 4, 1972.

Oka, Takashi. "In Literary Mainstream." *New York Times*, October 18, 1968.

"País de nieve, por Yasunari Kawabata." Review of *País de nieve*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *ABC*, November 23, 1968.

Redacción. "Yasunari Kawabata, hallado muerto en su estudio." *ABC*, April 18, 1972.

Redacción. "Ha muerto el novelista japonés Kawabata." *La Vanguardia*, April 18, 1972.

Rimer, J. Thomas. *Modern Japanese Fiction and its Traditions: An introduction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Roderick, John. "Kawabata: An Obsession With Death." *Washington Post*, April 18, 1972.

Rodriguez-Izquierdo, and Fernando Gavala. "Yasunari Kawabata, Premio Nobel de Literatura 1968." *ABC*, October 27, 1968.

Rogers, Thomas. "Pidgin Hemingway." Review of *The Sound of the Mountain*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *Washington Post*, May 24, 1970.

Salter, Mary Jo. "Kimonos and Lovely Violets." Review of *The Old Capital*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *New York Times*, July 21, 1987.

Saunders, E. Dale. "Two Evolutionary Works of a Man of Letters." Review of *The Sound of the Mountain* and *The House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *Washington Post*, April 18, 1970.

Staff Book Reviewers. "And Away We Go Into '57 Fiction World." *Washington Post*, January 6, 1957.

Ueda, Makoto. *Modern Japanese Writers and the Nature of Literature*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.

Ury, Marian. "A Man and the Idea of a Woman." Review of *Palm-of-the-hand Stories*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *New York Times*, August 21, 1988.

Vallejo-Nágera, Juan Antonio. "Vivir en refinada pobreza." *ABC*, January 2, 1983.

Vallejo-Nágera, Juan Antonio. "El riesgo de Cela." *ABC*, November 20, 1989.

White, Edmund. "As Natural and Contrived as a Tea Garden." Review of *The Lake*, by Kawabata Yasunari. *New York Times*, June 23, 1974.

Yamanouchi, Hisaaki. *The Search for Authenticity in Modern Japanese Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

"Yasunari Kawabata." *ABC*, October 31, 1968.

Mishima – Corpus

Berasategui, Blanca. "Vallejo-Nágera o el placer de escribir." Review of *Mishima o el placer de Morir*, by Juan Antonio Vallejo-Nágera. *ABC*, December 3, 1978.

Boardman Petersen, Gwenn. *The Moon in the Water: Understanding Tanizaki, Kawabata, and Mishima*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1979.

Bracelen Flood, Charles. "Review of 'After the Banquet'." Review of *After the Banquet*, by Mishima Yukio. *Monumenta Nipponica* 19, no. 3/4, (1964): 485-487.

Buruma, Ian. "Rambo-san." *New York Review of Books*, October 20, 1985.

"Caballos desbocados." Review of *Caballos desbocados*, by Mishima Yukio. *La Vanguardia*, Jun. 24, 1976.

Calisher, Hortense. "After the Self-Explanation, A Cross-Cultural Death." Review of *Sun and Steel*, by Mishima Yukio. *New York Times*, November 12, 1972

Carmona Ristol, Angel. "Un fascista japonés." *La Vanguardia*, August 26, 1976.

Carter, Angela. "Mishima: the Last Samurai?" *Washington Post*, August 1, 1971.

Clayton, James. "Japanese Author Gives Modern Touch to Feudal Era Dramas." Review of *Five Modern No Plays*, by Mishima Yukio. *Washington Post*, August 9, 1957.

Clayton, James. "Nationalism Urges Japan to Shed Its Western Trappings." *Washington Post*, August 18, 1968.

Dalmau, Miguel. "Yukio Mishima, la corrupción de un ángel." Review of *El mar de la fertilidad*, by Mishima Yukio. *La Vanguardia*, January 29, 1987.

De Paola, Luis. "Nieve de primavera." Review of *Nieve de primavera*, by Mishima Yukio. *ABC*, March 3, 1984.

De Paola, Luis. "Caballos desbocados." Review of *Caballos desbocados*, by Mishima Yukio. *ABC*, August 25, 1984.

De Paola, Luis. "El templo del alba." Review of *El templo del alba*, by Mishima Yukio. *ABC*, May 10, 1986.

De Villena, Luis Antonio. "Mishima, la belleza de la muerte herida." *La Vanguardia*, October 3, 1985.

Edwards, Jorge. "El fondo oculto del Japón." *La Vanguardia*, November 20, 1981.

"El pabellón de oro." Review of *El pabellón de oro*, by Mishima Yukio. *La Vanguardia*, August 5, 1964.

"El hara-kiri de Yukio Mishima." *La Vanguardia*, November 27, 1970.

"En alabanza a una traducción." *La Vanguardia*, August 1, 1974.

Enright, D.J. "Peasants and Poets." Review of *Thirst for Love*, by Mishima Yukio. *New York Review of Books*, September 25, 1969.

Escamilla Mallorquí, Juan. "Carta de lector: Puntualización en torno a Mishima." *La Vanguardia*, October 20, 1988.

Flowers, Faubion. "Politics and Love in Japan." Review of *After the Banquet*, by Mishima Yukio. *The New York Times*, April 14, 1963.

Fremont-Smith, Eliot. "Books of The Times: Two From Japan - A curiosity and a Discovery." Review of *A Personal Matter*, by Ōe Kenzaburō, and *Forbidden Colors*, by Mishima Yukio. *New York Times*, June 17, 1968.

Friedman, Alan. "A Master of Gorgeous and Perverse Surprises." Review of *The Decay of the Angel*, by Mishima Yukio. *New York Times*, May 12, 1974.

Foote, Audrey C. "Malevolence in a Gracious Landscape." Review of *Thirst of Love*, by Mishima Yukio. *Washington Post*, September 21, 1969.

Fuller, Edmund. "For Love of a Girl." Review of *The Sound of Waves*, by Mishima Yukio. *New York Times*, August 19, 1956.

García-Garzón, Juan Ignacio "Mishima, amor y muerte de un samurai manierista." *ABC*, October 13, 1989.

García Nieto, José. "Mishima o la visión del vacío." Review of *Mishima o la visión del vacío*, by Marguerite Yourcenar. *ABC*, November 2, 1985.

Grazzini, G. "El 'hara-kiki' como protesta y desengaño." *ABC*, December 12, 1970.

Gregg, Taylor. "The Mishima Enigma." *Washington Post*, October 20, 1985.

Gold, Ivan. "'Everything I have Felt About life, This World'." Review of *Spring Snow*, by Mishima Yukio. *Washington Post*, February 7, 1972.

Harrison, Selig S. "Suicide of Novelist Mishima Shocks Japanese." *Washington Post*, November 26, 1970.

Harrison, Selig S. "Novelist's Grisly Death Stirs Japanese." *Washington Post*, December 7, 1970.

Harrison, Selig S. "Japanese Attend Funeral for Mishima." *Washington Post*, January 25, 1971.

Ishiguro, Hide. "Writer, Rightist or Freak?" *New York Review of Books*, December 11, 1975.

Keene, Donald. "Beauty Itself Became a Deadly Enemy." Review of *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, by Mishima Yukio. *New York Times*, May 31, 1959.

Keene, Donald. "Mishima." *New York Times*, January 3, 1971.

Keene, Donald. *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era.* New York: Holt, 1984.

Keene, Donald. *Five Modern Japanese Novelists*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Kimball, Arthur G. *Crisis in Identity and Contemporary Japanese Novels.* Rutland: Tuttle, 1973.

Krisher, Bernard. "Portrait of a Man Reading." *Washington Post*, November 2, 1969.

"La perla y otros cuentos." Review of *La perla y otros cuentos*, by Mishima Yukio. *ABC*, October 10, 1987.

Lask, Thomas. "Consumed In Their Own Life." Review of *Spring Snow*, by Mishima Yukio. *New York Times*, Jul. 6, 1972.

L., E. "Sobre la muerte voluntaria." Review of *Mishima o la visión del vacío*, by Marguerite Yourcenar. *La Vanguardia*, December 25, 1985.

López Sancho, Lorenzo. "El «No» de Yukio Mishima." *ABC*, December 6, 1970.

López Sancho, Lorenzo. "El Japón y su máscara." *ABC*, April 19, 1972.

López Sancho, Lorenzo. "Fallido intento de occidentalizar a Mishima y al 'Noh' japonés." *ABC*, October 19, 1989.

Maso, Ángeles. "El escritor, intérprete de su propia historia." *La Vanguardia*, April 20, 1985.

Miller, Henry. "Reflections on the Death of Mishima." In *Sextet: His Later Writings Under One Cover*, Santa Barbara, CA: Capra Press, 1977.

Mitgang, Herbert. "Books of The Times; Prophetic Stories From Mishima." Review of *Acts of Worship: Seven Stories*, by Mishima Yukio. *New York Times*, November 25, 1989.

Miyoshi, Masao. *Accomplices of Silence: The Modern Japanese Novel.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

Moravia, Alberto. “Morir como un samurai.” *ABC*, January 10, 1971.

Nathan, John. *Mishima: A Biography*. London: Hamilton, 1975.

O., J. “Hacerse a la mar para siempre.” Review of *El marinero que perdió la gracia del mar*, by Mishima Yukio. *La Vanguardia*, September 23, 1986.

Oka, Takashi. “Mishima Memorial: Some Banzais, Much Skepticism.” *New York Times*, December 16, 1970.

“Paperbacks.” Review of *Spring Snow*, by Mishima Yukio. *Washington Post*, July 22, 1973.

Pedemonte, Javier. *Yukio Mishima: El penúltimo samurái* (*La rebeldía honorable de un escritor idealista*). Barcelona, 1987.

Redman, Ben Ray. “What He Had to Hide.” Review of *Confessions of a Mask*, by Mishima Yukio. *New York Times*, September 21, 1958.

Richie, Donald. “Mishima and the Savage God.” Review of *The Sea of Fertility*, by Mishima Yukio. *Washington Post*, May 5, 1974.

Rimer, Thomas. “Mishima in a Minor Key.” Review of *Acts of Worship: Seven Stories*, by Mishima Yukio. *Washington Post*, December 7, 1989.

Rimer, Thomas. *Modern Japanese Fiction and its Traditions: An introduction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Ryan, Marleigh. “Review of ‘The Mishima Tetralogy’.” Review of *The Sea of Fertility*, by Mishima Yukio. *Journal of Japanese Studies* 1, no. 1, (1974): 165-173.

Salado, Ana. “Mishima, biografía de John Nathan.” Review of *Mishima: Una biografía*, by John Nathan. *ABC*, January 18, 1986.

Scott-Stokes. *The Life and Death of Yukio Mishima.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974.

Seidensticker, Edward. "Yuichi Was a Doll." Review of *Forbidden Colors*, by Mishima Yukio. *New York Times*, June 23, 1968.

Shabecoff, Philip. "You've Heard of Yukio Mishima, Novelist, General, Swordsman, Karate Student, Movie Star, Lecturer, Bon Vivant and maybe Soon Nobel Prize Winner? Everyone in Japan Has." *New York Times*, August 2, 1970.

Shabecoff, Philip. "Mishima: A Man Torn Between Two Worlds." *New York Times*, November 26, 1970.

Staff Book Reviewers. "An Alcoholic is Saved, Another Lover Triumphs." Review of *The Sound of Waves*, by Mishima Yukio. *Washington Post*, September 2, 1956.

