

Insignificance Given Meaning: The Literature of Kita Morio

DISSERTATION

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By

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Abstract

Kita Morio (1927-), also known as his literary persona Dokutoru Manbô, is one of the most popular and prolific postwar writers in Japan. He is also one of the few Japanese writers who have simultaneously and successfully produced humorous, comical fiction and essays as well as serious literary works. He has worked in a variety of genres. For example, *The House of Nire* (*Nireke no hitobito*), his most prominent work, is a long family saga informed by history and *Dr. Manbô at Sea* (*Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki*) is a humorous travelogue. He has also produced in other genres such as children's stories and science fiction.

This study provides an introduction to Kita Morio's fiction and essays, in particular, his versatile writing styles. Also, through the examination of Kita's representative works in each genre, the study examines some overarching traits in his writing. For this reason, I have approached his large body of works by according a chapter to each genre. Chapter one provides a biographical overview of Kita Morio's life up to the present. The chapter also gives a brief biographical sketch of Kita's father, Saitô Mokichi (1882-1953), who is one of the most prominent tanka poets in modern times. The biographical information not only provides important background when examining Kita's fiction and essays but also indicates the influences on his writings. Chapter two examines two of his fictional works, *Ghosts* (*Yûrei*) and *The House of Nire*.

Although both works are fictional, they contain strong autobiographical elements: *Ghosts* is highly introspective and tinged with Jungian insight; on the other hand, *The House of Nire* is a family epic that depicts the decline of one family over three generations during the enormous upheavals Japan underwent from 1918 to 1946. Through the examination of the two works and several of his essays, I demonstrate how Kita depicts the same materials from different perspectives. Chapter three deals with one of Kita's humorous travelogues, *Dr. Manbô at Sea*. Although this work is considered "humorous," I argue that the work also has the theme of "recovery" beneath the comical style of the work. By tracing his alter-ego's journey as a ship's doctor on a Japanese Fishery Agency's survey ship, the chapter examines what materials are subjected to laughter and what are not. The methods Kita employs to make a phrase and a sentence "comical" are also analyzed in the chapter. In chapter four, his children's stories for the young and for adults are examined. Special attention is given to what makes some of his stories a "tale for children," and how the components appear in these stories. Chapter five takes up his major works that do not fit easily into any given genre and are not discussed in the previous chapters. Translations of one essay and four short stories, which have not been translated previously and are discussed in this study, are provided in the Appendix.

Dedication

Dedicated to my parents

Acknowledgments

It was ten years ago in August 2000 that I set out for Columbus, Ohio, an 11 hour trip from Saratoga Springs, New York, in a fully loaded car with all my worldly possessions to return to graduate school to study Japanese literature; I was excited, anxious, and downright scared. It has been a long road with many ups and downs, and I could not have come this far without the help of so many along the way.

First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Professor Richard Torrance, for his guidance, patience, and constant encouragement throughout my graduate work. His intellectual and personal support has carried me through this long journey.

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The late Professor William Tyler always went the extra mile to help me out both academically and personally. I consider myself very fortunate to have had the opportunity to study Japanese literature under him. I miss him greatly.

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Skidmore College, my employer since 1989, has generously supported me throughout my graduate studies. The College gave me a two-year leave from 2000 to 2002 and a semester leave in 2005, which enabled me to be a full-time student and helped me to make progress towards my degree. The College's Faculty Research Development Grant (Part of Title VIA grant) of 2006 and Faculty Development Grant of 2009 and 2010 assisted me in writing this dissertation. I have been so fortunate to be surrounded by caring and encouraging colleagues. I would especially like to thank Patricia Rubio and Mary-Elizabeth O'Brien, the former and the current Chairs of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures respectively, for their support, and all my colleagues at Skidmore College who have constantly given me encouragement.

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Last but not least, I give my deepest thanks to my husband, Robert Longhurst, for his constant encouragement, prayers, and his faith in me especially when I was doubtful about my ability to complete my graduate work.

I am truly grateful to my family in Japan, especially my parents, Takeshi and Kiyo Inamoto, for their unconditional love and support that they have given me throughout my life. This dissertation is dedicated to them.

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Fields of Study

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgments.....	v
Vita.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: The Writer	8
Chapter 2: Autobiographical Fiction	44
Chapter 3: Humorous Travelogue.....	84
Chapter 4: Children's Stories.....	123
Chapter 5: Other Works	172
Conclusion	210
Appendix: Original Translations.....	219
The Red Ghost and the White Ghost.....	220
Death	227
Purchase	255
The Captain	278

Meals My Mother Made For Me	286
Bibliography	290

Introduction

Kita Morio (1927-), also known as his literary persona Dokutoru Manbô, became famous as a writer in 1960 after the publication of two of his works, *Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki* (*Doctor Manbô at Sea*) and *Yoru to kiri no sumi de* (*In the Corner of Night and Fog*). The two works are written in totally different styles: the former is a travelogue in which Morio records his alter-ego's journey as a ship's doctor in a very humorous, comical manner, and the latter is a dark novel which depicts the attempts of a psychiatrist to save mentally disordered patients from the Nazis. The former became a best-selling book soon after it was published, and the latter received the Akutagawa Prize, the most prestigious literary award in Japan. A literary critic and Morio's friend since middle school, Okuno Takeo, later recalls that he thought Morio might be awarded both the Akutagawa Prize, which is awarded for serious works of fiction by a new or a rising writer, and the Naoki Prize, given to a writer of popular literature, at the same time.¹

Since then, Kita has continued to write both humorous and serious works simultaneously and both types of works have been attracting very large readerships. Readers of Kita's works can be roughly divided into two groups: *Manbô-ha* or "Manbô group" and *Yûrei-ha* or "Ghosts group." *Manbô-ha* is a group of people who like Kita's

¹ Okuno Takeo, "Kaisetsu," *Mabuze kyôwakoku kenkoku yuraiki*, by Kita Morio (Tokyo: Shûeisha, 1985) 257.

humorous works, and *Yûrei-ha* is a group of those who like his lyrical, serious works. In short, the versatility of his writing style is well known in Japan.

The division in his readerships does not seem to depend on demographics, such as age or gender, but is purely due to readers' preferences in literature. Those who like to read something light, comical, and humorous tend to be attracted to Kita's *Manbô*-series and those who like more serious works belong to the "*Ghosts* group." It is interesting that those who are in the "*Ghosts* group" tend to prefer *Ghosts*, Kita's very first and introspective work, to *The House of Nire*, a family epic that is considered to be Kita's masterwork.² Okuno Takeo suspects that this is because *Ghosts* and other serious stories express sentiments that readers can relate to, such as long-forgotten feelings they experienced in their own childhood.³ However, although there is no doubt that each reader of Kita's has preferences, I suspect many readers are attracted to Kita's works because he possesses many diverse styles of writing. I was first introduced to the world of Kita Morio via *Doctor Manbô at Sea*. I was fascinated by the humorous, comical expressions in his work, and I began reading more of his humorous stories. Then one day I found a book by Kita entitled *Ghosts* on the shelf of a bookstore. I expected the book to be about ghosts and other supernatural beings written in a comical, funny manner. I still remember my disappointment and surprise when I started to read the story: nothing was funny on the first page of the work, so I skimmed through the book to find the comical sections, but to no avail. However, I was soon immersed in the world of *Ghosts* – its beautiful depiction of the protagonist's childhood experiences and memories and the

² See Kita Morio, "Sôzaku yowa" (12), in *Geppô* (12) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 3 (1977) 1.

³ Okuno Takeo, "Harappa no bungaku," *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 9-10.

melancholy the protagonist feels during his adolescence. At the same time, the writer Kita Morio began to appear to me as a writer of more depth. If Kita had written only serious stories or comical ones, I might not have been attracted to his diverse work in the long term. It was the versatility of his writing style that made me want to read more of his works and to know more about the writer, and I suspect the same goes for many other readers as well.

Critics agree that Kita is one of Japan's most popular writers of his time.⁴ Kita's works are not only popular but also regarded highly by critics, which is evidenced by the fact that Kita has received prestigious literary prizes in Japan, including the aforementioned Akutagawa Prize, Mainichi Shuppan Bunka Prize, Japan Literary Prize, and Osaragi Jirô Prize. However, in spite of the popularity and high quality of his works, he has received little attention among literary scholars working in the English language, or even in Japan. This relative lack of awareness, particularly in the English language arena, was one of the primary reasons that spurred my interest in this topic.

In Japan, two academic journals, *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyôzai no kenkyû* and *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō*, have published special issues on Kita's literary works in 1973 and 1974, respectively, and there are some academic articles published in

⁴ For example, a comparative literary scholar Yamada Hiromitsu says that Kita is the most popular writer in the contemporary period, and a literary scholar Akiyama Shun writes that Kita is, along with Ôe Kenzaburô, the most loved writer who has wide readership. Also a literary scholar Ôkubo Tsuneo writes in 1974 that Kita is a contemporary popular writer. See Yamada Hiromitsu, "Kita Morio," *Shin kenkyû shiryô gendai nihonbungaku*, ed. Asai Kiyoshi et al., vol. 2 (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 2000) 166, Akiyama Shun, "'Yûrei' to 'Manbô' no tairitsu," *Kita Morio no sekai* (Tokyo: Shinpyôsha, 1979) 139, and Ôkubo Tsuneo, "Kita Morio o meguru dôjidai hiyô," *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 39.12 (1974): 127, respectively.

university annals and other academic journals.⁵ Four books have been published on Kita Morio, but three of them are not strictly studies of his works but are more biographies of the writer Kita Morio, and only one of them is a book-length study of his works.⁶ Even this book, however, consists mostly of articles that the author had previously published in magazines and literary journals. Considering the importance of Kita's position in the history of Japanese literature, Kita has not received much academic attention even in his own country.

The scholarship on Kita Morio and his works in English is much less. Eight of Kita's works have been translated into English, but only half of them are book-length and the other half are short stories appearing in anthologies or academic journals. His translated works published as books are: *Nireke no hitobito* (*The House of Nire* and *The Fall of the House of Nire*, translated by Dennis Keene in 1984 and 1985, respectively), *Funanori Kupukupu no bôken* (*The Adventure of Kupukupu the Sailor*, translated by Ralph F. McCarthy in 1985), *Dokutoru Manbô Kôkaiki* (*Doctor Manbô at Sea*, translated by Ralph F. McCarthy in 1987), and *Yûrei* (*Ghosts*, translated by Dennis Keene in 1991).⁷ Kita's name is mentioned in some dictionaries of modern Japanese writers such

⁵ The special issue of *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyôzai no kenkyû* is not devoted just to Kita's works but is devoted to Endô Shûsaku's and Kita's.

⁶ The four books are Okuno Takeo, *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978), *Kita Morio no sekai* (Tokyo: Shinpyôsha, 1979), Kita Morio, *Kita Morio ni yoru Kita Morio* (Tokyo: Seidôsha, 1982), and Amamiya Yoshio, ed., *Pîpuru saizensen: Kita Morio* (Tokyo: Fukutake Shoten, 1984). Okuno's *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* is the one that examines Kita's literary works.

⁷ Dennis Keene was awarded Noma Award for the Translation of Japanese Literature for his translation of *Yûrei* (*Ghosts*) in 1992. The short stories translated into English are as follows: "Haari no iru oka" ("A Hillock of Winged Ants"), "Tanjô" ("Birth," trans. Clifton Royston, *Japan Quarterly* (Oct./Dec. 1969): 415-422), "Iwaone nite" ("On the Rock Ridge," trans. Clifton Royston, *Japan Quarterly* (Oct./Dec. 1969): 423-430), and "Along the Mountain Ridge," trans. Lane Dunlop, *Autumn Wind and Other Stories* (Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1994), and "Akichi" ("The Empty Field," trans. Kinya Tsuruta and Judith Merrill, *The Best Japanese Science Fiction Stories*, ed. John L. Apostolou & Martin H. Greenberg, (New York: Barricade Books Inc., 1997). The translated works of

as *Modern Japanese Novelists: A Biographical Dictionary* by John Lewell and *Japanese Fiction Writers Since World War II*, a dictionary of literary biography edited by Van C. Gessel. Reviews on Kita's *The House of Nire/The Fall of the House of Nire* and *Ghosts*, and an introduction/summary of his *Under the Shining Azure Sky* (*Kagayakeru aoki sora no shita de*) have been published as well. However, with the exception of a recent dissertation by Reed M. Peterson on the comic aspects of Kita Morio's work, there are no sustained critical studies, not even an academic article, on Kita and his works in the English language.

Some literary critics speculate that the reason Kita has not received much deserved scholarly attention is due to his humorous, comical works. Hinuma Rintarô writes that a part of the reason Kita's work has not been adequately evaluated is because Kita became famous as the writer of the humorous travelogue, *Doctor Manbô at Sea*, before receiving the Akutagawa Prize.⁸ Nada Inada also states that Kita's works have not received the proper attention they deserve because literary criticism in Japan has been focused only on serious, ideological literature and excludes other types of works such as comical works or science fiction. Pointing out the fact that Mishima Yukio valued Kita's serious literature but despised his comical works, Yamada Hiromitsu also clearly states that Kita's humorous, comical works are negatively affecting him in terms of receiving attention from literary scholars.⁹ Their speculation seems to be correct, for, as Joel R. Cohn writes in his book *Studies in the Comic Spirit in Modern Japanese Fiction*, "[I]n

Japanese writers can be found in Japan Foundation's "Japanese Literature in Translation Search" database.

⁸ Hinuma Rintarô, *Gendai sakka an'nai* (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobô, 1967) 186.

⁹ Yamada Hiromitsu, "Kita Morio," *Shin kenkyû shiryô gendai nihonbungaku*, ed. Asai Kiyoshi et al., vol. 2 (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 2000) 166.

Japanese high culture, the cult of seriousness [...] has persistently retained such formidable power and prestige that comic artists have had a great deal of trouble in presenting their work as a legitimate alternative.”¹⁰ Okuno Takeo also states that Kita Morio and Endô Shûsaku are the ones who finally broke the taboo in the literary world that a writer should not write both serious and comical works at the same time.¹¹ Humorous, comical expressions are sometimes difficult to translate across cultural boundaries, and this may contribute to the lack of scholarship on Kita in English. However, considering Kita Morio is one of the most important, prolific postwar writers in Japan, he deserves to receive more attention.

This study is intended to make up for this deficiency in both English-language and Japanese-language literary sources. It provides an introduction to Kita Morio’s fiction and essays, in particular, his versatile writing styles and their relation to his life and career. Also, through the examination of Kita’s representative works in each genre, the study examines some overarching traits in his writing. For this reason, I have approached his large body of works by according a chapter to each genre. Chapter one provides a biographical overview of Kita Morio’s life up to the present. The chapter also gives a brief biographical sketch of Kita’s father, Saitô Mokichi, who is one of the most prominent tanka poets in modern times. The biographical information not only provides important background when examining Kita’s fiction and essays but also indicates the influences on his writings. Chapter two examines two of his fictional works, *Ghosts* and *The House of Nire*. Although both works are fictional, they contain strong

¹⁰ Joel R. Cohn, *Studies in the Comic Spirit in Modern Japanese Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998) 187.

¹¹ Okuno Takeo, “Warai no shitsu,” *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 70-71.

autobiographical elements: *Ghosts* is highly introspective and tinged with Jungian insight; on the other hand, *The House of Nire* is a family epic that depicts the decline of one family over three generations during the enormous upheavals Japan underwent from 1918 to 1946. Through the examination of the two works and several of his essays, I demonstrate how Kita depicts the same materials from different perspectives. Chapter three deals with one of Kita's humorous travelogues, *Doctor Manbô at Sea*. Although this work is considered "humorous," I argue that the work also has the theme of "recovery" beneath the comical style of the work. By tracing his alter-ego's journey as ship's doctor on a Japanese Fishery Agency's survey ship, the chapter examines what materials are subjected to laughter and what are not. The methods Kita employs to make a phrase and a sentence "comical" are also analyzed in the chapter. In chapter four, his children's stories for the young and for adults are examined. Special attention is given to what makes some of his stories a "tale for children," and how the components appear in these stories. Chapter five examines his major works that do not fit easily into any given genre and are not discussed in the previous chapters. Translations of one essay and four short stories, which have not been translated previously and are discussed in this study, are provided in the Appendix.

Chapter 1: The Writer

Kita Morio was born Saitô Sôkichi in Tokyo on May 1, 1927, the third child of Saitô Mokichi, prominent tanka poet and psychiatrist, and his wife, Teruko.¹² It is appropriate for this study to introduce Mokichi's brief biographical information here because it will give some background information when we discuss Kita Morio's fictional works that have autobiographical roots in the following chapter, and also because Mokichi's works and his being a well-known literary figure influenced his son, Sôkichi, a great deal.

Saitô Mokichi was born in a village named Kanakame in Yamagata, a northern prefecture in Japan, in 1882 as the third son of Moriya Den'emon. Den'emon was born into the Kanazawa family, but he was adopted as a husband for a daughter of the Moriya family, Moriya Iku. Den'emon's father and therefore Mokichi's paternal grandfather, Kanazawa Jiemon had a taste for poetry. The Moriya family were farmers but were also engaged in silk-worm cultivation, and they were relatively prosperous in the village. Yet, farmers in the countryside in northern Japan did not usually send their third sons to middle school after they graduated from elementary school. Mokichi recalls that he was wondering whether he should become a painter, an apprentice at Hôsenji, the nearby

¹² Primary sources for the body of this biography are the biographies compiled by Maeda Akira which appears in *Kita Morio no sekai* (Tokyo: Shinpyôsha, 1979) and by Saitô Kunio which is included in *Kita Morio zenshû*, vol. 15 (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1977) 359-377, along with Kita's numerous autobiographical essays. Hereafter, Kita Morio, *Kita Morio zenshû*, 15 vols. (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1976-1977), is referred to in the notes as *KMZ*.

temple, or start silkworm cultivation.¹³ At around the same time, Mokichi's second cousin Saitô Kiichi, who was also from Yamagata but resided in Tokyo, was looking for a boy whom he could possibly adopt in the future as Kiichi did not yet have a son at the time. Kiichi consulted the priest of his hometown temple Hôsenji, and the priest recommended Mokichi to Kiichi.¹⁴ Four months after graduating from elementary school in August of 1896, Mokichi, at the age of fifteen, went to Tokyo to live with Saitô Kiichi and his family.

Kiichi was a self-made, successful, and popular medical doctor who was the director of a prosperous hospital in Asakusa when Mokichi came to live with him. Kiichi was very ambitious but also loved novelty.¹⁵ When he studied abroad in Europe in 1900, he specialized in psychiatry and received his doctoral degree in medicine. Upon his return to Japan in 1902, he began constructing a "castle-like"¹⁶ Aoyama Mental Hospital in the style of Roman architecture, which was completed in 1907.¹⁷ The building was very stately and looked so exotic that it was occasionally used as a setting for movies.¹⁸ Kiichi also served as a member of the Japanese Diet from 1917 to 1920.

After moving to Tokyo, Mokichi transferred to Kaisei Middle School, and in 1901 he entered First Higher School. It was when he was a third-year student of First Higher School that he was inspired by Masaoka Shiki's poems and became seriously interested

¹³ Saitô Mokichi, "Yamako," *Saitô Mokichi zenshû*, vol. 5 (1973) 681. Hereafter, Saitô Mokichi, *Saitô Mokichi zenshû*, 36 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973-1976) is referred to in the notes as *SMZ*.

¹⁴ Fujioka Takeo, *Saitô Mokichi-shashin, shiryô de egaku uta to shôgai* (Tokyo: Chûsekisha, 1982) 17.

¹⁵ Kita Morio, *Seinen Mokichi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001) 59.

¹⁶ Kita Morio, "Nezu yama," *Haha no kage* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1994) 28.

¹⁷ It is interesting to note that Natsume Kyôko, Sôseki's wife, mentions Sôseki and Kiichi were on the same ship on their return from Europe to Japan and they acquainted with each other. See Natsume Kyôko, *Sôseki no omoide* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjû, 1994) 119.

¹⁸ Saitô Shigeta, *Mokichi no taishû* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000) 211.

in tanka. In July 1905, Mokichi was adopted by the Saitô family as a husband for Kiichi's second daughter, Teruko, although he did not marry her until some years later.¹⁹ In the same month, he graduated from First Higher School, and entered Tokyo Imperial University Medical College in September. His interest in tanka continued even after entering the medical college. In 1906, he sent some of his tanka poems to Itô Sachio. He later visited Sachio at his house and began studying tanka under him. Itô Sachio studied under Masaoka Shiki, and after Shiki passed away, he led the Negishi school and started a poetry magazine *Ashibi* (1903-1908). When the publication of *Ashibi* ended in 1908, there was a dispute among people within the Negishi school. Mokichi took the side of Itô Sachio and was actively involved in helping Sachio to start a new poetry magazine *Araragi* (1908-1997), which later grew to be one of the most prestigious poetry magazines in Japan. In 1910 Mokichi graduated from Tokyo Imperial School Medical College, although he "barely" graduated because his academic standing at the graduation was the 131st out of 132 students.²⁰ Three months later he became an assistant of the College and began working at Tokyo Prefectural Sugamo Hospital, where he studied psychiatry under the guidance of Kure Shûzô while being trained as a clinician. As a poet, Mokichi took charge of editing the magazine *Araragi* and became very active in composing and critiquing poetry. Itô Sachio passed away in July of 1913, and three

¹⁹ Although Teruko was the second daughter of Kiichi, since his first daughter passed away at the age of three, Teruko was practically the oldest daughter of the family.

²⁰ See Saitô Shigeta, *Seishinkai sandai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1997) 58. Kure Shûzô is said to be the father of Japanese psychiatric medicine. Regarding Mokichi's grades resulting in such a low ranking in his graduating class, Fujioka Takeo attributes it to Mokichi's suffering typhus a year before his graduation. See Fujioka Takeo, *Saitô Mokichi- shashin, shiryô de egaku uta to shôgai* (Tokyo: Chûseikisha, 1982) 35. However, his poor grades may indicate that his true interest did not lie in the study of medicine but in the study of poetry. It is interesting to see that Mokichi, who was more passionate about poetry than medicine in his youth, put pressure on his son, Kita, to study medicine some years later.

months later in October, Mokichi published his first anthology of poetry entitled *Red Light* (*Shakkô*). His poems, replete with romanticism, captured many readers' hearts, and because of *Red Light*, Mokichi became known as a poet. *Red Light* had a great impact not only in the world of tanka poets but also in the literary world.

The success of the publication of *Red Light*, however, did not stop him from advancing his medical career.²¹ In 1914, Mokichi married Teruko who was fourteen years junior to Mokichi, and in January of 1917 he resigned his post at Sugamo Hospital and moved to Nagasaki to take up his new post as a professor at Nagasaki Medical School. In February 1921, he was appointed as Ministry of Education Researcher Abroad (*Monbushô zaigai kenkyû-in*) and from October of 1921 to December of 1924, Mokichi studied abroad in Vienna in Austria and Munich in Germany. When his study ended in Europe, Teruko went to see Mokichi and they toured around Europe. They came back from Europe to Japan on January 5, 1925, getting off the ship in Kobe and returning to Tokyo by train two days later. However, nine days prior to Mokichi's return to Tokyo, a little after midnight on December 29, 1924, a fire broke out at Aoyama Mental Hospital and it almost completely destroyed the hospital. The hospital building of three thousand-*tsubo* (11,862 square yards) was burnt down in three hours and took more than twenty lives.²² To make matters worse, the fire insurance for the hospital had expired a little over a month earlier. In the place of Kiichi, who was already sixty-five

²¹ In “‘*Shakkô*’ saihan ni saishite,” Mokichi writes that one should not consider composing poetry as a successful career. Saitô Mokichi, “‘*Shakkô*’ saihan ni saishite,” *SMZ*, vol. 1 (1973) 114. Mokichi also mentions in the afterword of the third anthology of his poems *Kan'un* that composing poems is a pastime of his regular work. Saitô Mokichi, “Afterword (of *Kan'un*),” *SMZ*, vol. 4 (1974) 174. Kita Morio speculates that, as the adopted son of Saitô Kiichi, Mokichi had to accept it as his fate to become a doctor. Kita Morio, *Seinen Mokichi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001) 60.

²² Saitô Shigeta, *Mokichi no taishû* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000) 239.

years old and who had spent huge amounts for his political campaigns, Mokichi had to carry the burden on his shoulders. Because there was a prejudice at the time against a psychiatric hospital and mental patients, people in the neighborhood raised objections to the rebuilding of the hospital, and the police, who had the authority to grant building permits at the time, did not grant permission to Mokichi to rebuild the mental hospital at the original site. After undergoing various vicissitudes, he successfully rented land in Matsubara Village in Tokyo in May. However, Mokichi had to continue to struggle raising money to build a hospital on the land. He wrote in his diary on December 31 of this year, “I feel as if I have grown ten years older in only one year, but I did my best. Oh God, protect me, this weak person.”²³

There was a two-story house in the west side of the hospital property in Aoyama that was partly burnt down but escaped the full brunt of the fire. Mokichi and his family lived there until it burned down again in an air raid during the war in May 1945. A temporary medical office, later renovated, was built on the site of the fire in Aoyama, and one year after the fire in 1926, Aoyama Mental Hospital was rebuilt in Matsubara Village in Tokyo. They called the hospital in Aoyama the branch office and treated less serious patients there, and called the one in Matsubara the main office.

At the beginning of 1927, mental patients escaped from the hospital one after another. Concerned that aged Kiichi was no longer able to deal with the problems in the hospital, the police ordered Mokichi to take over Kiichi’s position, and Mokichi became the director of Aoyama Mental Hospital on April 27, 1927. Four days later, on May 1,

²³ Saitô Mokichi, “Nikki 1,” *SMZ*, vol. 29 (1973) 149.

his second son and third child, Saitô Sôkichi (pseudo-name, Kita Morio) was born.²⁴

When Kita was born, Mokichi was forty-four years old, already a well-known poet of the Araragi School, and was the director of Aoyama Mental Hospital, still busying himself in taking care of finishing the rebuilding of the hospital.

Kita had a brother Shigeta (1916-2006), who was eleven years Kita's senior, an older sister Momoko (1925-1959), who was two years older than Kita, and his younger sister Masako (1929-1971), who was born when he was two.²⁵ Both Kita and Shigeta recall that Mokichi had a fierce temper and they were constantly afraid of him when they were small.²⁶

Kita's parents, Mokichi and Teruko, did not get along as husband and wife. Their personalities were very different, just like "water and oil" or "one extreme and the other extreme."²⁷ Mokichi grew up in the country in northern Japan; on the other hand, Teruko studied in Gakushûin where half of her classmates were members of noble families. There was an episode about Mokichi and Teruko in their time in Nagasaki: girls on the street laughed at Mokichi wearing a *hakama* that was too short for him. In contrast, Teruko was wearing a beautiful long-sleeve kimono, a pair of thick felt sandals, had a

²⁴ Even though Kita Morio is Sôkichi's pseudo-name and he did not use the name until he was twenty, I will refer to Saitô Sôkichi as Kita Morio throughout this study to avoid confusion.

²⁵ Saitô Shigeta was a psychiatrist and also well-known essayist in Japan. He published several books.

²⁶ Mokichi's short-temper and his being affable to everybody except his family are mentioned in numerous essays by Shigeta and Kita. For example, Shigeta writes, "It may be an exaggeration if I say I was constantly afraid of him day and night, but at least when I was a child, there was not even a day that I could relax in front of him." See Saitô Shigeta, *Mokichi no taishû* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000) 1. Kita Morio also mentions in his numerous essays that Mokichi held him in fear and was scary. For example, see Kita Morio, "Mokichi to sono akusai," *KMZ* vol. 15 (1977) 90.

²⁷ Kita Morio, *Seinen Mokichi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001) 44. Saitô Shigeta also writes that their marriage was "fundamentally impossible" and was "out of balance." Saitô Shigeta, *Mokichi no taishû* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000) 208.

piano, and she looked surprisingly elegant.²⁸ They were a mismatched couple. On November 8, 1933, when Kita was six years old, the newspaper reported the so-called “Dance Hall Affair” (*Dansu hôru jiken*). A popular, handsome dancer named Tamura Kazuo, nicknamed Eddie Cantor, was arrested because of his indecent relationships with his patrons including wealthy women, one of whom was Teruko. The newspaper did not reveal Teruko’s name but referred to her as “the wife of the director of a hospital.”²⁹ Both Mokichi and Teruko were asked to appear in front of the police and were questioned. Enraged, Mokichi ordered her to leave the house and did not allow her to come home until twelve years later. It was in March of 1945 when Mokichi finally allowed Teruko to come home. By the time, Kita was already seventeen years old. Kita talks about the Dance Hall Affair in his essay “Nezu-yama” (*Nezu yama*):

In the eighth year of Showa, the relationship of my mother and her dance instructor was reported in the newspaper.

To begin with, my mother was quite different from those modest Japanese women in the Meiji period. She was strong-minded and free-willed. The fact that she was not obedient to my father, who was well known for his short temper and irascibility, tells that she was no ordinary woman. I heard that, even before the so-called “Dance Hall Affair,” she had an affair once or twice. This was a well-known secret and my father must have known that. However, he also womanized. He became involved with a maid and wrote love poems [to her], and while he was on the medical staff, he went to a pleasure quarter very often. Nowadays, people would say that both parties are to blame. However, it was in the old-fashioned Taisho period. Before scolding her with words, he hit her, but my mother was not defeated. At any rate, it is a sure fact that they did not get along very well.³⁰

There is no critical tone against his mother in this passage. Rather, Kita defends her.

However, it is not difficult to imagine what a devastating experience it must have been

²⁸ Fujioka Takeo, *Saitô Mokichi- shashin, shiryô de egaku uta to shôgai* (Tokyo: Chûseikisha, 1982) 56.

²⁹ “Yûkan madamu ‘dansu hôru jiken’ to bundanjin tobaku issei kenkyo,” *Shinchô* Jul. 2005: 68-69.

³⁰ Kita Morio, “Nezu yama,” *Haha no kage* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1994) 28-29.

for the six-year old Kita to be suddenly separated from his mother, even though Kita and his siblings went to visit his mother regularly starting a year later. The mother's disappearance is written about in Kita's first novel, *Ghosts (Yûrei)*, 1954) and his long masterpiece, *The House of Nire (Nireke no hitobito)*, 1964), although the scandal in which the mother was involved is not mentioned in either of the works.

Kita was born in Aoyama, a neighborhood which is known today as the area where many famous designers' boutiques are located and which is one of the most expensive residential areas in Tokyo. However, when Kita was a child, it still had lots of open fields where neighborhood children gathered to play. There were two cemeteries in his neighborhood, Aoyama Cemetery, Japan's first municipal cemetery where some well-known people were laid to rest, and Tateyama Cemetery. Kita later recalls that, even as a child, the cemeteries and tombstones made him vaguely aware of and think about death.³¹

When he was in his fourth year in elementary school, he had a project during the summer vacation, which was to create an insect collection. With this as a start, Kita became interested in collecting insects, especially scarabs. Kita had a weak constitution as a child, and he often developed a fever. When he was twelve, he suffered from acute kidney disease, which forced him to remain in bed and stay out of school for more than four months. Feeling pity for this sick boy, his family bought an encyclopedia of insects, which Kita kept looking at repeatedly in bed to the extent that he memorized most of the common insects' names. Being out of school for months, however, made Kita behind in everything, and it negatively affected Kita who had been doing very well in school before getting sick. He later recalls how he felt in school:

³¹ Kita Morio, "Yukiyama de tôshi," *Bungei Shunjû* Jan. 2005: 261-326.

Because I missed school for the entire third trimester, I suddenly became a bad student. ...

I could not believe that I received only thirty percent on a mathematics test on which I almost always got one hundred percent before getting sick.

I could somehow catch up with school subjects within a semester or so, but my athletic ability remained inferior since then. The Second Sino-Japan war was prolonged, so athletic ability was considered more important than anything else at that time.

I became a boy with a crooked disposition, and I felt sad about it myself.³²

His enthusiasm towards insects continued but it was not well received by Mokichi.