"The Talk of Town." *New Yorker*, December 12, 1970.

Theroux, Paul. "About Reincarnation (Sort Of), Chickens (Sort Of), Travel (Sort Of)." Review of *The Temple of Dawn*, by Mishima Yukio. *New York Times*, October 14, 1973.

Trumbull, Robert. "Encounters with Life." Review of *Death in Midsummer and Other Stories*, by Mishima Yukio. *New York Times*, May 1, 1966.

Ueda, Makoto. *Modern Japanese Writers and the Nature of Literature*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.

"Un grupo de extremistas asalta un cuartel en Tokio." *ABC*, Nov. 23, 1970.

Vallejo-Nágera, Juan Antonio. *Mishima o el placer de morir*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1978.

Vallejo-Nágera, Juan Antonio. "Mishima o el placer de morir." *ABC*, December 3, 1978.

Vallejo-Nágera, Juan Antonio. "Por qué escribí 'Mishima o el placer de morir.'" *La Vanguardia*, January 14, 1979.

Vidal, Gore. "Mr. Japan." Review of *Sun and Steel*, by Mishima Yukio. *New York Review of Books*, June 17, 1971.

White, Edmund. "Too Good to Be True, At Least Too Good to Be Interesting." Review of *New York Times*, June 24, 1973.

Williams, Christian. "The Rediscovery of Yukio Mishima." *Washington Post*, Nov 25, 1982.

Wolfe, Peter. *Yukio Mishima*. Continuum Intl Pub Group, 1989.

Yamanouchi, Hisaaki. *The Search for Authenticity in Modern Japanese Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Ōe – Corpus

Astorga, Antonio. "Tres Nobel, Kertész, Coetzee y Ōe, publican en España sus últimas novelas." *ABC*, March 7, 2003.

Ayén, Xavi. "España es el ejemplo a seguir." *La Vanguardia*, April 17, 2004.

Ayén, Xavi. "'Mi hijo disminuido es la lente con la que veo el mundo.'" *La Vanguardia*, November 14, 2005.

Beaumont, José F. "Devoto de Cervantes y admirador de Ortega." *El País*, May 7, 1997.

Beaumont, José F. "Kenzaburō Ōe afirma que las dificultades han alimentado su creatividad literaria," *El País*, July 5, 1997.

Betancor, Orlando. "La libertad de elección en Una cuestión personal de Kenzaburo Oé," *Espéculo*, (2008), Accessed November 19, 2018, http://webs.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero38/cuestion.html

Bradbury, Steven, Donald Pease, Rob Wilson and Ōe Kenzaburō. "A Conversation With Ōe Kenzaburō." *boundary 2* 20, no. 2 (1993): 1-23.

Bridges IV, William H. "In the Beginning: Blackness and the 1960s Creative Nonfiction of Ōe Kenzaburō," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 25, no. 2 (2017): 323-349.

Botsman, Daniel. "Korea-Japan Tension is Centuries Old; Ōe the Dissenter." *New York Times*, November 14, 1994.

Caeiro, Luís. "Ōe en la literatura japonesa del siglo XX." *ABC*, October 14, 1994.

Carbajo, Felipe. "Ōe: 'Gracias al Nobel he logrado que mi anciana madre me respete por primera vez.'" *ABC*, October 15, 1994.

Castanedo. "Menos es más." Review of *Salto mortal*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *El País*, September 4, 2004.

Conte, Rafael. "La presa." Review of *La presa*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *ABC*, December 16, 1994.

Dirda, Michael. "Through a Thin Veil, Ōe Bares All." Review of *The Challenging*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *Washington Post*, March 25, 2010.

Doria, Sergi. "'Sería difícil hacer una lista de las violencias grandes y pequeñas que habremos de padecer.'" *ABC*, 2004.

"El Nobel japonés rechaza la mayor condecoración oficial nipona." *EFE*, October 16, 1994.

"El Nobel Kenzaburō Ōe lidera la gran protesta antinuclear en Tokio." *El País*, September 20, 2011.

"El segundo Nobel japonés." *ABC*, October 12, 1994.

Enright, D.J. "Days of Marvelous Lays," Review of *A Personal Matter*, by Ōe Kenzaburō, and *The Pornographers*, by Akiyuki Nosaka. *New York Review of Books*, 1968.

Ernesto-Ayala, J. "Lo abismal." *El País*, October 14, 1994.

Fernandez-Sastre, Roberto. "Legítimo continuador de Dostoievski." *El País*, October 14, 1994.

"Front Cover," *La Vanguardia*, 23 April 2010.

García Calero, Jesús. "Kenzaburō Ōe: 'Cervantes es mi modelo de humanismo moderno.'" *ABC*, May 7, 1997.

García Calero, Jesús. "Oé: 'La actitud perfecta para un escritor es la de Don Quijote, un lector al borde de la locura.'" *ABC*, May 2, 1998.

García-Valero, Benito Elías. *El ser y la carne*. Alicante: EAE 2011.

Gold, Ivan. "A Ray from the Rising Sun." Review of *Teach Us to Outgrow Our Madness*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *Washington Post*, September 11, 1977.

Graeber, Laurel. "News & Newsworthy Paperbacks." *New York Times*, March 29, 1998.

Gross, Jane. "Japanese Says His Country Has Sold Its Soul," *New York Times*, June 14, 1990.

Guelbenzu, José María. "Definiciones del mundo." Review of *¡Despertad, oh jóvenes de nuestra era!* by Ōe Kenzaburō. *El País*, January 28, 2006.

Guelbenzu, José María. "Admirable humanidad." Review of *La bella Annabel Lee*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *El País*, January 3, 2017.

Hillenbrand, Margaret. "Doppelgängers, Misogyny, and the San Francisco System," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 33, no. 2 (2007): 383-414.

Iwamoto, Yoshio. "The 'Mad' World of Ōe Kenzaburō." *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 14, no. 1 (1979): 66-83.

Kato, Norihiro. "Ambiguities of Japan's Nuclear Policy." *New York Times*, April 13, 2014.

"Kenzaburō Ōe: 'Japón no ha aprendido las lecciones de Hiroshima y de la Segunda Guerra.'" *La Vanguardia*, August 3, 1995.

"Kenzaburō Ōe termina su primera novela tras el Nobel." *AP*, June 14, 1999.

Kotazawa. "Literatura a contracorriente." *La Vanguardia*, October 14, 1994.

Mantecon, Ramon. "'Estoy escribiendo mi última novela'." *El País*, October 14, 1994.

Mantecon, Ramon."Voz discordante en el país de la unanimidad." *El País*, December 21, 1994.

Mantecon, Ramon. "Estoy contra todos los nacionalismos." *El País*, February 25, 1996.

Marco, Joaquín. "El grito silencioso." Review of *El grito silencioso*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *ABC*, May 5, 1995.

Martinez Ruiz, Florencio. "Testigo del nuevo Japón." *ABC*, October 14, 1994.

Mitchelmore, Stephen. "Cult Following." Review of *Somersault*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *Washington Post*, February 3, 2003.

Monmany, Mercedes. "Cantos de la inocencia." Review of *¡Despertad, oh jóvenes de nuestra era!* by Ōe Kenzaburō. *ABC*, April 1, 2006.

Monmany, Mercedes. "Tiempo de ensoñación." Review of *M/T y la historia de las maravillas del bosque*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *ABC*, November 10, 2007.

Monmany, Mercedes. "La tristeza de Kogito." Review of *Renacimiento*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *ABC*, January 9, 2010.

Monmany, Mercedes. "En un mar de llamas." Review of *Cuadernos de Hiroshima*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *ABC*, November 5, 2011.

Mora, Cecilia. "El autor japonés Kenzaburō Ōe, de 59 años, gana el premio nobel de literatura." *La Vanguardia*, October 14, 1994.

Mora, Cecilia. "Ōe: 'Mi hijo autista cree que ha sido él quien ha ganado el Nobel y que recogerá el premio.'" *La Vanguardia*, December 6, 1994.

Mora, Cecilia. "Kenzaburō Ōe defiende la renuncia de Japón a la guerra ante la Academia Sueca," *La Vanguardia*, December 8, 1994.

Mora, Rosa. "'Japón debe retirar sus tropas de Irak'" *El País*, March, 17, 2004.

Moreno, Ricardo. "Kenzaburō Ōe gana el Nobel de Literatura." *El País*, October 14, 1994.

Moreno, Ricardo. "'Japón todavía tiene que pagar por sus atrocidades,' declara el Nobel Oé." *El País*, December 6, 1994.

Napier, Susan J. "Death and the Emperor: Mishima, Ōe, and the Politics of Betrayal." *Journal of Asian Studies* 48, no. 1 (1989): 71-89.

Napier, Susan J. "Marginal Arcadias: Ōe Kenzaburō's Pastoral and Antipastoral." *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 5, (1993):48-58.

Napier, Susan J. *Escape from the Wasteland.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Napier, Susan J. *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature.* London: Routledge, 1996.

Navarro, Justo. "La generación de Hiroshima." *ABC*, October 14, 1994.

Navarro, Justo. "La cuestión personal." *El País*, February 25, 1996.

Nimura, Janice P. "Kenzaburō Ōe's 'Death by water.'" Review of *Death by Water*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *New York Times*, February 10, 2015.

Ōe, Kenzaburō. "Denying History Disables Japan," *New York Times*, February 7, 1995.

Ōe, Kenzaburō. “The Day the Emperor Spoke in Human Voice,” *New York Times*, May 7, 1995.

Ōe, Kenzaburō. “Carta a Mario Vargas Llosa.” *El País*, January 10, 1999.

Ōe, Kenzaburō. “El poder de la inocencia,” *El País*, February 8, 1999.

Ōe, Kenzaburō. “Hiroshima and the Art of Outrage.” *New York Times*, August 5, 2010.

Ōe, Kenzaburō. “History Repeats,” *New Yorker*, March 28, 2011.

Ōe, Kenzaburō, Steve Bradbury, Joel Cohn and Rob Wilson. “An Interview with Kenzaburo Ōe: The Myth of My Own Village.” *Mānoa* 6, no. 1, (1994): 135-144.

“Ōe reivindica a la generación de Hiroshima ante la academia sueca.” *EFE*, December 8, 1994.

“Ōe visto por Ōe.” *La Vanguardia*, October 14, 1994.

Osaka, Go. “Una obra difícil para los grandes.” *ABC*, October 15, 1994.

Onishi, Norimitsu. “Japanese Court Rejects Defamation Lawsuit Against Nobel Laureate.” *New York Times*, March 29, 2008.

Onishi, Norimitsu. “Released From Rigors of a Trial, a Nobel Laureate’s Ink Flows Freely.” *New York Times*, May 17, 2008.

Oz, Amos and Ōe Kenzaburō. “De Auschwitz a Hiroshima: cartas entre Amos Oz y Kenzaburō Ōe.” *ABC*, February 27, 1999.

Pons, Philippe. “¿Pueden hacerse humanistas los japoneses?,” *El País*, October 23, 1994.

Pons, Philippe. “Japón ha entrado en una nueva era.” *El País*, March 18, 2011.

Porta, Yoonah Kim. “Retrato de los jóvenes de nuestro tiempo.” *ABC*, October 15, 1994.

Pottecher, Beatriz. "Una cuestión personal." Review of *Una cuestión personal*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *ABC*, October 14, 1994.

Puig, Valentí. "Nobelista del remordimiento." *ABC*, October 14, 1994.

Reid, T.R. "Japanese Writer Ōe Wins Nobel; Novelist-Activist Depicts His Two Shattered Worlds." *Washington Post*, October 14, 1994.

Remnick, David. "Reading Japan." *New Yorker*, February 6, 1995.

Reston Jr, James. "About men; A Joy Not Shared." *New York Times*, December 7, 1986.

Saladrigas, Robert. "Los fondos de Ōe." Review of *La presa* and *Una cuestión personal*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *La Vanguardia*, December 30, 1994.

Saladrigas, Robert. "La 'divina comedia' de Oé." Review of *Cartas a los años de nostalgia*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *La Vanguardia*, May 5, 1997.

Saladrigas, Robert. "El fin de la historia." Review of *Salto mortal*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *La Vanguardia*, March 3, 2004.

Sánchez-Ostiz, Miguel. "Dinos cómo sobrevivir a nuestra locura." Review of *Dinos cómo sobrevivir a nuestra locura*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *ABC*, January 26, 1996.

Sanchís, Ima. "'Nacer con estas orejas me hizo escritor'." *La Vanguardia*, April 15, 2004.

Sans, Guillem. "Kenzaburō Ōe: 'En Japón aún no se puede hablar de una democracia.'" *El País*, September 11, 2005.

S.C. "Octavio Paz y Kenzaburō Ōe: la visión de dos culturas unidas por la palabra." *ABC*, December 22, 1996.

"Segundo Nobel japonés." *ABC*, October 14, 1994.

Serra, Màrius. "Salto mortal." Review of *Salto mortal*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *La Vanguardia*, March 16, 2004.

Shimizu, Norio. “La huella de Cervantes y el realismo mágico.” *ABC*, October 14, 1994.

“Sommersaults.” *New Yorker*, October 14, 1996.

Sterngold, James. “Nobel in Literature Goes to Kenzaburō Ōe of Japan.” *New York Times*, October 14, 1994.

Sterngold, James. “The World; Japan Asks Why A Prophet Bothers,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1994.

Streitfield, David. “Japanese Writer Ōe Wins Nobel; Novelist-Activist Depicts his Two Shattered Worlds.” *Washington Post*, October 14, 1994.

Streitfield, David. “Book Report.” Review of *A Quiet Life*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *Washington Post*, January 26, 1997.

Tachibana, Reiko. “Structures of Power: Ōe Kenzaburō’s ‘Shiiku’ (‘Prize Stock’).” *World Literature Today* 76, no. 2 (2002): 36-48.

Tanabe, Kunio Francis. “Letter from Tokyo.” *Washington Post*, July 16, 1995.

“The Talk of Town.” *New Yorker*, June 8, 1968.

Toback, James. “Bird in a Cage.” Review of *A Personal Matter*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *New York Times*, July 7, 1968.

“Tranquilidad zen en la mesa del comedor.” *La Vanguardia*, March 1, 2008.

Trenas, Miguel Ángel. “Kenzaburō Ōe espera que en el siglo XXI Occidente y Oriente fundan sus saberes.” *La Vanguardia*, July 5, 1997.

“Un asunto personal.” Review of *Un asunto personal*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *La Vanguardia*, July 22, 1971.

Vargas Llosa, Mario. “Segunda carta a Kenzaburō Ōe.” *El País*, February 14, 1999.

Villar Mir, Carmen. "La Academia Sueca premia en Kenzaburō Ōe a la trágica generación nipona de Hiroshima." *ABC*, October 14, 1994.

Ward, Elizabeth. "Innocence and Experience." Review of *Rouse Up, O Young Men of the New Age*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *Washington Post*, September 6, 2002.

Washburn, Dennis. *Modern Japanese Writers*, Edited by Jay Rubin. New York: Charles Scribners & Sons, 2000.

Whittier Treat, John. "Hiroshima Nōto and Ōe Kenzaburō's Existentialist Other." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47, no.1 (1987):97-136.

Wilson, Michiko N. "Ōe's Obsessive Metaphor, Mori, the Idiot Son." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 7, no. 1 (1981):23-52.

Wilson, Michiko N. *The Marginal World of Ōe Kenzaburō*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

W.M.S. "Dinos cómo sobrevivir a nuestra locura." Review of *Dinos cómo sobrevivir a nuestra locura*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *El País*, April 3, 2004.

Wolff, Geoffrey. "Hiroshima Shadows Novel." Review of *A Personal Matter*, by Ōe Kenzaburō. *Washington Post*, June 11, 1968.

Yamanouchi, Hisaaki. *The Search for Authenticity in Modern Japanese Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Yang, Manuel. "Familial Autobiography and the World: A Review Article of Work by Kenzaburō Ōe." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 1, no. 3 (1999).

Murakami – Corpus

Adams, Susan. "From Japan to the Middle East, Tales of Upheaval and Conformism." *Washington Post*, August 20, 2002.

Alter, Alexandra. "New 96-Page Murakami Work Coming in December." *New York Times*, September 1, 2014.

Anderson, Sam. "The Fierce Imagination of Haruki Murakami." *New York Times*, October 21, 2011.

Aparicio Maydeu, Javier. "Veinticuatro imágenes de la alienación." Review of *Sauce ciego, mujer dormida*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, February 9, 2008.

Aparicio Maydeu, Javier. "Murakami antes de Murakami." Review of *Baila, baila, baila*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, September 8, 2012.

Aparicio Maydeu, Javier. "La Marca Murakami." Review of *Los años de peregrinación del chico sin color*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, December 28, 2013.

Aparicio Maydeu, Javier. "Underground." Review of *Underground*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, September 8, 2014.

Aparicio Maydeu, Javier. "Retrato del artista evanescente." Review of *La muerte del comendador*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, October 15, 2018.

Arana, Marie. "'Colorless' Man Matures in a Fractured Modernity." Review of *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and his Years of Pilgrimage*, by Murakami Haruki. *Washington Post*, August 12, 2014.

Ayén, Xavier. "Canción triste de Tokio." Review of *Tokio Blues*, by Murakami Haruki. *La Vanguardia*, August 15, 2005.

Ayén, Xavier. "'Describo en qué consiste el mal'." *La Vanguardia*, January 18, 2007.

Ayén, Xavier. "Murakami muestra su lado oscuro." Review of *After dark*, by Murakami Haruki. *La Vanguardia*, March 17, 2009.

Ayén, Xavier. "Murakami tras el tsunami." *La Vanguardia*, June 9, 2011.

Ayén, Xavier. "El sueño de Murakami." *La Vanguardia*, June 10, 2011.

Ayén, Xavier. "'Mi novela '1Q84' quiere describir todo lo que existe.'" Review of *1Q84*, by Murakami Haruki. *La Vanguardia*, June 11, 2011.

Ayén, Xavier. "El sol naciente de la literatura japonesa." *La Vanguardia*, November 4, 2013.

Ayén, Xavier. "Doctor Murakami, ¿me escucha?" *La Vanguardia*, January 24, 2015.

Bagué, Gerard. "Depresión japonesa." *El País*, September 17, 2005.

Barranco, Justo. "La nueva ola de la literatura japonesa." *La Vanguardia*, August 13, 2011.

Baxter, Charles. "Behind Murakami's Mirror." Review of *1Q84*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Review of Books*, December, 2011.

Bernstein, Richard. "An Obsessive Attraction that Cripples Two Lives." Review of *South of the Border, West of the Sun*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, February 17, 1999.

Bumiller, Elisabeth. "Japan's Fiction Turns a Page." Review of *Monkey Brain Sushi*, edited by Alfred Birbaum. *The Washington Post*, June 1, 1991.

Buruma, Ian. "Becoming Japanese." *New Yorker*, December 23, 1996.

Buruma, Ian. "The Japanese Malaise." *New York Review of Books*, July 5, 2001.

Caryl, Christian. "Gods of the Mall." Review of *Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Review of Books*, March 1, 2007.

Carpenter, Julia. "Haruki Murakami's Advice Column is Surrealist and Sweet and so, well, Murakami." *Washington Post*, February 5, 2015.

Collera, Virigina. "'Tokio Blues' fue sólo un experimento." *El País*, February 26, 2007.

Daido, Nobuhiko. "Murakami is no Outlaw." *New York Times*, December 12, 2006.

Dargis, Manohla. "He's an Isolated Fellow; She's Addicted to Shopping." *New York Times*, July 29, 2005.

Díez, Pablo M. "'Es la primera vez que escribo cada personaje con tanto detalle.'" *ABC*, October 15, 2013.

Díez, Pablo M. "'Drive my car,' nuevo relato de Murakami." *ABC*, November 11, 2013.

Dirda, Michael. "A Surreal Novel of Suspense From one of Japan's Most Exciting Writers." Review of *After Dark*, by Murakami Haruki. *Washington Post*, May 20, 2007.

Dirda, Michael. "Orwell by Way of the Tokyo Subway." Review of *1Q84*, by Murakami Haruki. *Washington Post*, October 20, 2011.

Domínguez, Iñigo. "Haruki Murakami, instrucciones de uso." *El País*, May 6, 2017.

Dyer, Geoff. "Marathon Man." Review of *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running*, by Murakami Haruki. *The New York Times*, August 10, 2008.

Erickson, Steve. "Haruki Murakami's 'Wind/Pinball'." Review of *Wind/Pinball*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, August 12, 2015.

Espadaler, Antón M. "Tokio, 1968." *La Vanguardia*, September 29, 2007.

Ferrero, Jesús. "El apocalipsis según Murakami." Review of *El fin del Mundo y un despiadado País de las Maravillas*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, December 5, 2009.

Ferrero, Jesús. "En manos de la oscuridad – 1Q84 Libros 1-2." Review of *1Q84*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, March 19, 2011.

Ferrero, Jesús. "El final de la pesadilla." Review of *1Q84*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, December 24, 2011.

Fielden, Jay. "New From Murakami: Tales of Cool Cars, Shinto Spirits and Lost Love." Review of *Men Without Women*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, May 9, 2017.

Finch, Charles. "Haruki Murakami Turns His Gaze Toward Middle Age." Review of *Killing Commendatore*, by Murakami Haruki. *Washington Post*, October 8, 2018.

Foguet, Joan. "'Me gustan Mahler y 'Los Soprano''." *El País*, June 6, 2011.

French, Howard W. "Seeing a Clash of Social Networks; A Japanese Writer Analyzes Terrorists and Their Victims." *New York Times*, October 15, 2001.

Fresán, Rodrigo. "El guardián entre los árboles como fenómeno." *El País*, June 18, 2005.

Fresán, Rodrigo. "Las órbitas del corazón." Review of *Sputnik, mi amor*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, September 24, 2002.

Fresán, Rodrigo. "Todo lo que necesitas es dolor." Review of *Tokio Blues*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, June 18, 2005.

Fresán, Rodrigo. "Juguemos en el bosque." Review of *Kafka en la orilla*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, November 18, 2006.

Fresán, Rodrigo. "El jardín de los sucesos extraordinarios." Review of *Sauce ciego, mujer dormida*, by Murakami Haruki. *ABC*, January 26, 2008.

Fresán, Rodrigo. "Murakami nos invita a temblar." Review of *Después del terremoto*, by Murakami Haruki. *ABC*, February 23, 2013.

Fresán, Rodrigo. "El nuevo viaje del 'Murakami express'." Review of *Los años de peregrinación del chico sin color*, by Murakami Haruki. *ABC*, October 26, 2013.