He prohibited Kita to go hunting for insects, saying that it would only become a hindrance to his study. When he found out that Kita was subscribing to an insect magazine under the family driver's name, he severely scolded Kita. Kita's enthusiasm for treasuring insects, however, did not cease. Upon entering Azabu Middle School, he joined a natural science club,³³ and he wished to go to Matsumoto Higher School in Nagano prefecture because there would be rare alpine insects in the Matsumoto area.³⁴ He took the entrance examination to Matsumoto Higher School in March of 1944, when he was in the fourth year of Azabu Middle School, but he did not pass. Even though he passed the entrance examination of Tokyo Imperial University Interim Medical College, he wished to go to a fifth year in the middle school and retake the entrance examination of the higher school again in the following year as he had a yearning for the traditional

³² Kita Morio, "Nagakatta jinen no koto," *Dokutoru Manbô kaisôki* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbun Shuppansha, 2007) 43.

³³ Okuno Takeo, "Harappa no bungaku," *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 14. Okuno Takeo is a prominent literary critic in Japan, and he happened to be a year senior to Kita in the natural science club in Azabu Middle School. Okuno recalls that Kita surprised the members of the club with his knowledge and collections of insects. Okuno Takeo, "Konchû no ôkoku," *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 28.

³⁴ Kita Morio, "Kaihi e no akogare," *Shinchô* Nov. 1993: 131.

higher school life.³⁵ However, being afraid that Kita would be drafted if he remained in the middle school, Mokichi ordered him to go to the medical college. Kita reluctantly followed his father's order and began attending the college, but three days later, Mokichi, having realized that Kita was still too young to be drafted, allowed him to go back to the middle school and to retake the higher school entrance examination. Kita went back for his fifth year of middle school. It was towards the end of the war and, even though Kita went back to his middle school, instead of going to classes, middle school students had to work all day in a munitions plant.

In January of 1945, Kita took the entrance examination to Matsumoto Higher School again, and he successfully passed this time. The next five months were restless for Kita as well as his family. Tokyo began to suffer continuous air raids, and Kita lost some of his friends in the raids. Teruko came home in March after a long separation from Mokichi and the family because of the Dance Hall Affair, and in April, Mokichi evacuated to his hometown, Kanakame-mura in Yamagata. Shigeta was drafted in the previous year. Therefore, after Mokichi's evacuation, Teruko took charge of the house along with Kita, Shigeta's wife, and Kita's younger sister. On May 25, during the last air raid that hit Tokyo, the house in Aoyama was burnt down, and Kita lost his substantial collections of insects. The family temporarily evacuated to the Uda family, the family of Shigeta's wife who lived in the outskirts of Tokyo, and Kita left from the Uda's for Matsumoto on June 15 to attend higher school.

³⁵ In the pre-war school system, there were five years in middle school. However, starting in 1919, those who wished to and were able to pass the entrance examination were allowed to skip the fifth year and go to higher school. See Ministry of Education, *Gakusei hyakunen shi*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Teikoku Chihô Gyôsei Gakkai, 1972) 471 and Toita Tomoyoshi, *Kyûsei kôtogakkô no tenkai* (Kyoto: Mineruva Shobô, 1982) 15-16.

While staying at the Uda's, Kita received from the family one of Mokichi's anthologies, *Cold Clouds* (*Kan'un*, 1940), and he took it with him to Matsumoto. It was Kita's very first time to read his father's poems, and he was deeply moved and captivated by the works. From this time on, he began to highly respect his scary, fierce-tempered father as a truly exceptional poet. Kita humorously records in several of his essays the ambivalent feelings he had toward his father, the poet whom he respected very much, and the irritable, scary father who constantly annoyed him. The following scene depicted is when Kita was a college student, spending the summer alone with Mokichi in their villa in Hakone:

While my father was out, I secretly took out his anthologies of poems such as *Red Light* and *Uncut Gems* (*Aratama*), and copied my favorite poems in my notebook. If this poet named Mokichi were not my father, I would have liked to become his disciple. When he came back from his walk, he complained about this and that and it annoyed me. In short, Mokichi, to me, seemed to be a better man when he was far away from me and was a mythical person.

When he was away from me, he was a poet whom I respected with all my heart. When I happened to spend my summer vacation together with him, I could not help but think I was cursed to have a father like him.³⁶

Kita began composing tanka poems himself in Matsumoto and sent some of them to Mokichi for criticism. At the beginning, Mokichi was willing to make corrections to Kita's poems using red ink, and he even commented that Kita's poems resembled the poems Mokichi composed around the time he published *Red Light*.³⁷ Kita was in "rapture" about receiving a lesson from Mokichi, but this did not last long.³⁸ After a while, Mokichi stopped giving him lessons and ordered him not to compose any more poems, as it would only become a hindrance to his study. It is interesting to look at what

³⁶ Kita Morio, "Oyaji," *KMZ*, vol. 15 (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1977) 282.

³⁷ Kita Morio, "Mokichi to Kôtarô," *KMZ*, vol. 15 (1977) 99.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

Mokichi had to say about Kita's poetry composition in his letters to Kita in chronological order. In the beginning, it seems Mokichi encouraged his son to compose poetry, but, probably because Mokichi began to realize his son's seriousness in composing poems, he warned his son that studying and entering university should be his first priority.

- Compose some poems and show them to me time to time. (February 22, 1947)³⁹
- Compose a poem once in a while. It's good to compose a poem about daily life. (April 22, 1947)⁴⁰
- You are good at poetry composition. Do it [only] when you have a free time. (May 30, 1947)⁴¹
- Don't let your composition pose any hindrance to your study. (June 13, 1947)⁴²
- There is something interesting in your poem. Compose poetry after you enter university. (September 2, 1947)⁴³

Kita entered the dorm named Shisei-ryô in Matsumoto Higher School in June 1945, but the dorm was soon closed because of the shortage of food. The school started on August 1, but immediately after the commencement, first-year students were mobilized to another town called Ômachi to work in an aluminum factory. It was in Ômachi that he listened to the Emperor's announcement of Japan's defeat in the war on the radio. The school resumed a month later, but many classes were cancelled. Many of the school days were spent to turn a former drill ground into a vegetable field.⁴⁴ Shortage of food was a serious problem in Matsumoto as it was in most parts of Japan at the time.

Kita was interested in science and hardly ever read serious literary works until he entered higher school. However, being influenced by his upper classmen in higher school, he began reading works by Western and Eastern philosophers and writers. Kita

³⁹ Saitô Mokichi, "Shokan 3," *SMZ*, vol. 35 (1975) 632.

⁴⁰ Saitô Mokichi, "Shokan 4," *SMZ*, vol. 36 (1976) 817.

⁴¹ Saitô Mokichi, "Shokan 3," *SMZ*, vol. 35 (1975) 668.

⁴² Saitô Mokichi, "Shokan 4," *SMZ*, vol. 36 (1976) 820.

⁴³ Saitô Mokichi, "Shokan 3," *SMZ*, vol. 35 (1975) 715.

⁴⁴ Kita Morio, "Hajime ni kûfuku ariki," *Dokutoru Manbô seishunki* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1968) 19.

writes in a comical manner about how he felt towards the upper classmen: “How intelligent [the upper classmen] looked! They sounded as though they studied directly under Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard, whose names I only knew. And it seemed they were befriended by Shakespeare, Goethe, and Dostoevsky.”⁴⁵

He was also introduced to the works of Thomas Mann and Rilke by Mochizuki Ichie, one of the professors at Matsumoto Higher School and a translator of Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* and Rilke’s *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*. These writers’ works, especially Thomas Mann’s, would later become Kita’s most favorite works in his university years.

In addition to studying, he was energetically involved in school activities. In the second year, he was elected as a committee member of the new dorm and participated in running the dorm, which included finding food for students residing there. He also went to inter-high ping-pong games and was elected as a captain of the club. Also, when he could obtain some food that allowed him to be in the mountain for a few days, Kita went to climb mountains in the Japan Alps, and sometimes he collected insects. He even caught a rare species of butterfly there. These experiences in the higher school are recorded in the book entitled *Dr. Manbô’s Record of Youth* (*Dokutoru Manbô seishunki*, 1968), which gained a great readership among young people.

When he entered Matsumoto Higher School, he had no doubt that he would become a medical doctor in the future. However, two years in higher school changed Kita. By the time he had to make a decision as to what he would major in at university, he began to desire seriously to be an entomologist like Jean Henri Fabre.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 24.

The life of Fabre, whose *Book of Insects* I had been enjoying reading since the beginning of my middle school years, seemed ideal to me. His *Book of Insects* stands unchallenged, and he was recognized in his last years. He greatly deserved honors for his ardent endeavor, but not all scholars valued his work appropriately. First of all, it was too easy for academic writing. It was too subjective. In any academic field, there surely is a tendency to consider that the drier the writing is, the better it is.

But I wished to follow the course Fabre took. I loved collecting and observing insects. So, I thought that, though I was lazy, I could become perhaps not a great scholar but an average one. Also, I thought I had a gift for composing poetry, so I dreamed of writing something that would combine natural science and literature.⁴⁶

Even though he wished to study zoology at university to become an entomologist, he did not have enough courage to talk about his ambition to his father in person, because Kita knew Mokichi expected Kita to become a medical doctor. Therefore Kita wrote him a letter to let him know he would like to major in zoology at university. Mokichi immediately wrote him back and continued to send him letters, at the beginning with a tender tone and gradually with anger, trying to persuade Kita that he would not be able to earn his living by becoming an entomologist and that he should become a medical doctor. In the letter to Kita dated October 11 of 1947, Mokichi included the information he obtained from people in the Department of Zoology in University of Tokyo, by which he tried to convince Kita how difficult it would be to get a job in the field of zoology that would allow him to do his research as well as provide him with enough money to make a living.⁴⁷ In the letter dated October 16, 1947, Mokichi writes to Kita:

Beloved Sôkichi, ... Do not have too high an opinion of me. My poems are not great. Do not read my poems. Also, the reason why I could study poetry was because my family was a doctor[’s family]. So, if you would like to produce what you call a masterpiece, please do so as much as you wish after you become a doctor and earn enough income. ... Why do you think Sugita Genpaku and

⁴⁶ Kita Morio, “Dô no jidai,” *Dokutoru Manbô seishunki* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1968) 123.

⁴⁷ Saitô Mokichi, “Shokan 3,” *SMZ*, vol.35 (1975) 741-42.

Ôtsuki Gentaku wrote such great works?⁴⁸ It is because they were doctors. You do not know yet how exquisite and profound Medicine is. I will tell you more about Medicine during this winter break. Doctors are truly great. ... I can tell from the insect cabinets you made that you are clever with your hands. Surgery is the same [as making an insect cabinet.] ... I recommend that you become a surgeon.⁴⁹

Kita gave up studying zoology. He later recalls and says, “I did not have nerves strong enough to go against my father’s wish after receiving this sort of letter.”⁵⁰

Kita entered University of Tōhoku School of Medicine located in the city of Sendai in Miyagi Prefecture on April of 1948.⁵¹ He entered the medical school to please his father, but he was beginning to feel uneasy about becoming a doctor and engaging in medicine throughout his life. Kita was introduced to Thomas Mann’s works while in higher school, and in university, he was completely fascinated by them. He especially enjoyed reading *Tonio Kröger*, and he carried the book with him everywhere. He repeatedly read the story and began to think that he, just like Tonio in *Tonio Kröger*, was cursed and destined to write literature whether he became a medical doctor or engaged in other occupations.⁵² Making up his mind that he would be a writer, Kita often skipped classes. During the daytime he enjoyed spending time with his friends, but at night, after his roommates went to sleep, he wrote down his thoughts in his notebook. His diary entry of May 10, 1948 reads:

⁴⁸ Sugita Genpaku (1733-1817) was a physician in the Edo period and is also known as a translator of a Dutch book of anatomy and the author of *Dawn on Western Science in Japan (Rangaku kotohajime)*. Ôtsuki Gentaku studied under Sugita Genpaku. He is the author of *Steps in Dutch Studies (Rangaku kaitei)*.

⁴⁹ Saitō Mokichi, “Shokan hoi,” *SMZ*, vol. 36 (1976) 829.

⁵⁰ Kita Morio, “Shi,” *KMZ*, vol. 5 (1983) 240.

⁵¹ Kita tells Okuno Takeo that he might have insisted more on becoming an entomologist if he had not lost his collections of insects during the war. Okuno Takeo, “Konchū no ôkoku,” *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1978) 39.

⁵² Kita Morio, “Monokaki o kokorozasu,” *Dokutoru Manbō seishunki* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1968) 165.

I didn't go to school again today. I skip classes very often. The blank pages in my notebook accumulate. I'm a troubled man. Moreover, I haven't been able to produce even one story that I thought I could in my swelled head. ... I am stupid. Make a little effort! ...

Why am I writing such things? For my memories? For my record? Am I planning to live frivolously? Create! Write steadily! Go forward without delay! Work! Write everyday! ...⁵³

Though Kita wished to become a writer, he was not sure what literary form he should pursue. While he was in his first year at university, he sent his poems to Takamura Kôtarô, a renowned poet whose works Kita admired, but he did not hear back from Kôtarô. Kita was disappointed, but he comforted himself by thinking that his letter might have been used to make a fire in a stove to cook Kôtarô's meal.⁵⁴

Kita's first paid work was a short-short comedy which he ghostwrote and was published in a trashy magazine. He ghostwrote two more short-short pieces for the magazine.⁵⁵ At around the same time, the poem entitled "Poem of Those Days" (Ano koro no uta), which he composed under a pseudo-name Kita Muneo, was published in the poetry column of the October 1948 issue of the literary magazine *Bungaku Shûdan*.⁵⁶

In 1949, some more of his poems were published in *Bungaku Shûdan*, but prose literary works he sent to *Bungaku Shûdan* and *Bungei Shuto*, also a literary magazine organized by Yasutaka Tokuzô, were not accepted. In 1950, Kita sent another prose work to *Bungaku Shûdan*, but, again, his work was not accepted. However, his short

⁵³ Kita Morio, *Aru seishun no nikki* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1988) 28-29.

⁵⁴ Kita Morio, "Mokichi to Kôtarô," *KMZ*, vol. 15 (1977) 99-100.

⁵⁵ Even Kita himself does not own the copy of the magazine, so we will probably never be able to read these pieces.

⁵⁶ Kita used a pseudo-name to hide his identity of being Mokichi's son. The last name Kita, which means "north" in Japanese, was chosen because he was living in colder areas such as Matsumoto and Sendai. His original plan was to use the characters "north," "south," "east," and "west" for his last name in term. His first pseudo-name Muneo (宗夫) has one character from his real name, Sôkichi (宗吉). Kita Morio, "Pen nêmu," *KMZ*, vol. 15 (1977) 241.

story “The Album of One Hundred Mosses” (Hyakuga-fu), which he wrote using his pseudo-name Kita Morio for the first time, was accepted and published in the short story column of the April issue in *Bungei Shuto*.⁵⁷ Kita continuously sent his works to *Bungei Shuto*, and after three stories were rejected, “Mad Poem” (Kyôshi) was accepted and published in the main column of their October issue.⁵⁸ Soon after that, Kita joined the literary group of *Bungei Shuto*. As for his poetry, he sent his works not only to *Bungaku Shûdan* but also to another poetry magazine *Shigaku*, and both magazines accepted them. However, Kita began to feel that he had reached his limits at composing poetry and shifted his focus to prose literature.⁵⁹ In November of 1950, he had his first novel *Ghosts* in hand. At around the same time, Kita also formulated the idea of writing a long novel modeled after Thomas Mann’s *Buddenbrooks*, which portrays the decline of the Buddenbrook family, based on Mann’s own family, in Lübeck, Germany, over three generations. Kita planned to write a novel in the future that would depict the decline of his own family over the period of three generations, Kiichi’s, Mokichi’s, and his own. He temporarily named the title of his future novel as “The House of Kamio” (Kamioke no hitobito)” and put it down in his notebook.⁶⁰ The novel would be completed and

⁵⁷ According to Kita, his pseudo-name Morio (杜夫) comes from Tonio (杜二夫) of Tonio Kröger. Kita Morio, “Pen nêmu,” *KMZ*, vol. 15 (1977) 241.

⁵⁸ The three works that were rejected are “Osanai Merikuriusu,” “Yumoresuku,” and “Bokujin no gogo.”

⁵⁹ Kita does not explain why prose literature seemed more promising to him at the time. In fact, from the recorded number of his poems accepted by literary magazines, Kita seems to have been doing well with his compositions. Nada Inada speculates that part of the reason Kita did not choose to keep composing poetry could be a reflection of Kita’s inferiority towards his father, Mokichi. See Nada Inada, “Kaisetsu,” *Kita Morio shû*, by Kita Morio, *Shinchô nihon bungaku*, vol. 61 (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1968) 694.

⁶⁰ The Japanese title of Mann’s *Buddenbrooks* is “*Buddenbrôkuke no hitobito*.” Therefore, the title he came up with, “Kamioke no hitobito,” is an imitation of *Buddenbrooks*.

published thirteen years later under the title *The House of Nire* (*Nireke no hitobito*, 1964).⁶¹

In March 1952, he graduated from University of Tōhoku School of Medicine, and continued working as an intern in the University of Tōhoku Hospital. On February 25, 1953, Mokichi, the father whose poetry inspired Kita a great deal, passed away due to cardiac asthma. The very last paragraphs of *Record of Dr. Manbō's Youth* portrays how Kita learned about his father's death:

I was still living a shameful, lazy life even though my internship was close to an end and the state medical examinations were drawing near. Then, I was informed of the passing of my father, who had become senile long ago. I received the telegram [informing that my father reached a critical condition] with a bad hangover. When I called Tokyo, he had already passed away. Even to the end, I was an undutiful son.

In the train to return to Tokyo, I opened *Red Light*, the first anthology of my father's poems, which I hadn't read since I entered the university. Nostalgic poems pierced my heart. The thought echoed in my head – Mokichi, who composed these poems, is not in this world, nowhere in this world, any longer.

When I looked up, it was raining outside and tiny raindrops were hitting and trailing on the train windows. While looking at them, I realized that the feeling I had for my father was one of strong affection. As the father passes, the unworthy son, carrying his clumsy manuscript, experiences an awakening almost sexual in nature – I felt as if it were a chilled destiny and a symbol of iteration of the circle of life.

At the time, I had with me in my bag a fairly bulky manuscript of my first long work *Ghosts* that was about to be completed⁶²

It was Teruko, who had not gotten along with Mokichi and who had been criticized as a bad wife by Mokichi's followers, who took care of and watched over Mokichi to his end.⁶³ At the family's request, Mokichi's body was autopsied. While witnessing the

⁶¹ Many of Kita's long novels were first serialized in a magazine and later published as a book. In this study, unless otherwise specified, the year given with the title of the book in the parenthesis is the one in which the work is first published as a book.

⁶² Kita Morio, "Gakumon to ai nit suite," *Dokutoru Manbō seishunki* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1968) 250.

⁶³ Kita Morio, "Shinitamau chichi," *Haha no kage* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1994) 111.

autopsy, Kita thanked Mokichi for encouraging him to study medicine. Because of that, he could gaze at his father's body being autopsied.⁶⁴

Kita took his state medical examinations in April and passed in June, moved back to Tokyo and became an assistant in the Department of Neurology in Keiô University School of Medicine in May. Also in the same month, Part One of his first novel, *Ghosts*, was published in *Bungei Shuto*. After coming back to Tokyo from Sendai, Kita was more actively involved in *Bungei Shuto* and had close contact with other younger members such as Hinuma Rintarô, Satô Aiko, and Tabata Mugihiko. Those younger members did not like some of the older members' thought and ideologies, and they created their own literary magazine called *Han Sekai*, but they did not talk about this openly as they feared that it might upset the head of *Bungei Shuto*.

Ghosts began its serialization in *Bungei Shuto* in May 1953, and continued in March, April, and May of 1954. In October, with Teruko's financial help, Kita published *Ghosts* at his own expense, but it was not successful. He had seven hundred fifty copies printed and they were put in regular bookstores, but it sold almost no copies and most of the copies were returned. Kita gave away copies of *Ghosts* to friends, writers, and literary critics, one of whom was Okuno Takeo. Okuno was a year senior to Kita in the natural science history club in Azabu Middle School, but Kita did not realize that the rising literary critic Okuno Takeo was the Okuno Takeo whom he had known in the middle school. Okuno also did not realize that the writer Kita Morio was, in fact, Saitô Sôkichi who had possessed a surprising amount of knowledge about insects during his middle school days. It was not until the summer of 1955 when they happened to meet

⁶⁴ Kita Morio, "Shi," *KMZ*, vol. 5 (1976) 241.

each other at a bus stop in Karuizawa that they realized the identity of each other. When they met at the bus stop, Okuno clearly remembered *Ghosts* because he had had a favorable impression of the work. When he received the copy and read it, he was even “excited, thinking that there was surely an anonymous genius writer.”⁶⁵ In December of this year, Kita was dispatched from Keiô University Hospital to Yamanashi Prefectural Mental Hospital.

Meeting his middle school senior Okuno Takeo, now a young and energetic literary critic, widened Kita’s literary circle. In January of 1956, through Okuno Takeo’s introduction, “Along the Mountain Ridge” (Iwaone nite) was published in the literary magazine *Kindai Bungaku*. Also through Okuno’s introduction, “The Town with a Psychic” (Reibai no iru machi) was published in another prominent literary magazine, *Mita Bungaku*, in March. Also in March, “The Hillock of Winged Ants” (Haari no iru oka) was published in *Kindai Bungaku* again. In July, “The Artificial Star” (Jinkô no hoshi) was published in *Bungei Shuto*, and for this work, Kita was nominated for the first time for the Akutagawa Prize, Japan’s most prestigious literary award for a new or a rising author. The work, however, did not receive the prize. In December, Kita returned from Yamanashi Prefectural Mental Hospital to Keiô University Hospital, and while working in the hospital as an unpaid assistant, he worked part-time at his brother Shigeta’s psychiatric hospital.

In May of 1957, Kita was promoted to a paid assistant in Keiô University Hospital. In the same year, “Mad Poem” published in the June issue of *Bungei Shuto* was nominated for the Akutagawa prize but, again, Kita did not receive the award.

⁶⁵ Okuno Takeo, “‘Yûrei’,” *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 78.

Previously Kita had never brought an unsolicited draft to a publisher because he feared that people would find out he was Mokichi's son.⁶⁶ However, almost ten years had passed since Kita began writing, and even though he was nominated for the Akutagawa Prize twice, he was not yet known as a writer. Thinking that it was about time that his work would be published in a commercial literary magazine, Kita took "In the Valley" (Tanima nite) to one of the commercial magazines, *Gunz ô*, but it was not accepted. The comment he received was that the story did not have any character.⁶⁷ He then brought his manuscript of "Floating" (Fuhû ô) to *Shinch ô*, but, again, it was not accepted. However, when "Floating" was published in *Bungei Shuto* and received a good review in *Yomiuri Shinbun*, *Shinch ô* asked Kita to contribute a work. He contributed his short story "Dust and the Consecrated Light" (Hokori to t ômy ô), and it was published in the November issue of *Shinch ô* in 1958. It became his first publication in a commercial literary magazine. Kita also gave *Shinch ô* the manuscript of "In the Valley," the work that was not accepted by *Gunz ô*. *Shinch ô* liked this work and encouraged Kita to write more. With their encouragement, he began to engage in writing his new novel *In the Corner of Night and Fog* (*Yoru to kiri no sumi de*), a story depicting the agony of the German psychiatrists who are forced to conduct experiments on mental patients during the war under Nazi's Night and Fog Decree. Kita later said that this work is especially memorable to him because he faced rough going writing this serious work.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Kita Morio, *Kita Morio ni yoru Kita Morio* (Tokyo: Seidôsha, 1981) 31.

⁶⁷ Amamiya Yoshio, ed., *Pîpuru saizensen: Kita Morio* (Tokyo: Fukutake Shoten, 1984) 84. The story was later published in *Shinchô* and nominated for the Akutagawa Prize in 1959.

⁶⁸ Kita Morio, "Sôzaku yowa" (9), in *Geppô* (9) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 2 (1977) 1. *Geppô* (Monthly Report) is supplemented to each volume of *Kita Morio zenshû*. Each *Geppô* includes Kita's "Sôzaku yowa" (Additional Stories of Creating the Work) and two other people's essays on Kita's

Kita had been fascinated by Thomas Mann and his works since he was a student, and he had a strong desire to visit Germany. However, at the time in Japan, traveling to a foreign country was restricted and one had to have a certain reason to go abroad.⁶⁹ Kita applied for the Ministry of Education study-abroad scholarship, but he did not even pass the screening of the documents. In the fall of 1958, he learned that the Fisheries Agency was looking for a ship's doctor for their research vessel that would sail to Europe. When he learned about this ship's doctor position, the ship was scheduled to put out to sea in a few days, and Kita had to make a quick decision. Kita gave his paid assistant position to his junior colleague, took a leave from Keiô University Hospital, and went on a journey as a ship's doctor. He took the manuscript of *In the Corner of Night and Fog* with him but he could hardly add any lines to it during his journey. While he was cruising, he wrote a series of essays entitled "On Board" (Senjônite) and sent them to *Bungei Shuto*. They were published in *Bungei Shuto* from January to May of 1959. In February of 1959, he arrived in Hamburg, Germany, and visited Yokoyama Kunji who was the manager of Mitsubishi Corporation Hamburg Branch. He was an acquaintance of Kita's senior colleague at Keiô University Hospital and also of Kita's German colleague who had studied at Keiô University. There, he met the oldest daughter of the Yokoyama family, Yokoyama Kimiko, whom he married two years later. In Germany, he visited Lübeck and saw Buddenbrookhaus, the setting of one of Thomas Mann's masterpieces *Buddenbrooks*, the place Kita had long desired to visit. During the trip, Kita learned that

works included in the volume of the zenshû. The page number given in the notes of this study for "Sôsaku yowa" is the page in *Geppô*, not in the main body of *Kita Morio zenshû*.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 85.

In the Valley, which was published in the February issue of *Shinchô*, was nominated for the Akutagawa Prize, but Kita was not awarded the prize for the third time.

In April 1959, he came back to Japan after a six-month journey. When he came back, he was contacted by several editors who had read “On Board” in *Bungei Shuto*, and he was asked whether he would be interested in writing about his voyage. However, since he intended to write “pure literature”⁷⁰ and had no intention of writing “such things”⁷¹ as travelogues, he declined all their offers. Kita went back to work as an unpaid assistant at Keiô University Hospital, but he suffered from a duodenal ulcer and often missed work. In the summer, he went to a hot spring resort in Gunma prefecture, hoping to make good progress on writing *In the Corner of Night and Fog*, but it was still very rough going. Because of his health condition and of not being able to make good progress on writing, he was feeling low.⁷² By the end of October, Kita decided to stop writing this tough novel as he thought the stress would make his ulcer worse. At around that time, Miyawaki Shunzô, an editor of *Chûô Kôron* who later became an essayist himself and befriended Kita, contacted Kita and asked again if he would be interested in

⁷⁰ Okuno Takeo, “‘Dokutoru Manbô Kôkaiki’,” *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 118. The term “pure literature” is used here as a translation of the term *junbungaku* used by Kita in the sentence quoted above. In this discussion between Kita and Okuno Takeo, which probably took place in 1977, both use the term *junbungaku* or pure literature as opposed to *taishûbungaku* or popular literature. The opposition of pure/popular in modern Japanese literature, however, has been reexamined and questioned in recent years, and scholars have pointed out that this opposition does not apply any longer to many postmodern Japanese literary works such as those by Murakami Haruki and Yoshimoto Banana. It is worth noting that, as early as in 1976, Shinoda Hajime writes that Kita’s works cannot be defined using the *junbungaku/tsuizokubungaku* (popular literature) opposition. See Shinoda Hajime, “Hito to bungaku,” *Kita Morio • Tsuji Kunio Shû*, by Kita Morio, and Tsuji Kunio, *Chikuma gendai bungaku taikai*, vol. 87 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobô, 1976) 524. For a more detailed discussion on pure and popular literature, see Matthew C. Stretcher, “Purely Mass or Massively Pure? The Division Between ‘Pure’ and ‘Mass’ Literature,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 51 (1996) 357-374. In this study, the term “pure literature” is used only in the translation of a direct quotation in which the word *junbungaku* is used.

⁷¹ Kita Morio, “‘Manbô mono’ no hassei ni tsuite,” *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 39.12 (1974): 6.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 2.

writing a travelogue. Kita recalls, “So, I agreed to write a travelogue, thinking that, if I write a ridiculous and exorbitant essay, my ulcer might get better.”⁷³ Since he had his essays “On Board” published in *Bungei Shuto* and also he kept a detailed diary during his voyage, writing the travelogue was easy. He tried to incorporate in his travelogue something of a comic knockabout protagonist, which is hard to express in a story of a purely literary nature.⁷⁴

He finished writing the travelogue in two months, titled it *Doctor Manbô at Sea* (*Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki*), and published it from Chûô Kôronsha in March 1960.⁷⁵ His humorous writing style attracted many readers, and it turned out to be the best-selling book in Japan in 1960. Because his first book *Ghosts* sold almost no copies, his book becoming a best-seller was something unbelievable to Kita:

The book [*Doctor Manbô at Sea*] was released in March of Showa 35 [1960]. When I went into a small bookstore but could not find copies of the book, I asked a store clerk about it and he replied, “It is all sold out and has been reprinted now.” I went all the way to the Kinokuniya bookstore, and there I found an empty space among the books mounted up on a table. In the empty space was a wrapper of the book. When I published *Ghosts* at my own expense, almost all the copies were returned to me. Because I had that experience and had the strong

⁷³ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁴ Okuno Takeo, “‘Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki,’” *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 118.

⁷⁵ The direct translation of *Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki* is different from “Doctor Manbô at Sea.” However, since Ralph McCarthy has already translated the work into English under the title *Doctor Manbô at Sea*, I use the same title in this study. The English word for *manbô* is “ocean sunfish.” It is a big, roundish, weird looking fish and is spotted floating sideways on the sea. Although the reason of this behavior is unknown, scholars suspect that it is basking in the sun. In the essay “Kita Morio no seishun igai den,” Kita’s former high school teacher Furukawa Hisashi records the following conversation with Kita: “Teacher, I wrote a voyage log. I would like to name it *Dokutoru Manbô*, but what do you think about it?” “It’s funny. I heard that *manbô* is a Pickwickian fish taking a nap on the sea.” “Isn’t it perfect (for me)? *Dokutoru manbô kôkaiki*. I’ll decide on this then.” Furukawa Hisashi, “Kita Morio no seishun igai den” in *Kita Morio no sekai* (Tokyo: Shinpyôsha, 1979) 29-30. Kita also writes to his friend Tsuji Kunio (1925-1999) in the letter dated Dec. 14th, 1959 that, because the travelogue is absurd, he gives it an absurd title “*Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki*.” In the same letter, he also says that the problem with the name “Dokutoru Manbô” is that it sounds similar to mambo, the Latin music. See Tsuji Kunio and Kita Morio, “Pari Tokyo ôfuku shokanshû,” *Shinchô* (Aug. 2009) 19.

impression that a book cannot be easily sold, seeing that was just like I was in a dream.⁷⁶

This success made Kita consider that he should keep writing pure literature while earning his living by writing humorous, comical works, as pure literature might not bring him any money.⁷⁷ Kita, however, did not want to be a popular writer. He writes:

I have never wanted to become a popular writer nor have I been one. There have been a few opportunities when I could have become a popular writer, when I published *Doctor Manbô at Sea* or *The Lonely King* (*Sabishii ôsama*) for example. If your work becomes a best-selling book and if you write something similar to it continuously, you will become a popular writer whether you like it or not. However, I had two to three-year intervals in between *Manbô* and the *Lonely* series.⁷⁸

Kita continued to write humorous essays under titles that begin “Dokutoru Manbô” or simply “Manbô,” and therefore they are *Manbô-mono* or “the Manbô series.” Kita’s humor is often compared with that of Natsume Sôseki’s.⁷⁹

He resumed writing *In the Corner of Night and Fog* after completing *Doctor Manbô at Sea*. It still did not go very easily, but finally he completed the work and it was published in the May issue of *Shinchô*. On July 19, 1960, after being nominated for the Akutagawa Prize for the fourth time, Kita was finally awarded the Forty-Third Akutagawa Prize for *In the Corner of Night and Fog*. According to Funabashi Seiichi, one of the eleven judges for the prize of that year, five judges supported Kita’s *In the Corner of Night and Fog* alone, and another five recommended that both *In the Corner of Night and Fog* and Kurahashi Yumiko’s *Partei* (*Parutai*) be awarded the prize.⁸⁰ Kita

⁷⁶ Kita Morio, “Sôsaku yowa” (3), in *Geppô* (3) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 11 (1976) 2.