Fresán, Rodrigo. "Murakami sin anestesia." Review of *Underground*, by Murakami Haruki. *ABC*, November 8, 2014.

Fresán, Rodrigo. "El rayo Murakami." Review of *Hombres sin mujeres*, by Murakami Haruki. *ABC*, March 7, 2015.

García-Valero, Benito Elías. *La magia cuántica de Haruki Murakami*, Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 2015.

Gaviña, Susana. "Viaje a Japón con Murakami." *ABC*, November 14, 2012.

Giles, Jeff. "A Shock to the System." Review of *after the quake*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, August 18, 2002.

Gisbert, Josep. "Murakami, Premi Internacional de Catalunya 2011." *La Vanguardia*, March 19, 2011.

Gómez Melenchón, Isabel. "Otoño japonés." *La Vanguardia*, November 2, 2011.

Ibáñez, Andrés. "Al sur de la novela, al este del sol." Review of *Al sur de la frontera, al oeste del sol*, by Murakami Haruki. *ABC*, October 10, 2003.

Ibáñez, Andrés. "La responsabilidad de los sueños." Review of *Kafka en la orilla*, by Murakami Haruki. *ABC*, November 25, 2006.

Ibáñez, Andrés. "Matrimonios imaginarios." *ABC*, January 26, 2008.

Ibáñez, Andrés. "El otro lado de la oscuridad." Review of *After dark*, by Murakami Haruki. *ABC*, October 4, 2008.

Ibáñez, Andrés. "¿Lo mejor de Murakami?" Review of *El fin del mundo y un despiadado país de las maravillas*, by Murakami Haruki. *ABC*, November 28, 2009.

Ibáñez, Andrés. "El escritor y la toxina." Review of *De qué hablo cuando hablo de correr*, by Murakami Haruki. *ABC*, May 1, 2010.

Ibáñez, Andrés. "El corredor y la asesina." Review of *1Q84*, by Murakami Haruki. *ABC*, January 29, 2011.

Ibáñez, Andrés. "Murakami también es poeta." Review of *Escucha la canción del viento y Pinball 1973*, by Murakami Haruki. *ABC*, November 7, 2015.

Handler, Daniel. "Haruki Murakami's 'Strange Library' and 'Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage'." Review of *Strange Library* and *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, May 15, 2015.

Hawthorne, Mary. "Love Hurts." Review of *South of the Border, West of the Sun*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, Feb 14, 1999.

Herrscher, Roberto. "Descenso al abismo." Review of *Underground*, by Murakami Haruki. January 21, 2015.

Hiatt, Fred. "Haruki Murakami's Homecoming: Japan's Best-selling author Returns to Recast a New Generation's Morality." *Washington Post*, December 25, 1989.

Iglesias, Óscar. "Murakami: 'No tengo plan cuando escribo. Una escena y unas palabras.'" *El País*, March 12, 2009.

Iwasaki, Fernando. "Comentarios Reales: Murakami." *ABC*, May 25, 2008.

James, Jamie. "East Meets West." Review of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, November 2, 1997

Johnson, George. "New and Noteworthy", *New York Times,* November 25, 1990.

Kakutani, Michiko. "On a Nightmarish Trek Through History's Web." Review of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, October 31, 1997.

Kakutani, Michiko. "Wandering Along the Border Between Reality and Fantasy." Review of *Number9Dream*, by David Mitchell. *New York Times*, March 15, 2002.

Kakutani, Michiko. "Worlds Where Anything Normal Would Seem Bizarre." Review of *after the quake*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, August 20, 2002.

Kelts, Roland. "The Harukists, Disappointed." *New Yorker*, October 16, 2012.

Kelts, Roland. "Lost in translation?" *New Yorker*, May 9, 2013.

Kirn, Walter. "In the Wee Small Hours." Review of *After Dark*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, June 3, 2007.

Knorr, Katerine. "A Japanese Novelist in Search of Lost Ideals", *New York Times,* October 20, 1998.

Kunzru, Hari. "In Haruki Murakami's New Novel, a Painter's Inspiration Is Supernatural." Review of *Killing Commendatore*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, October 16, 2018.

La Vanguardia, 23 April 2010.

Llaneza, Paloma. "Después del terremoto." Review of *Después del terremoto*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, August 3, 2013.

Llopart, Salvador. "El hombre que escucha en la barra del bar." *La Vanguardia*, November 15, 2006.

Llopart, Salvador. "Takahashi de noche, Murakami de día." *La Vanguardia*, November 5, 2008.

Leavitt, David. "As Japanese as Burt Bacharach." Review of *The Elephant Vanishes*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, March 28, 1993.

Libedinsky, Juana. "'Una buena historia está en un libro o en la televisión'." *La Vanguardia*, February 3, 2008.

Lozano, Antonio. "Murakami y las tristes adolescentes." Review of *Tokio Blues*, by Murakami Haruki. *La Vanguardia*, July 17, 2005.

Lozano, Antonio. "El mapa del subconsciente según Murakami." Review of *El fin del mundo y un despiadado país de las maravillas*, by Murakami Haruki. *La Vanguardia*, January 20, 2010.

Lozano, Antonio. "Los agujeros negros de Murakami." Review of *1Q84*, by Murakami Haruki. *La Vanguardia*, February 2, 2011.

Lozano, Antonio. "Armarse de confianza." Review of *1Q84*, by Murakami Haruki. *La Vanguardia*, November 2, 2011.

Lozano, Antonio. "Puerta al país de las maravillas." Review of *El fin del mundo y un despiadado país de las maravillas*, by Murakami Haruki. *La Vanguardia*, February 27, 2013.

Lovell, Joel. "Super-Frog." *New York Times*, March 3, 2011.

Lyall, Sarah. "Haruki Murakami Says He Doesn't Dream. He Writes." *New York Times*, October 10, 2018.

Martín Rodrigo, Inés. "El mundo real según Murakami." *ABC*, October 15, 2013.

Maslin, Janet. "A Tokyo With Two Moons and Many More Puzzles." Review of *1Q84*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, November 9, 2011.

Maslin, Janet. "A Pilgrim's Progress, or Lack Thereof." Review of *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*. *New York Times*, August 8, 2014.

Matías López, Luís. "Murakami, dos por uno." Review of *Crónica del pájaro que da cuerda al mundo* and *Sputnik, mi amor*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, April 26, 2008.

Max, D.T. "Japanese Stories of Import." Review of *The Elephant Vanishes*, by Murakami Haruki. *Washington Post*, May 28, 1993.

McAlpin, Heller. "Suddenly, They Aren't Half the Men They Used to Be." Review of *Men Without Women*, by Murakami Haruki. *Washington Post*, June 20, 2017.

McDonald, Mark. "Japanese Novelist Denounces 'Cheap Liquor' of Nationalism." *New York Times*, September 30, 2012.

McIerney, Jay. "Roll over Basho: Who Japan's Reading, and Why", *New York Times*, September 27, 1992.

Michaud, Jon. "Coffee and Spaghetti." *New Yorker*, September 15, 2009.

Michaud, Jon. "Murakami and Individualism." *New Yorker*, August 26, 2011.

Miller, Laura. "Crossing Over." *New York Times*, February 6, 2005.

Mishan, Ligaya. "Background Check." *New Yorker*, September 21, 2009.

Mitgang, Herbert. "Young and Slangy Mix of the U.S. and Japan." Review of *A Wild Sheep Chase*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, October 21, 1989.

Mitgang, Herbert. "Brando, the Stones and Banana Yoshimoto", *New York Times*, July 8, 1990.

Mitgang, Herbert. "Tales from Japans Postwar Generation." Review of *Monkey Brain Sushi*, edited by Alfred Birnbaum. *New York Times*, June 17, 1991.

Mitgang, Herbert. "From Japan, Big Macs and Marlboros in Stories." Review of *The Elephant Vanishes*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times,* May 12, 1993.

Mitgang, Herbert. "Looking for America or is it Japan?" Review of *Dance Dance Dance*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times,* January 3, 1994.

Montañés, José Ángel. "El escritor japonés Murakami, Premi Internacional Catalunya 2011." *El País*, March 19, 2011.

Morán, David. "Haruki Murakami: 'Cuando escribo me puedo olvidar del mundo real'." *ABC*, March 17, 2009.

Morán, David. "En Japón nos hemos quedado en shock." *ABC*, June 9, 2011.

Moore, Steven. "As the Crow Flies." Review of *Kafka on the Shore*, by Murakami Haruki. *Washington Post*, January 30, 2005.

Murakami, Fuminobu. *Postmodern, Feminist and Postcolonial Currents in Contemporary Japanese Literature*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2009.

Murakami, Haruki. "Jazz Messenger." *New York Times*, July 8, 2007.

Murakami, Haruki. "Murakami, la literatura del jazz." *ABC*, January 26, 2008.

Murakami, Haruki. "Reality A, Reality B." *New York Times*, November 29, 2010.

Murakami, Haruki. "Realidad A, Realidad B." *La Vanguardia*. December 21, 2010.

"Murakami's Tokyo." *New York Times*, October 21, 2011.

Navarro, Justo. "La caza del carnero salvaje." Review of *La caza del carnero salvaje*, by Murakami Haruki. *ABC*, May 15, 1992.

Nimura, Janice P. "Rubber Souls." Review of *Norwegian Wood*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, September 24, 2000.

Nimura, Janice P. "Separate Orbits." Review of *Sputnik, Sweetheart*, by Murakami Haruki. *Washington Post*, April 29, 2001.

Oestreich, James R. "Review: 'Absolutely on Music' Gives a Maestro a Stage for Ideas." *New York Times*, November 21, 2016.

Onishi, Norimitsu. "A Rebel in Japan Eyes Status in America." *New York Times*, June 14, 2005.

d'Ors, Pablo. "Por qué funciona Murakami." *ABC*, October 8, 2011.

Parks, Tim. "The Charms of Loneliness." Review of *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Review of Books*, October 2014.

Pérez, Xavier. "La rescatada voz de Eurídice." *La Vanguardia*, July 20, 2005.

Peschell, Joseph. "A Strange, Surreal Descend." *Washington Post*, December 17, 2014.

Pollack, David. "The Method." *New York Times*, July 1, 2001.

"Pozo." Review of *Crónica del pájaro que da cuerda al mundo*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, July 9, 2005.

"Pronouncements, Critiques, Catcalls and Plaudits." *Washington Post*, June 1, 1997.

Rafferty, Terrence. "Box set." Review of *Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, September 17, 2006.

Reboiras, Ramón. "Oleada de tristeza." *El País*, November 8, 2011.

Reid, T.R. "Japan's Brat Pack." Review of *Monkey Brain Sushi*, edited by Alfred Birnbaum. *Washington Post,* August 11, 1991.

Reid, T.R. "Japan's Literary Trade Deficit: After the Cars and Radios, the Country Seeks to Sell its Culture", *Washington Post*, August 27, 1992.

Rich, Motoko. "Now that Japan is Cool, Its Fiction Seeks U.S. Fans." *The New York Times*, March 15, 2000.

Rodríguez, Emma. "Mi pregunta al señor Murakami." *El País*, March 31, 2015.

Rubin, Jay. *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words.* London: Vintage, 2005.

Rubio, Carlos. *El Japón de Murakami.* Madrid: Aguilar, 2012.

Ruiz Mantilla, Jesús. "Una cena gallega con Murakami." *El País*, March 14, 2009.

Ruiz Mantilla, Jesús. "'Mis libros triunfan en el caos'." *El País*, April 5, 2009.

Ryan, Alan. "Wild and Wooly." Review of *A Wild Sheep Chase*, by Murakami Haruki. *Washington Post,* November 12, 1989.

Saladrigas, Robert. "El señor de las alas desplegadas." Review of *Crónica del pájaro que da cuerda al mundo*, by Murakami Haruki. *La Vanguardia*, June 15, 2001.

Saladrigas, Robert. "La chistera de Murakami." Review of *Kafka en la orilla*, by Murakami Haruki. *La Vanguardia*, November 15, 2006.

Saladrigas, Robert. "El japonés global." Review of *Sauce ciego, mujer dormida*, by Murakami Haruki. *La Vanguardia*, March 12, 2008.

Saladrigas, Robert. "Y sin embargo, japonés." *La Vanguardia*, March, 19, 2011.

Saladrigas, Robert. "De raíces y afectos." *La Vanguardia*, August 20, 2016.

Sánchez Braun, Andrés. "En Japón, referirse a algo mediante una abreviatura suele ser la mejor prueba de..." *El País*, March 19, 2011.

Schultz, Kathryn. "Murakami's Mega-Opus." Review of *1Q84*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, November 6, 2011.

Seats, Michael. *Murakami Haruki: The Simulacrum in Contemporary Japanese Culture*. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2006.

Smith, Patti. "Deep Chords." Review of *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, August 10, 2014.

Sotelo, Justo. *Los Mundos de Haruki Murakami*. Madrid: Izana Editores, 2013.

Sterling, Bruce. "Down a High-Tech Rabbit Hole." Review of *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, by Murakami Haruki. *Washington Post*, August 11, 1991.

Strecher, Matthew. *Dances with Sheep: The Quest for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki*. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies/University of Michigan, 2002.

Strecher, Matthew. *Haruki Murakami's The Wind-up Bird Chronicle: A Reader's Guide*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2007.

Strecher, Matthew. *The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2014.

Strecher, Matthew, and Paul L. Thomas, ed. *Haruki Murakami: Challenging Authors*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2016.

Suter, Rebecca. *The Japanization of Modernity: Murakami Haruki between Japan and the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008.

Tanabe, Kunio Francis. "Letter From Tokyo: The Yen for Books." *Washington Post*, August 25, 1985.

Tanabe, Kunio Francis. "Letter from Tokyo: What the Japanese Are Reading." *Washington Post*, October 4, 1987.

Tanabe, Kunio Francis. "Letter from Tokyo: A Nation of Readers." *Washington Post*, September 3, 1989.

Tanabe, Kunio Francis. "Letter from Tokyo: A Yen for Prophecy." *Washington Post,* May 5, 1991.

Treisman, Deborah. "This Week in Fiction: Haruki Murakami." *New Yorker*, August 28, 2011.

Treisman, Deborah. "This Week in Fiction: Haruki Murakami." *New Yorker*, October 6, 2014.

Tomás, Ana and Carlota Iglesias. "Viajes al pie de letra." *La Vanguardia*, June 15, 2013.

Updike, John. "Subconscious Tunnels." Review of *Kafka on the Shore*, by Murakami Haruki. *New Yorker*, January 24, 2005.

Vallín, Pedro and Salvador Llopart. "La producción creativa del país asiático ha girado desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial entorno al anuncio de la destrucción." *La Vanguardia*, March 16, 2011.

Vásquez, Juan Gabriel. "Criaturas de la noche." Review of *After dark*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, October 25, 2008.

Vila-Sanjuán, Sergio. "Latidos: Murakami, dos cubiertas y un despegue." *La Vanguardia*, March 15, 2006.

Ward, Elizabeth. "The Long Sayonara." Review of *Dance Dance Dance*, by Muarkami Haruki. *Washington Post*, January 16, 1994.

Ward, Elizabeth. "Neon Obsessions." Review of *South of the Border, West of the Sun*, by Muarkami Haruki. *Washington Post*, February 14, 1999.

Wiltz, Teresa. "'Tony Takitani': A Man Apart." *Washington Post*, October 14, 2005.

Yan, Lianke. "Words to Soothe Asia's Tensions." *New York Times*, October 5, 2012.

Yokota, Kay, ed. *A Wild Haruki Chase: Reading Murakami around the World*. Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge, 2008.

Zabalegui, Fermín. "Los libros de Haruki Murakami no son para tanto y estos son los motivos." *El País*, April 27, 2017.

Zalewski, Daniel. "Lost in Orbit." Review of *Sputnik Sweetheart*, by Murakami Haruki. *New York Times*, June 10, 2001.

Zanón, Carlos. "Murakami y los botones mal abrochados." Review of *Hombres sin mujeres*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, March 9, 2015.

Zanón, Carlos. "Días de cigarrillos y gatos." Review of *Escucha la canción del viento y Pinball 1974*, by Murakami Haruki. *El País*, December 4, 2015.

Zaun, Todd. "Tokyo Tales Onstage." *New York Times*, July 19, 2004.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adlbi Sibai, Sirin. *La cárcel del feminismo: Hacia un pensamiento islámico decolonial*. Mexico DF: Akal, 2017.

Almazán, Vicente David and Elena Barlés. "Japón y el Japonismo en la revista La Ilustración Española y Americana." *Antigrama* 12, (1996,97): 627-660.

Althusser, Louis. *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and State Apparatuses*. New York: Verso, 2014.

Appadurai, Arjun. "Patriotism and Its Futures." Public Culture 5, no. 3 (1993): 411-429.

Apter, Emily. *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. New York: Verso, 2013.

Apter, Emily. "Untranslatability and the Geopolitics of Reading." PMLA 134.1 (2019): 194-200.

Aston, William George. *A History of Japanese Literature*. Tokyo: Tuttle, 1986.

Auslin, Michael R. *Negotiating With Imperialism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Beeby, Allison and Maria Teresa Rodriguez. "Millán-Astray's Translation of Nitobe's Bushidō." *Meta* (2009): 627-660.

Beller, Manfred and Joep Leerssen ed. *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Benedict, Ruth. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword.* Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1974.

Benedict, Ruth. *Patterns of Culture*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989.

Bennet, David. *Multicultural States: Rethinking Difference and Identity*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Bennet, Tony. *Formalism and Marxism*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Bhabha, Homi. "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990.

"Bibliografía." *La Vanguardia*, October 7, 1904.

Billig, Michael. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage, 1995.

Blasco Ibáñez, Vicente. *La vuelta al mundo, de un novelista*. Valencia: Prometeo, 1924.

Brooks, Roy L. *When Sorry Isn't Enough: The Controversy Over Apologies and Reparations for Human Injustice*. New York: NYU Press, 1999.

Browne, Stephenson. "Boston Notes." *The New York Times*, April 9, 1904.

Buruma, Ian. *Inventing Japan, 1853-1964*. New York: The Modern Library, 2004.

Calders, Pere. *Tots els contes*. Barcelona: La Butxaca, 2006.

Capra, Frank, dir. *Know Your Enemy: Japan*. 1944; College Park, National Archives.

Carter, John. "Japan's Classic of the Golden Age." Review of *Genji Monogatari* by Murasaki Shikibu, *The New York Times*, July 26, 1925.

Carter, John. "A Japanese Court Lady of 1000 A.D.," Review of *The Pillow Book* by Sei Shōnagon, *The New York Times*, February 17, 1929.

Castro-Gómez, Santiago. *La hybris del punto cero: ciencia, raza e ilustración en la Nueva Granada (1750-1816)*. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2005.

Castro-Gómez, Santiago and Ramón Grosfoguel. *El giro decolonial.* Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores, 2007.

Chamberlain, Basil Hall. *Japanese Things*. Tokyo: Tuttle 1994.

Clapp, Priscilla A. and Morton H. Halperin, "U.S. Elite Images of Japan." In *Mutual Images*, edited by Akira Iriye, 202-222. Cambridge: University Press, 1975.

"Contes populars del Japó." *Llevor*, April 29, 1905.

Damrosch, David. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003.

De Kosnik, Abigail. "The mask of Fu Manchu, Son of Sinbad, and Star Wars IV: A New Hope." In *Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Asia In Speculative Fiction, History, and Media*, edited by David S. Roh, Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu, 89-100. London: Rutgers University Press, 2015.

"Divorce in Japan." Review of *Nami-Ko*, by Kenjirō Tokutomi. *New York Times*, April 23, 1904.

Dussel, Enrique. "Sistema-Mundo y 'Transmodernidad.'" In *Modernidades coloniales*, edited by Saurabh Dube, Ishita Banerjee y Walter Mignolo, 201-226. México: El Colegio de México, 2004.

Dyserinck, Hugo, and Joep Leerssen, *Studia Imagologica*, Leiden: Brill.

Envall, HDP. "Japan: From Passive Partner to Active Ally." In *Global Allies*, edited by Michael Wesley, 15-30. ANU Press, 2017.

"European Parliament resolution of 13 December 2007 on Justice for the 'Comfort Women'," *European Parliament*, last modified December 13, 2007. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2007-0632+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN

Even-Zohar, Itamar. "The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem." *Poetics Today* 11, no 1(1): 45-51.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press, 1983.

Figueres, Jaume. *La narrativa curta al segle XX*. Barcelona: Editorial Barcanova, 1993.

Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in Class? The Authority of Interpretative Communities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Flores, Linda. "Matrices of Time, Space, and Text: Intertextuality and Trauma in Two 3.11 Narratives." *Japan Review: Journal of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies* 31, (2017): 141-169.

French, Howard W. "The Rising Sun Sets on Japanese Publishing." *New York Times*, December 10, 2000.

Fowler, Edward. "Rendering Words, Traversing Cultures: On the Art and Politics of Translating Modern Japanese Fiction." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 18, no 1 (1992): 1-44.

Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983.

Glazer, Nathan. "From Ruth Benedict to Herman Kahn." *In Mutual Images*, edited by Akira Iriye, 138-168. Cambridge: University Press, 1975.

Gómez Carrillo, Enrique. *El Japón heroico y galante*. Madrid, 1908.

Gordon, Andrew. *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Gramsci, Antonio. *La política y el estado moderno*. Madrid: El Público, 2009.

Grosfoguel, Ramón. "World-Systems Analysis in the Context of Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 29, no. 2 (2006): 167-87.

Guillory, John. "Canon, Syllabus, List: A Note on the Pedagogic Imaginary." *Transition*, no. 52 (1991): 36-54

Harris, Neil. "All the World a Melting Pot?" In *Mutual Images*, edited by Akira Iriye, 24-54. Cambridge: University Press, 1975.

Hausman, Joshua K. and Johannes F. Wieland, "Overcoming the Lost Decades? Abenomics after Three Years." *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, (Fall, 2015): 385-431.

Hernando, Silvia. "Japón está aquí al lado: vive en sus libros." *El País*, June 29, 2012.

"Historia de la literatura japonesa." *La España moderna*, Madrid, 1899.

Hobsbawm, Eric J. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." In *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1-14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995.

Hohendal, Peter Uwe. *Building a National Literature: the Case of Germany, 1830-1870*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Hough, Kenneth. "Demon Courage and Dread Engines." In *Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Asia In Speculative Fiction, History, and Media*, edited by David S. Roh, Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu, 23-39. London: Rutgers University Press, 2015.