⁷⁷ Okuno Takeo, “‘Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki,’” *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 119. For the term “pure literature,” please see the footnote no. 58 above.

⁷⁸ Kita Morio, “Sôsaku yowa” (15), in *Geppô* (15) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 15 (1977) 2.

⁷⁹ For example, see Hasegawa Izumi, *Sengo bungakushi* (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1974) 61.

⁸⁰ Shiba Shirô, et al., *Akutagawa-shô zenshû*, vol. 6 (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjû, 1982) 394.

was recommended for the prize almost unanimously. Some judges who are also prominent writers praised Kita's writing skills. For example, Ishikawa Tatsuzô commented that *In the Corner of Night and Fog* was like a work of architecture that has been planned and constructed well, Niwa Fumio said that Kita was richly talented in writing, and Ibuse Masuji remarked that Kita had the potential to grow as a good writer.⁸¹ Kita, however, was not excited about the award. He explains his feeling about receiving the Akutagawa Prize, saying "I was nominated four times for the award, so in the end, I had gotten used to not being awarded. When I finally received the award, *Doctor Manbô at Sea* was already a best-selling book, so I was not as thrilled about receiving the prize."⁸² It is customary for a recipient of the prize to comment on their feelings. Almost all the recipients seriously express their excitement and gratitude over receiving an award and their future intentions. Kita's comment, however, was a comical one compared to others', part of which reads, "I will purchase and eat good food with the prize money and hope to write something decent when I enter upon middle age."⁸³

The year 1960 was very significant for Kita's writing career because of the huge success of *Doctor Manbô at Sea* and his receiving the Akutagawa Prize for *In the Corner of Night and Fog*. In September, his first novel *Ghosts*, the novel that he had published at his own expense six years ago and had not been received well, was published from Chûô Kôronsha, and in October, the collection of his short stories entitled "Hill of Winged Ants" was published from Bungei Shunjû Shinsha. Kita writes, "People are very simple-minded. Six years ago I published *Ghosts* at my expense but only ten copies were sold.

⁸¹ Ibid, 388-391.

⁸² Okuno Takeo, "Tanpen ni tsuite," *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 109.

⁸³ Shiba Shirô, et al, *Akutagawa-shô zenshû*, vol. 6 (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjû, 1982) 469.

But, after I received the Akutagawa Prize and Chûô Kôronsha published it as a decent book, it sold [well] this time.”⁸⁴ Beside *Ghosts* and “The Hill of Winged Ants,” he had more short stories published in literary magazines, he was asked to give lectures, and he participated with Tezuka Osamu in script writing for Tôei Animation “Arabian Nights: the Adventure of Sinbad.” Kita’s writing career finally began to flourish, but it was also an important year for his other career as a psychiatrist. In November, he was awarded his medical degree from Keiô University by writing his doctoral thesis entitled “A Study of a Micro Mental Movement in Schizophrenia” (*Seishin bunretsubyô ni okeru bisai seishin undô no ichi kôsetsu*).⁸⁵

In January of 1961, Kita resigned his position as an assistant at the Keiô University Hospital and began working at his brother Shigeta’s hospital. In April, he married Yokoyama Kimiko whom he met in Germany two years before during his trip as a ship’s doctor. Kita and his wife went to Gamagôri in Aichi Prefecture for their honeymoon, but on their way back to Tokyo, Kita and his wife stopped in Atami to interview an elderly lady who once worked for the Saitô family. Kita was collecting

⁸⁴ Kita Morio, *Manbô aisaiki* (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 2001) 42. *Ghosts* continues to be one of the most popular works that Kita produced. Kita has expressed his desire to write two or three subsequent chapters to *Ghosts* various times. In 1971, Kita wrote that he intended to write a subsequent story to *Yûrei* every ten years and would like to make it a three-volume work. See Kita Morio, “Watashi no bungaku – Gôman to tôkai,” *Sono Ayako • Kita Morio*, by Sono Ayako, and Kita Morio, *De Luxe warera no bungaku*, vol. 16 (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1969) 476. Kita also told Okuno Takeo in 1975 that the protagonist of his third sequel of *Ghosts* would be around Kita’s age (Kita was 48 years old at the time) and the protagonist would be in his old age in the fourth sequel. See Okuno Takeo, “‘Kodama,’” *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 156. Many years later, he said in a talk with Satô Aiko that he had hoped to make *Ghosts* a three-volume work but now he has given it up. “Ai-chan to Manbô no rôgo taidan,” *Bungei Shunjû* Dec. 2000: 176. He did write one subsequent story entitled *Kodama* (*Wood Spirit*) in 1974, which is a sequel to *Ghosts*.

⁸⁵ In his doctoral thesis, Kita analyzed the pressure that a mental patient applies in handwriting. In *Wood Spirit*, the protagonist who is studying abroad in Germany is told by his advisor to do a research on the similar topic but he is very skeptical about the research. See Kita Morio, “Kodama,” *KMZ*, vol. 3 (1977) 143.

materials for his new novel, *The House of Nire*, in which he would portray the decline of the Saitô family over the course of three generations, but he also thought it would be good for his newly-wed wife to learn the stories of his family. He and his wife traveled to Yamagata, Sendai, among other places, to gather materials for the novel.⁸⁶ He undertook the novel in August while writing other works such as *The Adventure of Kupukupu the Sailor* (*Funanori Kupukupu no bôken*), and *The Notebook of a Yawn* (*Akubi n ôto*).

The House of Nire turned out to be a very long novel. In 1962, Part One of the novel was serialized in *Shinchô* from January to December. Kita reduced his consultation days at Shigeta's hospital to two days a week, but working both as a writer and a doctor was not easy.⁸⁷ During the serialization of Part One of the novel, Kita was encouraged by Mishima Yukio's postcard in which Mishima favorably commented on the work. In January 1963, when Kita hit a slump and was not able to undertake Part Two of the novel, he consulted with Yukio and received some advice on writing a long novel. Kita serialized Part Two in *Shinchô* from September to March of the following year. Part Three and therefore the entire work was completed in December of 1962, and it was published in book form from Shinchôsha in April 1963. Mishima Yukio contributed his enthusiastic recommendation for the work:

This is one of the most important novels that have been written since the end of the war. With the emergence of this novel, we have a true work of the bourgeoisie for the first time in the Japanese literary field, and we learn that it is the bourgeois nature that proves the orthodoxy of literature.

⁸⁶ Kita Morio, *Manbô aisaiki* (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 2001) 47-48.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 73.

We could not even imagine the novel that is so gigantic and totally free from unhealthy ideologies. ... This is a magnificent victory for Mr. Kita's novel. This is the novel!⁸⁸

Kita received the Eighteenth Mainichi Shuppan Bunka Prize for *The House of Nire* in November 1964. The novel was televised as a teleplay on TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System) from September to October of 1965, and later on NHK (Nihon Hôshi Kyôkai) from April to June of 1972.⁸⁹ At the end of 1965, Kita totally withdrew from working as a doctor and started to devote himself to writing.

Kita's daughter Saitô Yuka (1963-), who writes essays in magazines while being employed at Suntory, a Japanese brewing and distilling company group, remembers peaceful days the family spent in their summer house in Karuizawa around 1965: "The sun-light flickered beatifully through the filter of the the leaves, and birds were singing in the woods. We, the family of three, had nothing to worry about. Who could have imagined that soon my father's life full of ups and downs would start?"⁹⁰ What she refers to here is Kita's bipolar disorder, which became manifest when he was approaching forty. He had his first manic episode at the age thirty-nine in 1966. Since then, he has had manic and depressive bouts alternately, but his depressive condition has lasted much longer than manic. In 1966, he wrote an essay entitled "I am a Manic Patient" (*Watashi wa sôbyôde aru*) and his conditions gradually became known, or rather, his being a

⁸⁸ The emphasis on the last line is by Mishima Yukio. Mishima Yukio, "Nireke no hitobito," *Ketteiban Mishima Yukio zenshû*, vol. 33 (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 2003) 35.

⁸⁹ Kita's other works that were televised include: *Takami no kenbutsu* by NHK in 1967, *Boku no ojisan* by NHK in 1974, *Dokutoru Manbô & Kaitô Jibako* by CX in 1983, and *Yasashii nyôbô wa satsujinki* by TBS in 1986.

⁹⁰ Saitô Yuka, *Madogiwa OL tohoho na asa ufufu no yoru* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 2006) 271.

bipolar disorder patient became his signboard. People around him thought at the beginning that this was something that he made up as his selling point.⁹¹ Kita writes:

People do not seem to believe that I am truly manic-depressive. They would never understand how languid I become and how despairing I feel when I have my depressive episode. Although I have never attempted to commit suicide, my brain becomes foggy, and my body feels weary. I do not even have energy to put toothpaste on my toothbrush so that I have to ask my wife to do it so for me. Not to mention, I have no energy to climb up the stairs to go to my study. Writing a draft is out of the question.

When I am in the manic state, I cause trouble to people around me but it is enjoyable for myself.⁹²

In another essay, he also writes:

It seems [my manic phase] looks amusing to a third party. However, it is true that I cause lots of trouble to my family members and close friends. When the episode is gone, I am filled with self-hatred and I enormously regret my own behaviors during the manic phase.⁹³

Kita claims that, thanks to his openness about his condition, Japanese people are now less prejudiced against manic-depressive conditions.⁹⁴ He also entertainingly writes in numerous essays about his strange, childish behaviors during his manic phase. For example, when he visited the United States to report on the launch of Apollo Eleven for Asahi Shinbun in 1969, he decided to be a beggar and earn some money:

In the previous year when I visited New York, my former junior colleague at Keiô University Hospital took care of me. He said to me, "It is very hard to make a living in a foreign country. Even if you claim yourself as Dr. Manbô, you

⁹¹ For example, even in 1980, more than ten years after Kita's bipolar disorder manifested, a psychiatrist Yamanaka Yasuhiro writes that Kita's so-called bipolar disorder is not real but is a part of his humorous acts. See Yamanaka Yasuhiro, "Kita Morio no dôwa sekai to sono himitsu," *Risô* Sep. 1980: 53.

⁹² Kita Morio, "Utsu no utsu," *KMZ* vol. 15 (1977) 136.

⁹³ Kita Morio, "Sôzaku yowa" (14), in *Geppô* (14) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 14 (1977) 3.

⁹⁴ Nada Inada, a writer and psychiatrist, once told Kita, "Some years ago, when I diagnosed a patient as manic or depressive, every patient became very nervous. But, recently on the contrary, when being diagnosed as manic-depressive, a patient feels rather relieved and says 'Oh, so my condition is same as what Kita Morio has.'" Kita Morio, "Tsuki kojiki," *Dokutoru Manbô kaisôki* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbun Shuppansha, 2007) 129-30.

cannot earn even a dollar here.” So I came up with an idea to become a beggar in America and earn some money. But I wanted to do it not in a pleading way but to do it with dignity. Therefore I bought a kimono, a pen, and strips of paper, and made a pamphlet [in English] stating that I am a famous beggar and a descendant of Kaguya-hime, the Moon Princess. I tried to sell a strip of paper for a dollar. At first I attempted to do it in a park in New York City while having a signboard hanging on my neck. However, at that time, the hippy culture was at its height and there were plenty of weirder people there, so I was totally ignored. When I tried it in Cape Canaveral Space Center, I thought I would be successful because many people began to gather around me. But I was immediately chased out by a NASA employee.⁹⁵

This episode is recorded in one of his travelogues entitled *The Moon and Ten Cents* (*Tsuki to jussento*, 1971). In 1976, when he was in a manic phase again, he hoped to make enough money to film a movie, so he invested in the stock market and almost went bankrupt. He borrowed money from his friends and publishers, and in order to return what he owed to them, he had to take any job that came to him. He apologetically writes to his readers in 1977:

Starting last October, I began owing huge debts for a certain reason. The reason I published a number of books including a collection of cheap talk this year, Showa 52 [1977], is because I needed to pay back the money I had borrowed in advance to each publisher.

... Those readers who are concerned about me have been mailing me letters and telling me not to publish a low-quality interview, but please allow me to continue doing this for one more year. I am broke to the extent that I have not been able to pay the taxes on time.”⁹⁶

In 1981 when he was again in a manic phase, he established the Republic of Manbô-Mabuze (*Manbô-Mabuze kyôwa-koku*), which Kita claims to be independent from Japan, and identifying himself as the head of the country named “Abominable Dr. Mabuse” (*Kaijin Mabuze hakase*). He created its national anthem, its bills and coins, and even its

⁹⁵ Kita Morio, “Tsuki kojiki,” *Dokutoru Manbô kaisôki* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbun Shuppansha, 2007) 128-129.

⁹⁶ Kita Morio, “Sôsaku yowa” (15), in *Geppô* (15) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 15 (1977) 3.

own cigarette brand.⁹⁷ In his humorous novel entitled *My Dad is an Extremely Eccentric Man* (*Totchan wa daihenjin*, 1981), the protagonist does all sorts of strange things, many of which reflect the ideas, plans, and behaviors that Kita came up with during his manic phase. Yoshiyuki Jun'nosuke, one of Kita's writer friends and also his senior at Azabu Middle School, says in one of his essays that, even though he previously doubted that Kita's depression is a mere excuse of his avoidance of working, there is no room to doubt that Kita truly has bipolar disorder.⁹⁸ His family and other writer friends also write about Kita's strange behavior in their essays.⁹⁹ He defends himself and says that his condition is serious enough to be hospitalized if he had not had knowledge of mental health.¹⁰⁰

In 1977, Kita's collection of works up until 1975 was published from Shinchôsha. "It feels strange to publish a collection of works while I am still living," Kita confesses, "but after thinking about it over and over, I decided to do it in order to repay all the favors Shinchôsha has given me."¹⁰¹ The collection of works consists of fifteen volumes and it clearly shows how versatile his writings are to the extent some scholars say that "[a] literary schizophrenia is evident in his work."¹⁰² Volumes one through five are

⁹⁷ Kita Morio, "Mabuze kyôwakoku," *Dokutoru Manbô kaisôki* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbun Shuppansha, 2007) 143.

⁹⁸ Yoshiyuki Jun'nosuke, "Kaitô Mabuze hakase," *Machikado no tabakoya made no tabi* (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1979) 106.

⁹⁹ For example, Kita's daughter, Saitô Yuka, remembers that she left the house with her mother and lived in the maternal grandparents' place when Kita had a manic episode, because Kita told his wife that he would like to live life the way he wanted and that she should leave the house. Saitô Yuka, *Madogiwa OL tohoho na asa, ufufu no yoru* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 2006) 250. Kita's wife Saitô Kimiko also writes in an article how difficult it has been to support Kita through his manic-depression states. Saitô Kimiko, "Sonotoki kazoku wa: Otto Kita Morio no 'Jikiru to Haido'," *Shinchiô* 45 June 2001: 72-76.

¹⁰⁰ Kita Morio, "Sôsaku yowa" (14), in *Geppô* (14) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 14 (1977) 1.

¹⁰¹ Kita Morio, "Sôsaku yowa" (15), in *Geppô* (15) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 15 (1977) 4.

¹⁰² J. Thomas Rimer and Van C. Gessel, *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature*, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) 170.

devoted to his pure-literary works, six to ten his humorous works and nursery stories, and eleven to fifteen his essays including the Dr. Manbô series. Kita has continued to write numerous stories and essays, which range over various genres, from serious historical genres to humorous, lighthearted essays, science fiction, and nursery stories. A few examples of more successful works of the serious genre include *White, Graceful Mountain* (*Shiroki taoyaka na mine*, 1966), which was written based on his own experience of participating in a Diran Peak (Western Karakorum in Pakistan) expedition as the team doctor, *Under the Shining Azure Sky* (*Kagayakeru aoki sora no shita de*, Part One in 1982 and Part Two in 1986), a literary account of the Japanese immigrants in Brazil, which won Kita the Eighteenth *Nihon Bungaku Taishô* (Japan Literary Prize) in 1986, and his critical biography of his father Saitô Mokichi which consists of four volumes: *Mokichi in Youth* (*Seinen Mokichi*, 1991), *Mokichi in the Prime of Life* (*Sônen Mokichi*, 1993), *Wandering Mokichi* (*Mokichi Hôkô*, 1996), and *Mokichi in his Last Years* (*Mokichi Ban'nen*, 1998). The work was awarded the Twenty-Fifth Osaragi Jirô Prize in 1999.

Kita's mother, Saitô Teruko, passed away in 1984. In her late years, she became well known in Japan not as the wife of the prominent poet Saitô Mokichi but as an elderly lady who was full of energy and as the mother of Kita Morio and Saitô Shigeta, who was also known as Mota-san.¹⁰³ It is true that she energetically traveled all over the world even in her eighties, but it is not deniable that this image of her has been promoted by Kita's as well as Shigeta's writings. In the preface of a book published in 2007, Kita, at the age of eighty, thinks back on his life and writes, "Thinking back on my life, I am

¹⁰³ His nickname "Mota" is another way to read his first name written in Kanji as 茂太.

not very satisfied with it but I do not regret about it, either. What I consider the most fortunate is that I have respected my father since the time I entered higher school and that I have also loved my mother, who was an eccentric woman.”¹⁰⁴

Kita Morio appeared on TV twice in 2008. The first time in 2008 was on April 2 and his interview was aired during *Nyûsu wotchi 9* (News Watch 9) on NHK Television. The interview was about the exhibition entitled “Dokutoru Manbô konchû ten” (The Exhibition of Doctor Manbô’s Insects). This exhibition was originally the idea of one of Kita’s fans living in Nikko in Tochigi Prefecture who himself was a butterfly collector. He wanted to have an exhibition that shows all the insects that appear in Kita’s *Dr. Manbô’s Book of Insects*. His idea became reality with a support of a university professor, the president of the Japan Insects Association, among others, and the exhibition was held in multiple places such as Nikko in Tochigi Prefecture, Sendai in Miyagi where Kita went to university, Matsumoto in Nagano where he went to higher school, and so on. Out of 185 species that appear in *Dr. Manbô’s Book of Insects*, 183 species were exhibited along with passages from *Dr. Manbô’s Book of Insects*. Forty percent of the exhibited insects were from Kita’s own collections that include some rare species.¹⁰⁵ Kita often writes about the enthusiasm he had for studying insects, but now it is proven that his enthusiasm was not a mere hobby of a schoolboy but was of superior quality. Although all of his collections before the war were lost during the air raid on

¹⁰⁴ Kita Morio, “Jo ni kaete – waga jinsei,” *Dokutoru Manbô kaisôki* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbun Shuppansha, 2007) 3.

¹⁰⁵ “Dokutoru Manbô konchûten: Kita Morio san, hyôhon o hatsukôkai,” *Kantou2008* 4 April 2008 <<http://kantou2007.seesaa.net/article/92209867.html>>.

Tokyo, he still has collections that he gathered in Matsumoto in his higher school years and in Yamagata when he visited Mokichi, both in his higher school years.

The second time he appeared on TV in 2008 was in May, and it is related to Kita's daughter Yuka's book on his mother Teruko entitled *The Lady Who was Called a Fierce Woman* (*Môjo to yobareta shukujo*, 2008) that was just published in February. Probably partly due to the purpose of promoting the book, Kita Morio and his daughter appeared on May 12 of 2008 on a TV talk show called *Tetsuko no heya* (Tetsuko's Room), hosted by Kuroyanagi Tetsuko. Previously when Kita was in the manic state, he appeared on the same talk show three times within a year in 1980-81, but it has been 27 years since he was on the show last. When Kuroyanagi Tetsuko asked Kita if it was because he was in the manic phase again that he decided to appear on her talk show, he said that he no longer had bipolar disorder because he has grown old and no longer has energy to be manic.¹⁰⁶ Yuka bluntly said that, considering his old age, probably this would be the very last time Kita appeared on a TV show and that he decided to come to the show to express his appreciation to his readers. He, however, appeared on a TV talk show again in May of 2009. The show is entitled *Bokura no jidai* (Our Time), which is a talk show series in which three guest speakers randomly talk about whatever they would like in each episode. Kita appeared with his daughter Yuka and Agawa Sawako, an essayist and the daughter of Kita's good writer friend, Agawa Hiroyuki. Kita's wife Kimiko also appeared and talked about the difficult times she had while Kita was going through his manic periods.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ *Tetsuko no heya*, Terebi Asahi, Tokyo, 12 May 2008.

¹⁰⁷ *Bokura no jidai*, Fuji Terebi, Tokyo, 10 May 2009.

Although he is not very active as a writer in recent years, he is still considered one of the most prolific and popular postwar writers in Japan, and his writings, especially his humorous works, still attract many readers in Japan.

Chapter 2: Autobiographical Fiction

Kita Morio writes in his essay that *Ghosts* (*Yûrei*) and *The House of Nire* (*Nireke no hitobito*) are the works he can be most proud of among his longer, serious literary works.¹⁰⁸ He also says that, in order to understand the writer Kita Morio, readers do not need to read all of his works but to read only three of them, *The House of Nire*, *Ghosts*, and *Doctor Manbô at Sea* (*Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki*).¹⁰⁹ A writer and Kita's friend, Miyawaki Shunzô, also jokingly told Kita that, if he had died immediately after the completion of *Ghosts* and *The House of Nire*, he would have been envied as a great writer.¹¹⁰ It is commonly acknowledged that *Ghosts* and *The House of Nire* are Kita's representative works. Although neither *Ghosts* nor *The House of Nire* is purely autobiographical, both have strong autobiographical roots.

Ghosts is Kita's first long work. According to Kita's diary from his college days, he began writing the novel at the beginning of November 1950, when he was twenty-three years old and a third-year student at University of Tôhoku Medical School. In the afterword of *The Afternoon of a Faun* (*Bokushin no gogo*) published from Tôjusha in 1965, Kita writes about the creation of his early works:

I checked my work diary and found out that I began writing something like a novel ... in the year I entered the university. Listed as "work No. 1" is a

¹⁰⁸ Kita Morio, "Sôzaku yowa" (6), in *Geppô* (6) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 4 (1977) 1.

¹⁰⁹ Kita Morio, "Watashi no bungaku – Gôman to tôkai," *Sono Ayako • Kita Morio*, by Sono Ayako, and Kita Morio, *De Luxe warera no bungaku*, vol. 16 (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1969) 478.

¹¹⁰ Kita Morio, *Manbo yuigonjô* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 2002) 25.

short story called “Suika” [A Watermelon], the second was also a short story “Kakûteki na” [Something Imaginary], but both manuscripts were lost. The third one was an uncompleted long story which was temporary entitled *Awai renkinjutsu no monogatari* [A Transitory Story of Alchemy]. ... When I wrote this long novel, I wrote climactic scenes first, but I could not fill in between those climactic scenes and ended up not completing it. I learned the lesson and thought that it was important to complete the work no matter how short a work it was, and, under the title *Krankheit* [Illness], I produced short stories such as “Hyakugafu,” “Osanai Merikuriusu” [Infant Mercurius], “Iwazô no hanashi” [The Story of Iwazô], “Take” [Bamboo]

In Shôwa 25 [1950] I wrote “Bokushin no gogo,” “Kyôshi,” “Pandora no hako” [Pandora’s Box], among others. ...

Also in Shôwa 25, when I was twenty-three years old, I began writing *Ghosts* so it was a very productive year.

A portion of “Kyôshi” was incorporated into *Ghosts*, and some into *The House of Nire*. Also, a cousin appearing in the unpublished work “Iôsen” [Sulfar Springs] has also been developed in *Ghosts*.

In summary, it can be said that *Ghosts* is the comprehensive survey of my earlier works, and I thought I would be satisfied even if these earlier works would not be read should *Ghosts* be read.¹¹¹

In other words, *Ghosts* is a crystallization of Kita’s earliest works. Kita states that *Ghosts* is the work in which he cross-examined himself.¹¹²

Ghosts is subtitled as “A Tale of Childhood and Youth (*Aru yônen to seishun no monogatari*).” However, this novel does not simply account for the memories of one’s childhood years. Rather, the story depicts the process of how one higher school student, whose parents and sister died earlier in his life and who has been raised by his uncle, recovers the memories of his childhood that have been deeply buried in his consciousness.

The beginning passage of the story summarizes what the work is all about:

Why this desire to relate what we recall of the past? Because, just as any race has its mythology, so an individual bears within him his own private myths, myths which also gradually fade, finally disappearing into the depths of time; and yet things leave their traces, events of the vague and distant past having found their way into the heart, and these things concern us through the years, are a

¹¹¹ Kita Morio, ‘Bokushin no gogo’ (Tôkisha ban) no atogaki, in *KMZ* 324-6.

¹¹² “Chiisana ômono (160): Kita Morio,” *Bungei Shunjû* 78, no. 11 (Sep. 2000), gravure.

constant preoccupation of the deeper reaches of the mind, lasting until that time when all our actions cease. And suddenly one day this usually unconscious activity may open up for us, become an awakening of sorts; much like a silkworm, as it slowly eats away a mulberry leaf for no reason it can comprehend, becoming conscious of the slight sound its own mastication makes. So it raises its head, unsure, fearful almost as it gazes around its world, experiencing itself as something ... whatever that might be.¹¹³

The protagonist excavates his memories – his “own private myths” – that seem to have disappeared in the depths of time in order to find out who he is and where he came from.

The time when the protagonist becomes conscious about his lost memories, which is depicted in the above passage as the moment that a silkworm becomes aware of the quiet sounds of its masticating a leaf, is depicted in one scene. The time is June of 1945, two months before the end of the war, and the protagonist, who has experienced the massive air raid in Tokyo at the end of May, comes to Nagano prefecture to enter a higher school there. One day he climbs the mountain and is struck by an “unreal” feeling. “Tokyo ... was probably engulfed in the roar of exploding bombs ... But here everything throbbed with reborn life, and it was this that seemed so mysterious – the fact that, quite unrelated to that other world, this natural one should go on radiantly living.”¹¹⁴ Then at the peak, the “moment” comes:

With my legs stretched out before me I went on sitting there for a long time, doing nothing but breathing lightly, and all I heard was something that was no sound but only an obscure sense of distance and space transmitted to me from the mountain range. Then in the silence the sound of my breath and this soundless calling from the mountains seemed to be hovering in the space about me, to be whisperingly gathering near. Finally a word emerged from that emptiness, a word my own lips then shaped in response, a completely unlooked-for word, one which at first I didn’t recognize and which my lips had to form once more before I understood: and when I had done so and tasted its full meaning I felt only a confused sense of its irrelevancy. ... Surrounded as I was by the

¹¹³ Kita Morio, *Ghosts*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1993) 1-2.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 33-34.

unfailing presence of the natural world, I found the word I muttered – “Mummy” – provoked an urgent question, which, for all its banality, is one we never tire of asking: where had I really come from?¹¹⁵

Thus the quest for his lost childhood memories, or his “myths,” begins.

Ghosts is written in the first person, and the protagonist (the past self of the narrator) is a higher school student who realizes one day that he has lost his childhood memories and attempts to recover them. The characters appearing in this story are all nameless, and the protagonist is no exception. The identity and the age of the narrator, boku, are not known in the work, but they will be revealed in *Wood Spirit (Kodama)*, the sequel to *Ghosts*. In *Spirit of Wood*, the main character is the grown-up protagonist of *Ghosts*, whose name is not known but who is called “Tat-chan” by his cousin. He is thirty years old, has already graduated from medical school, and holds a position as an assistant in the Department of Neurology in a university hospital in Japan. But he had been doing research for two years in a neurology research center in Tübingen, Germany. He is also a very new member of the literary world in Japan. While in Tübingen, he learns that one of his stories has been published for the first time in a prestigious commercial literary magazine in Japan. At the end of *Spirit of Wood*, the protagonist learns that his work, which was nominated for a literary prize for a new author, did not get the prize. However, even though he did not receive the prize, he is encouraged by a publisher to write a novel, and he decides to do so. At the end of *Spirit of Wood*, the protagonist writes down the first line of the novel, which is the first line of *Ghosts*: “Why this desire to relate what we recall of the past?”¹¹⁶ In short, the narrator of *Ghosts* is the

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 38-39.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1.

thirty-year old protagonist who has become a medical doctor but is also pursuing a career as a writer. This is a fictional work but the narrator is obviously the alter-ego of the author.

Ghosts does not have a main plot line nor does it progress in chronological order. When writing concerning memories, depicting them randomly without following the chronological order has a special effect. As Jeffrey Angeles points out, when we recall memories, they are segmented and are presented without following a real-time chronology.¹¹⁷ Therefore, a reader can read the memories of the narrator as if they are coming to the narrator's mind. One example of a work that portrays a writer's childhood memories in random order, not in chronological order, is Uno Kôji's *Seijir ô the Dream Child* (*Seijir ô yume miru ko*, 1913). However, while in *Seijir ô the Dream Child* the writer/narrator simply depicts his childhood memories, in *Ghosts* the narrator portrays how he as a young adolescent recovered his childhood memories. In other words, in *Seijir ô the Dream Child* the time that is dealt with in the work is the narrative present and the past (memories). In contrast, in *Ghosts*, the narrative present, the past (his adolescent years), and the grand past (his childhood years recovered by the adolescent protagonist) are depicted. This stratification of time seems quite appropriate for the structure of the work, because this is the story of how the adolescent protagonist recovers his childhood memories that have been buried in the "deep strata" of his consciousness.

¹¹⁷ Jeffrey Angeles, "Discovering and Textualizing Memory: The *Tsuioku Shôsetsu* of Naka Kansuke and Takahashi Mutsuo," *Issues of Canonicity and Canon Formation in Japanese Literary Studies: Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies*, ed. Stephen D. Miller (West Lafayette, IN: Association for Japanese Literary Studies, 2001): 389-404.

The House of Nire, on the other hand, is narrated in chronological order most of the time. The story relates the decline over the course of three generations of a bourgeois family who owns a mental hospital in Aoyama, Tokyo. The family, the House of Nire, is modeled after the author's own family, the Saitô family. The time span in this novel is about thirty years from the middle of the Taishô period to the end of the Second World War, and the story is told by an omniscient narrator. This long work consists of three parts.

Part One introduces the founder of the Nire Hospital, Nire Kiichirô, his family, his hospital, and those who closely work with and for the family and the hospital. The characters are very vividly and comically portrayed. Kiichiro is a self-made man who is depicted as a charming poseur. He hates his provincial origin and even changes his name from Kanazawa Jinsaku, his original name that has a provincial tone, to Nire Kiichirô, the name he has created for himself. His hospital is a magnificent, castle-like building with a row of Corinthian style columns garnished with complex decorations on their upper portions, seven Western style towers, and a Chinese style clock tower that is evocative of the Dragon Palace. Yet what looks like marble columns are in fact made of wood and concrete. He employs some absurd methods of diagnosis and treatments, such as using a stethoscope on the patients' head, using the instruments for looking inside noses and ears to diagnose mental illnesses (he claims he can see a patient's rotten brain through the instruments), or having the radium bath that has no radium in it. However, Kiichirô is very confident and he constantly tells his patient, "I'll cure you. You see, I'm a *Doktor Medicine*, if you know what that is. I'm a specialist, an authority on the subject."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Kita Morio, *The House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984) 66.

Curiously, his self-confidence and foreign title gain the confidence and trust of his patients, some of whom get better much quicker.

Kiichirô has five biological children – Ryûko, Seiko, Ôshû, Momoko, and Yonekuni, and two adopted sons – Tetsukichi and Tatsuji.¹¹⁹ Kiichirô boasts that one of the adopted sons has “the finest mind in Japan” and the other “the finest physique.”¹²⁰ The adopted son with “the finest mind,” Tetsukichi, is adopted when he is fifteen, studies very hard and is accepted into Tokyo Imperial University Medical School, becomes a psychiatrist, and marries Ryûko, the eldest daughter of the Nire family. The one with “the finest physique” becomes a sumo wrestler. However, none of his biological and adopted children, except Ryûko, meet the expectation of Kiichirô. The hospital that somehow survived the Great Kanto Earthquake is completely burned down in the fire that is caused by neglecting to extinguish the fire used in the rice-cake making for New Year’s Day. While trying hard to rebuild the hospital, Kiichirô passes away at the age of sixty three. It is also the last year of the Taishô period.

In Part Two, the struggles of Tetsukichi are described. He has studied abroad in Germany, earned his medical degree, and has succeeded to the directorship of the hospital after Kiichirô’s death. A smaller “branch” hospital is rebuilt at the original location in Aoyama, and a larger “main” hospital in a new location at Matsubara in Setagaya Ward. Tetsukichi, however, is utterly incapable of managing the hospital and that irritates people around him, especially Ryûko and the Deputy Director, the two people who have been faithful followers of Kiichirô. Losing confidence as a director and

¹¹⁹ He later adopts Takayagi Shirô, who becomes Momoko’s husband.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 52.

a doctor, Tetsukichi devotes himself to his research and to writing a book on the history of psychiatry. His home life is not a happy one, either. He and Ryûko do not get along well at all, and his busy life keeps him from spending time with his three children, Shun'ichi, Aiko, and Shûji. Ryûko leaves the house due to a quarrel with Tetsukichi, leaving the children behind. The boys for whom Tetsukichi has hopes are not doing well at school. They are not just below average but are clearly inferior in terms of their school work. Part Two ends with the scene in which a radio broadcast announces the start of the Pacific War. The hospital and the Nire family are going downhill, and so is the nation, as it descends into the dark era of the war.

Part Three depicts the lives of the characters tossed about by the war. At the end of the story, the Nire family loses both hospitals, Tetsukichi has a stroke while in his hometown, Shun'ichi comes back from the war with a nihilistic attitude, Aiko who was attractive and was expected to have a good future has a severe scar from a burn on her face caused by the explosion of an incendiary bomb, and Shûji who failed on the entrance exams of both a higher school and a special school of medicine loses all his ambition. Only Ryûko tries hard not to give in. The novel ends with the following passage:

So Ryûko was forced to the bitter, humiliating conclusion she could expect as little from her children as from her useless husband. She was filled by a sense of the hopelessness of it all, of the terrible pathos of her own situation, although to feel in this way was something so humiliating she soon rejected it. She would not give in. She, and she alone perhaps, would not flinch or be downhearted as she faced this crisis. She would never surrender, no matter how hopeless other people were or how disgracefully they behaved. She was seized with another spasm of irrational anger. She could not sit still but must do something, so she stood up briskly and marched into the kitchen. She then stomped back noisily carrying some dry, used tea leaves. She put these in the machine at the side of the table which transformed all things into powder. Then she knelt before it, back straight, head back, neck firm, biting her lips as if she

were daring somebody, anybody, to oppose her; and she began to turn the handle, round and round, busily, relentlessly, with all her might...¹²¹

The House of Nire describes the fate of one family that is going through the dark times of Japan's modern era: the Great Kantô Earthquake, the second Sino-Japanese War, the Shôwa Great Depression, and the Second World War. These historical incidents are faithfully recorded incorporating actual quotes from articles in newspapers and magazines, and because of that, critics often call this novel "historical literature" or "river/saga literature."¹²² The work also portrays very well the atmosphere of pre-war Aoyama, especially children's culture in Tokyo. Etô Jun states that in the process of Edo transforming to present-day Tokyo, there existed a city called "Tokyo" for about half a century which was neither Edo nor present-day Tokyo, and that *The House of Nire* proves that Kita Morio is one of the few writers who is aware of the existence of the city "Tokyo."¹²³ Okuno Takeo points out the same thing by stating that Kita Morio's literature is the literature of *harappa* (open fields). In the aftermath of the Meiji Restoration, the former *daimyô*, *hatamoto*, and other landowners abandoned their large estates and returned to the provinces. This resulted in open fields throughout the city. Okuno continues that these open fields are an irreplaceable "hometown" for those who spent their childhood years in pre-war Yamanote in Tokyo, and that Kita is the most accomplished in recreating in literature the "open field" that has now been lost in

¹²¹ Kita Morio, *The Fall of the House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1985) 245.

¹²² Donald Roden says that the novel is "a unique blend of literary imagination and social history." Donald Roden, Review of *The House of Nire*; *The Fall of the House of Nire*, *The Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Apr., 1986) 127.

¹²³ Quoted in Kokubo Minoru, "Kita Morio kenkyû annai," *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 39.12 (1974): 152.

Tokyo.¹²⁴ Just like those writers who recapture their childhood memories in their works such as Minakami Takitarô and Naka Kansuke, Kita also recreates his childhood by reconstructing a “place” in the text.

In both *Ghosts* and *The House of Nire*, there is a passage about “time.” In *Ghosts*, the protagonist ponders:

So far I have recorded various reminiscences, drawn from different layers of my memory. With even the most childish and naïve of memories, however, there is a maturing process, an inevitable growing with the years, just as a tree accumulates annual rings. The self that appears in memory, even though undoubtedly a child, is still just as certainly the person one is now. But there are also memories that lie completely buried, and these remain uninfluenced by time, as if time stagnated at the deepest level of one’s being, or simply turned in circles there. Perhaps it is only when such buried things are suddenly exposed that a person first becomes aware of the real nature of time, can see himself as something existing in its flow, conscious of the circumstances that have formed him, not as he usually thinks of them, but as things with roots in a deeper, more distant world.¹²⁵

After stating this, the narrator recalls the moment when one of the memories he has forgotten suddenly came back. The moment was so intense that he could barely remain standing:

A storm broke in my breast; my knees trembled. I found myself leaning forward to rub my face against the cold, wet rock, as though intoxicated. I did this for a while. When at last I raised my head, I saw the scenery around me with different eyes. The world of infancy had returned, confirming that for all those years I’d merely grown physically, grown tall and thin. The outer world seemed changed in almost every detail, the inner equally transformed. It was like that day

¹²⁴ Okuno Takeo, “Harappa no bungaku,” *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 10. He also claims that some writers, especially those from rural areas, have a strong *gen-fûkei* (the original landscape) of their hometown that would unconsciously affect their literary works. The original landscapes include, for example, the inn at Magome in Shinshû for Shimazaki Tôson, Tsugaru for Dazai Osamu, and mountains in Ehime for Ôe Kenzaburô. For many writers who grew up in Yamanote before and during the war such as Yasuoka Shôtarô, Mishima Yukio, Miura Shumon, Etô Jun, and Kita Morio, Okuno Takeo claims, the open field was their original landscapes. See Okuno Takeo, “Bungaku ni okeru gen-fûkei,” in *Okuno Takeo bungaku ronshû*, vol 3 (Tokyo: Tairyûsha, 1976) 209-226.

¹²⁵ Kita Morio, *Ghosts*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1993) 145.

when, having been confined to bed for months with a kidney infection, I was allowed outside for the very first time, and I discovered a whole new realm of sensations.¹²⁶

When he realizes that his childhood memories are lost, he feels as if his life were “the film sequence broke[n] off at that point ... where pitch-darkness always closed in around the thin, wavering light of whatever path (he) might be following.”¹²⁷ Recovering the memories means rejoining the flow of time. There is a symbolic scene that expresses this notion: when one of his forgotten memories comes back, he notices that, probably because he wound it up unconsciously, a cheap alarm clock that has stopped for some time begins ticking again for the first time in a long time. When he recovers a memory, his time starts to flow again.

In *The House of Nire*, a question about the “time” itself is posed.

One comes back to the question of time, of what it is, of what we ourselves are, living in the midst of it, laughing like fools, suffering and in pain, or just idly getting through the days. Is it too unimportant to be worth mentioning, or is it the most vital of things, something we daren’t overlook? And which of those two attitudes is true of us, assuming either of them is? Whatever time may be, one assumes it is recorded on the clocks we make: and the hands of those clocks undeniably move constantly forward. ...

If one leaves the mechanical world of clocks, however in what manner does “time” exist? Is it some huge, immeasurable circularity, finally returning to where it was? Or does it really proceed forever forward, second after second after second, a dead-straight line moving into a future that recedes beyond some infinitely distant horizon?

But who could work out the answers to such questions? And who really thinks about them, and why should they? After all, what possible reason could there be for the people of, say the Nire family and those connected with the Nire Hospital of Mental Pathology to bother their heads with such things? Time just passes, that’s all.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Ibid., 149.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 40.

¹²⁸ Kita Morio, *The House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984) 328. The idea of mortal humans and eternal flow of time is also symbolized in the scene where little Shûji, the character that corresponds to Kita, cannot sleep in the middle of night. Feeling lonely, he hears Nanny snoring and the clock ticking indicating the progress of time. Then he remembers one of the

One may wonder in whose voice this passage is told. The story is told by the omniscient narrator, but this is obviously not a question posed by the narrator. This is, in fact, the question posed by the author, Kita himself.

In *Ghosts* the protagonist, the alter-ego of Kita, seeks to find out what has formed him by recovering his lost memories and situating himself in time that flows “within” him. On the other hand in *The House of Nire*, Kita, disguising himself as the narrator, asks if there is any meaning to our lives when seeing them in the ceaseless flow of historical time.¹²⁹

If *Ghosts* is the work Kita wrote in order to examine himself, *The House of Nire* is the work in which he examines people in his family as well as his “roots” in a broader perspective. In a certain sense, then, both *Ghosts* and *The House of Nire* are born of the same impulse of the author: to find out where he came from and who he really is.

Even though *Ghosts* and *The House of Nire* are fictional stories, they share common themes and motifs because both have very strong autobiographical roots. If the works are written to examine the author himself, the recurrent themes are what the author feels significant to his life. The common themes and motifs in both works will be compared and examined below.

war songs which phrase goes, “only the clock ticks heartlessly,” and he is overwhelmed by the sad, scary feeling. The entire lyric of the war song is not given in the work, but the quoted song is entitled “A Fellow Soldier (*Senyû*)” and its eighth lyric goes as follows: My brother in arm dies and his body becomes cold/ His soul goes back to the home country / How sad it is / Only the clock ticks heartlessly in his pocket. Kata Kôji, *Gunka to Nihonjin* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1965) 179. The lyric clearly contrast a mortal body and flow of time represented by the clock in the pocket.

¹²⁹ It should be noted that “time” in *Yûrei* is written with the Kanji character 刻, and in *Nireke no hitobito* Kita uses the character 時. A writer Tabata Mugihiko calls “time” in *Yûrei* “inner” time (*naiteki jikan*) and that in *Nireke no hitobito* “outer” time (*gaiteki jikan*). See Tabata Mugihiko, “Kita Morio ni okeru rekishi to jikan,” *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyôzai no kenkyû* 18.2 (1973): 132.

Mother and her disappearance:

In the protagonist's memory, the mother in *Ghosts* is remembered as an elegant, very westernized person. She spent her early years in Germany, and she had a taste for Western things. In her room, where a gray carpet completely covered the *tatami* and the Gobelin tapestry veiled a wall, were a large mirror in a carved frame, a cupboard, and a bed. She often invited guests to the house, and the protagonist, *boku* (I, me), remembers that she looked "extraordinarily foreign" and "more remote from everyday Japanese reality than the actual foreigners who were sometimes present."¹³⁰ A depiction of her in one scene is even sensual, although *boku*'s innocence is emphasized in the last line of the passage:

Once when I wandered in [to my mother's room] for no reason, I was brought up short by the appearance in the mirror of an image I had never seen before. It was only my mother, but she was almost naked to the waist, something her children were never allowed to see; or at least I had no recollection of it, for I was brought up on cow's milk, not my mother's, and the concept of a woman's breast was almost completely blank to me. Our old nanny had sometimes let me touch her withered dugs when I slept with her as a small child, but I hadn't felt the slightest interest. Yet Mother's body was quite dazzlingly white, and the sight of those soft, round swellings was attractive to me; and her loosened hair, tinged with brown, fell in languid waves over her shoulders.

As was my habit with any new sight, I decided to fix it firmly in my mind, exactly as I did when discovering some rare species of flora or fauna.¹³¹

After the father passed away, the mother was often away, which suggests that she was having some kind of illicit affair. One night *boku* and his sister are awakened by the sound of their mother coming home. After the mother goes upstairs to her room, they call out to the mother from the bottom of the stairs.

"Mummy."

¹³⁰ Kita Morio, *Ghosts*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1993) 8.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

We must have made a charming picture, like two kittens huddled together, but there was still no response from above so we shouted out again, in voices now full of anxiety and dismay.

Mother appeared this time, soundlessly, suddenly, moving very slowly and calmly as if she had understood everything, raising her right hand as if to restrain us, her thrust-out fingers oddly like those of someone swimming through the dark. Her whole appearance was blurred and white, no doubt because she was wearing her white dressing gown; and yet what always surprises me about this memory of her is how sharp its details seem now, how clear. Despite the almost total darkness at the top of the stairs, I can still remember the expression on her face, the loosened hair drifting in soft waves behind her shoulders, and the intense, black eyes as they looked down on us. A slight, sad smile appeared on her lips, and she moved her outstretched hand up and down, twice, three times, a gesture that suggested a hidden distress; then she opened her mouth and said something, although what it was I couldn't hear. To me it was like watching a film when the sound breaks down and the actors are made suddenly dumb, moving their lips but only miming speech, and at once I felt afraid; but it was also as if I had lost all willpower and could only go on standing there looking up at her, beautiful but indistinctly so, like an image formed in a feverish, semiconscious mind.¹³²

This is the last time the protagonist saw his mother. The next morning he wakes up only to find out that she is gone. Nanny explains that she went away on a journey, but she never comes back. In *Ghosts*, the mother's beauty, elegance, and exoticism are portrayed skillfully with strong lyricism.

The character in *The House of Nire* who corresponds to Kita's mother, Teruko, is Ryûko, the eldest daughter of Nire Kiichiro.¹³³ Compared to the mother in *Ghosts* whose memories are so beautifully enshrined in the protagonist's heart, Ryûko is depicted rather mercilessly by an omniscient narrator. Ryûko has a long face and hooked high nose, which give her a cold look. She is "the embodiment of all that [is] orthodox and central in the Nire family."¹³⁴ If Kiichiro is the commander in chief of the Nire family, Ryûko is the sergeant who makes the spirit of her general known to the house by faithfully

¹³² Ibid., 31.

¹³³ Kita Morio, "Sôzaku yowa" (6), in *Geppô* (6) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 4 (1977) 4.

¹³⁴ Kita Morio, *The House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984) 18.

carrying out his commands. She is only concerned about the fate of the Nire family, and she casts her cold disdain on everything else. Even when she goes to meet her husband, who returns from studying abroad after a long interval, she does not even talk about their son, but instead brags about her father, herself, and the hospital, and she complains about everyone else.

As in *Ghosts*, *The House of Nire* also depicts the mother's disappearance but Ryûko leaves the house in a quite different manner than the mother in *Ghosts* does. In Ryûko's case, she leaves the house because she has a quarrel with Tetsukichi. At this point, Kiichirô is already dead, Tetsukichi has succeeded to the directorship of the hospital, and the hospital has been rebuilt in two places, Aoyama and Matsubara. Although Tetsukichi is the director of both hospitals, practically speaking, Tetsukichi manages the smaller branch hospital in Aoyama and the bigger and growing main hospital in Matsubara is taken care of by the Deputy Director. Ryûko is not happy about this and is quite frustrated and irritated by her husband's inability as the director. One day she criticizes Tetsukichi. "You seem to be a little too casual about the affairs of the hospital," Ryûko says. "If my father were still alive, he would have made this into a splendid hospital."¹³⁵ Then she suggests that Tetsukichi set up the radium bath, one of the phony devices Kiichirô used to have in the hospital. Tetsukichi immediately dismisses the idea saying that the radium bath is a "complete and utter fraud."¹³⁶ Also, in

¹³⁵ Ibid., 348.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 349.

response to Ryûko's pride at her father having been a Diet member, he spits out the words, "A Diet member ... that's lower than the monkeys."¹³⁷

Hearing her father so insulted, Ryûko says something that rubs Tetsukichi's inferiority complex the wrong way. "But I wonder if you are aware of what people are saying about you behind your back? They think you are a disaster, an absolute failure as Director. I have heard it said myself."¹³⁸ Then they begin insulting each other verbally, but there is no way Tetsukichi can keep up with Ryûko in a verbal battle. Tetsukichi, frustrated, uses force.

Tetsukichi found his obvious inferiority galling, and consequently resorted to the male prerogative. First he signaled his intentions with the standard formula that no fool of a woman understands anything, and then he thrust out his arm and pushed her firmly just below the shoulder. Ryûko, who was in a formal kneeling posture on the *tatami*, went flat over backward, cracking her head against the bookshelves. This disturbed a dozen or so books that had been jammed in there, and these crashed down on her as she lay in disarray.

She brushed the books off her, stood up quickly, straightened her kimono and then, after a few moments of tight-lipped silence, she said in a slightly trembling voice:

"Nobody has ever once lifted a finger against me since the day I was born... And now to be knocked down like this... I am not the kind of person who will endure in silence an outrage of this kind... I shall... I shall leave this house."

"Leave it then," replied Tetsukichi automatically, struggling to keep his voice under control.

... He could sense his wife behind him as she left the room, although he did not look at her. He was only just managing to hold down his wrath, as he endeavored to reenter the world of his books with as little delay as possible.

Ryûko's words indicated more than some passing difference of opinion, for she put them into effect. She did actually leave the house, and her three totally ignorant children, Shun'ichi, Aiko and Shuji, were left behind her.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Ibid., 350.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 351.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 350-51.

Compared to the mother's secret and quiet departure from the house in *Ghosts*, Ryûko's strong personality, her pride, and determination are very well depicted in the above scene.

The disappearance of the mother is based on Kita's real life experience. In August 1933, major newspapers reported the affairs that a dance instructor had had with some respectable women of leisure, one of whom was Teruko. Deeply hurt and enraged, Mokichi ordered her to leave the house, and he did not allow her to come home until twelve years later.

In 1994, after Mokichi and Teruko were long gone, Kita published an autobiographical story/essay entitled "Nezu-yama" (*Nezu yama*) in *Shinch ô*, in which Kita describes again the mother's disappearance. This depiction is very similar to the one in *Ghosts*, but it is recreated in a documentary manner, rather than lyrically as in *Ghosts*.

The following is the passage from "Nezu-yama":

I, of course, did not understand the reason for my mother's leaving. At the time I was only six years old.

But I have this vague, dream-like memory.

Three of us, excluding my older brother, slept in a seven-mat size room that was right under my father's study, which was dominated by his books. I slept side by side with my older sister Momoko and little sister Masako. We were two years apart from each other.

I was not sure what time it was, but I knew it was very late at night.

We might have been already asleep or were dozing. There was a sound at the entrance right next to our room, and we woke up sensing that our mother, who was frequently absent, had come home. Nanny went to the entrance, and we realized that it was our mother by their conversation that we heard through a sliding screen.

"It's Mummy."

"Yeah, it's Mummy."

We said to each other and were completely awake. We were afraid of our father, and compared to him, Mother was much gentler. I felt unusually happy and playfully ran to the entrance. But mother said, "It's late. Go back to bed." Then she went upstairs using the stairs in a little room, which we called the telephone room, that was next to our room.

Father's room was on the left side of the stairs and mother's on the right.

Because there were so many books in our father's study, I felt it was somehow intimidating, but our mother's room was more attractive....

At any rate, we followed mother's figure climbing the stairs with a tickling feeling in the throats. When she went upstairs, she disappeared into her room, which was on the right, then did not reappear.

However, we might have sensed something, or it might have been a mere coincidence. We were completely awake after that, and we talked to each other with excitement.

Nanny had gone somewhere. We little children couldn't sleep because of a mixed feeling of happiness and fear, and at last my older sister suggested that we call on Mother.

Then the three of us went to the bottom of the stairs in the telephone room again, and called out to her.

"Mummy."

Then, my mother appeared on top of the stairs without making a sound. I do not remember what she was wearing at that time, but, if I remember correctly, she was not wearing a sleeping garment.

Mother appeared at the top of the stairs, and without saying a word, she told us by gesturing with her hand to go back to bed. I do not remember how long mother and we children were looking at each other from the top to the bottom of the stairs.

At any rate, we went back to the seven-mat room, then get into the futon. When we next woke up, our mother was gone. Ever since then....

When I think about it now, mother, who was ordered by my enraged father to leave the house, probably came home secretly in order to get her clothes and other things.

I do not know at all whether my father was in his study or not.¹⁴⁰

This is very similar to the scene from *Ghosts* quoted earlier, but some details are different. For example in *Ghosts*, the reason for the mother's coming home late at night is not explained. When the mother in *Ghosts* appears at the top of the stairs, she does so "soundlessly," and her appearance is "blurred and white" as she is wearing a white gown. Her right hand moves as if it were swimming in the darkness. Comparing the passages in *Ghosts* and "Nezu-yama," we can clearly see how Kita manipulates his memories when

¹⁴⁰ Kita Morio, "Nezu yama," *Haha no kage* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1994) 30-31. Kita later states that this, too, is a very vague, dream-like memory. Kita Morio, *Mokich hôkô* – "Takahara" ~ "Shôen" jidai (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001) 127.

recapturing them in *Ghosts* in order to create a more poetic and mysterious image of the mother and the incident.

In *The House of Nire*, Ryûko, after leaving the house, goes to live with one of her younger brothers, Ôshû. Ôshû and Ryûko have not gotten along very well, but he could not think of any reason to reject her. He agreed to let her stay “and he immediately set about having an extension added to the house. This was a suite of two rooms at the end of a long connecting passageway, and he had it built in great haste. Even though he had to have his sister formally living under the same roof as himself, he wanted her as far away as possible, living in as different a room as he could contrive.”¹⁴¹ In real life, however, Teruko first went to live with her younger brother temporarily, then went to stay with her relative in her mother’s hometown. While Teruko was under house arrest there because of the incident with her dance instructor, she escaped by means of a rope that she hung out the window and came back to Tokyo.¹⁴² Later, she was sent to stay at an inn in Yamagata that Mokichi’s younger brother was managing. A month before Teruko was sent there, Mokichi wrote his younger brother as follows:

By the way, I would like you to take care of Teruko for three to four months, as she needs to be confined in a house. Two meals a day will suffice, and I would like your wife (Ohama-san) to take care of her. No need to pay attention to her [other than meals]. Just ignore her. However, since she is confined to the house, do not allow her to leave the house. No need to let her read newspapers. Letters should be prohibited. As far as the room is concerned, if it is a storage space that can be locked up from outside, that would be the best, but, at present, any room is fine. It is necessary that we confine her in one room so that she will

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 365-366.

¹⁴² Kita Morio, *Mokichi hôkô* – “Takahara”~“Shôen”jidai, 124. According to Fujioka Takeo, however, Teruko first went to stay in Yamagata, then after that she went to stay with her maternal relatives. Fujioka Takeo, *Mokichi hyôden* (Tokyo: Ôfûsha, 1989) 82.

not mingle with others. Please make it so that people believe that she is there to have a spa treatment for her ordinary stomach illness.¹⁴³

After Teruko arrived at the inn, Mokichi wrote to his brother again:

Thank you for taking care of Teruko. Because of reasons you understand, please be strict with her. This bitch does nothing but trick people, just like Kiichi, so please make sure that she does not step out of the house other than the times she goes to the dentist. Also, it will be the worst trouble if she sends a letter to Tokyo. Also, I don't want her to see anyone, so please keep your eyes on her.¹⁴⁴

Kita quotes in his essay what Mokichi's brother, who took care of Teruko, had to say about her:

My brother asked me to open and check all the letters that came to Teruko, to check all of her visitors and report to him, not to allow her to read the newspaper or let her step out of the house. So, she was a troublesome guest, but, for my brother, I reluctantly let her stay. However, this is an inn, not a jail or a hospital. It was impossible to watch her like that. Besides, Teruko was not an ordinary woman but had a peculiar innate disposition. She went out wearing showy clothes, ate whatever she wanted, and she lived in the lap of luxury. Before we knew it, she obtained sweets or fruits that we had never seen.¹⁴⁵

Before too long, Mokichi's brother took Teruko back to Tokyo, and upon returning to Tokyo, she stayed at her younger brother's house for more than ten years until she was allowed by Mokichi to come home in 1945.¹⁴⁶

Kita says that these letters are abnormally strict in tone.¹⁴⁷ They, in fact, clearly show how infuriated and hurt Mokichi was by the incident and also how Mokichi felt about his father-in-law and Teruko. However, although (or maybe because) Mokichi was

¹⁴³ Fujioka Takeo, *Mokichi hyôden* (Tokyo: Ôfûsha, 1989) 81.

¹⁴⁴ The Kiichi mentioned in the letter is Teruko's father and Mokichi's adopted father, Saitô Kiichi, after whom Kiichirô in *Nireke no hitobito* is modeled. The letter is in Fujioka Takeo, *Mokichi hyôden* (Tokyo: Ôfûsha, 1989) 81.

¹⁴⁵ Kita Morio, *Mokichi hôkô – "Takahara"~"Shôen"jidai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001) 123-24.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 131-32.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 128. Kita also mentions that these letters are not included in Mokichi's collection of works. He suspects that it is because Mokichi's brother wanted to save the appearance of the family and did not submit these letters for the inclusion of the collection of works

extremely upset, we cannot help but feel something “comical” in the letters and in Mokichi’s attitude.

Enraged Mokichi, and Teruko, who did not give in to his authority and who behaved self-indulgently even in unusual circumstances, are an apparent parallel to the depiction of Tetsukichi and Ryûko in *The House of Nire*.

Ryûko is portrayed quite differently from the mother in *Ghosts*, but they are not as far away from each other as they seem. On a ship back to Japan after meeting with Tetsukichi, who had completed his study abroad, Ryûko reclines in a chair on a deck next to an American person, wearing “a dress of purple georgette with a great many pleats in the skirt” and “[a] wide-brimmed horsehair hat decked with satin ribbon.”¹⁴⁸ She spends more time aboard with foreigners than with other Japanese people and does not hesitate to talk to them in her broken English, or even in her mother tongue although they do not understand what she is saying. When she goes out in the latest model of Chrysler, she has “an aggressively modern appearance.”¹⁴⁹ Just like the mother in *Ghosts*, Ryûko does have a taste for Western things. Both mothers are also free from social values imposed on women in the Taishô and the early Shôwa periods: they do not hesitate to leave the house, deserting their small children for their own desires.

The differences in the depiction between the mother and Ryûko lie in the perspectives from which they are described. The mother in *Ghosts* is depicted through the eyes of the little protagonist who has not even reached school age. There are things untold about the mother in *Ghosts* because they are beyond the comprehension of little

¹⁴⁸ Kita Morio, *Mokich hôkô – “Takahara”~“Shôen”jidai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001) 202.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 260.

“boku.” How elegant the mother looked, how nice her room looked with unfamiliar exotic furniture – these are all how “boku” felt as a little child. This is the mother in his memories or, in his word, his own personal myths. Just as myths do not constitute historical facts, the image of the mother depicted here does not represent who she really was. Ryûko, on the other hand, is described by the omniscient narrator who can reveal what is in a character’s mind. Readers are aware that Tetsukichi thinks Ryûko does not look well in Western clothes and that Ryûko is not elegantly talking to foreigners but is speaking Japanese to them and they do not understand a word of what she is saying. The narrator’s voice skillfully captures Ryûko in a comical manner and reveals the other side of her elegance. If *Ghosts* were told by the same narrator, it would poke fun at the mother who is trying to convert her Japanese room to look like a Western room by covering up the *tatami* and a wall. Both mothers are portrayed so differently, but they are, in fact, the same person.

Isolated Father:

In contrast to the fact that the mother in *Ghosts* and Ryûko in *The House of Nire* are portrayed in a very different manner, the father in *Ghosts* and Tetsukichi, who correspond to Kita’s father, Mokichi, are depicted in a quite similar manner. The protagonist’s father is described in *Ghosts* as follows:

Father seemed to be some sort of scholar; or at least I believed so for a long while until I gained some understanding of the world. Now I can see he was only a kind of high-class dilettante, someone of whom perhaps it could be said that he had understood only too well not just the glory but the petty meanness of the creative life he led, and this, combined with a longing for the satisfactions of the simple everyday, had meant he had finally committed himself to neither. So his coolheaded attachment to life resulted in a few books of travel and reminiscences, some essays, and one slim blue volume of poetry. No doubt the

title of art critic or essayist would have been preferred, but he does seem to have been more noted as a travel writer.¹⁵⁰

Not much is said about his character. He was a quiet man and had “the peculiar aura of silence,”¹⁵¹ yet he turned into a tenacious man once he engaged in research or writing. The father suddenly passed away during his journey to a rural river town in the northeast. About the only thing the protagonist remembers about his father is his slightly bowed back. The father must have isolated himself from the family, spent most of the time in his room devoting himself to writing and researching, and he probably did not spend much time with his children. This quiet, isolated father is contrasted with the mother, who is elegant, beautiful, and sociable.

Tetsukichi is a psychiatrist, and while busying himself rebuilding and managing the hospital that has been burned down in the fire, he completes his long study and publishes a book entitled *History of Psychiatric Medicine*. His room is filled with books. There is a scene where Tetsukichi expresses his feelings about his family:

Tetsukichi's home life was also unhappy. His main impulse was to love his children in the innocent, doting manner of the normal parent, but something had changed inside him since he had returned from his stay abroad to find that the image he had cherished of his eldest son during those three and a half years did not coincide at all with reality, and Shun'ichi appeared to regard him as a complete stranger.

... Once he had finished his day's work he would return home exhausted, without even the energy to open his mouth in simple greeting, let alone indulge in that friendly exchange with wife and children which is part of the normal idea of home. Not only was he excluded from the world of his wife, whose character was alien to him, but also from that of his children. In Shun'ichi's case this perhaps had been inevitable, since he had been absent while the child was growing up.

¹⁵⁰ Kita Morio, *Ghosts*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1993) 4.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

But with Aiko, born a year after his return, and Shuji two years after that, things were surely different, yet they showed no affection for their father whatsoever.¹⁵²

This section expresses Tetsukichi's loneliness and isolation not only from his wife but also from his children. He is also isolated in the Nire Hospital. After Kiichiro passed away, even those who despised Kiichiro for his "ludicrous obsession with the illusory bright side of things" and "his irresponsible making of promises which were never kept"¹⁵³ forgot these qualities of his and only remembered the successes Kiichiro had. Thus, Kiichiro quickly became a legendary hero in the hospital, and Tetsukichi, who succeeded to the directorship, was fated to be constantly compared with his predecessor and criticized. Tetsukichi is aware that he lacks administrative skills but has full confidence in his talent as a doctor. However, facing the criticism around him, his confidence in what he has been doing begins to fade away.

Even though *Ghosts*'s father's and Tetsukichi's occupations are different – one being a writer and the other a psychiatrist – what they do is the same. They are both isolated from other family members and confine themselves to their studies, devoting themselves to writing.

Dichotomies:

A very clear dichotomy is presented in both works. In *Ghosts*, the difference in personalities between the mother and the father is further emphasized by the depiction of their rooms. Contrasted to the mother's room that is decorated with modern, Western objects, the father's room has nothing but vast numbers of books, dust, and mildew.

¹⁵² Kita Morio, *The House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984) 282-283.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 279.

However, when the protagonist goes to the father's room after his death and stands among the books, he clearly feels that his father and himself are of the "same kind."¹⁵⁴

In the earlier scene when the mother invites guests to the house and has a gathering, the young protagonist enjoys the atmosphere yet knows that the place is not meant for him. He envies his sister who "had no difficulty in being accepted in an environment from which (he felt) excluded."¹⁵⁵ Here, a dichotomy, the mother and the sister vs. the father and the protagonist, is presented. He identifies with the father, but he yearns to be like the mother and the sister. He, however, clearly knows that they are different beings and that he can never be like them. This thought is further expressed by his "depressed feelings" when he thinks that, when he and his sister grow up, he will have his father's room and his sister his mother's. Longing to be something else but being aware that one can never be like that – this theme reminds us of Thomas Mann's Tonio Kröger who yearns to be like his friend, Hans Hansen, who is beautiful, popular among his peers, and smart.

A similar dichotomy is also present in *The House of Nire*. Readers are constantly reminded that Tetsukichi and Ryûko are different in various scenes and depictions, just like water and oil. Tetsukichi and Ryûko contrasted, however, is not the only dichotomy described in *The House of Nire*. What is also clearly contrasted in this work are the people in *oku* or "within" and those who belong to *makanaï* or "cookhouse." "Within" is the name given to refer to the living quarters of Kiichirô and his wife, Hisa, and it is depicted as follows:

¹⁵⁴ Kita Morio, *Yûrei*, 22.

¹⁵⁵ Kita Morio, *Ghosts*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1993) 9.