Hutchinson, John, and Anthony D. Smith. *Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994.

Iriye, Akira. "Japan as a Competitor, 1895-17." In *Mutual Images*, edited by Akira Iriye, 73-99. Cambridge: University Press, 1975.

Isaacs, Harold Robert. *Scratches on our Minds: American Images of China and India.* Routledge: New York, 1980.

Iser, Wolfgang. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

Iwabuchi, Koichi. "Pop-Culture Diplomacy in Japan," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 21, no 4 (2015): 419-432.

"Japan." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 18, 1874.

"Japanese Fairy-Tales." *New York Times*, January 14, 1911.

"Japanese Literature." Review of *Sunrise Stories*, by Roger Riordan and Tozo Takayanagi, *New York Times*, March 18, 1896.

"Japanese Literature." Review of *A History of Japanese Literature* by W.G. Aston, *New York Times*, July 8, 1899.

Jauss, Hans Robert. *Historia de la literatura como provocación*. Barcelona: Gredos, 2013.

Johnson, Sheila K. *The Japanese Through American Eyes*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

Karatani, Kojin and Sabu Kohso. "Uses of Aesthetics: After Orientalism." *boundary 2* 25, no. 2, (1998): 145-160.

Kawabata, Yasunari. "Japan, The Beautiful, and Myself." In *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature*, edited by J. Thomas Rimer and Van C. Gessel, 729-739. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Keene, Donald. *Appreciations of Japanese Culture*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1981.

Kelts, Roland. *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture has Invaded the U.S*. New York: St. Martin Press, 2006.

Kowner, Rotem. "Lighter Than Yellow, But Not Enough." *The Historical Journal* 43, no 1 (2000): 103-131.

Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

Kuki, Sonya. "The Burden of History: The Issue of 'Comfort Women' and What Japan Must Do To Move Forward." *Journal of International Affairs* 67, no.1, 2013.

"La literatura japonesa contemporánea." *Nuestro tiempo*, Madrid, 1913.

"Lafcadio's Fancies," Review of *Kwaidan*, by Lafcadio Hearn, *New York Times*, April 30, 1904.

Lee-Loy, Anne-Marie. *Searching for Mr. Chin*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010.

Leerssen, Joep Th. "The Rethoric of National Character: A Programmatic Survey." *Poetics Today* 21, no. 2 (2000): 267-292.

Lehmann, Jean-Pierre. "Old and New Japonisme." *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 757-768

Lehmann, Jean-Pierre. *The Image of Japan: From Feudal Isolation to World Power, 1850-1905*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978.

Literatura Hispano-Americana. January 1919.

Llaneza, Paloma. "Más allá de Murakami." *El País*, April 25, 2009.

Looney, Dennis and Natalia Lusin. "Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Summer 2016 and Fall 2016: Preliminary Report." *Modern Language Association of America*, 2018.

Lummis, C. Douglas. "Ruth Benedict's Obituary for Japanese Culture." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 5, no. 7 (2007).

Mayumi, Itoh. *Globalization of Japan: Japanese Sakoku Mentality and U.S. Efforts to Open Japan*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Mignolo, Walter. *Desobediencia epistémica: Retórica de la modernidad, lógica de la colonialidad y gramática de la descolonialidad*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Signo, 2010.

Ming, Wan. "Spending Strategies in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 39, no 1 (1995): 85-108.

Minear, Richard H. "Cross-Cultural Perception and World War II." *International Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1980): 555-580.

Morley, David and Kevin Robins. *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Murakami, Haruki. *Wind/Pinball*. New York: Vintage, 2016.

Neumann, William L. *America Encounters Japan: From Perry to MacArthur*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1963.

"New Books." *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 13, 1871.

"New Publications." *The New York Times*, Sept. 12, 1870.

"New Publications." *The New York Times*, June 15, 1876.

Nitobe, Inazō. *Bushidō: The Soul of Japan*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2002.

Puar, Jasbir K. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Next Wave: New Directions in Women's Studies, 2017.

Pyle, Kenneth B. "In Pursuit of Gran Design: Nakasone Betwixt the Past and the Future." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 13, no. 2 (1987): 243-270.

Quijano, Anibal. "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from the South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 533-580.

Renan, Ernest. "What Is a Nation?" Nation and Narration. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. London: Routledge, 1990.

Richie, Donald. *The Films of Akira Kurosawa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Robinson, William I. "Beyond Nation-State Paradigms: Globalization, Sociology, and the Challenge to Transnational Studies." *Sociological Forum* 13, no. 4 (1998): 561-594.

Rodao, Florentino. *Franco y el imperio japonés*. Madrid: Plaza y Janés, 2002.

Roh, David S., Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu. "Technologizing Orientalism." In *Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Asia In Speculative Fiction, History, and Media*, edited by David S. Roh, Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu, 1-22. London: Rutgers University Press, 2015.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Classics, 2003.

Schroeder, Ralph. "Media Systems, Digital Media and Politics." *Social Theory after the Internet*, London: UCL Press, 2018.

Seaton, Philip A. *Japan's Contested Memories*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Selden, Mark and Nozaki Yoshiko. "Japanese Textbook Controversies, Nationalism, and Historical Memory: Intra- and Inter-national Conflicts." *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 24, no. 5, 2009.

Serra-Vilella, Alba. "La traducció de llibres japonesos a Espanya (1900-2014) i el paper dels paratextos en la creació de l'alteritat." PhD Thesis, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2016.

Serra y Boldú, Valerio. "Leyendas y cuentos del Japón." January 17, 1934.

Smith, Anthony D. *National Identity*. London: Penguin, 1991.

Sudo, Suedo. "Japan-ASEAN Relations: New Dimensions in Japanese Foreign Policy." *Asian Survey* 28, no. 5 (1988): 509-525.

Suter, Rebecca. "Beyond *Kizuna*: Murakami Haruki on Disaster and Social Crisis," in *Disasters and Social Crisis in Contemporary Japan*, edited by Mark R. Mullins and Nakano Koichi, 288-308. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016.

Takashi, Inoguchi. "Japan's Images and Options: Not a Challenger, but a Supporter." *The Society of Japanese Studies* 12, no 1 (1986): 95-119.

Tanehasi, Amadeo Jensana, "Las relaciones entre España y Japón," Anuario Internacional CIDOB, 2013.

Tiezzi, Shannon. "Pope Francis Meets Korean 'Comfort Women'." *Diplomat*, August 19, 2014.

Toby, Ronald P. "Reopening the Question of Sakoku." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 3, no 2 (1977): 323-363.

Valaskivi, Katja. "A Brand New Future? Cool Japan and the Social Imaginery of the Branded Nation." *Japan Forum* 25 (2013): 485-504.

Victoria, Brian. "Zen Nazi in Wartime Japan: Count Dürckheim and his Sources." *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 12, 3-2 (2014).

Warner Mettler, Meghan. *How to Reach Japan by Subway*. Lincon and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2018.

"Wartime and the Bill of Rights," *Constitutional Rights Foundation*. Accessed April 24, 2018. http://www.crf-usa.org/america-responds-to-terrorism/wartime-and-the-bill-of-rights.html

Wallerstein, Immanuel. "The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity." In *Race, Nation, Class. Ambiguous Identities*, edited by Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, 71-85. London: Verso, 1991.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Wordell, Charles B. *Japan's Image in America*. University of Wisconsin, 1998.

Wurgaf, Lewis D. "*Identity in World history: A Postmodern perspective*." History and Theory 34, no. 2 (1995): 67-85.

Yoshihara, Mari. "The Flight of the Japanese Butterfly: Orientalism, Nationalism, and Performances of Japanese Womanhood." *American Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2004): 975-1001.

APPENDIX OF ORIGINAL REFERENCES

[i] "Explica las costumbres antiguas que aún perduran y las modernas que la civilización occidental ha impuesto, y la manera cómo unas y otras costumbres se han armonizado en unos casos y las disonancias y choques que han engendrado en otras."

[ii] "Lliure de las passions de moment."

[iii] "Una segunda edición de una antigua historia."

[iv] "Hasta los que visten completamente á lo occidental tienen en sus ademanes algo de torpe y cohibido, como si fuesen disfrazados."

[v] "No se ve el Japón por ninguna parte."

[vi] "Aquella nit vaig dormir poc i malament. No em podia treure el japonès del cap. Perquè mentre es presentin tal com són, amb la rialleta, les reverències i aquella mirada de través, hi haurà manera de defensar-se'n. Així ho espero! Però si comencen a venir amb tanta de simulació i d'aparat ful, donaran molta feina."

[vii] "El nuevo Premio Nobel tiene un sentido hondamente arraigado de la tradición japonesa y [...] no se ha dejado influir por las tendencias occidentalistas en el desarrollo de su arte."

[viii] "Su obra, sin duda influenciada por las modernas corrientes literarias europeas, conserva, no obstante, las esencias más características de la literatura japonesa."

[ix] "La herencia de los siglos, los comportamientos familiares a través del tiempo, la tradicional sumisión y, por supuesto, la exquisita cortesía de la mujer japonesa componen el telón de fondo donde Kawabata estiliza un modo de ser y un modo de vivir, en el que queda cifrado todo el encanto exótico, y también todo el erotismo - los temas sexuales no están en el Japón sometidos, desde hace mucho tiempo, a ninguna censura política o moral - típico de la literatura oriental de posguerra."

[x] "Ha muerto el escritor Yasunari Kawabata, y el viejo Japón asiático […] muere un poco con él."

[xi] "Las 'geishas' han perdido a uno de sus perpetuadores […] que ahora cumple en su vida y en su obra su destino de 'samurai.'"

[xii] "El año de Yukio Mishima."

[xiii] "Se dijo entonces que las letras japonesas habían perdido su mayor figura de la posguerra."

[xiv] "Yukio Mishima, el novelista japonés, que además de genio y de loco fue también suicida."

[xv] "Considerado como un aspirante al premio Nobel de Literatura."

[xvi] "En un país derrotado, sin ejército, sometido a un proceso de modernización acelerada […] con un emperador humillado, convertido en un pequeño funcionario de cuello y corbata."

[xvii] "El Japón de los transistores, de los relojes atómicos, de los velocísimos trenes monorraíles."

[xviii] "Una población enfebrecida por el trabajo, los negocios y la avidez de los bienes de consumo."

[xix] "El alma del país se ha desplazado del templo del pabellón dorado de Kioto hasta los muros del Banco de Japón."

[xx] "Que Mishima, como hombre público y como escritor, representaba al Japón, que es un país dualístico y contradictorio, en el cual, junto a una revolución industrial v neocapitalista coexisten hábitos, costumbres y visiones de un mundo tradicional. Todavía hoy, en el Japón, el intermediario entre la revolución industrial y el feudalismo, en el plano de la literatura, sigue siendo no el marxismo, sino el esteticismo, como sucedía en la Europa de hace un siglo."

[xxi] "Deja caer su florido abanico occidental y muestra el rostro antiguo; la máscara cruel e incomprensible."

[xxii] "Todo ese asombroso fenómeno de industrialización, de modernización del pueblo japonés, ¿será una máscara? Tal vez los japoneses obedecen al mágico sonido de un silbato tallado en un zueco de mujer occidental. No han temido la fascinación de Occidente [...] la seducción de la técnica, que en el fondo no es otra cosa que caer en el cepo de bienestar material."