[The rooms] were at the end of a long corridor, and it was this inner status that had led to the whole complex of their living quarters being referred to briefly as “within.” Few of the numerous employees of the hospital were actually acquainted with these rooms. A heavy black door sealed them off, and a private maid attended to the needs of the two “within,” no unauthorized person being permitted beyond the door. The lower members of staff would often gossip about the rooms, maintaining that there was a really “super” Western-style lavatory, that the double bed there had been brought all the way from Germany by the learned Director himself, and that the pink walls were decorated in such a way as to excite the imaginations of both sexes.¹⁵⁶

This mysterious, authoritative “within” is reserved just for Kiichirô and Hisa, and even his children are not living there. However, there are children who are close to “within” and those who are not. Ryûko and Seiko belong “within” and the two young children, Momoko and Yonekuni, belong in the “cookhouse.” Ryûko and Seiko are allowed to have meals “within” with the parents, but the two young ones are seldom allowed to do so. Ryûko is a direct line to “within” and therefore her husband, Tetsukichi, is expected to be closer to “within,” but he despises the authority and formalism of “within.” However he does not belong to the “cookhouse,” either, as he is a young master. Here again we can see Tetsukichi being made an isolated figure.

Just like little “boku” in *Ghosts* desiring to be like his mother and sister but being aware that he cannot be, there is also a character in *The House of Nire* who would like to belong “within” but knows it is not possible. The character is Kiichiro’s third daughter, Momoko.

Momoko does not have qualities to be “within”; she lacks the elegant features of her older sisters, and she acts like a vulgar child. When Seiko, the most beautiful daughter of the three, comes into the room, Momoko feels that “her sister seem[s] to

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 9.

belong to a quite different species” and that she is aware that it is “pointless to be envious of [Seiko] or to want to be like her.”¹⁵⁷ When she occasionally has meals with her parents “within,” she feels that her mother scrutinizes her behavior, and she cannot enjoy the meal at all. When she gets out of “within,” she can finally breathe freely and feels that the “outside world [has] everything.”¹⁵⁸ She is painfully aware that her sisters are the people who belong “within” and she is a “cookhouse” child, and that she should not envy them or wish to be like them. Yet, Momoko is young, and she seems to accept and enjoy who she is. She is depicted as a carefree girl who enjoys associating with lower-class people and using their vulgar language. Mishima Yukio was fascinated by the depiction of Momoko, and after reading the first three chapters, he wrote to Kita, “What an irresistibly cute and charming girl Momoko is! I earnestly wish that she will not encounter misfortune in the future.”¹⁵⁹

However, as she grows older, her sense of being rejected by “within” begins to manifest itself in her sense of inferiority and her feeling of hatred towards the Nire family. She complains to Nanny:

Nanny, I'll tell you this: and you're the only one I would tell this to. The House of Nire is a cold, heartless place, and always was. I can't describe the extent of that coldness. Oh yes, the people on top, the ones with class and quality, they get treated very well, very nicely thank you. But that's not from love; that's just being practical. The only thing that matters for the Nire family is the hospital. It's not people, nothing with warm blood running through it. There's no warmth, no blood in any of them, no tears, nothing. Look at Father and Mother if you don't believe me. What blood or tears did you ever see in them? ... All right, I'll admit it: I was never much good. I was never anything to be proud of. That's true. But that was no reason why I shouldn't have been treated a little as if I were

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 15.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 114.

¹⁵⁹ Mishima Yukio, “Kita Morio ate [shokan],” *Ketteiban Mishima Yukio zenshû*, vol. 38 (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 2004) 477.

human, as if I were alive with thoughts and feelings of my own, not just some object, some piece of merchandise they could do anything they wanted with ...¹⁶⁰

She is forced to marry a surgeon chosen by Kiichiro, but her husband dies prematurely. After his death, she finds a lover, marries him, abandons her son from her first husband, and disappears from the Nire family. When her second husband tells her his intention of moving to China, however, she is not willing to go because “she didn’t want to be too far from the Nire Hospital, even though she had run away from it and had received nothing but constant abuse from the place.”¹⁶¹ Momoko, however, has to face that she is totally rejected and ignored by her mother. One day in front of a department store, Momoko meets a driver for the Nire family. He has driven Hisa to the department store and is waiting for her to finish shopping. The driver sees Momoko, runs to her and speaks very kindly to her, and advises her to apologize to Hisa and ask for her forgiveness.

His words were so kind and considerate that Momoko was suddenly convinced that they must also be true. She was bound to be forgiven; it stood to reason. Of course she would be roundly abused; she would be dealt with as a useless good-for-nothing. But she would humble herself and say she was sorry, and eventually she would be forgiven. How far she would be forgiven she did not know, but at least she would be allowed to return to Aoyama and Matsubara. She was sure she would.

However things do not go the way she hopes:

In this state of wishful anticipation she went and stood by the car, and almost immediately, much sooner than she had expected, she saw her mother approaching. ... Momoko stepped forward two or three paces, but then her body went stiff with a sudden shudder of realization. Her mother had known for some time that someone was there, and she was also well aware who it was. But she was not even going to glance in her direction. As that expressionless, emotionless

¹⁶⁰ Kita Morio, *The House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984) 325-26.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 423.

profile passed directly in front of her Momoko knew exactly what its message was, just as if it had all been put into words. It was telling her that her mother did not wish to look upon her face. It was telling her that she would be wise to go away at once.¹⁶²

Realizing that she is totally ignored by her own mother, she decides to go to China with her husband. Yet, the further away from the family and the hospital she is, the more she misses and longs for them. One scene that depicts this feeling of Momoko is in Part Three. After spending some time in China with her second husband during the war, she comes back to Japan and lives in Nagano prefecture. She has not had any contact with her family for a long time, and one day she has a houseguest named Shinoda who used to live in Aoyama. On hearing the name “Aoyama,” Momoko becomes very excited and proudly says to him, “I’m a daughter of the Nire hospital.” Then she begins to talk with the guest about the neighborhood in Aoyama:

“Do you remember the noodle shop that used to be on the corner there, the Masudaya?”

“Now, was there a noodle shop there? It’s all a pretty long time ago...”

“Well, if you walked along the narrow street from there you passed a stationer’s called the Seiundo.”

“Can’t say I do. Of course, it’s all...”

... Momoko wouldn’t let things drop until she had finally talked Shinoda into praising the former glories of the Nire Hospital.¹⁶³

Momoko has been severely hurt because of the rejection from “within,” and her sense of inferiority and hatred for the Nire family have been planted deep inside of her. Yet, this scene reveals her secret desire – probably she herself is not aware of it – of wanting to belong to the family because, after all, it is her family.

¹⁶² Ibid., 425.

¹⁶³ Kita Morio, *The Fall of the House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1985) 134.

“Within” disappears after the fire destroyed the hospital. Even though Ryûko refers to the living room where they dine “within,” it does not have the authority and power that the previous “within” had. Therefore, the dichotomy of “within” and the “cookhouse” does not apply to the “Shôwa Child (*Shôwa-kko*),”¹⁶⁴ generation to which Shûji, Ryûko’s second son, belongs. However, there is also a clear dichotomy between Shûji and his elder sister, Aiko, Shûji being a descendent of the “cookhouse” and Aiko being of “within.” When Aiko is a little child, she holds a special position among the children in the neighborhood – her clothes, her facial feature, and her upbringing are better than any of them. Aiko reigns as the Queen of the kids of the neighborhood. In contrast to his sister, Shûji is “quite lacking in the refinement proper to a child of good family.”¹⁶⁵ He is completely ignored by both the children and his sister. Even his mother neglects him – she occasionally takes Aiko out, but she leaves all his care to Nanny. In primary school, Aiko is “becoming more and more precocious with looks and clothes that put her near the top in the popularity stakes.”¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, Shûji is sometimes shunned by his peers even in school. Aiko is ashamed of her brother and tells her friend that he is not her real brother but a relative’s child.

When they grow a little older and Aiko goes to a girls’ school and Shûji to a middle school, Aiko is “enjoying this cheerful, exciting life.” In contrast, Shûji feels that his “schooldays consist almost entirely of gloom and anxiety.”¹⁶⁷ He feels that he is

¹⁶⁴ Kita Morio, “Nireke no hitobito,” *KMZ*, vol. 4 (1977) 192.

¹⁶⁵ Kita Morio, *The House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984) 256.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 376.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 474.

“unable to avoid the guilty feeling that he [isn’t] really suited for anything,”¹⁶⁸ but has “a great desire to become a genuine middle-school student, one who [is] accepted by his peers, and to have it said of him, if only for the most delusory of reasons, ‘he’s a pretty amusing sort of guy.’”¹⁶⁹ It is not until Sh ūji consumes himself with the notion of death during the war that he is released from his inferiority complex. He thinks that before “death,” everything is so trivial and so is his inferiority complex.¹⁷⁰ However, when he is released from his inferiority complex, he is captured by a notion of death. He hopes that he dies magnificently during the war, and he feels excited on such occasions as air raids when he feels that death is near. After the war, he cannot escape from the regret that he has put off dying until it is too late, and he becomes indifferent to everything.

The Perspective of Inferiors:

As examined above, both *Ghosts* and *The House of Nire* depict clear dichotomies among the characters: superiors/envied and inferiors/envious. The protagonist of *Ghosts* envies his mother and sister, and he feels inferior for not being able to become like them. This perspective of the inferior is more clearly seen in *The House of Nire*. When looking at the characters in *The House of Nire* as those who belong to “within” and those who belong to the “cookhouse,” it is interesting to see how the narrator depicts them. As for the people “within,” they are most of the time depicted from the outsider’s eyes and their

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 477.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 479.

¹⁷⁰ Okuno Takeo suspects that Kita must have spent a lonely and sad childhood because of his complicated family relationship. However, Okuno continues, Kita’s works are free from an inferiority/superiority complex because Kita has learned the depth and greatness of nature. Compared to the magnitude of nature, all humans are small and, when one is aware of this, there is no room for inferiority/superiority complex. See Okuno Takeo, “Kaisetsu,” in Kita Morio, *Dokutoru Manbō shōjiten* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1974) 199. Okuno’s point is very intriguing, because a similar thing is happening here to Sh ūji, Kita’s alter-ego. When he faces death (one aspect of nature), his feeling of being an inferior person disappears.

inner thoughts and feelings are not much presented. On the other hand, the feelings and inner thoughts of the people who belong to the “cookhouse” are described to a much greater extent. For example, Kiichi who represents “within” is depicted by the narrator as to what he does, says, and what kind of personality he has. However, once it comes to his inner voice – what he thinks and how he feels – it is not depicted at all. When he lost his hospital in the fire and was in a desperate situation, we know his devastation and shock because of this depiction:

It was unmistakably Kiichiro who now appeared from the back door of the house, although he was much changed from the former dandy whose condescending and energetic presence had once graced the hospital, for as little trace remained of the one as of the other. He looked no more than some old man of the back streets toddling off to the public bath, this bathrobe loosely tied about him and carrying a tin washbowl with what seemed to be a bottle in it. His originally small stature seemed to have been reduced further, as if he had actually been shrunk by the fire.¹⁷¹

However, what he thinks is not depicted at all. Not only does the omniscient narrator not reveal Kiichi’s inner feeling, but also the narrator wonders what Kiichi is thinking:

What kind of thoughts or reveries passed through his mind as he sat [in the lukewarm bath]. His hair, which had previously been so carefully groomed and shone such a lustrous black, was more than half gray now, dry, lifeless and disordered. But his Kaiser moustache remained as ever, the same shining, pomaded black: clearly he retained much of his passion for his personal appearance, and the time spent over his daily toilet was no doubt little changed. This seemed only to add to the atmosphere of pathos he exuded, this tiny, sad and comical man. There he sat, his wrinkled and unhealthy-looking face and the bony upper portion of his chest emerging above the surface of the water, his eyes closed. What thoughts and feelings were passing through this solitary head, there in the vast expanse of the bath? Did he feel that everything had ended now, that the final breakup had come? Was he resigned to his harsh fate, or overcome by despair?¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Kita Morio, *The House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984) 222.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 224.

His desolation and despair are well depicted but only from outside. In other words, when depicting such people who belong to “within” as Kiichirô, Hisa, and Ryûko, the narrator is a mere observer.

In contrast to those people who belong to “within,” the inner thoughts and emotions of those who belong to the “cookhouse” or who feel inferior to others such as Tetsukichi and Shûji, are depicted in detail. The following is the passage that captures the inner thoughts of Tetsukichi, who is on a walk on a late autumn day, just right before having a stroke:

He thought then of his actual children: Shûji, Aiko, Shun'ichi. He had not been a good father to them, never gone to any trouble for them; perhaps he had even been a source of unhappiness for them. Did they understand that it was not because he didn't love them? It was, well, just the way he had been, his character, lots of things, some sort of destiny that had made everything as it was. Not that he was trying to excuse himself. He had been a cold, seemingly unloving father. He had certainly not been what society would consider a good father. It was just that there had always been something that seemed to make him behave the way he did. It would do so for the rest of his life.¹⁷³

It is not obvious in the translation, but in the original Japanese text, the collapse between the omniscient narrator and the character, Tetsukichi, is present. The very first line of the Japanese passage is a third-person account with the phrase *Tetsukichi wa omotta*, meaning “Tetsukichi thought.” However, the rest of the sentences in the passage are written as a first-person account with *jibun* (self, I) as the subject. In other words, the narration is conflated with Tetsukichi, and it depicts Tetsukichi's inner thoughts.

A couple of pages later, the narrator depicts Tetsukichi having a stroke:

¹⁷³ Kita Morio, *The Fall of the House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1985) 221-222.

So he lay quite still on his side and looked at the withered grass and the earth under the tree. Then suddenly he felt an unmistakable shudder of fear run down his spine, contradicting his belief that he no longer clung to life. The tremor seemed to spread all over his body, yet his body was cold and motionless, particularly the left side of it. He did not want to die. He knew that now. Finally he did not want to die.

Then his mind, which had been so terrifyingly lucid about his condition began to cloud over, turning imprecise and vague. His eyes seemed to be gradually clouding over as well. He could see the leaves; brown, yellow, black; and yet they were all slowly turning white. Now everything to the side of his vision seemed white.

Was it snow? No, it was only an illusion. Yet still the world was growing whiter. He closed his eyes and opened them again. Now everything was white, a world of whiteness, a pure, soft, glittering white, a total covering, incomparably clean, unsullied, flooding his whole field of vision, a world of whiteness spreading everywhere. He heard his heart beating in the amazing silence. ...

Then a greater haziness, a heavier, sluggish wave, surged over him, washing away even that minimal awareness...

Half an hour later a passing villager found him, still lying at the foot of the pine tree. When the man raised him up Tetsukichi could speak slightly and his pulse was apparently still steady.¹⁷⁴

In this passage, again, the collapse between the narrator and Tetsukichi is observed in the original Japanese text. Moreover, not only Tetsukichi's inner thoughts but also his vision – what Tetsukichi actually sees through his eyes – are described here with the voice of the narrator conflating with Tetsukichi.

When depicting the people who belong “within,” the narrator is only an observer and does not reveal them from within, but when depicting those who belong to the “cookhouse” or to the inferior group, he discloses their inner thoughts, using the voice that is fused with that of the characters on some occasions. Both *Ghosts* and *The House of Nire*, thus, are written from the perspectives of inferiors.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 224.

As both are fictional works, it might not be very meaningful to compare these father figures with Kita's father and the person after whom these characters are modeled, Saito Mokichi, a prominent traditional Japanese poet and psychiatrist. However, it is very interesting to see that each father figure in the works has only one of Mokichi's occupations. The father in *Ghosts* is a scholar/writer but not a psychiatrist, and Tetsukichi in *The House of Nire* is a psychiatrist. Tetsukichi does publish books on psychiatry, but he has nothing to do with poetry or literature. Kita explains this as follows:

Tetsukichi is the least attractive [among all the characters in *The House of Nire*] and is boring. Because *Nireke* is, just like *Buddenbrooks*, a history of one declining family, Tetsukichi should not be greater than Kiichiro. Therefore I did not include [in Tetsukichi] Mokichi's aspect of being a literary person and his intense personality.¹⁷⁵

Moreover, in order to clearly establish Tetsukichi as being a different, independent figure from Mokichi, Kita inserts in *The House of Nire* the historical fact that Saitô Mokichi contributed verses to the *Asahi* newspaper on its New Year's Day edition of the Imperial Year 2600.¹⁷⁶

Nada Inada, a writer who also worked with Kita at Keiô University Hospital while Kita was an assistant there, sees in the reconstruction of the father figure in *Ghosts* and *The House of Nire* the relationship between Kita, the son who aspired to become a writer, and Mokichi, the father and a prominent poet whose talent Kita respected very much. He points out the fact that Kita seldom referred to his father as "father" but as "Mokichi" as if he were talking about just another writer. Nada Inada speculates that, because Mokichi

¹⁷⁵ Kita Morio, "Sôzaku yowa" (6), in *Geppô* (6) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 4 (1977) 4.

¹⁷⁶ Kita also states after completing the work that he intentionally put Mokichi's name there. Kita Morio, "Chôhen o oete," *KMZ*, vol. 14 (1977) 287.

was a giant literary figure in Kita's mind, Kita had to reject him as his "father," and therefore he made the father in *Ghosts* die at such an early stage. Nada Inada concludes that it was when Kita successfully captured his father as Nire Tetsukichi that he finally overcame his father's presence.¹⁷⁷

Whether Kita felt inferior to his father as a person of letters is not an issue here, but there is no doubt that he was constantly aware of the existence of Saitô Mokichi. In one of his essays, Kita writes that it was sometimes a burden to have a famous father. He writes:

At any rate, because my father was a famous person, I suffered in various ways. What I hated most was my teacher telling me, "You should become as great as your father." This would be an impossible task. Generally speaking, if there are great people, their children are most of the times as useless as scum. A teacher says such things very carelessly, but it is a cruel thing for a child. I did not become a delinquent child nor have I gone to a jail. I think this is a great accomplishment [as a child of a famous father.]

When I was a second grader at middle school, I was walking near a moat by the Empress Dowager's Palace in Aoyama and found an insect. I went into the moat to catch it, and when I was going to get out of the moat my friend tried to keep me from getting out of it. I ran in the moat and tried my best to get out of the moat, then I got caught by a policeman who was on guard.

"If you were to trespass into the Palace, His Excellency Tōjō Hideki would have to go in front of the Emperor and apologize to him on your behalf," he warned sternly.

The name of the school and even my grade were inquired into.

"In any case, you must be at the bottom of your class," he said. "Where do you live?"

I gave him my address. Then he asked me if my home was Aoyama Mental Hospital, and if I was the son of Mokichi. Suddenly his attitude changed, and he became gentle. Probably he was composing poems himself. He told me to be more careful in the future and immediately released me. I received a special benefit from having a famous father. But that incident left a deep scar in my heart. Sometimes you can benefit from having a famous father, but it can also be a great psychological burden.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Nada Inada, "'Yûrei' kara 'Nireke' made," *Kita Morio no sekai* (Tokyo: Shinpyôsha, 1979), 153-154.

¹⁷⁸ Kita Morio, "Oyaji," *KMZ*, vol. 15 (1977) 280-281.

From this passage, it can be readily assumed that, as a boy, Kita was constantly made aware of his insignificance every time his father's fame was mentioned. Fukuda Hirotoishi also writes that, when Kita was asked to write about Mokichi at the beginning of his writing career, he refused the request.¹⁷⁹ He used a pseudo-name to send his drafts to literary magazines in order to hide his identity as the son of Saitô Mokichi. There is also an episode at the time of a party to celebrate the publication of *Ghosts* when Kita asked one of his former teachers at Matsumoto higher school to make a speech. However, he asked the former teacher not to mention two facts in his speech; that he was a medical doctor and that his father was Mokichi.¹⁸⁰ His attitude is quite opposite from some of the second-generation writers, Koda Aya for example, who began their literary careers by writing about their famous literary parents.

Kita states that, because he did not portray Mokichi's literary aspect in *The House of Nire*, he felt responsible to write the biography of Mokichi to capture the "real" Mokichi. In this four-volume biography, Kita writes not only about Mokichi but also his relationship with and memories of Mokichi. It can be said that he uses the work to examine his identity in relation to his father. In addition to this biography, Kita also published a collection of short autobiographical stories entitled *The Shadow of My Mother* (*Haha no kage*) in 1994. All nine stories included in this collection, except for one unpublished story, were previously published in the literary magazine *Shinchô* as independent stories. Some of the contents of the stories overlap from one story to another,

¹⁷⁹ Fukuda Hirotoishi, "Kaisetsu," in Kita Morio, *Tenjôura no kodomotachi* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1966) 226.

¹⁸⁰ Furukawa Hisashi, "Kita Morio no seishun igaiden," *Kita Morio no sekai* (Tokyo: Shinpyôsha, 1979) 28.

but all the stories are mainly about Kita's recollection of his parents. In these stories, Kita, once again, writes about himself and his family. In contrast to the poetic, lyrical depictions in *Ghosts*, or *The House of Nire*, which is written in the form of a family-epic, in these short stories, he depicts his memories or events concerning his parents in a more documentary manner.

In addition to the biography and the short stories, Kita also mentions his parents in his numerous essays. He wrote two short essay-like autobiographical works that were totally devoted to capturing the aging Mokichi, his death, and Kita's reminiscence of Mokichi.¹⁸¹ In contrast to these two autobiographical works, his memories of his parents during his childhood, especially with Mokichi, are all quite fragmented in other works. The following passage describes the time when Mokichi and Teruko lived separately, Mokichi in the house in Aoyama, and Teruko in her younger brother's house in Setagaya. The four children often visited Teruko in Setagaya on Sundays.

Once we went driving to Chiba Prefecture [with my mother]. ...

Somewhere in a large field, we opened our lunch boxes. I remember very well even now that there were lots of *matsutake* mushrooms sautéed with butter in the lunch box. *Matsutake* was not as expensive at the time as it is now, but we had never eaten *matsutake* so abundantly in Aoyama. My father is from a farmer's family in Yamagata Prefecture, so he lived frugally in everything. His favorite food was eel, but even so, when he ordered delivery he always had medium-grade and was content with it. Even worse, he often ordered it for himself but seldom ordered it for us children. On top of that, he did nothing but study all the time, and he was also very frightening to the extent I felt like crying even if it was someone else who was scolded by him. With my father being this way, it was natural that we became much more attached to our mother than to our father.

¹⁸¹ The two works are "Shi" and "Shinitamau chichi" and they were published in 1964 and 1992 respectively.

Compared to the meals served at the house in Aoyama, the ones served at the house in Setagaya were much more extravagant. Among the people living in the house in Setagaya, I think it was my mother who lived most lavishly.

Mother favored Momoko [the older sister], as she was a good-looking girl, and mother often took her out for shopping or dining, I heard. I was also taken out by mother once and went to a Western-food restaurant that was located in an underground somewhere. There, a waiter brought us a heap of meats on a silver tray such as ham, sausages, and corned beef, and I could take as much as I wanted. I had never had such a sumptuous feast.

....

Compared to that, father seldom took us children out. The only exception was on our birthdays. On the day, he took us to a restaurant called Olympic in Ginza. I remember that Olympic was a medium-rate restaurant. However, since the meal served at the house in Aoyama was simple, the fried shrimp that we had at Olympic tasted extremely delicious. There were three big shrimp on a plate topped with soft mayonnaise with parsley in it, and it tasted wonderful beyond description to me as a young child.

In any case, just taking food as an example, my father and mother were very different. ...

It was probably when I was in the upper grade in elementary school. Because nobody was going to Setagaya one Sunday, I decided to go there to see mother alone by bicycle. For me, a bit of a coward with no sense of direction, it was a drastic adventure. However, while I pedaled my bicycle, trying my best to remember the road we took by car, I found I had reached a railroad crossing near Gôtoku-ji from where I could see the building of the main hospital.

Since then, almost every Sunday, I went to Setagaya to see my mother by myself on the bicycle. On some occasions, I went there on Saturday and stayed overnight.

Father must have known for some time that we went to see our mother, but he did not say anything to us. He may have acquiesced to the idea that children do, indeed, need their mother. Only once did he question me when I came home one evening on a Sunday.

“Where have you been?”

If I remember correctly, I made something up, saying that I was visiting my friend or someone. Then he scolded me severely and said, “You have become a liar.”

How sad, how sad! / Like a bolt of lightening / flashing through me /
I have found myself hating / even my own children.¹⁸²

This is one of the poems father composed. Probably he composed this poem after this incident.¹⁸³

¹⁸² This translation is by Amy Heinrich. Amy Heinrich, *Fragments of Rainbows – The Life and Poetry of Saito Mokichi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) 95.

Even in this passage, the differences between Mokichi and Teruko, Teruko's attraction for her children and Mokichi's devotion to his studying and his irritable nature, are well depicted in a documentary manner through the fixed perspective of the narrator "I."

In the end, Kita Morio was a psychiatrist. Through long years of narrative experimentation, telling the same stories again and again from different perspectives, in his fiction and memoirs, he provides a series of extraordinary insights into the influence of family on the formulation of personality. Or rather, the formulation and fragmentation of personality according to which narrative we tell ourselves. Jung seems to have been an influence on Kita Morio and perhaps Kita's tendency to mythologize the major influences on his early life owes something to Jung's thought. In any case, this mythologizing of childhood and early adult family life from a variety of perspectives provides the reader with a view of realities of middle class life and its tensions that is, as Mishima Yukio noted, nowhere else present in Japanese literature. That said, the mythologizing of the middle class also invites parody. And it is here that Kita Morio the humorist comes to the fore, as we will see in the next chapter.

¹⁸³ Kita Morio, "Nezu yama," *Haha no kage* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1994) 36-39. Regarding Mokichi's poem quoted in this passage, Kita later realized that it was composed much earlier than the Dance Hall Incident, and he corrected that the poem was not about him. See Kita Morio, *Mokichi hôkô – "Takahara" ~ "Shôen" jidai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001) 100.

Chapter 3: Humorous Travelogue

In Chapter Two, two of Kita's fictional works that deal with autobiographical topics, *Ghosts* (*Yûrei*) and *The House of Nire* (*Nireke no hitobito*), were examined. Both works were born of the same impulse – to find out who he was and where he came from, and they deal with the same topic – examining one's roots, whether they are the protagonist's childhood memories or the affairs of one family. However, the ways in which the works are written are quite different. *Ghosts* is depicted in a lyrical, melancholy manner. On the other hand, *The House of Nire* is written in a broader, family-epic style. We have also seen that Kita reconstructed the same material in a more documentary manner in his essay-like stories.

Although the topic is the same in both *Ghosts* and *The House of Nire*, what is dealt with in *Ghosts* is the protagonist's childhood memories and it consists of a very enclosed, confined world. In *The House of Nire*, however, glimpses of the outside world are depicted with the description of political situations, wars, and other national crises that occurred in the era. At the same time, as the world of the work widens, so does humor in the work. *Ghosts* is a very serious work showing a psycho-analytical frame of reference, and humor or comical depictions do not exist in it. In *The House of Nire*, some people are depicted in a uniquely comical manner.

However, it is when Kita leaves the cocoon of remembrance and ventures out from his family and himself that his satirical, humorous, and comical instincts come to the fore. In this chapter, the first and the most famous of his humorous travelogues, *Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki* (*Doctor Manbô at Sea*), will be discussed.

Doctor Manbô at Sea is a travelogue based on the journey Kita took as a ship's doctor from November of 1958 to April of 1959. During his journey, Kita mailed the installments of the account of his journey from every port to the literary magazine *Bungei Shuto*. The installments were published under the title "On Board" (*Senjônite*) in the same magazine. *Doctor Manbô at Sea* was written in 1959 and published in 1960 based on these essays. The work immediately became a best-selling book and made the name Kita Morio very well known. Miyawaki Shunzô, an editor at Chûô Kôron at that time who persuaded Kita to write a travelogue, later recalled:

I received the information: a young psychiatrist is traveling on the Fishery Agency's survey ship to Europe through the African coast. It appears that he writes well. He also writes novels. It was in the spring of Showa 34 [1959]. At that time, I was working for a publisher. It was the time that traveling abroad was a lofty dream.

I was waiting for the "young psychiatrist who also writes novels" to come back to Japan, and as soon as he came back, I requested him to write a travelogue. He showed me many photos, which were all unique. I planned to make the travelogue into a book that would contain many photos.

In about half a year, the draft was completed. It was far better than what I had expected. His writing was free and vigorous, reflected his young spirits, and was filled with humor.

I was fascinated by his writing so much that my idea of inserting photos in the travelogue somehow disappeared.

In the following spring, a travelogue without any pictures, which was very unusual at the time, was published. His writing captured readers' hearts, and it immediately became a best-selling book. The book is Kita Morio's *Doctor Manbô at Sea*.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Miyawaki Shunzô, *Tabi wa jiyû-seki* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1998) 243-244.

From Miyawaki's passage, it is obvious that Kita's "On Board" gained attention among editors when it was published from *Bungei Shuto*.

The reason for Kita's becoming a ship's doctor is briefly explained at the beginning of the work and also in some of his essays and seems in accord with the facts of the matter. He wanted to go to Germany, but at that time in Japan, overseas travel was limited to those people who had specific reasons to be abroad, such as those who worked for the government, a trading company, researchers, among others.¹⁸⁵ Kita applied for the examination administered by the Ministry of Education to qualify for studying abroad, but he did not survive even the screening of applications.¹⁸⁶ It was suggested by one of his colleagues in the research laboratory in the university hospital that he become a ship's doctor and leave the ship once he got to Europe. However, when he visited one shipping company, they told him they would require a three-year contract because they had dealt with so many doctors who became ship's doctors only to quit the ship after reaching

¹⁸⁵ Maekawa Ken'ichi writes in his book *Ikoku shōkei* how limited overseas travel was for younger people. If one excels academically, one could study abroad. If their parents are well to do and own a company, they could disguise themselves as an employee and go abroad "on business," and also they could obtain a foreign sponsorship and study abroad privately. There is also a way to become a crew of a ship or to emigrate to a foreign country. Certain women chose to marry a GHQ soldier and go abroad as a war bride. If one possesses a special skill, one could participate in an international sporting event, a research group, or a climbing group. But, in any case, it was not easy to go abroad. Some people, who desired to go abroad but were not able to, illegally left Japan, one of whom is Horie Ken'ichi, a well-known adventurer. See Maekawa Ken'ichi, *Ikoku shōkei – sengo kaigairyokō gaishi* (Tokyo: JTB, 2003) 102.

¹⁸⁶ Kita writes in his essay "Hito ware o hakuchi to yobu," since he was not serious about his work at all at the research laboratory, people around him were surprised and even amused to learn that he was applying for the examination. Nada Inada, who worked as an unpaid staff at the research laboratory with Kita, recalls and confirms that even a professor did not believe Kita was serious about his application. See Kita Morio, "Hito ware o hakuchi to yobu," *KMZ*, vol. 11 (1976) 289, and Nada Inada, "Yūrei kara Nireke made," in *Kita Morio no sekai* (Tokyo: Shinpyōsha, 1979) 158. It is noteworthy that Kita Morio claims the essay "Hito ware o hakuchi to yobu," which was published in 1957 in *Bungei Shuto* to be his first humorous essay. See Kita Morio, *Dokutoru Manbō ikyokuki* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1993) 169.

certain foreign countries. The shipping company also preferred a doctor who was adept at surgical techniques, which Kita, a psychiatrist, was not.

In November 10 of 1958 Kita heard that the Fisheries Agency was seeking a doctor for one of their survey ships called the Shôyômaru. It was scheduled to sail in a few days, but they had not been able to find a ship's doctor, and they were desperate enough to hire a doctor no matter what his specialty was. Kita wrote in his diary of the day, "During the night, I was troubled thinking about it" but the entry of the next day reads, "Made up my mind. Busy."¹⁸⁷ On November 15, only five days after he first heard about this position, the ship departed with Kita on it.

Overseas travel would not become available to ordinary people until April of 1964. Even then, although some people were able to obtain passports, it was still not easy for them to go overseas because of the cost. A dollar being equivalent to three hundred sixty yen, traveling overseas cost Japanese people a fortune. Because it was not easy for ordinary Japanese people to travel overseas, not many overseas travelogues had been written around that time. Kita's *Doctor Manbô at Sea* is one of the first overseas travelogues in Japanese in the post-war era.¹⁸⁸

Okuno Takeo speaks highly of the work, saying that it is the first overseas travelogue in post-war Japan that is completely free from Japanese people's inferiority

¹⁸⁷ Kita Morio, "Sôzaku yowa" (3), in *Geppô* (3) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 11 (1976) 1.

¹⁸⁸ According to Maekawa Ken'ichi's study, the first post-war writing that can be classified as travelogue (including one's record of stay in a foreign country) is *Sengo no sekai o tobu* by Takada Ichitarô, published in 1948, who worked for *Mainichi shinbun*. In Maekawa's list, Kita's *Doctor Manbô at Sea* is the 15th travelogue published after the war. See Maekawa Ken'ichi, *Ikoku shôkei – sengo kaigairyokô gaishi* (Tokyo: JTB, 2003) 97. Some overseas travelogues published earlier than *Doctor Manbô at Sea* include Takamine Hideko's *Pari hitori aruki* (Tokyo: Sekai Eigasha, 1953) and Kanetaka Kaoru's *Sekai hitori aruki* (Tokyo: Hiraki Shobô, 1959).

complex towards the West, Japanese nationalism, which is the concomitant of the inferiority complex, or a writer's elitism. He continues:

[*Doctor Manbô at Sea*] played a groundbreaking role in that other writers followed it and produced their own travelogues one after another, such as Oda Makoto's *I'll Go Everywhere and See Everything* (*Nandemo mite yarô*, 1961), Yasuoka Shôtarô's *A Sentimental Journey through America* (*Amerika kanjô ryokô*, 1962), and travelogues by Ôe Kenzaburô and Kaikô Ken. In this sense, although the work may seem simply absurd and funny, it actually played a very important role in the history of Japanese literature.¹⁸⁹

Shôyômaru was to stop at Singapore, Suez (Egypt), Lisbon (Portugal), Hamburg (Germany), Rotterdam (the Netherlands), Antwerp (Belgium), Le Havre (France), Genoa (Italy), Alexandria (Egypt), and Colombo (India). The travelogue depicts the life on the survey ship of the Fisheries Agency as well as the author's experience in each place he visited.

Susanna Fessler has written on Japanese overseas travel literature in the Meiji period in her book, *Musashino in Tuscany*. She mentions that in the late Meiji travelogue, there is a set of favorite images appearing in the works of different authors. She says that this derives from Japan's *uta makura* tradition in which a traveler was eager to visit famous places about which they had heard or read in their predecessors' writings.¹⁹⁰ She writes, "it was much more tempting to travel to a place where one could employ an artistic use of *uta makura* than to explore an uncharted region. The attraction for travel writers was not in writing something of a place that had never been written about before but rather in writing of the same images while adding a slight variation or

¹⁸⁹ Okuno Takeo, "'Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki,'" *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô kôronsha, 1978) 114.

¹⁹⁰ Susanna Fessler, *Musashino in Tuscany* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2004) 22.

improvement.”¹⁹¹ In contrast to this attitude seen in Japanese travel writers in the late Meiji period, Kita’s attitude in writing the travelogue is quite different. In the afterword of the work, he writes, “In this book, I omitted all the important, significant things. Instead, I decided to write only of trivial, unimportant, and insignificant things that nobody cares about.”¹⁹²

Take Paris as an example. When Kita got off the ship at Le Havre, he went to Paris to visit *T*, who was one of Kita’s friends from Matsumoto Higher School and who was studying abroad in Paris at the time. The first thing Kita has to write about Paris is his criticism against Japanese people’s attitude that people are so fascinated about this famous city just because it is Paris: “There’s no reason to go into much detail about Paris, as it’s been my experience that no one knows the city as intimately as those who’ve never been there” (191).¹⁹³ He does mention a few famous places in Paris such as Montmartre, the Luxembourg Gardens, and the Seine. However, what attracted Kita about Montmartre was not the famous stone-paved streets but the crumbling, slanted walls of the buildings on the backstreets. Instead of writing about famous landmarks, he takes up an old barber, who is referred to as “Professeur,” in a little, filthy barbershop on rue Valette, and the time he spent with *T* and his wife in their shanty apartment.

He claims that he writes “trivial, unimportant, and insignificant” things in this work. But, then, what might be “non-trivial, important, and significant” things for Kita?

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 17.

¹⁹² Kita Morio, *Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1965) 224. This afterword is dated February 25, 1960. However, the afterword of the translated version is a newer one written in December, 1987. See Kita Morio, *Doctor Manbo at Sea*, trans. Ralph F. McCarthy (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1987) 291-292.

¹⁹³ In this chapter, the number in a parenthesis in the body of texts refers to a page number in Kita Morio, *Dr. Manbo at Sea*, trans. Ralph McCarthy (Tokyo: Kôdansha International, 1987).

He often writes in his essays that he was willing to die in the war, but when he lost everything in the air raid and when his country was defeated, he became indifferent to everything. In *Ghosts*, the protagonist, the alter-ego of Kita, is enthusiastic about collecting insects, and he has made many specimen boxes that were splendid for his age. However, his collections are all burned down in an air raid. The next morning, while standing in the hot ashes, he looks around and realizes that everything has been turned into ashes.

Water from the exposed pipes dripped onto the scorched earth, tracing a few irregular lines in it. The adults called out to me, and I walked away, first picking up the battered remains of a steel helmet which I found lying at my feet. What I felt at the time was not so much grief or regret but something much harder, much simpler, much closer to the skin; a sense that a decision had been made for me, that everything was over, and the conclusion to be drawn was that any obsession for things on my part, any commitment, was only a pointless assumption of burdens which could lead to nothing but failure and defeat.¹⁹⁴

He painfully learned first hand that any obsession is in vain.

In *The House of Nire*, Kita clearly depicts insignificant affairs of people who float in the large and ceaseless river called “time/history.” In the flow of this large river, people are utterly powerless and unimportant. When Tetsukichi, who has accomplished what the world believes to be something significant such as studying abroad when it was not easily done, rebuilding the hospital that had been burned down in the fire, and completing a large volume of book on psychiatry, recalls his life, he feels that what he has accomplished is nothing important:

He had been a fool. His whole life had been a sequence of stupidities; all of it an empty foolishness, perhaps. All that energy, all that study, and all to no purpose. It had given him no real understanding, no critical grasp of things. He had simply spent his by no means brief life like a dray horse of scholarship,

¹⁹⁴ Kita Morio, *Ghosts*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1993) 101.

dragging along an unseen burden it could not understand. Still, he was not the only fool. The people he knew, certainly all those living in the Nire Hospital, had all, quite frankly, been fools.¹⁹⁵

Kita's alter-ego in the work, Shûji, dreams about splendidly dying in the war as a suicide bomber when Tokyo would finally become a battlefield. He has been waiting for the moment eagerly, but in the summer of 1945 he hears the broadcast of the Emperor announcing Japan's defeat. He is truly distressed.

The news left him dumbfounded more than anything else. What was he supposed to think about this? It had never once crossed his mind that any human agency could simply call a halt to the war like this when there were so many Japanese people still alive. He had assumed the war was a natural phenomenon beyond the power of man to change, and it would continue until the whole race had been exterminated. But now what had happened? The Allied declaration had been accepted! We had surrendered! How was it possible?¹⁹⁶

After this, then, he lost his motivation to do anything. He says, "Everything is ridiculous. There is nothing. Indeed, there is nothing in this world."¹⁹⁷

It can be easily conjectured that the war had left a deep scar in Kita's mind.

When Kita and his family lost everything in the war, and when what he had been made to believe as "the truth" turned out to be not true and the Japanese value system was turned inside out, he must have keenly felt that there was nothing in this world that was important or significant. A literary critic Hinuma Rintarô mentions this point and argues that Kita thinks this world is completely, utterly meaningless.¹⁹⁸ In *Doctor Manbô at Sea*, it is the perspective of this alter-ego – a citizen of a country defeated in war – from which the world is depicted. From this perspective, Kita satirizes and brings down the affairs of

¹⁹⁵ Kita Morio, *The House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984) 222.

¹⁹⁶ Kita Morio, *The Fall of the House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1985) 211.

¹⁹⁷ Kita Morio, "Nireke no hitobito," *KMZ*, vol. 4 (1977) 580.

¹⁹⁸ Hinuma Rintarô, *Gendai sakka an'nai* (Tokyo: Sanichi Shobô, 1967) 188.

the state and national characteristics to the level of the everyday life of laughter. For Kita, nothing is significant. Obsession with heritage, family position, status and wealth are meaningless and empty vanity, but in a world that values money, status, power and authority, these empty vanities, when portrayed as insignificant, become funny. And, this is where the humor of *Doctor Manbô at Sea* comes from.

In connection with the war, he mentions in *Doctor Manbô at Sea* that one of the things he has wanted to see in Europe is the scar of bombing. He writes, “Among the things I’d especially wanted to see in Europe were the bombed-out ruins of old brick buildings. I imagined each grotesque, haunted pile of scorched and crumbled brick would, in contrast to the vast burned and flattened areas of Japan, have a tale of its own to tell” (162). Kita openly claims that he wanted to go to Germany because of his fascination for Thomas Mann, but I suggest that the other, hidden motive of his travel lies in witnessing a “tale” that unhealed wounds of war tell in places he would visit. This point is further supported by the fact that he depicts how people have been affected by the war in many of the places he visits. In a way, a sub-theme of this travelogue is “recovery” – Kita’s recovery from the war, his recovery of the “self” by placing himself far away from his family and country, and the recovery from the war of each place he visits. Along with the humor he uses lyricism, which is observed in *Ghosts*, to depict nature and the results of war. For this reason, even though Kita’s exaggerated humor is present throughout the work, the work holds a certain pathos.

Now let us follow Dr. Manbô’s journey to exotic places on the Shôyô-maru. The unnamed protagonist of the work, clearly Kita’s alter-ego, is called “Doctor” by others throughout the novel, and therefore he will be referred to as such here.

Dr. Manbô in Singapore:

Twelve days after the ship sailed from Japan, it entered its first port, Singapore. In the port “Doctor” saw in the distance another Japanese ship, the S ôya, which was to sail off to Cape Town in four hours. Even though “Doctor” does not say anything in the work, Kita writes in one of his essays that seeing a Japanese flag on the S ôya made him feel nostalgic.¹⁹⁹

In Singapore, “Doctor” and crew members did some sightseeing on the bus provided by the Consulate General of Japan. It was probably because the Sh ôy ô-maru was a survey ship of the Fisheries Agency, a governmental organization, that the consulate provided them with a sightseeing bus. However, “Doctor” does not talk anything about famous places he must have visited on the bus. He only says, “There’s much to be said for this mode of sightseeing, no doubt, but the drawback is that it’s likely to leave you with no more in the way of memories than a list of things you saw,” adding that it is desirable to wander around on foot (57).²⁰⁰ “Doctor” attends a reception at the consulate, but he does not describe it at all. Instead, he depicts local people and his interaction with them.

Singapore in 1958 is depicted as a place where Chinese, Indian, and Malay people co-exist and where there are still scars left by war and by Japan’s occupation between 1942 and 1945. “Doctor” hears in a botanical garden one Malay person shouting a

¹⁹⁹ Kita Morio, *Manbô yuigonjô* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 2001) 44.

²⁰⁰ Kita also writes in one of his essays that what is important in traveling is not to reach the destination but the process itself. Kita Morio, “Watashi wa tabidatô to omou,” *Dokutoru Manbô tochû gesha*, 185.

Japanese military command, "*Kashira, Naka*."²⁰¹ He also meets a Chinese prostitute whose parents were killed by the Japanese army during the war, and a young Malay man who sings a Japanese military song for him. The country is still poor, and "Doctor" describes Chinese and Malay vendors, who speak severely broken Japanese, coming onto the ship as soon as it anchored at the port. On the land, vendors approach him trying to have him exchange money or to sell bananas and other things. "Doctor" ended up buying a packet of fifty old postage stamps. He makes fun of himself in depicting the event:

I made my way through the streets of the town in search of the post office, fending off each banana merchant and moneychanger with a simple and concise "No thanks." At the post office I mailed my letters and was about to leave when a young Malay came up to me to propose that I purchase a packet of fifty old postage stamps. "How much?" I asked casually. "One dollar," he replied. (The Malaysian dollar, worth slightly more than a hundred yen, was still being used in Singapore at that time.) I said I didn't need any old stamps, thanks, and walked off. But once you've asked how much something is, no matter how casually, these fellows won't leave you alone. He pursued me relentlessly. "Ninety! Ninety cents!" he shrieked. "Eighty!" Hoping to get rid of him, I displayed my infinite stupidity by countering with a bid of seventy cents. Seven cents would have been more like it. My antagonist accepted the offer immediately, of course, and I panicked. I tried to tell him I had no money, but he pointed at my chest and said, "What's that?" I looked down to see two or three of the bills I'd received as change in the post office sticking out of my shirt pocket. Thinking fast, I endeavored to explain I needed this money for something else, but in the end, thoroughly exhausted from trying to shout him down in English, I surrendered my seventy cents, took possession of the goods, and fell into a deep blue funk. Not more than five minutes after coming ashore I'd been hoodwinked into buying some damned postage stamps I had no earthly use for (46-47).

He adds that he writes down this kind of incident in hope that he can help unseasoned travelers. The poverty of the country is also described through the depiction of Chinatown:

²⁰¹ This is still used in the Self-Defense Forces or the fire fighting organizations in Japan. The command urges people to pay attention to someone who is important or their superior.

There was a chaotic sort of beauty to this place, accented by rainbows of laundry hanging out to dry wherever I looked and red brick buildings with chipped, peeling stucco. Changing direction, I walked alongside the Singapura River, where countless junks nestled in the shallows, and made my way back to the pier, stopping on the way to look in on stalls selling an unappetizing bread-like substance, fruit that resembled peeled pears, and God knows what else (51).

Singapore is poor, but so is Japan. The crew members of Japan's first Antarctic observation ship, the *Sôya*, which sailed off Singapore four hours after the *Shôyô-maru*'s arrival, seem to have been paid well. In front of a beer hall "Doctor" sees a signboard written in Japanese, which reads, "Welcome, visitors from Japan. Please come up to second floor, where Japanese-speaking Chinese girls await. Ask about our fine meals and reasonable prices" (55). "Doctor" suspects that the Japanese signboard was posted because the crew of the *Sôya* had spent a good amount of money there. However, when he meets other Japanese who work for a Japanese fishery, they present a story that is quite different from the *Sôya* crew members'.

The boys from the *Soya* had obviously had a gay old time in Singapore. But a group of men we met who worked for a certain Japanese fishery and whose base of operations was here presented a striking contrast. They had scraped together what little money they had and were drinking with the sole intention of getting plastered. (56)

The working conditions of those who worked for the Japanese fishing industry were not good and they were poorly compensated in the late 1950s.

In the work, Singapore is depicted as an impoverished country still recovering from the war, yet people are not anti-Japanese. Even the person who shouted at "Doctor" a Japanese military command, it appeared, did it with nostalgia. The section depicting Singapore ends with a rather moving scene. When "Doctor" was looking for a museum and asked for directions, a young Malay person gave him a guided tour for two hours

without demanding any reward. This young Malay knows a part of one Japanese military song, and out of hospitality he sings it to “Doctor,” adding that he regrets he does not remember the entire song. When it comes to the parting time, “Doctor” wants to give him something but, since he does not have any money left, he gives him a pack of cigarettes in which only a few cigarettes remained. When the sampan pulls away slowly to take “Doctor” to the ship, his “swarthy new friend [stands] on the pier waving goodbye till [he] reached the ship” (63). The effects of the war and of Japan’s occupation can be observed here and there in Singapore, but people are moving on from the nasty past. “Doctor” keeps writing about his interactions with ordinary people in other places as well.

Dr. Manbô in Suez:

After leaving Singapore, the ship goes to the Indian Ocean via the Strait of Malacca. Then it approaches Suez. The scenery of the desert seen from the ship is depicted:

The Gulf of Suez, at the northern end of the Red Sea, is renowned for the frequent appearance of mirages. The sea is so narrow here that one can see land on either side. To the left, the yellowish brown sands of the Egyptian desert rise in a gradual, terrace-like effect toward the mountains in the distance. Amid this wasteland I spotted some white buildings, and had a look through the binoculars at what appeared to be oil tanks and derricks. But these were few and far between, and there wasn’t a tree or blade of grass anywhere. Saudi Arabia, to the right, presented a similar prospect; steep, rugged mountains separated from the sea by a wide stretch of undulating sand dunes. The sand contained a considerable amount of reddish mineral matter, which only added to the sense of forbidding desolation. These dunes bear little resemblance to the dampish and vaguely melancholy variety found in Japan; it’s hard to imagine playing [tag] with the sand crabs here. (85-86)

Water and the desolate desert are well contrasted, and, of course, he has to insert a line to make the depiction humorous. The last line about playing with a crab is a parody of a famous poem by Ishikawa Takuboku (1886-1912):

on a white strip of sand,
on a tiny island,
in the eastern sea,
drowned in tears
I play with a crab²⁰²

Ishikawa Takuboku is considered a poet of sad fate. He died from tuberculosis when he was only twenty-six years old, and during his short life, he went through many hardships such as poverty and the loss of his son. The poem tells of Takuboku's sad, depressed mind. But, with Kita's adaptation of it, the sad scene of the poem becomes comical.

In Suez, Egypt, there still remain things that are reminders of the Suez Crisis that took place three years prior to the arrival of "Doctor." The bullet-riddled buildings and posters depicting a mother holding her baby in the aftermath of an air attack make a deep impression on him. He says that "the mother's face, with her eyes peering vacantly up at the sky, was despair itself" (90-91). He also sees the mast of a ship, which sank during the Suez Crisis, remaining above water. What "Doctor" focuses on in his description of Suez is the country's poverty and its nationalism.

The poverty is present in the country, and those who work for the Suez Canal are willing to take advantage of their position and try to obtain materials from foreign ships. "Doctor" describes people coming to him, pretending that they are sick so that they can receive some medicine that is expensive and scarce in Egypt. Others also try to get things:

"I can't stand [Suez] any more," [the captain] groaned, by way of prefacing his story. The ship, you must know, carried a goodly store of presents for pilots, quarantine officers, and other minor officials. These souvenirs were, typically, inexpensive japonaiserie: fans, masks, decorative battledores, and what

²⁰² Ishikawa Takuboku, *Takuboku: Poems to Eat*, trans. Carl Sesar (Tokyo: Kôdansha International, 1966) 27.

have you. But one of the more detestable pilots had refused these and asked to see something else. He ended up suggesting a certain oil painting hanging in the captain's cabin. I let the captain have one of my *furoshiki* to use in the negotiations, and this was the only time I was truly glad I hadn't brought the expensive variety (88).²⁰³

Contrary to the poverty and corruption of the Egyptian officials, there is a very strong nationalism and pride in their country among people. Because of the Suez Crisis of 1956, Gamal Abdel Nasser was the most idealized Arab leader of the time. By the summer of 1958, a few months before the *Shôyômaru* passes the Suez Canal, it seemed nothing could stop Nasser and he was at the height of his power.²⁰⁴ Concerning the ubiquitous presence of photographs of Nasser in Suez and Port Said, "Doctor" says:

In Suez, photographs of Nasser were everywhere, indoors and out. And the same was true of Port Said. Photographs are meant to be displayed in the privacy of people's homes; seeing them everywhere, one begins to smell a rat. But when I hinted this in a conversation with a young government official I met, he poked himself in the chest and declared, "Nasser is my heart." And this appeared to be the predominant attitude of the citizenry (89).

When "Doctor" tries to take some photographs in Suez, he is interrupted by patriots who do not want him to take a photo of impoverished scenes in their country. They prevent him from doing so, fearing that this would damage the national image.

Although "Doctor" is not fond of the people's behavior that is based on their patriotism and nationalism, he is surprised to realize that he himself also exhibits the behavior that he dislikes:

²⁰³ It is also depicted that many Egyptian officials beg "Doctor" for medication and eye drops. This attitude of the Egyptian officials is later explained by a person employed by Nihon Yûsen to "Doctor." According to him, right after the war their ship gave many souvenirs when they passed the Suez in order to establish amicable relationship with them. This, he explains, is probably the reason that Egyptian officials expect to receive things from the Japanese ships. See Kita Morio, *Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1965) 181.

²⁰⁴ Fujimura Shin, *Chûtô gendaishi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1997) 58.

“Chinese?”

I was asked this twice in Suez. When you’re traveling abroad, you unconsciously develop a stronger sense of national identity, and I reflexively answered “No! Japanese!” in such stentorian tones it surprised even myself. Reflecting on this later, I thought it rather odd behavior for me, and resolved that the next time I was asked I’d claim to be from another planet. It’s often pointed out that some Japanese who live abroad cease even to look Japanese, while others become fanatic about preserving their heritage. Neither of these options appeals to me (92).

Contrary to adults whose friendly action even seems calculated, children show “Doctor” genuine curiosity and friendliness. He finally feels relaxed with them.

After leaving Suez and Port Said, the Shôyô-maru heads for the Atlantic Ocean in order to fish for tuna off the northwest coast of Africa. Thirty-five days later, after their longest unbroken stretch at sea, it finally arrives at its first European port, Lisbon.

Dr. Manbô in Europe:

“Doctor” feels fortunate that the first European land he steps on is Lisbon, an old port town that is located at the western edge of Europe, rather than arriving at a modern airport terminal. Indeed, this port is historically significant for Japan in that this is the first European port that the European Youth Delegation representing three Christian *daimyô* in 1582 landed at thirty months after departing Japan.

The only famous place in Lisbon mentioned in the work is the Jerónimos Monastery, the symbol of Portugal’s wealth and power during the Age of Discovery. This is the first European cathedral that “Doctor” visits. He expresses how magnificent it is: “The Church of Santa Maria there is a magnificent, Renaissance-flavored, quintessentially Gothic structure that took forever to complete. ... One’s first, overwhelming impression is of the enormous scale of the stonework. The Japanese aesthetic tends to recoil from the unyielding, almost heartless tenacity and permanence

inherent in those great stone slabs” (134). After writing this paragraph, however, he does not forget to make it funny by adding the following lines: “To build something like this, we suspect, is to invite demons to take up residence. Because of their susceptibility to rheumatism, of course, demons avoid the drafty wooden structures of Japan. But then again, perhaps we could do with a few more healthy demons [in the land of Japan]” (134). “Doctor” is also impressed by how pretty the face of Virgin Mary’s statue is, and he wonders if those men worshipping Virgin Mary truly have faith in her or they are simply attracted to her pretty face. He says, “If Mary really was as attractive as that, it’s no wonder the Holy Ghost couldn’t keep His hands off her” (135). Even a holy figure and a man’s worshipful soul are brought down to laughter.

Portugal is also depicted as a poor country. The food is inexpensive in a restaurant, and people gather like “a flock of herrings” in a bar that has a TV, because the TV broadcast has just begun in Lisbon and not many people have a television.²⁰⁵ When “Doctor” goes to Estoril, a famous summer seaside resort, a man wearing dirty clothes follows him. He shows “Doctor” a tumor on his leg and begs for money.

Just as in other places, there is an episode that depicts an interaction between “Doctor” and an ordinary person in the place. “Doctor” rents a horse in Estoril and rides on it, but he realizes that a stable-boy is following him. He does not know why the stable-boy follows him, so he tries to talk to him by throwing at him some words in English and German but “for all the response I got I might as well have addressed his horse” (140). Then the stable-boy starts to talk without stopping in a language that

²⁰⁵ The analogy Kita uses, that people gather like a flock of herrings, is not a common expression in Japanese but is very appropriate for this work, as the previous chapter depicts a fishing scene. Ralph McCarthy translates this as “sardines squeeze themselves into cans” (137).

“Doctor” does not understand. At the beginning “Doctor” just nods, but in rivalry with the stable-boy, he begins speaking Japanese to him.

He could point at a pine forest, and I would say, “Ah, pine trees. We’ve got lots of those in Japan. Who’d’ve thought you’d find pine trees in a place like this?” He’d draw my attention to a flock of sheep. “Those’re sheep,” I’d say. “We had some mutton in Egypt, but it wasn’t very good.” From then on the conversation flowed smoothly. Neither of us had the slightest idea what the other was saying, but this give and take was a hundred times more tolerable than remaining silent while being subjected to a steady stream of unidentifiable phonemes (141-42).

He mentions that, thanks to the stable-boy, he has had a truly memorable ride. After leaving Lisbon, “Doctor” finally goes to Germany, where he truly desired to visit.

It will be recalled that Kita Morio often writes that he was fascinated by the works of Thomas Mann while he was young. In the chapter entitled “Having an Ambition to be a Writer” (Monokaki o kokorozasu) in *Diary of Dr. Manbô’s Youth*, he writes, “At that time the writer whom I loved and admired most was Thomas Mann. Because of my age at that time, I was especially fascinated by his earlier novella *Tonio Kröger*. In fact, I was possessed by it.”²⁰⁶ In *Doctor Manbô at Sea*, his alter-ego “Doctor” explains why he decided to become a ship’s doctor. He desired to go to Germany so he applied for an examination for exchange students but failed, so as a desperate measure, he became a ship’s doctor. In other words, because of his desire to see Germany he began his service on the ship. When the ship stops in the port of Hamburg, “Doctor” is delighted to see the scenery that is similar to the one depicted in one of Mann’s works.

In 1959 when “Doctor” visits Germany, the Berlin Wall has not been built yet but the migration between the East and the West Germany was strictly monitored. In

²⁰⁶ Kita Morio, “Yakutatazu no nikki no koto,” *Dokutoru Manbô Seishunki* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1968) 110-111.

Hamburg, “Doctor” sees a poster everywhere that has a photograph of the Brandenburg Gate and the slogan in large letters saying, “Open the Gate.” He desires to go to Berlin so that he can take a glimpse of East Germany, but he cannot receive a proper documentation from the Japanese consulate because he is not going there for an official purpose. At that time, many East Germans were trying to escape to West Germany, so Berlin was chaotic. A British historian Mary Fulbrook describes the situation in Germany in the 1950s as follows:

Seeing the astonishingly rapid economic growth and new affluence in the west, which was associated not with political repression but relative personal freedom (even the freedom to be apolitical), many East Germans in the 1950s chose to vote with their feet. While the main border with West Germany was closed, it was still possible to cross from East Berlin to West Berlin – with very few possessions, of course, so as not to arouse suspicion – and to leave from there for West Germany.²⁰⁷

“Doctor” states that young people in West Germany truly hate communism, not because of its ideology but because of their experience of having their family members killed or violated by Soviet soldiers. The mark that the war left was still evident in the late 1950s.

“Doctor” has a chance to visit Lübeck where Thomas Mann was born and the old house Mann modeled in his novel, *Buddenbrooks*, still stands. The house, however, is not easily found as not many people know about it, and when he finally finds it after asking several people, it is, to his disappointment, an ordinary-looking white stone building. Realizing that works of Thomas Mann are not as widely read in Germany as “Doctor” thinks they should be, and that some Germans think that Thomas Mann is not really German, “Doctor” criticizes German people by quoting and dedicating to them

²⁰⁷ Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 214.

Arthur Schopenhauer's words near the end of his life: "I lament the extraordinary ignorance of the German people. I am ashamed at being a citizen of that country."²⁰⁸

After the ship leaves Hamburg, it stops at Rotterdam. There, "Doctor" talks about how European people love and take care of animals in a grandly exaggerated manner:

The European also grow extremely attached to horses, dogs, cats, and other domesticated beasts. In any city you're likely to see people walking dogs dressed in little vests or jackets, and occasionally you run across some poor mutt with painted toenails, lipstick, and earrings. Animal lovers' societies have become a powerful force here; one sees their glittery-eyed members everywhere, and they sometimes go to outlandish extremes (165-66).

The humor has a poignant quality in that after the tremendous loss of human life in the war, there is an obsessive concern with not hurting things.

In France, the humorous criticism of "Doctor" resumes. He says that French people "are wont to compare foreign tongues to the shrieks of brigands or the cawing of crows, and tend to think of anyone who can't speak français, the language of angels, as being somewhat subhuman" (187-88). He knows that some French people who can speak other languages often pretend that they do not, and he is surprised to realize that he cannot make even a very simple English word understood in souvenir shops in the port. The first person in France who speaks to him in English is a prostitute, then he remarks, "which only goes to show that when you've got a language problem, the quickest solution is to find a working girl" (188).

When he goes into Paris, a city known in Japan as *hana no miyako* or the Capital of Flowers, he remarks how dirty Paris looks.

²⁰⁸ Kita Morio, *Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1965) 115. Because of his criticism of Nazis, Thomas Mann's German citizenship was revoked in December of 1936, and soon after that, his honorary doctorate from the University of Bonn was taken away. Martin Swales, *Thomas Mann: A Study* (London: Heinemann, 1980) 5-6.

My first impression after reaching the station of Saint-Lazare was one of sheer amazement at the incredible filth and grime. I boarded a taxi and hadn't gone far when I noticed a long row of dented, dust-covered Citroens beside the road and thought, Ah, a used-car lot. But I soon realized that such vehicles were everywhere; Paris had more beat-up old junkers than I'd ever seen in one city. And all the buildings were so dark with soot that I wondered if we weren't following a parade of chimney sweeps (191-92).²⁰⁹

Yet he is not merely criticizing the city. He confesses that, despite the filth and dirt, he comes to like the city. Part of the reason why Paris is so appealing to "Doctor" is because his good old friends, *T* and his wife, are currently studying abroad in Paris. His depiction in Paris is devoted mostly to the time he spends with *T* and his wife, and about a barber who is called Professor.²¹⁰

Kita's satire on civilization, however, is not limited to that of foreign lands but he subjects Japan, his own civilization, and its people to laughter. First, he makes fun of a Japanese farewell custom at a port when a ship departs in which a passenger on the deck and a person who sees him/her off at the pier each holding an end of a colorful paper streamer until they will be cut. He writes:

²⁰⁹ In 1962 André Malraux, Minister of State for Cultural Affairs in France at the time, initiated the program to clean the facades of historic buildings in Paris. See Harvey Levenstein, *We'll Always Have Paris – American Tourists in France Since 1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 237.

²¹⁰ In *Dr. Manbô's Record of Adolescence*, Kita reveals that *T* who appears in *Doctor Manbô at Sea* is his friend from Matsumoto Higher School, Tsuji Kunio, who also later became a writer and literary critic. See Kita Morio, "Monokaki o kokorozasu," *Dokutoru Manbô seishunki* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1968) 159. In 2009, fifty years after the letters were written, the correspondence between Kita and Tsuji Kunio was published in a literary magazine *Shinchô*. The time span of this correspondence was from 1959 to 1961, which was from the time Kita came back from his trip on *Shôyô-maru* to the time Tsuji was coming back to Japan from his study abroad in France. The correspondence is very touching, clearly indicating their friendship, mutual trust and respect, and they encourage each other to write. In the letters, Kita talks about his struggles to write *In the Corner of Night and Fog*, his decision to write *Doctor Manbô at Sea*, and his frustration of dealing with the media after his name had become well known. See Tsuji Kunio and Kita Morio, "Pari Tôkyô ôfuku shokan," *Shinchô* Aug. 2009: 6-63.

Stepping out on deck and seeing all the colorful paper streamers fluttering in the breeze did stir the soul a bit, but the idiotic nature of this time-honored custom soon made itself evident to my keen intelligence. It's no simple matter for a tugboat to pull a ship a safe distance from the wharf. And until it succeeds in doing so, both the well-wishers ashore and the sailors on board have to cling to their respective ends of the streamers and wave to each other, so that everyone's arms get dreadfully tired. It would be preferable, perhaps, for the opposing teams to engage in a real tug-of-war with ropes, losers ending up in the bay (17).

He, then, criticizes and makes fun of the authoritarian attitude of the Japanese government. He quotes a lengthy telegram from the Fisheries Agency to the ship, warning its crew members that they should be aware of exercising utmost caution regarding their speech and behavior at every port they stop in order to maintain a favorable reputation for Japan and to promote smooth relations with other countries. He simply dismisses this command by saying that money spent on telegrams like this is a waste. When "Doctor" goes to Hamburg, he has the desire to see East Berlin. However, because of the political situation, the seaman's papers that "Doctor" has are not an adequate identification. Therefore, he contacts the consulate, but they say that they would give permission only to those who are government officials. "Doctor" says that even people in the Popoto Tribe, who are primitive and have shark-like teeth, know most Japanese governmental officials are useless.²¹¹ He further writes, "Not satisfied ... with rejecting my application to study overseas, the Japanese government was now practically inviting me to plot an insurrection by trying to restrict my movements abroad" (149).