[xxiii] "¿Vale la pena destruir la naturaleza del Japón, su antigua arquitectura, su estilo tradicional de cortesía, su serenidad de origen religioso, para llenar el país de desechos, de fábricas de plástico y de artefactos electrónicos?"

[xxiv] "El joven Toru representa, pues, la nueva raza sin escrúpulos: un autómata embrutecido por la industria, incapaz de albergar nobles sentimientos. De modo que si Kiyoaki simboliza lo más puro del Japón eterno, su última reencarnación es un monstruo anónimo del hormiguero contemporáneo."

[xxv] "Desde un plano más específicamente literario, a Mishima le atañen dos corrientes. Una, la tradición de la literatura clásica japonesa, que dominaba, y que, como definió la antropóloga norteamericana Ruth Benedict, se mueve entre 'el crisantemo y la espada.'"

[xxvi] "El Japón de los cerezos en flor, de los enamorados que cambian sus abanicos en prenda de matrimonio, de las almohadas mágicas que inducen sueños maravillosos."

[xxvii] "Si Kiyoaki era un paradigma estético […] Isao es su contracara marcial."

[xxviii] "Los demócratas liberales se acercaban a Estados Unidos, buscaban el soporte de las potencias extranjeras. El japonés medio aceptaba esta realidad."

[xxix] "Los últimos samurais del antiguo orgullo nacional."

[xxx] "En algún lugar de su vida, Mishima dijo que un occidental jamás podría entender a un japonés."

[xxxi] "En la tensión entre tradición y vanguardia."

[xxxii] “Se trata de una verdad profunda, la cultura japonesa no es una cultura de pecado como la nuestra sino una 'cultura de vergüenza.'”

[xxxiii] “Lector amigo, no te hagas ilusiones, en Japón no basta con 'saber', hay que saber deleitarse de un modo determinado y bajo reglas flexibles.”

[xxxiv] “En un Japón dirigido hacia la más pura modernidad y 'occidentalización', llamado a estar entre los países líderes de la tecnología.”

[xxxv] “Un acuerdo en denunciar la hipoteca que vivía el Japón hacia la superpotencia occidentalizada a golpes de materialismo, competitividad y oligarquía.”

[xxxvi] “En nuestros días, las computadoras de occidente les rinden mercaos y divisas. Las teorías clásicas sustentan la existencia de relaciones entre conquista político-económica y cultural [...] Los japoneses siguen siendo enigmáticos. nada nos han dado, se han limitado a superar a sus maestros en las cosas que les hemos enseñado [...] hechos un internacionalismo que elimina cualquier mensaje no digerible en librerías de clase media inquieta o en filmotecas de altas cejas, podemos pasar por alto todo lo particular o, mentes y fauces abiertas, comerlo sin guisarlo en el decorativo rincón de lo exótico.”

[XXXVII] “De actividades políticas izquierdistas.”

[XXXVIII] “Es la generación que sabe más del Japón antiguo y del moderno, la más culta y radical, la que mejor ha absorbido de las fuentes vanguardistas occidentales.”

[XXXIX] “He querido formar parte de la voz de mi generación. Cuando era joven escribía sobre los jóvenes japoneses y supongo que ahora escribo sobre los viejos desesperados.”

[XL] “Kenzaburo Oé vivía en una patria deshecha por las bombas atómicas, una patria asesinada y asesina, una patria monstruosa.”

[XLI] “Las nuevas razones de ser, en un Japón desmitificado, la incertidumbre y la búsqueda de la verdad, que es tanto como decir la obligación de asumirla.”

[XLII] "Oé retrata los jóvenes de nuestro tiempo, secuestrados por la modernidad, el ardiente anhelo y la desesperación por el futuro, una angustia existencial en permanente ebullición."

[XLIII] "Un autor que conjuga el interés por la sociedad actual con momentos que nunca podrá olvidar: la bomba atómica en 1945 y el momento en el que el Emperador, como persona civil, habló entre los mortales."

[XLIV] "Era inevitable que un proceso de modernización tan violento y espectacular causara en Japón y en los japoneses una serie de profundas heridas. En la primera mitad del presente siglo fue Japón el que infligió heridas a otros países y pueblos de Asia. Como primeras víctimas del poder destructor de las armas nucleares, Japón y los japoneses recibieron, a su vez, unas heridas morales que serían heredadas en el futuro. En la segunda mitad del siglo, el precipitado crecimiento económico de Japón causó, cual violento accidente, heridas tanto dentro como fuera del país. Durante algún tiempo, Japón fue el único blanco de todas las críticas del exterior. Hoy, Japón sufre sus heridas -unas heridas que no se han cerrado y siguen sangrando- en la propia vida de su pueblo. Espero que me entienda si le digo que, viviendo en este país y en esta sociedad, un país y una sociedad que describo en mis novelas, utilizo por norma en mi escritura el modelo de la teoría de la rehabilitación."

[XLV] "La problemática del Japón moderno."

[XLVI] "Hacia el año 1960, la recuperación económica de Japón estaba más o menos consolidada y la economía japonesa entraba en fase de gran desarrollo. La literatura japonesa experimentó un cambio radical en esta época. El sentido materialista y algo frívolo empezó a predominar en la literatura. La gente ya no necesitaba recordar las experiencias duras de la guerra."

[XLVII] "La brutal modernización."

[XLVIII] "El momento histórico en el que el Japón feudal […] pasa a convertirse en consumista."

[XLIX] "El brusco salto del feudalismo a la contemporaneidad."

[L] "Tengo una gran admiración por la manera como el pueblo japonés, luego de la devastación en que quedó el país al finalizar la guerra, pudo levantarse de sus ruinas, sacudirse de la tradición autoritaria que gravitaba sobre él con tanta fuerza, y convertirse en uno de los más prósperos y modernos países del mundo. Que esta modernización tuvo un alto precio, y que ha causado traumas en la sociedad, lo sé de sobra, gracias a quienes, como usted, lo han descrito con lucidez y sutileza. […] No hay duda de que la sociedad japonesa es menos abierta de lo que parece y que su desarrollo industrial sufre, al menos en parte, por ello, la crisis que atraviesa."

[LI] "Millones de japoneses procuran correr un velo de ignorancia."

[LII] "Kenzaburo Oé dice llevar sesenta años esperando que se consolide la democracia en su país, un deseo continuamente frustrado por el sometimiento de las élites niponas a la 'hegemonía de Estados Unidos' y, más recientemente, por un creciente militarismo."

[LIII] "Si me califican de izquierdas porque defiendo una apertura universalista de Japón, no sólo no me molesta, sino que lo asumo encantado. Estoy contra todos los nacionalismos. Quiero desempeñar este papel que sirva para universalizar a nación. Lo peor para Japón es enquistarse en su nacionalismo. No sirve para nada. No ofrece ninguna esperanza de futuro para el país."

[LIV] "Japón se convertirá en un país terrible el día en que los japoneses ya -no crean en el pacifismo."

[LV] "Si pretendemos ignorar nuestras obligaciones puede emerger nuevamente lo más monstruoso y peligroso de Japón."

[LVI] "Quiero dejar claro que si no respetamos el espíritu de la Constitución japonesa […] puede surgir un Japón monstruoso y muy peligroso."

[LVII] "Ōe: Estoy recogiendo datos y estudiando bien este fenómeno tan impresionante, porque pienso escribir algo al respecto, ojalá sirva para movilizar al pueblo de Japón.
Periodista: ¿En qué sentido?

Ōe: Japón tiene tropas en Iraq, a pesar de que su Constitución pacifista le prohíbe invadir directa o indirectamente cualquier país. Es una tragedia enorme."

[LVIII] "Debemos aportar una contribución económica y financiera a Naciones Unidas si se nos pide. Japón no debe en ningún caso llevar a cabo acciones militares. Se dirá entonces, con condescendencia, que Japón sólo es una potencia económica. ¿Por qué no? Se puede actuar con eficacia siendo sólo eso."

[LIX] "Tradicionalmente pronuclear."

[LX] "Recuerdo a los jóvenes de los años sesenta y sus protestas contra el gobierno. Entonces tuvieron bastante eficacia, pero en estos momentos no observo esas demostraciones de unidad entre los jóvenes de espíritu libre. Me parece preocupante. No hay situación más vulnerable que la atomización y no me refiero a que se agrupen en torno a un partido o ideología, sino que se asocien de forma espontánea para ejercer la crítica."

[LXI] "P. ¿Cómo son los jóvenes japoneses de hoy?
R. Tras la desaparición de la Unión Soviética no ha quedado ninguna ideología en Japón. Hay un vacío de poder, de liderazgo. No hay movimientos universitarios. ¿Qué es lo que influye en los jóvenes? ¿Adónde se agarran? ¿Qué es lo que siguen? […] La falta de liderazgo y la falta de proyectos, crear una nueva identidad a través de la experiencia, todo eso es lo que sueñan mis novelas."

[LXII] "La obra de Kenzaburo Oe se sitúa en el polo opuesto a la del anterior premiado japonés con este mismo galardón, en 1968, Yasunari Kawabata, cumbre entonces de la cultura tradicional de su país, y se presenta como más occidentalizada, trágica, erótica y terrible, y sin embargo esperanzada al mismo tiempo."

[LXIII] "La 'occidentalización' está desde la época Meiji en el punto de mira de una literatura perdida entre dos senderos que se bifurcan: la tradición y la modernidad."

[LXIV] "Al igual que los de su generación, rechaza la retórica tradicional y sus metáforas procuran acertar solamente en su esencia. No obstante,

la aspereza de sus imágenes, su ornamento existencial, es profundamente japonés.”

[LXV] “El universo de Oé es un mundo de culturas cruzadas, donde la máscara existencialista oculta un fondo de moral japonesa tradicional.

[LXVI] “Oé llegó a rechazar la lengua literaria de escritores como Tanizaki y Kawabata, y prefirió copiar provocadoramente el estilo de las traducciones al japonés de los novelistas occidentales, pero siempre se ha atenido a los principios de la moral tradicional: las obligaciones con los antepasados y los contemporáneos, el cumplimiento de la deuda moral que fundamenta una vida noble.”

[LXVII] “En Japón - desde nuestra posición, digamos, periférica-, debemos repensar nuestro humanismo totalmente, a partir de nuestras experiencias negativas en la historia.”

[LXVIII] “El humanismo, por definición, es una categoría universal pero se expresa y se vive de forma distinta en Occidente que en los países asiáticos. Es necesario crear un humanismo de los países periféricos. Corea, China, Tailandia o Japón han estudiado el humanismo y la cultura occidental pero ahora deben crear un humanismo que sea universal y a la vez propio, periférico.”

[LXIX] “Los japoneses necesitan ir y venir entre el centro y la periferia, lo que implica una profunda reestructuración de los dos conceptos, para poder participar de forma positiva en la disolución y reconstrucción de la comunidad de naciones.”

[LXX] “Es difícil imaginar cuántos aromas, colores y matices han quedado diluidos en el trasvase de lenguas tan distintas; cuántos símbolos, referencias y significados habrán quedado en los arcenes del trayecto o resultan extraños a la sensibilidad del lector occidental. Por otra parte nos encontramos con que ciertos hábitos de vida, intereses o tensiones inherentes en la sociedad japonesa, a nosotros puedan resultarnos ajenos, incluso extravagantes. […] Deduzco que en el ámbito de la realidad japonesa esa monumental urdimbre fatalista y fanatizada debe de tener un sentido que a mí, francamente, como lector se me escapa.”