Not only Japan's government but also its people are subjected to satirical treatment. In Rotterdam, when the crew members have a bus tour provided by the

²¹¹ This sentence is not translated in Ralph McCarthy's translation probably because it does not make much sense in English. The word ポポト土人 appears on p. 112 in *Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1965). It is probably one of those words that Kita created.

Japanese Embassy, he depicts his own people “dangling cameras and parading about as if they owned the place” (176). In later years in the 1970s and 80s, when the overseas travel became available to ordinary people, Japanese tourists – who come to a famous tourist spot as a group by bus, following a tour guide who carries a little flag, and who keep taking photographs – received a satirical treatment nationally and internationally. Kita may well have been one of the first people to make fun of this Japanese tourists’ behavior.

It is when he arrives in Italy that his sharp criticisms against Japan and Japanese come to the fore. He especially makes fun of those Japanese people who change their attitude to become someone else in a foreign country. Mentioning that there are vast numbers of famous art works in Europe, he says, “One wonders what it is that induces the man who’d normally rather suck noodles through his nose than look at paintings to become a great connoisseur of art the moment he sets foot on foreign soil and to run himself ragged going from one gallery or museum to the next” (223). As for “Doctor,” he is himself no matter where he goes and openly claims that he does not understand art. When he goes to the museum, “I grew dizzy, my kneecaps danced and rattled, and I staggered toward the exit, where I collapsed in a heap” (223). When his friend takes him to see an opera at *Teatro alla Scala*, he does not talk about how wonderful the opera is or how famous the singers in the opera are. Instead, he writes about enthusiastic Italian opera fans.

There is one nationality criticized in the work not by “Doctor” but Europeans, and they are Americans. America is the country that won the war, and in the late 1950s, the

American dollar was very strong. It is not surprising to see the antipathy Europeans had to Americans. “Doctor” writes:

In general, Europeans exhibit considerable antipathy to Americans. A lady I met in a bar in Lisbon was unrestrained in her scorn. When I said, “but Americans always have lots of money, don’t they?” she put a fist to her nose, then grabbed the fist with her other hand and made as if to dash it to the floor – an obviously contemptuous, if inscrutable, gesture. And the younger brother of the madame at the Taisho in Antwerp told us, in a tone of dead seriousness, “Americans’ hearts are not clean.” One also frequently hears that Oriental tourists are given better service than tourists from the U.S. (221).

Twenty-eight years later, Kita wrote an essay recalling the journey and *Doctor Manbô at Sea*. However, this time, the criticism points to his own people:

In sharp contrast to the impoverished Japanese traveler in those days was the wealthy American tourist, and one or two passages in this book refer to the antipathy many Europeans felt toward Americans. ... But the American tourist as the primary object of scorn has now, ironically enough, been supplanted by the Japanese – great droves of them, in fact, who let their money do all the talking and to whom “absorbing local culture:” means loading up on designer goods (292).²¹²

Dr. Manbô in Alexandria:

When the Shôyô-maru leaves the port of Genoa, crew members begin to be anxious to go back to Japan. The ship goes back to Egypt to do a survey with Egyptian officials then heads back to Japan, with a stop in Colombo, India.

Three days after the ship leaves Genoa, the boatswain begins to show signs of appendicitis. He has, indeed, appendicitis and has surgery in Alexandria, Egypt. Even though the captain and other researchers on the Shôyô-maru leave for Cairo, “Doctor” remains in Alexandria to be with the boatswain, but he wastes no time interacting with people in the hospital. There is an elderly Egyptian man in the bed next to the boatswain

²¹² This is included in McCarthy’s translation as the afterword, but Japanese versions do not include this as the afterword. Please see my note 9 above.

who also has gone through surgery. His wife and daughter are very kind to “Doctor” and the boatswain from the beginning. It is during Ramadan, the Islamic holy month in which Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset:

The second day I stayed until after sunset and watched them lay out an extravagant spread of mutton, vegetables, bread, and fruit. Having fasted since dawn, they proceeded to gorge themselves upon this, their only meal of the day, and repeatedly urged me to join them. When I took only a small amount of food, not expecting it to be very good, they obviously thought I was being shy and pressed me to take more. I did, too: it was actually a good deal tastier than the dinner we’d eaten with the government officials in Suez (242).

Contrary to the kind, generous, and friendly civilians, the attitude of the Minister of the United Arab Republic Agriculture irritates the “Doctor.” The minister has not decided if he would join the survey cruise conducted by the Shôyô-maru. Whether they are Japanese or Egyptians, “Doctor” does not like the bureaucratic attitude of the governmental officials.

The Minister of Agriculture had also hinted that he might honor us with his presence, and departure has to be delayed until he made up his mind. Finally word came down that the minister would decide after seeing the ship. Having such a personage aboard would be of no benefit whatsoever; ... I began to boil and seethe with righteous indignation. “All right, pal, I hope you do make the mistake of coming aboard,” I growled at my cabin wall. “You’ll be flat on your back, sick as a dog, in no time. And if you complain, I’ll stuff you full of laxatives!” Fortunately, however, when the illustrious minister came with his mob-sized entourage, he found the ship to be much smaller than he’d imagined and immediately decided against joining us. Out at sea by herself, the Shôyô-maru is a stately and imposing vessel, but next to the 10,000-tonners in port she looks rather like an overgrown dinghy (245-246).

One evening in Alexandria, a reception is held by the government at one of the shooting clubs for the Shôyô-maru crews, but “Doctor” does not describe anything about the reception except for the fact that the band played some old Japanese songs. Rather, he depicts an ordinary corner of this historical town:

The main avenues were lined with shiny modern buildings, but the backstreets were another world entirely – a weird realm of chaos and confusion. Having a natural predilection for that sort of thing, my heartbeat quickened as I followed these twisting, mazelike lanes. Alexandria was already a flourishing city when Jacob came to Egypt looking for wheat, and one wonders if places like this have changed at all since then. White-haired, unwashed old men sit idly on chairs facing the street. Barefoot children dash about at play, and dark brown men in long white galabias squat on the ground, noisily hawking their vegetables. You begin to feel that if you venture much deeper down these crowded, narrow streets, you'll vanish forever from the life you've known, to become just another face in the numberless throng (242-243).

The tone of the last line in the paragraph is similar to the tone that persists throughout *The House of Nire*, in that both emphasize the insignificance of individuals.

Kita says that he intentionally did not write down things in *Doctor Manbô at Sea* that could later be developed into a more serious work.²¹³ One of the examples is a short story called “Captain” (Senchô), in which Kita depicts the protagonist’s encounter with an elderly Egyptian man on a street in Alexandria who claims himself a retired ship’s captain. Even though the old man barely knows the protagonist, he invites him to his house for supper. The protagonist, after all, decides not to go. He leaves Egypt next morning, but the sad look of the old man keeps coming back to him. He wonders what would have happened if he had visited the man. Just like in *Ghosts*, the work contains absolutely no humorous depictions but rather is full of pathos. The protagonist imagines that the elderly man is lonely – has no wife, no children, and nobody comes to visit him. However, the protagonist does not know anything about this man. How the protagonist imagines him is a mere reflection of his own loneliness he feels from being on a ship for more than four months, and being so far away from any familiar environments such as his

²¹³ Quoted in Saitô Kunio, “Kaisetsu,” *Haari no iru oka*, by Kita Morio (Tokyo: Pharaoh Kikaku, 1991) 268. Also see Kita Morio, “Sôsaku yowa” (10), in *Geppô* (10) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 6 (1977) 1.

family or country. While lying down on the upper bridge looking at the dunes that lay flat on both sides of the canal, he thinks of Japan and recalls his childhood days with sentiment, and he tells himself, “After we pass through this canal, Japan would seem much closer.”²¹⁴ The town of Alexandria is depicted as a dream-like, mysterious, exotic place, and this little prose piece itself is contained in lyricism.²¹⁵

Dr. Manbô returns home:

Colombo, the next and last stop of the voyage, is also depicted as an impoverished place. People try to trick “Doctor” and take him to their store, and they ask for a reward for doing even the smallest thing for him. They enjoy gambling in a wooden shack. When “Doctor” buys a bottle of beer with one U.S. dollar, a seller intentionally gives him little change. He does not have much contact with local people in Colombo, but he depicts people in the zoo. He first says that, observing long-armed monkeys playing on a tire swing, he believes that monkeys are evolved from humans, not the other way around. Then he depicts people in the zoo as if he were observing animals.

After the ship leaves Colombo, the Shôyô-maru heads for Japan. Knowing that there will be no more ports to stop, “Doctor” loses interest in anything. Even photos of naked women do not interest him: “The realization that there were no more ports of call ahead left me feeling enervated. I no longer had the energy to read detective novels, and not even the photos of naked women were capable of arousing my interest. How boring all that smooth, featureless geography seemed; how much better if the female of the

²¹⁴ Kita Morio, *Makkurake no ke* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1985) 16.

²¹⁵ My translation of the work is included at the end of this study.

species were equipped with coxcombs, nodules, and retractable wings” (279). Kita’s interest in insects is reflected in this sentence.

Finally, the ship returns to Tokyo Bay and the six-month voyage of “Doctor” comes to an end. Is he happy that he could finally come home? No. On the contrary, he is amazed to see how dirty and filthy the water is in Tokyo Bay, and he calls it a “sewer.” He is also upset with the customs officer who applies taxes for his old golf club that he purchased in Singapore. Kita incorporates many humorous scenes and absurd stories into the travelogue, and he ends it by quoting the words of the sage Tertullian: “It is to be believed because it is absurd” (290).

Humor in the work:

As we have seen, “Doctor” gives his trenchant views on one civilization after another in the travelogue. He makes fun of national traits, including his own, from the perspective of a citizen of a country defeated in the war – the insignificant perspective of a person from an impoverished defeated nation. As discussed earlier, Okuno Takeo writes that *Doctor Manbô at Sea* is written without inferiority or any complex that the citizen of a developing country often has towards the Western civilization.²¹⁶ It is true that this work seems to be free of any inferiority complex, but, instead of inferiority, Kita uses his humor in the work. The only perspective possible for Kita, who is aware of the insignificance of his perspective, is that of defense, of bringing down the grand events of the world, the nation state, and national characteristics to the everyday life of laughter. In other words, humor in this work is his defense mechanism.

²¹⁶ Okuno Takeo, “‘Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki’,” *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 114.

Humor is observed in some of his works written prior to *Doctor Manbô at Sea*, but it is important that his first comic work deals with a voyage to the world outside Japan. It can be said that, at least earlier in his career as a writer, when Kita moves from interiority to exteriority, or when his alter-ego leaves the family, its hospital, and his self-reflection behind, and when the world opens up, the way his alter-ego deals with the world is humor.²¹⁷ Three years after publishing *Doctor Manbô at Sea*, he wrote *The House of Nire*. Although this autobiographical fiction contains some humor, the humor appearing in *The House of Nire* and *Doctor Manbô at Sea* are quite different. Since *Doctor Manbô at Sea* is the first work by Kita that is generically recognizable as comedy and this generic recognition becomes a trademark in his Manbô series and other comical works subsequent to this travelogue, I would like to analyze the humor he uses in the work.

Many critics speak highly of Kita Morio's humor in his comic works. Okuno Takeo, for example, writes that *Doctor Manbô at Sea* holds an equal position as Natsume Sôseki's *Botchan* in the literary history of Japan in terms of containing humor of good quality.²¹⁸ The humor is present in *The House of Nire*. The founder of the hospital, Nire Kiichirô is depicted in a very comical manner. But, Tetsukichi is also depicted using a different kind of humor. Tetsukichi is portrayed as a man who possesses absolutely no

²¹⁷ Although Kita put some humorous expressions in his earlier serious works, he did not write humorous works except one essay entitled "Hito ware o hakuchi to yobu" prior to writing *Doctor Manbô at Sea* (see my note no. 3 above). However, he states that he has always respected humor expressed in the works by such writers as Natsume Sôseki, Ibuse Masuji, Dazai Osamu, Dostevsky, Gogol, Chekvof, among others. See "'Manbô mono' no hassei ni tsuite," *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 39.12 (1974): 7.

²¹⁸ Okuno Takeo, "Kita Morio • hito to sakuhin.," *Nakamura Shin'ichirô, Inoue Mitsuharu, Kaikô Takeshi, Kita Morio, Miura Shumon*, by Nakamura Shin'ichirô, et al., *Shôwa bungaku zenshû*, vol. 22 (Tokyo: Shôgakukan, 1988) 1062.

sense of humor. However, even though he does not intend to be funny, or rather, because he is serious, his behavior is comical. If this kind of humor can be called “passive” humor, a different kind of humor observed in *Doctor Manbô at Sea* can be called “active” humor as the writer manipulates a sentence so that it can sound humorous and funny. I would like to view this active humor in four broad categories: a) an unexpected humorous simile, b) a parody of an existing story, lyric, or saying, c) an exaggerated, nonsensical story, and d) the humor that depicts the writer’s alter-ego as an inferior person. The first three groups, I am afraid, could be cultural and may not sound funny or comical if translated into other languages. Being aware of that, I still would like to point out some of the descriptions representing each category.

The similes Kita uses are often those that one usually does not associate with the person or a thing that is represented. Probably because this is a travelogue of the cruise, the similes he uses are often sea creatures. I have already mentioned one example of this kind of simile earlier in this chapter, which is comparing those people in Lisbon who gather in front of the TV to watch a program to “a group of herrings.” Some other examples include the third officer on the ship, a cabin mate of “Doctor,” who has a habit of staring at him like a shark, and “Doctor” claims that deep down he is as timid as the average hermit crab. When he uses a washing machine aboard, the machine “begins to rattle, shudder, bubbles froth up as if the tub were filled with epileptic crabs, and spray flies every which way” (208). When he describes a beautiful young lady whom he meets

at a bar in Lisbon, he says that she has eyes the color of the Caribbean and that she would have looked right if she lived in a forest of seaweed.²¹⁹

As for employing parody of an existing story, lyric, or saying in his writing, Kita is skilled in his utilization of phrases from famous songs and sayings to evoke a specific feeling or image, but he does so with a comical twist. For example, after “Doctor” is tricked into buying stamps in Singapore, his facial expression is described as if he “chewed thirty-eight bitter bugs.”²²⁰ Here, Kita uses the beginning of the traditional Japanese saying “*nigamushi o kamitsubushita yôna kao o suru*” (“make a sour face” or literally “make a face like one has chewed a bitter bug”), adding a specific number of bugs to the phrase “*nigamushi o 38 piki kamitsubushita yôna kao o suru*” or “make a face like one has chewed thirty-eight bitter bugs.” The addition of a specific number of bugs in this instance provides a comical slant to the image evoked by the well-known beginning to the saying. This is also seen in Kita’s use of the lyric of the children’s song “*Suzume no gakkô*,” or “Sparrow’s School,” in which little sparrows make a circle and chirp as well as they can to please their strict teacher. This appears in the scene when “Doctor” asks the crew members where the best place they have ever visited is, and they all chorus “Tahiti, Tahiti,” like chirping little sparrows.

The effectiveness of parodying an existing saying or lyric is similar to that of *honkadori* in the Japanese poetic tradition in which a poet alludes to an older poem that

²¹⁹ Kita Morio, *Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1965) 107. “A forest of seaweeds” (*konbu no hayashi*) in the original text is translated as “a fairy tale” in Ralph McCarthy’s translation. See Kita Morio, *Dr. Manbo at Sea*, trans. Ralph McCarthy (Tokyo: Kôdansha International, 1987) 144. All the underlined emphases are mine.

²²⁰ Ralph McCarthy translated it as “my face twisted into a fiendish scowl.” See Kita Morio, *Dr. Manbo at Sea*, trans. Ralph McCarthy (Tokyo: Kôdansha International, 1987) 50-51.

would be recognized by is potential readers by using specific phrases taken from the older poem. By doing so, without a wordy explanation, the poet can concisely add to his poem the mood that the older poem has. Kita's parodying an existing saying or lyric has the same effect on the reader. When Kita says that his facial expression is as if he chewed thirty-eight bitter insects, or when he describes that crew members all say "Tahiti, Tahiti" like a flock of little sparrows, readers can immediately visualize the images they have for the proverb "Chewing a bitter insect" or the image of a flock of little sparrows singing together. These overlap with the images mentioned in the work. When the image of the manly crew members saying that Tahiti is a wonderful place, and the image of those little cute sparrows chirping very hard are overlapped, there is a very comical image evoked in readers' mind which cannot be attained if Kita simply said, "Every crew member says 'Tahiti.'"

The exaggerated, nonsensical stories can be seen throughout the work. In Singapore, he compares his timidity to many women's boldness when it comes to shopping:

I would do well to take a few lessons from the women shoppers of this world. Having decided to purchase, say, three square centimeters of cloth, the female of the species feels no compunction about entering a shop and demanding the right to inspect every piece of material she lays eyes on – including those in the window display and especially those on the topmost shelves, accessible only by ladder – then rubbing, stretching, and wrinkling these with such zeal that before long scarcely an undamaged article remains in stock, at which point she declares that nothing she's seen is quite right, thank you, and walks calmly out. As for myself, I can hardly pick up an article in a store without my pulse quickening with fear I'll be mistaken for a shoplifter. If a sales clerk shows me three or four different items, I'm overcome with guilt (48).

In Rotterdam, "Doctor" encounters many people riding on a bicycle. He explains how much the people in Holland love to bike:

In this country everyone – even cats and rats – rides a bicycle. Some young women ride on a bike with their shins exposed in the falling snow, and some in slacks, even an elderly woman pedaling courageously. Indeed the Dutch love their bicycles. Even in a rare occasion when they buy a car, they don't even try to ride in a car. Rather, they strap their car to the rack of the bike and drag off for home.²²¹

When he eats curry in Colombo, India, he describes how hot the curry is as follows:

“This time my mouth did a convincing imitation of a blast furnace, and I gripped the seat of my chair to avoid crashing through the roof, gargled with beer and water, and sat back gasping what sounded, even to me, like a death rattle. I tried a scoop of rice, but it might as well have been sawdust” (277).

The exaggerated stories of this sort are a double-edged sword. Some may enjoy reading them as nonsense stories, but some may never take the work seriously as a literary work. One literary critic says that even Kita's serious works are not received as well and seriously as they should be in the literary world of Japan because Kita has been labeled as a writer of comical works who uses Gargantua-ish humor.²²² Speaking of humor, Kita Morio writes in one of his essays:

The quality I have as a writer that I can be most proud of is humor, and I consider humor more important than other writers do. But it is important to recognize that there are various kinds of humor, the humor of high quality or the other. I like all sorts of humor, whether it is of good quality or not. In this world, when people encounter a humorous work, they tend to criticize it saying “This provokes laughter of low quality” or “The writer is amusing himself.” On the other hand, when they read a serious novel, nobody really says, “The writer is too serious.” Nobody understands the difficulty a writer goes through – he writes a sad scene with peaceful mind and a comical scene full of torment. My works contain all sorts of humor including nonsense stories and slapstick comedies, and I consider all these very precious.²²³

²²¹ Kita Morio, *Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1965) 124.

²²² See Hinuma Rintarô, *Gendai sakka an'nai*, (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobô, 1967) 185-86.

²²³ Kita Morio, “Gôman to tôkai,” *KMZ*, vol. 14 (1977) 297.

A writer and playwright Inoue Hisashi (1934-2010) says that all the gags and exaggerated humor appearing in *Doctor Manbô at Sea* have a pattern, which is “a person rebelling against logic and common sense, using exaggeration as his weapon.”²²⁴ Based on the above statement of Kita, it can be also said that his exaggerated humor is a challenge to the conservative literary circle and the readership that rejects humor as something unworthy.

Kita's humor is often compared with that of Endô Shûsaku (1923-1996) whose representative works include *Silence* (*Chinmoku*, 1966) and *Upon the Dead Sea* (*Shikai no hotori*, 1973). Even though Endô Shûsaku is known as a writer whose central theme often revolves around his Catholic faith, he writes comical works as well. When he writes humorous essays, he often refers to himself as *Korian*, the literal meaning of which is “a hut where foxes and raccoons live.” A literary scholar Isogai Hideo points out the similarities in both writers' humor. He writes that it is a kind of humor that is produced to intentionally make the reader/public laugh by putting the writer himself in an inferior's position.²²⁵ Both writers are aware of this point. They talk about their humor as follows:

- Kita: Among my Manbô works, it is *Doctor Manbô at Sea* that contains nonsense, overly exaggerated laughter the most abundantly.
 Endô: That is what you were aiming at, right?
 Kita: Yes. But the characteristic of my laughter is totally different from the esprit of criticism in which a writer looks down upon things from a standpoint of a superior. In my humor, the laughter comes from the writer whose position is lower than the reader or at the same level with the reader at best. I think your laughter is of the same sort.

²²⁴ Inoue Hisashi, “Kita Morio ni okeru jojô to yûmoa,” *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyôzai no kenkyû* 18.2 (1973): 134.

²²⁵ Isogai Hideo, “Sengo bungakushi no naka no Endo • Kita,” *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyôzai no kenkyû* 18.2 (1973): 69 and 72.

Endô: You are right. Well, this may sound arrogant, but my humor is that of putting myself in an inferior's position. In short, it's the kind of humor that gives the reader some kind of security.²²⁶

Okuno Takeo sees the same thing in the writers' humor but he analyzes it one step further. He defines Kita's humor as "static" and Shûsaku's humor as "dynamic," explaining that Kita's humor is as if he were mumbling in a small voice whereas Shûsaku's is as if he were speaking aloud.²²⁷ Okuno continues that Kita's humor is a self-scornful monologue, but that of Shûsaku contains self-promotion even when he depicts himself as an inferior person.²²⁸ Kazusa Hideo also argues that both writers' humor is of a different quality. He says that Shûsaku's humor is the humor of a person who goes along with reality; on the other hand Kita's is the humor of a person who is trying hard to adjust to reality.²²⁹ Critics and even Kita himself agree that Kita's humor lies in depicting himself or his alter-ego, "Doctor" in this work, as someone who is inferior, who goes against what a reader expects a doctor should be.

This brings us to the fourth point. "Doctor" in the work is depicted as a doctor who is not serious about his work. Even though he works in the university hospital's research laboratory, he hangs a sign "Center for the Study of Extraterrestrial Psychology" in a corner of a small room and he does nothing but read about flying saucers. When "Doctor" gets a job as a ship's doctor, he fears that the chief professor of his research laboratory may not give him leave because the university hospital is in preparation to sponsor a major conference in a few months. However, the chief professor allows him to

²²⁶ Endô Shûsaku and Kita Morio, *Korian vs. Manbô* (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1974) 34-35.

²²⁷ Okuno Takeo, "Kaisetsu," *Dokutoru Manbô shôjiten*, by Kita Morio (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1974) 196.

²²⁸ Ibid., 197.

²²⁹ Kazusa Hideo, "Bungaku ni okeru yûmoa," *Kita Morio no sekai* (Tokyo: Shinpyôsha, 1979) 171.

take leave without hesitation, and “Doctor” thinks it is because the professor has totally given up on him. On the ship, when the fishing begins, “Doctor” is prepared, sterilizing his tools and waiting for injured people to come to his office. Fortunately, those who come to the office have just small cuts. He suspects the crew is exceptionally careful this time because they think that “with a doctor like [himself] aboard, any serious injury might result in a bloodbath” (120). When he goes to a bar in a port, he is always the unlucky one who attracts ugly women while other crew members are sitting with pretty ladies. In Milan, when “Doctor” visits his colleague, *H*, he meets a Japanese surgeon there. When *H* steps out of the room, “Doctor” asks the surgeon to give him some piece of advice on removing conglutinated appendices. When *H* comes back to the room and realizes what they are talking about, he becomes pale knowing what kind of a doctor “Doctor” is, and he exclaims, “Are you out of your mind? Don’t even think of trying that!”²³⁰ In Japan, a medical doctor is considered to be skilled at German. So, one day, the chief officer asks him to translate a pamphlet describing the Anton Dohrn, a new German research vessel. “Doctor” tries hard but this happens:

The text was full of technical jargon like “three-positional electric current,” and though it seemed unlikely that executions would be performed aboard a research ship, several references were made to a “gallows” on deck. ... The *Dunkelkammer* was, as far as I could make out, “a gloomy chamber,” and God only knew what all those things in the engine room were – I pretended they didn’t exist. The Anton Dohrn was, in fact, the latest thing in vessels of its kind; ... but my translation turned this pride of German technology into a veritable ghost ship, with hangmen and crypts and no apparent means of propulsion (210).

As mentioned previously, Kita writes in the postscript that he decided to write only of trivial things in the work. His alter-ego has a similar attitude – he is not good at

²³⁰ Ibid., 237.

the important thing, namely his job as a doctor, but is very curious and enthusiastic about trivial things. He declares himself as the “resident biologist” aboard and torments the captain by reporting to him every red tide and little bird he finds. When he learns in a book that sugar water can kill a shark, he becomes eager to try it out. During the fishing, he goes down on deck to help the crew smash fish heads and dissect their intestine. He also reveals his vast amount of knowledge on unimportant things such as the Madagascan deity “Ataokoroinona,” interesting experiences of the poet Blaise Cendrars, and various unbelievable and absurd stories which “Doctor” claims to be true.

We have seen Kita’s attitude of focusing on insignificance or inferiors in *The House of Nire*, in which the narrator clearly empathizes with people in the “cookhouse.” This travelogue, also, is written from the perspective of a ship’s doctor who is by no means a skilled person, and this doctor shows empathy to people who are insignificant in worldly terms. The following passage, depicting a scene in a bar in Lisbon, is an example:

In one corner of the café sat a family who were downing beer after beer and having a gay old time, but in the opposite corner was an elderly lady clad in an overcoat who’d been sitting rigidly before her cup of tea since I’d arrived. I was empathizing with her, imagining that she had no one to go home to and preferred to spend the long evening amid the warmth and hubbub of people enjoying themselves, when I realized that I myself had been sitting before an empty glass for some time now, and it had grown quite late. (183)

It is interesting to see that when he sees an elderly lady, he imagines that she is lonely. Her loneliness is emphasized by contrasting her to a family who are enjoying themselves. Then, he suddenly realizes that he looks no different from the elderly lady. Here “Doctor” is a traveler and a traveler is, by nature, lonely. Even though “Doctor” talks and behaves

horrendously and humorously throughout the work, he is aware of his lonely state and has empathy towards lonely, insignificant people.

One thing I would like to mention about this work is that, although *Doctor Manbô at Sea* is considered as a comical work, there is one area in which Kita's humor does not apply. This is the depiction of nature. "Doctor" seems to have no respect for worldly things and people, but in front of nature, his sharp tongue ceases:

Then there was the splendor of sunset. The clouds sank below the horizon, and the sun followed at a leisurely pace. As it dropped into the sea, the sky above the opposite horizon, to the east, divided into three distinct layers: yellow below, and a stretch of rose fading to blue. The sea was light pink and as smooth as duralumin, though with each little breeze it crinkled for a moment like crêpe. While the west remained aglow, the sky overhead darkened with astonishing speed. An unexpectedly bright, round moon appeared, and night began to fall. Venus was the first star to show itself. Then, as the curtain of night covered even the western sky, the Southern Cross peeked out over the horizon, shining faintly as it rose.

I lay sprawled on the upper bridge with a thick coil of rope for a pillow, listening to the sound of the bow cutting through the water and inhaling the salty breeze. At times like this, I felt how truly fortunate I was to have boarded the Shôyô-maru. It was a feeling of satisfaction that one would not be likely to realize after two or three months on a luxurious passenger ship (285-286) .

Nature is depicted in this manner throughout the work.

Doctor Manbô at Sea is a very important work not only for Kita but also in the literary history of Japan. The work is one of the important works of Kita because this is the first humorous work he published, and it made his name known as a writer. From this point on, he continued writing both serious and humorous works simultaneously. It is also a very important work in post-war Japan in that it is one of the very first world travelogues written by a Japanese post-war writer. Kita depicts the places of the world in 1958, only thirteen years after WWII, when the scars of the war still vividly remain not

only on the land but also in people's minds, while laughing at what is generally believed to be "significant" in the world.

A literary critic Kobayashi Nobuhiko writes that, although he was impressed by the humor and gags when he read the work for the first time, he could not help but appreciate the splendid depictions of nature when he read it again.²³¹ I have analyzed the methods Kita employs to make a sentence or a phrase comical in the work. While the work contains exaggerated humor in abundance, which may not have appeal to a reader who appreciates more serious, ideological literary works, the work has certain pathos because of its lyricism in depicting nature and of the depiction of lonely, insignificant people, which seems to be consistent in Kita's works whether they be serious works or humorous.

Kita writes not only serious works and the humorous *Manbô* series but also writes in other genres. In the next chapter, his nursery stories will be examined.

²³¹ Kobayashi Nobuhiko, "Kaisetsu," *Heso no nai hon*, by Kita Morio (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1976) 256.

Chapter 4: Children's Stories

It was not unusual in the Taisho period that a mainstream writer, or a writer who normally produced works for adult readers, also wrote stories for children. For example, the leading writers of the day such as Akutagawa Ryûnosuke (1892-1927), Arishima Takeo (1878-1923), Izumi Kyôka (1873-1939), Shimazaki Tôson (1872-1943), Tayama Katai (1872-1930), Tokuda Shûsei (1872-1943), Uno Kôji (1891-1961), to name a few, contributed poetry, songs, biographies, and stories to children's magazines.²³² However in post-war Japan, it seems there has been a clear division between writers for adult readers and for children, so much so that the term *jidô bungaku sakka* or “a children's literature writer” has come about. Kita Morio, however, is one of few post-war mainstream writers who produced literary works for adults as well as for children. Kita's works for children's literature are wide-ranging, from creating stories for children in different age groups to translating a pre-modern Japanese literary work into plain Modern Japanese for children, and to translating foreign children's and children's stories into Japanese, such as German writer Helme Heine (1941-)'s works and *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum (1856-1919).²³³

²³² Fujimoto Yoshinori, a scholar of Japanese children's literature, points out that, prior to the Taishô period, such mainstream writers as Kôda Rohan and Ozaki Kôyô also contributed some works for *Shônen bungaku*, a magazine targeted for young boys. See Fujimoto Yoshinori, “Sôsaku jidô dôwa no shuppatsu,” in *Hajimete manabu nihon jidô bungakushi*, ed. Torigoe Shin (Kyoto: Minerva Shobô, 2001) 73.

²³³ For works of Helme Heine's (1941 -), Kita has translated *Zôsan no odango* (the title has been later changed to *Zôsan no sansû*) and *Karasu no Rihyaruto tomodachi o sagashite*.

Kita openly expresses his attraction to children's literature: "What a gorgeous world children's stories embrace! Even after I have grown up, I have been reading a fair number of children's stories because they have often evolved from something fundamental about human beings, or from old legends and folklores."²³⁴ In the same essay, he points out the fact that some well-known mainstream writers in the West have written wonderful children's literature, and he concludes the essay by stating, "In my opinion, those writers who write novels, dramas and poems create better children's stories than those who write only children's stories. However, one can easily come to the conclusion without thinking too much that it is not surprising that a great writer leaves behind a great children's story."²³⁵ Kita's sentiment, that the writers who are able to write to move the hearts of adults are those who can also write great stories for children, echoes the famous maxim of C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), whose children's story *The Chronicle of Narnia* has been widely read by both adults and children all over the world. He writes, "A children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story."²³⁶

In her book *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives*, in which the international trend of crossover literature is examined, a literary scholar Sandra Beckett writes that Kita Morio is a "major twentieth-century Japanese author to have written successful child-to-adult crossovers" and mentions that Kita's *The Adventures of Kupukupu the Sailor* (*Funanori Kupukupu no bôken*, 1962), which he wrote for

²³⁴ Kita Morio, "Omoide no gaikoku dôwa," *Manbô hakase to Kaijin Mabuze* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1984) 122.

²³⁵ Ibid., 125-126.