[LXXI] "Bird representa a la generación que vive, después de la II Guerra Mundial, en un país que experimenta durante este período intensos cambios sociales y económicos, y que se encuentra desconcertada y confusa."
"Los profundos cambios sociales y políticos que experimentó un país que vio cómo su emperador, símbolo de carácter divino, perdía su naturaleza sagrada."

[LXXII] "El existencialismo llegó en un tiempo en que la nación japonesa debía definirse totalmente y empezar desde cero."

[LXXIII] "Su cruce de identidades, intensificado desde la ocupación norteamericana a partir de 1945, ha dado lugar a un país confusamente mixto que no ha tenido tiempo para encajar adecuadamente todos los cambios que implicaba Occidente ni todas las tradiciones que reclamaba Oriente. […] Japón resume muchos de los hitos históricos del siglo pasado: hibridez entre Oriente y Occidente, inimaginables tragedias humanas provocadas por el hombre, […] un descomunal desarrollo económico… Por estos motivos, es necesario reconocer que lo acaecido en Japón puede ser ejemplo o contraejemplo para el resto de sociedades, cada vez más plurales. […] su peculiar historia ha condensado prácticamente todos los rasgos de la modernidad en apenas un siglo; hasta 2010, era la segunda potencia económica mundial […] es cuna de la tecnología más desarrollada y, principalmente, depositaria de un patrimonio histórico y cultural importantísimo que sólo en las últimas décadas está empezando a ser reconocido como se merece."

[LXXIV] "Profeta en su tierra."

[LXXV] "Novelista de los sentimientos contemporáneos."

[LXXVI] "Consolidó a Murakami como autor de culto, sucesor de Yukio Mishima, Junichiro Tanizaki y Kenzaburo Oé."

[LXXVII] "Mishima, Kawabata y Tanizaki. Ellos eran la idea que se tenía de la literatura japonesa, hasta que irrumpieron Haruki Murakami y Yoshimoto Banana."

[LXXVIII] "Desafió la ortodoxia poética y trascendentalista de la tradición literaria nipona."

[LXXIX] "Ecléctico, multicultural, poscolonial y perturbador."

[LXXX] "El Japón tradicional con el de hoy rendido a la influencia de la cultura yanqui […] los poetas de las dinastías niponas y las letras de canciones modernas […] un mestizaje que aturde pero al mismo tiempo plasma las tensiones culturales y éticas que han forjado la afilada sensibilidad de Murakami."

[LXXXI] "Todo ello se escenifica en una sociedad como la japonesa en la que aún no está resuelto el conflicto entre tradición y modernidad, entre lo retrógrado y lo ultrainnovador."

[LXXXII] "Un cuadro à clef de la Europa de Hitler en el Japón del Toyota Prius."

[LXXXIII] "Cuando usted abre el bolso de una japonesa y miramos dentro, encontramos lo mismo que puede haber en el de una muchacha de cualquier gran ciudad."

[LXXXIV] "En la letanía de minucias domésticas y burocráticas [...] Murakami traza un sosegado panorama de la mente del trabajador medio en el Japón de finales del siglo XX. El valor inmenso de tener un trabajo, aunque sea mal pagado y de desesperante repetición."

[LXXXV] "Japón se tambaleó después del ataque atómico del Enola Gay el 6 de agosto de 1945 sobre Hiroshima, cuando se convenció de que su emperador no era divino, pero sí vencible. Y volvió a hacerlo el 20 de marzo de 1995, cuando cinco ataques coordinados de miembros de la secta Aum Shinrikyo convirtieron el metropolitano en un asfixiante laberinto emocional que debía acelerar el apocalipsis que les daba su aliento vital. […] En su país, a la violencia terrorista ocasional la vence la violencia cotidiana familiar, laboral. Describe un país imperialista que ni siquiera se compadece del caído, que no concibe honor alguno al perdedor. […] Y el lector piensa en la ceremonia del té y en los cerezos en flor, pero sobre todo en la katana del psicótico Mishima, en los pilotos volando en sus Zero hacia su muerte feliz y en el líder de Aum que gaseaba a los ciudadanos."

[LXXXVI] "La herida ajaponesa siempre abierta de la Segunda Guerra Mundial."

[LXXXVII] “Pecado histórico de Japón.”

[LXXXVIII] “El terremoto termina funcionando como despertador que evidencia el vacío en las vidas de toda una sociedad, la del Japón de la década del 90, vacía de ideales y sin saber en qué gastar todo el dinero que le sobra.”

[LXXXIX] “Nos hemos quedado en estado de shock; estamos un poco perdidos ahora mismo.”

[XC] “Los japoneses hemos sufrido desastres constantemente a lo largo de nuestra historia, somos un pueblo sufrido, hemos recibido palos de todo tipo: guerras, bombas, catástrofes naturales… ¿quién sabe cuál es el próximo? Ahora […] estamos sin brújula, en estado de shock. Queríamos ser ricos y occidentales, soñábamos con ser el país más desarrollado y tecnológico del mundo, y estábamos muy orgullosos de algo que, veo, hemos perdido. No sé si va a ser posible encontrar ahora una nueva dirección hacia la que dirigirse.”

[XCI] “Para mí la cultura popular, incluso la más comercial, es como una gran reserva natural de donde los escritores podemos tomar infinitos temas para establecer una comunicación directa con los lectores. Es tan imposible escapar de ella, como del aire que respiramos. Todos comemos una hamburguesa de McDonald's, miramos la televisión o escuchamos a Michael Jackson. Es algo tan natural que ni siquiera nos paramos a pensar que todo eso es cultura. Por eso, si uno escribe sobre la vida en la ciudad, no incluir estas cosas sonaría falso.”

[XCII] “El feliz matrimonio de la sensibilidad oriental y el consumismo de Occidente.”

[XCIII] “El influjo contagioso de la cultura pop entendida como una de las tantas formas del zen.”

[XCIV] “Un ‘héroe’ ocioso –o directamente en paro–, buen aficionado a la música y a la cocina. Un personaje inesperado, pues, dentro de la idea que tenemos de la cultura japonesa más tópica y tradicional.”

[XCV] “Siempre echo de menos en él lo que me cautiva de Kawabata, Tanizaki o Nagai, artistas deudores de la tradición literaria japonesa

que incorporaron formas de las vanguardias occidentales pero conservaron en el uso de la elipsis y la concisión. Murakami […] se siente impelido a contar al detalle toda la historia."

[XCVI] "Los efectos casi radiactivos."

[XCVII] "Ni identificable ni atractivo."

[XCVIII] "P: Sus libros, repletos de referencias occidentales, son tildados a veces de poco japoneses. ¿Por qué?
R: Sinceramente, no sé lo que significa ser realmente japonés. Quizás por haber sido durante toda mi vida y en todo momento un japonés, me gustara o no, no poseo una noción exacta de lo que es japonés y de lo que no lo es. En otras palabras, soy demasiado japonés para estimar desde fuera cuán japonés soy. Pero si usted espera de mí ese tipo de historia en la cual los personajes comen sushi o tofu todos los días y van a ver teatro kabuki vistiendo kimonos y se hacen reverencias entre ellos todo el tiempo, es mejor que lea los libros de los viejos maestros, como Kawabata o Tanizaki. […]Es más, creo que a la mayoría de los lectores japoneses contemporáneos tampoco le interesa leer esa clase de relatos.
[…]
P: ¿Pero usted se inscribe en la tradición japonesa?
R: Ése es un tema que no me concierne, y que imagino que no importa a la mayoría de mis lectores. […]soy un escritor japonés. Auténtico o no, eso ya no lo sé."

[XCIX] "Japonés universal" "Japonés global."

[C] "Uno de los grandes intérpretes de la condición contemporánea y también uno de los grandes poetas de nuestro tiempo."

[CI] "Murakami me sugiere cómo mirar lo ajeno con sutileza, con imágenes y referentes que proceden de una cultura muy enraizada y muy distinta a la nuestra, como es la japonesa, y sin embargo todos nos podemos reconocer en los protagonistas."

[CII] "Un Haruki Murakami más japonés que el sushi y el té verde juntos."

[CIII] "Los fideos, otra seña de identidad nacional en Murakami."

[CIV] "Toman el molde o el nombre, pero no la sustancia."

[CV] "Mundos posibles."

[CVI] "Sus personajes quieren mantener su individualidad, pero la realidad se lo impide. Por ese motivo existe un enfrentamiento constante entre su conducta inconformista y el sistema económico que les rodea."

"La historia reciente japonesa adquiere un enorme valor en algunas de las novelas de Murakami […] ya que determinados personajes están marcados por el temor, la irracionalidad y el complejo de culpa que sienten tantos japoneses."

[CVII] "Las novelas de Murakami han sabido reflejar ese movimiento de la sociedad japonesa, de apertura al exterior, pero también de reflujo sobre sí misma. Sus personajes son denominados por los miedos y temores más profundos, y por eso se abren hacia los demás, hacia la cultura y la sociedad occidental, pero sin olvidar sus raíces."

[CVIII] "Ha dado la espalda con desdén al Japón tradicional y exótico."

[CIX] "¿Acaso es menos japonés, hoy día, un ciudadano de Tokio que bebe cerveza y ama el jazz que su tatarabuelo que bebía sake y amaba los acordes del koto?"

[CX] "Una cultura que asfixia la individualización, homogeniza los comportamientos y condena a la soledad a sus ciudadanos, especialmente a los jóvenes ansiosos de novedad, autonomía y diferenciación."

[CXI] "Murakami […] vincula la era digital, el conformismo, la ataraxia política y la homogeneidad cultural con un sesgo autoritario inherente a la sociedad japonesa y su voluminoso paquete de escrupulosas reglas de comportamiento."

[CXII] "El cultivo del arroz en terrenos poco favorables a la agricultura exigió en todo momento una alta jerarquización de la sociedad y una rígida distribución de las labores que acabaron desembocando en una progresiva homogeneización de los tipos sociales y en una casi incuestionable sumisión a la misión colectiva del grupo o comunidad."

[CXIII] “Basta abrir casi cualquier libro al azar para comprobar que el imaginario de la novela nipona continúa siendo fiel a la idiosincrasia que le es propia.”

[cxiv] “El desprendimiento significa cambiar los términos de la conversación (y sobre todo, de las ideas hegemónicas sobre lo que son el conocimiento y el entendimiento).”

[cxv] “La corpopolítica es una epistemología que se desprende del ‘pienso, luego existo’ y afirma que ‘se es donde uno piensa.’”

[cxvi] “No hay modernidad sin colonialidad.”

[cxvii] “La modernidad queda así en el presente del tiempo y el centro del espacio.”

[cxviii] “Cuando Occidente nos representa y habla por nosotros a través del poder que le da el habernos colonizado física y materialmente tras haberse erigido en 'centro del mundo', en ese mismo acto morimos; dejamos de existir. 'No existimos' y 'no somos' puesto que sólo se puede ser cuando se tiene la capacidad de 'hablar' y auto-representarse. […] Los *otros* (por debajo de la línea abismal) tienen los canales de comunicación cerrados, en tanto que todo el conocimiento de la realidad se genera y se difunde desde el *ser*, y son esos discursos e imágenes a través de los cuales vamos a percibirnos a nosotros mismos y a los otros pueblos, culturas e individuos no occidentales.”

[cxix] “La ecuación binomial tradición/modernidad constituye en sí misma la crisis y le da forma.”