²³⁶ C. S. Lewis, "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," in *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967) 24.

schoolchildren, was very popular among university students in the 1960s.²³⁷ Kita's *The Lonely King* (*Sabishii ôsama*, 1969), although not written exclusively for children, is also called "a children's story for children and adults." This work also became a best-selling book in 1969.²³⁸

Rachel Falconer, a scholar who also studies the recent phenomenon of crossover literature, argues that one of the reasons adult readers turn to children's fiction is that they are "seeking to recover the earliest memories of childhood, the perceived roots of language and culture, and narrative in its allegedly most archaic and primitive forms."²³⁹ Interestingly, this is very similar to what Kita says regarding his attraction to children's stories as quoted earlier. Falconer also quotes Jonathan Stroud, "The kid is not going to be impressed by trendy, pretentious, [hifalutin] stuff which some adults will be enraptured by," and she continues:

In this view, narrative aimed at a primary audience of children becomes a touchstone of authenticity for jaundiced, post-postmodern older readers. The inauthenticities of contemporary, 'hifalutin' adult fiction can be countered by fiction aimed at child readers in at least three ways: stylistically, children's fiction is perceived as being more closely linked to oral tradition and the ancient craft of storytelling; ideologically, it speaks from the margins and for the marginalized; and thematically, it addresses a timeless core of experience and accesses a latent spirituality and/or hope of redemption within (post)modern, secular culture.²⁴⁰

Falconer's points about children's literature seem to apply to Kita's stories. Falconer's first point is that children's stories tend to have a style of storytelling. Walter Benjamin

²³⁷ Sandra L. Beckett, *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2009) 94. Other than the works by Kita and Miyazawa Kenji that Beckett mentions in her book, Haitani Kenjiro's *Usagi no me* and Kuroyanagi Tetsuko's *Madogiwa no Totto-chan* have also become popular both with child and adult readers.

²³⁸ Dentsû, "Besuto serâ (1969)," *Kôkoku keiki nenpyô*
<<http://www.dentsu.co.jp/marketing/adnenpyo/r1969.html>>

²³⁹ Rachel Falconer, *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership* (New York: Routledge, 2009) 129.

²⁴⁰ Jonathan Stroud is the author of the best-selling crossover fiction *Bartimaeu* trilogy. Ibid., 131.

(1892-1940), a well known Marxist literary critic, distinguishes “storytelling” from the “novel” by defining a novelist and a storyteller as follows: a novelist is “the solitary individual, who is no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concerns, is himself uncounseled, and cannot counsel others,” but a storyteller, on the other hand, “tells from experience.” Benjamin argues that many storytellers have an orientation toward practical interests and that the story “contains, openly or covertly, something useful,” whether it is a moral, practical advice, or an old saying.²⁴¹ Although what Kita writes in his children’s stories may not be what he has heard or exactly what he has experienced, it is not difficult to see that his experience during childhood provides a strong background or is the solid foundation of some of his children’s stories. Also, there is usually a didactic element – or what Walter Benjamin calls “practical advice” – in his children’s stories. This element is obvious in work for younger children and is more indirect and implicit in works intended for older readers, but it can be recognized. In this sense, Kita fits into Walter Benjamin’s definition of a “storyteller” in writing children’s stories. Falconer’s second point about children’s literature is that it speaks “from the margins and for the marginalized.” As we have seen in the previous chapters, a protagonist of Kita’s works tends to be someone “inferior” or the stories are depicted from the eyes of an “insignificant.” His children’s stories are not the exception. A protagonist of his children’s stories tends to be someone who is far away from what the world calls “successful.” Even though the main characters of *The Lonely King* and *The Lonely Princess* (*Sabishii himegimi*, 1977) are a king and a princess, they have no power,

²⁴¹ Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968) 86-87.

are naïve, and are constantly manipulated by people around them. By depicting stories of those insignificant people, it surely speaks to and gains empathy from those who feel themselves not playing a leading role in society.²⁴² Falconer's last point is that a children's story tends to give some "redemption" in this modern world. As pointed out, Kita's children's stories usually contain didactic messages, and the messages concomitantly express a sharp criticism of modern culture and civilization. In his stories for children, Kita implicitly and explicitly argues that what is believed to be true in modern culture and civilization is not necessarily true. Many of Kita's children's stories satisfy the three qualities which Rachel Falconer argues children's literature has: they are written in the style of story telling; they speak from the perspective of and to the marginalized; and they expose the true and right as not being necessarily true or right.

Kita writes stories for children of various ages – young children, schoolchildren, and for children who are "ten years old to a hundred years old."²⁴³ In this chapter, I would like to examine three of Kita's children's stories that are written for different age groups, "The Red Ghost and the White Ghost" (*Akai obake to shiroi obake*, 1963) written for young children, *The Adventures of Kupukupu the Sailor*, which was originally written for middle school students, and a series that consists of three stories, *The Lonely King*, *The Lonely Beggar* (*Sabishii kojiki*, 1974), and *The Lonely Princess*.

²⁴² The psychiatrist Yamanaka Yasuhiro writes one of the most popular literary works among many of his adolescent patients who suffer from school phobia or anorexia nervosa is Kita's *Lonely* trilogy. See Yamanaka Yasuhiro, "Kita Morio no dôwa sekai to sono himitsu," *Risô* Sep. 1980: 49-50.

²⁴³ Kita says that *The Lonely King*, *The Lonely Beggar*, and *The Lonely Princess* are written for "children who are from ten years old to a hundred years old," and this phrase is used within the works as well as for advertisement.

A story for younger children:

“The Red Ghost and the White Ghost” was originally published in a magazine entitled *Dizunî no kuni* (The Land of Disney) in 1963, and the story is targeted at young children.²⁴⁴ The story starts with a narrator stating that he used to live in the neighborhood of Aoyama Cemetery and that the cemetery looked so much bigger when he was a child. He then introduces the song about the ghosts in Aoyama Cemetery and the story begins after the song:

Out from Aoyama Cemetery
Three white ghosts come gliding, three.
Two red ghosts come following after.
Last of all a student boy
With big, floppy breeches on:
Flippety, floppety, flap.²⁴⁵

The same song is mentioned in some of Kita’s essays as the song that Kita’s nanny Matsuda Yawo, whom he often refers to as *Matsuda no bâya* or Nanny Matsuda, used to sing for Kita and his siblings when they were small. The song also appears in *The House of Nire*, one of his autobiographical fictions, as the song that the Nire family’s nanny, Nanny Shimoda, sings for children.²⁴⁶ Kita writes that Aoyama Cemetery is, along with an open field where he played as a child and a vast number of books in his father’s study,

²⁴⁴ Kita later intended to write a longer children’s story for adults under the same title whose main characters are the Red and the White ghosts that have been living in Aoyama Cemetery since the Meiji period. In 1990, Kita said that he had written the beginning part of the story and it already became 230 pages. Unfortunately, the story has not been published yet as of today. See Kita Morio, “Jicho o kataru: Kaitô Jibago no fukkatsu,” *NEXT* 7 (3) March 1990: 247. My translation of “The Red Ghost and the White Ghost” is provided at the end of this study.

²⁴⁵ The song is mentioned in some of Kita’s fiction as well as essays. This translation is Dennis Keene’s that appears in Kita Morio, *The House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984) 9.

²⁴⁶ Some essays that mention the song include “Butai saihô ‘Nireke no hitobito’” in *KMZ*, vol. 15 (1983) 244, and “Bochi” in *Dokutoru Manbô kaisôki* (Tokyo Nihon Keizai Shinbun Shuppansha, 2007) 24-25.

one of the primary landscapes that is engraved in his heart.²⁴⁷ In other words, the topic of this short children's story, ghosts in Aoyama Cemetery, is something that is closely related to his childhood experiences and memories.

"The Red Ghost and the White Ghost" is a story of two ghosts who reside in Aoyama Cemetery and are disappointed that people in modern days are not afraid of or do not even believe in ghosts because of the schooling they receive. The ghosts decide to make their existence known to the world, and so they go on parade in an open convertible on a major avenue in Tokyo. This catches the eye of a manager of a bubble gum company, and he asks the ghosts to be on a TV commercial for the company's product. When they appear in a commercial, they instantly become popular and enjoy fame and luxuries. In the middle of one night, however, ghosts from all over the world appear by their bedside and accuse them, in a very threatening manner, for their not frightening people, which is what they are supposed to be doing. Red and White Ghosts are so terrified that they run away, and ever since that time nobody knows their whereabouts. The narrator suggests at the end of the story that they may still be in Aoyama Cemetery and that, if they manifest their presence next time, they may turn out to be very scary ghosts.

In the story the narrator says that, as he grew up, the number of the ghosts and goblins in Aoyama Cemetery decreased from 66,666 to about 3,000, to 300, to 30, to 3, and finally they disappeared.²⁴⁸ In this story, Kita seems to express his nostalgia for the world of children in which ghosts, goblins, and other mysterious creatures are real. In

²⁴⁷ Kita Morio, "Harappa, Bochi, Shomotsu," *Manbô hakase to kaijin Mabuze* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1984) 221.

²⁴⁸ Kita Morio, *Akai obake to shiroi obake*, in *KMZ*, vol. 8 (1977) 330.

one of the poems entitled “Lost Gods” (*Ushinawareta kami*), which Kita created while he was still a student at University of Tohoku Medical School, he expresses the sadness of growing-up. A part of the poem reads:

Nevertheless, how painful it was to grow up!
When the veil, that had been covering my eyes so gently, was removed,
How ugly things looked!
How sad it is to stare at those things!
Nevertheless, out of my sight that was widened, gods have disappeared.²⁴⁹

He also writes about the evolution of tales in an essay and states that, as humans began to add plausible mystery to tales, the world that embraced the existence of gods began to go against humans and, eventually and inevitably, gods had to die.²⁵⁰ Although in this paragraph Kita specifically talks about the evolution of tales and the disappearance of gods, what he suggests seems to be in keeping with the lines of the poem quoted above. A prominent Jungian psychologist in Japan, Kawai Hayao, writes a passage about super naturals or superior beings (*ch ôetsu*, 超越) in modern society in which he says as follows:

Due to natural science that was discovered in early-modern Europe and the development of the technology that tied into it, “superior beings” began to disappear at once. ...

In this way, many human beings began to think that they could do anything they would like with their own thought and power without depending on superior beings. They even reached the moon, which used to be the object of their worship. They began to travel in space, but they did not find “God” there.²⁵¹

When civilization advances and people become educated and focus only on plausible things or something they can prove, such as natural science for instance, supernatural beings, like gods and ghosts, lose their place in the world. In the story, the

²⁴⁹ Kita Morio, “Ushinawareta kami,” in *KMZ*, vol. 1 (1977) 16.

²⁵⁰ Kita Morio, “Watashi no bungaku – Gôman to tôkai,” *Sono Ayako • Kita Morio*, by Sono Ayako, and Kita Morio, *De Luxe warera no bungaku*, vol. 16 (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1969) 474-475.

²⁵¹ Kawai Hayao, *Yungu shinrigaku to chôetsu-sei* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1994) iv.

ghosts lament that in recent years the education that does not believe in the existence of ghosts has prevailed.²⁵² By having the ghosts sigh about humans not believing in supernatural beings any more, Kita seems to express nostalgia for his lost childhood.

The didactic message expressed in this story is a warning for those who get sidetracked and are not doing what they are supposed to do. The story is intended for children, but it seems that the warning is directed towards Kita himself as well. The story was published in 1963, three years after his *Dr. Manbo at Sea* became a best-selling book, and he had begun producing numerous essays and light reading material in various magazines. Although he emphasizes in his essays that laughter and humor are what have been lacking in modern Japanese literature, he also clearly distinguishes serious literary works from humorous, light works by calling the former “pure literature” and the latter “entertainment.” He confesses that, before writing *Dr. Manbo at Sea*, he did not intend to write “entertainment” or humorous essays at all.²⁵³ However, after *Dr. Manbo at Sea* became a best seller and as he became known as *Dokutoru Manbô*, he received numerous requests from publishers to write something humorous and entertaining, and he did so for financial reasons.²⁵⁴ The story, then, might well be considered as a warning to himself not to forget what he was supposed to be doing, which was to produce serious literary works. “The Red Ghost and the White Ghost,” in this regard, can be read as a warning for the grown-up writer Kita from his past, his childhood memories.

²⁵² Kita Morio, “Akai obake to shiroi obake,” *KMZ*, vol. 8 (1977) 331.

²⁵³ Kita Morio, “‘Manbô mono no hassei’ ni tsuite,” *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 39.12 (1974): 6-7. For the term “pure literature,” please see the footnote no. 58 in Chapter 1 of this study on page 37.

²⁵⁴ Kita Morio, “Sôzaku yowa” (15), in *Geppô* (15) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 15 (1977) 1-2.

A story for schoolchildren:

As a story Kita wrote specifically for schoolchildren, I would like to examine *The Adventures of Kupukupu the Sailor*. The work was serialized in a monthly magazine for middle school students called *Chûgakusei no tomo ni-nen* (*Friend of 2nd Year Middle School Students*) from 1961 to 1962 and published as a book in 1962. This is considered Kita's first published children's story. Although many of Kita's works have been out of print now, this work is one of the works that have been republished in recent years.²⁵⁵

The story has been adapted to various forms such as a radio musical, a puppet play, and a regular musical. NHK broadcast a puppet play for children entitled *Hyokkori Hyôtanjima* (*Hyokkori Hyotan Island*) from 1964 to 1969. Inoue Hisashi, who wrote a scenario for this very popular puppet play, expresses his indebtedness to *The Adventure of Kupukupu the Sailor* as he received some ideas from the work while writing the play.²⁵⁶ Kita explains how the work came about. When he participated with Tezuka Osamu in script writing for a Tôei Animation, *Arabian Nights: The Adventure of Sinbad*, the ideas that Kita suggested were mostly rejected by the people at Tôei. When he was very upset about the rejections, he was requested to write a story by a magazine targeted for middle school students. Kita accepted the offer and serialized the story entitled *The Adventures of Kupukupu the Sailor* in the magazine, throwing many of the rejected ideas into it.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ *The Adventures of Kupukupu the Sailor* was republished from Shûeisha in May, 2009.

²⁵⁶ Inoue Hisashi, "Kaisetsu," *Funanori Kupukupu no bôken*, by Kita Morio (Tokyo: Kadokawa Bunko, 1969) 204.

²⁵⁷ Kita Morio, "Sôsaku yowa" (7), in *Geppô* (7) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 7 (1977) 1.

The protagonist of the story is a student named Tarô who does not like to study, and the story is told by an unnamed narrator.²⁵⁸ Because Tarô does not want to do his homework, he starts reading a book that he purchased a few days earlier that is entitled *Kupukupu the Sailor* by the writer named KITA MORIO.²⁵⁹ The book, strangely, contains only four printed pages: a preface, a two-page incomplete story, over two hundred pages of blank paper, and an afterword. The unnamed narrator of the original story tells the reason why the story of *Kupukupu the Sailor* is incomplete. It is because the writer KITA MORIO is very lazy and could not meet the deadline, and so he disappeared in order to avoid a fierce editor and nobody knows his whereabouts. KITA MORIO wrote in the afterword of the book:

This is the end of *Kupukupu the Sailor* because I'm not going to write any more. Since the story is rather short, the entire thing, including the Foreword and Afterword, is only four pages. That's not really long enough for a book, so I've decided to insert 244 blank pages. You may want to use it as a notebook. You might draw pictures of [Fuku-chan] or [Kuri-chan] or [the Atom Boy] or, better yet, write the story of *Kupukupu* yourself. The fact that the book is of no more value than a common notepad is reflected in the extremely low price. It follows that my royalties will come to virtually nothing. I am currently in hiding, and the way things are going, I may very well starve to death. Farewell, readers. It's unlikely that we'll meet again. So long. Bye-bye now.²⁶⁰

After Tarô finished reading the afterword he suddenly feels dizzy, and when he regains consciousness, he is lying down on the beach. He realizes that he is now in the world of the story *Kupukupu the Sailor*. Due to the writer KITA MORIO being an incompetent writer, the world of the story is disordered and chaotic. Moreover, Tarô realizes that his

²⁵⁸ Tarô's age is never revealed in the story, except one section in the story suggests that he is older than ten. Since the story is written for middle school students, Tarô is probably around that age.

²⁵⁹ The name "KITA MORIO" is written in Katakana in the original text. In order to distinguish the character from the real writer Kita Morio, I use a capital letter for the writer appearing in the story.

²⁶⁰ Kita Morio, *The Adventures of Kupukupu the Sailor*, trans. Ralph McCarthy (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1985) 13-14.

name is no longer Tarô but others call him Kupukupu.²⁶¹ Kupukupu sails out to sea in a ship whose captain does not know where the ship is headed. On board are, beside the captain, a giant sailor named Nubô, and two other sailors named Nanja and Monja, who remind us of Yajirobei (Yaji-san) and Kitahachi (Kita-san), the two main characters of the late Edo humorous fiction entitled *Tôkaidôchû hizakurige* (*Travels on the Eastern Seaboard*, 1802-1822) by Jippensha Ikku (1765-1831).²⁶² The story depicts the adventures that Kupukupu experiences, people whom he meets on and off the ship, and how he matures by overcoming obstacles. In the Afterword of KITA MORIO's story as quoted above, KITA MORIO asks his readers to write the story of Kupukupu themselves on blank pages, and that is exactly what is happening here. A reader Tarô becomes Kupukupu himself and performs/begins the story, and this is probably the message Kita sends to his young readers through the work: after reading the story, they are the ones who go out and write their own story called "life." Although there is no evidence that Kita was influenced by Laurence Stern (1713-1768), the idea of inserting a blank page in a book reminds us of Stern's famous work, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*.

Kupukupu and other crew members believe that KITA MORIO has the power to change everything in the story because, after all, he is the creator of the story. When the captain and others are captured by cannibals, Kupukupu meets KITA MORIO.

Kupukupu asks him to write a line to save the captain and others, so KITA MORIO

²⁶¹ The word "kupukupu" means a butterfly in Indonesian, but it is also a parody of the Japanese onomatopoeia *pukupuku* that is used to express bubbling noises.

²⁶² *Nanja-monja* is a word used in Eastern Japan which refers to a big tree that is rarely found in the area.

writes that the captain and others were able to escape from cannibals. However, even after he wrote that, nothing happens. However, Kupukupu still believes that KITA MORIO has the power to let him go home to Tokyo. Later, Kupukupu asks KITA MORIO to write down on a manuscript paper that, one day, Kupukupu the Sailor began to doze off, and when he woke up, he was in his house in Tokyo. Unfortunately, when KITA MORIO starts writing the beginning of the sentence, he notices his angry editor rushing towards him on a motorboat. KITA MORIO immediately runs away without completing the sentence, and therefore Kupukupu is still unable to go back to his home in Tokyo at the end of the story. Kupukupu still wishes to go home but, until that happens, his journey must continue. Kupukupu at the end of the story is a hearty young boy who is quite different from Tarô who whined a lot at the beginning of the story. This is a humorous fantasy adventure with an element of coming of age. Tarô/Kupukupu does not do anything spectacular like a protagonist in a fantasy story often does, such as conquering evil or saving a suffering princess, but he mentally matures as the story goes on.

What stands out in this story is that Kita offers moral/practical advice and his criticism of civilization or a modern society through the voice of the characters. The following is an example of moral/practical advice. When Kupukupu just joins the crew, two sailors Nanja and Monja, who have been at the bottom of the hierarchy on the ship, are very happy to have Kupukupu whose rank is lower than theirs. Therefore, they dump on him all bothersome work such as peeling potatoes and cleaning everywhere on the ship. Although Kupukupu first thought Giant Nubô was a kind sailor, he does not help Kupukupu at all, even though he knows what Nanja and Monja have been doing to

Kupukupu. One day, when Nanja and Monja order Kupukupu to do a task that seems impossible, Kupukupu is at a loss, not knowing what to do. Giant Nubô comes to him and tells Kupukupu not to hate Nanja and Monja, and he teaches him about human nature: “Before you came along, everyone picked on [Nanja and Monja], and now they’re taking it out on you. That’s just the way most people are.”²⁶³ He also explains to Kupukupu the reason why he has not helped Kupukupu when he was pushed around by Nanja and Monja. It is because Nubô knows Kupukupu will never grow up unless he sticks it out when the going gets tough and that he knows helping him is not good for Kupukupu. The story also teaches that appearances are deceiving. The captain, who is supposed to be knowledgeable, does not know much, and the cannibals who live half-naked in a jungle possess advanced civilization. The cannibals criticize Kupukupu and others for judging people based on their appearances.

Regarding his criticism of civilization and culture, first Kita seems to criticize the modern education system in Japan that simply focuses on memorization. Giant Nubô believes himself to be stupid and he openly admits it, but when Kupukupu points out the fact that Nubô possesses practical skills, Nubô says that he knows how to do it simply because he has been at sea for a long time. He continues that memorizing something does not make one smart but the real smart people are those who can apply the knowledge they memorize to do something else. The same thing is mentioned in another section. Here, Kita as a narrator uses a slightly difficult set phrase for a middle school

²⁶³ Kita Morio, *The Adventures of Kupukupu the Sailor*, trans. Ralph McCarthy (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1985) 38-39.

student, and he teaches them how to look the phrase up in the dictionary step by step.

Then he says,

If you do not understand a word, you'd better get in the habit of looking it up in the dictionary. ... Making something clear is much better than leaving it unclear.

However, memorizing what is written in a book is not sufficient. What is far more important than memorizing is creative thinking. But, in order to come up with an idea, you first have to memorize bare essentials. If you do not understand what "bare essentials" means, look it up in the dictionary.²⁶⁴

The narrator repeatedly warns the reader – a middle school student who is about to go into the entrance examination hell where memorizing is the key to the success – the uselessness of mere memorization. What is interesting here is that he not only offers criticism about modern education in Japan but also tactfully teaches a target reader how to use a dictionary.

His criticism against civilization is offered through two sub-characters, one is a native on Lazybones Island and the other is the chief of cannibals. People on Lazybones Island are extremely lazy to the extent that they just lie down on the beach with their mouths open, hoping that they can drink some water when the squall comes. Some are too lazy to complete a sentence or to say anything. Then one native of the island, who is diligent enough to speak, offers the explanation as to why they have become so lazy. According to the native, the people on the island used to be very hard working to the extent the island was called Busybee Island. He continues, "Well, there's nothing wrong with working hard, but when people work too hard, they get mean-hearted and greedy. And that's what happened. A lot of people started fussing and fighting. So our king issued a proclamation that said everyone had to become lazy. People who still wanted to

²⁶⁴ Kita Morio, "Funanori Kupukupu no bôken," in *KMZ*, vol. 7 (1977) 50-51.

work were sent to another island, ...”²⁶⁵ When Kupukupu suggests that this relatively diligent native move to another island, he replies, “But I love this island. ... Here, there’s no need to worry yourself sick about [who is successful and who is not].”²⁶⁶

When Kupukupu, the crew, and KITA MORIO are all captured by cannibals, KITA MORIO keeps saying that those cannibals are savage, ignorant barbarians, and that he can find a way to escape because he is civilized and much smarter than they are. However, they soon realize that the people they thought to be ignorant savages are quite civilized. Although they live in mud-and-grass huts, they have an enormous stone building, which is their Capitol Building. They understand many languages, have the Nuclear Power Research Laboratory, and even have the College of Culinary Arts, where they teach how to make gourmet dishes. After making Kupukupu and other captives frightened to death by threatening that they are going to kill and eat them, the natives reveal their true identity. The chief of the natives says that they have a very advanced culture and that they could easily build a great city with all the conveniences of modern technologies. However they choose not to do so and the chief explains why:

“There are many benefits to civilization but it can get out of control, advancing to the point where the lives of the very people who created it start to lose meaning and purpose. It can make you forget what life’s all about, and what real happiness is. So while we do our research, we still live half naked out here in the jungle, exposing ourselves to the sun and the

²⁶⁵ Kita Morio, *The Adventures of Kupukupu the Sailor*, trans. Ralph McCarthy (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1985) 57-58.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 58.

wind and running barefoot across Mother Earth. And we're very content with our way of life."²⁶⁷

Both the native of Lazybones Island and the chief of cannibals do acknowledge that civilization is beneficial, but they warn that if people do not control civilization, civilization will control people and destroy people's peaceful, happy lives. People of Lazybones Island went to the other extreme, and they now do nothing. But the cannibals seem to lead a balanced life – physically, they enjoy living in harmony with nature like primitive tribes while they keep pursuing advanced scientific research, and in their spiritual world, science and unscientific things do not go against each other but they nicely coexist. In one scene, Kupukupu tells a cannibal that Japanese people say there is a rabbit making rice cakes on the moon, but he quickly dismisses it by saying that he knows it is just a lot of baloney. Although the cannibal knows all the scientific facts about the moon, he does not dismiss their legends as Kupukupu does his. He says, "Our astronomical laboratory has researched all [the facts about the moon]. But we still respect the moon-goddess legend. It's the life and blood of our ancestors' dreams."²⁶⁸

In the discussion of "The Red Ghost and the White Ghost," I have argued that Kita, through the voice of the ghosts, laments about modern society where scientific facts carry great weight but something "mysterious" such as myth, legends, and ghosts are totally ignored. Through the depiction of the way cannibals are living, Kita teaches a middle school student the importance of what has been ignored in modern education.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 177.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 180.

As we have seen, *The Adventures of Kupukupu the Sailor* contains practical advice and teaching for a middle school student as well as criticism of civilized society and modern education. As mentioned earlier, Sandra Beckett writes that the work was very popular among college students in the 1960s. Kita Morio also writes that some adults prefer *The Adventures of Kupukupu the Sailor*, the work written exclusively for middle school students, to *The Lonely King* that Kita wrote for both children and adults.²⁶⁹ During the 1960s, the Tokyo Olympics was held in 1964 and Japan was rising from the ashes of World War II to achieve rapid economic growth with 10% annual growth.²⁷⁰ However, the vigorous economic growth was also negatively affecting people's lives. An education journalist Nakai Kôichi points out that what was behind the severe "entrance exam war" was the rapid economic growth that Japan was experiencing in the 1960s. He writes that, because the big enterprises hired only the graduates from top universities and colleges, this resulted in the entrance examination system that determined at the age of eighteen whether a person would have a successful life or not.²⁷¹ Company employees had to devote themselves to working for long hours in the office, and children were thrown into the world of competition called "entrance examination hell" to be raised as what is termed "economic animals." In colleges and universities, the student movements such as the 1960 and the 1970 protests against the renewal of Japan-U.S. Security Treaty (*Anpo*) and the *Zenkyô-tô* (All-Campus Joint Struggle) movement were shaking campuses throughout the country. When circumstances are changing

²⁶⁹ Kita Morio, "Sôzaku yowa" (7), in *Geppô* (7) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 7 (1977) 2.

²⁷⁰ Hiroshi Yoshikawa, "High Economic Growth in the 1960s," *Social Science Japan* 15 (1999) 13.

²⁷¹ Nakai Kôichi, *Daigaku nyûshi no sengoshi: juken jizoku kara zennyû jidai e* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôron Shinsha, 2007) 204.

rapidly and there is no stability, and when people know something is wrong in their modern society but are utterly powerless to change the system, it is not surprising to see that even college students and adult readers turn to a children's story which is comical and yet criticizes modern society and which suggests in simple language what happiness is and what life is all about. As Rachel Falconer says as stated above, the adult readers are "seeking to recover the earliest memories of childhood" through reading children's stories in order to recover their self that is buried and forgotten in their busy reality.

In the story, the weak Tarô matures and grows stronger by the end of the story, and he is willing to continue his journey on the ship. However, the story by no means has a happy ending. Tarô/Kupukupu's true wish is to go back to his home in Tokyo but he is unable to do so by the end of the story. Kupukupu still hopes that KITA MORIO is the one who will be able to send him home, but a reader has already seen that KITA MORIO once failed to make things happen even when he wrote them down on the paper. This is not surprising because, at this point, KITA MORIO is not the creator of the story any longer but, rather, what Kupukupu and other characters are experiencing is becoming the story itself. This is significant for a book targeted at schoolchildren, because it is as if Kita is saying that those young children are the ones who are to perform their own stories, their lives. So, will Kupukupu ever be able to go home? We will never know. Although the work is comical due to funny characters, including the completely incapable writer KITA MORIO, exaggerated humor and gags, and although Kupukupu seems to accept his fate rather positively, it is because of the fact that Tarô is still wandering in the world of the story that the work contains certain pathos.

Children's Stories for both Children and Adults:

The Lonely King, *The Lonely Beggar*, and *The Lonely Princess* are subtitled as “children’s stories for both children and adults.” Even though each work is published independently and in intervals of a few years, the three of them are all related and together form one long story: *The Lonely King* is the first of the series, *The Lonely Beggar* is a sequel to *The Lonely King*, and *The Lonely Princess* is the last of the series. Because of this, sometimes these works are referred to as the *Lonely* trilogy (“*sabishii sanbu-saku*”). Each story is narrated by a writer named KITA MORIO, and each starts with a line in which the writer dedicates the work to readers: “For many children, and many of those adults who retain a heart of a child.”²⁷² There are six prefaces and an equal number of epilogues in each story. Kita explains how he came to write children’s stories for both children and adults and why there are so many prefaces and epilogues in the works:

I began writing *The Lonely King* on the 30th of June, 1968 [when I was in a manic phase]. I have been writing numerous essays such as the “*Dokutoru Manbō*” series. However, when I write my real-life experience in the essays, I lose something [to write about in a novel]. Yet, when I write a long work of pure literature, I become exhausted both physically and mentally, so I need to write something light after writing a long novel.

Therefore, as light fictional stories, I came up with writing a series of children’s stories entitled “children’s stories for ten-years olds to hundred-years olds.” This phrase is an imitation of a [Erich] Kästner’s. Kästner is a master of writing “prefaces” and “epilogues,” so I wanted to surpass him by writing half a

²⁷² Although the writer KITA MORIO also appears in *The Adventures of Kupukupu the Sailor*, he is simply one character in the story and the story itself is narrated by an unnamed narrator. On the other hand, in the *Lonely* trilogy, KITA MORIO is not a character but the creator and narrator of the stories. At the end of *The Lonely Beggar*, however, the worlds of the story and of the writer KITA MORIO collide. In this scene, after the space aliens invade Las Vegas, the Prime Minister is walking in the desert with a disoriented mind and picks up some sheets of paper which he thinks are money. However, they are actually the draft of KITA MORIO’S work. See Kita Morio, “*Sabishii kojiki*,” *KMZ*, vol. 10 (1976) 431.

dozen “prefaces” and “afterwords.” As you can tell, this idea was affected by my manic phase.²⁷³

Mentioning the surprising number of copies both *The Lonely King* and *The Lonely Beggar* sold, a literary critic Dômeki Kyôzaburô still gives an unkind comment on the stories. He writes, “Honestly speaking, this kind of story, which is a mere compilation of nonsense, does not help Mr. Kita to be evaluated highly...”²⁷⁴ A psychiatrist Yamanaka Yasuhiro gives a favorable critique of the trilogy, but he also suspects that many readers might have stopped reading *The Lonely King* after a few prefaces, thinking that the story is of a low quality due to gags and exaggerated humor. Yamanaka admits that he himself did not finish reading the work when he first started.²⁷⁵ Kita acknowledges that he used exaggerated humor in the *Lonely* trilogy, but he also states that it is exactly what he intended to write in the *Lonely* trilogy.²⁷⁶ This can be considered his response to criticisms similar to what Dômeki Kyôzaburô wrote about on the trilogy. Kita writes:

What I intended most in this series of children’s stories was extreme humor, specifically nonsensical laughter.

In Japan, people respect faint laughter, and the humor that makes a reader burst into laughter is often considered that of inferior quality. I am strongly against this trend, and I intend to keep writing humorous works [that can induce loud laughter from a reader]. There are various kinds of laughter, and the more versatile the laughter is, the better we can keep Japanese literature from becoming infertile.²⁷⁷

²⁷³ Kita Morio, “Sôzaku yowa” (2), in *Geppô* (2) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 10 (1976) 1. Erich Kästner (1899-1974) was a German writer. His representative children’s stories include *Emmil und die Detektive* (Emile and Detectives, 1929), *Das fliegende Klassenzimmer* (The Flying Classroom, 1933), and *Emil und die drei Zwillinge* (Emile and Three Twins, 1933). For the term “pure literature,” please see the footnote no. 58 in Chapter 1 of this study on page 37.

²⁷⁴ Dômeki Kyôzaburô, *Gendai no sakka 101 nin* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1975) 71.

²⁷⁵ Yamanaka Yasuhiro, “Kita Morio no dôwa sekai to sono himitsu,” *Risô* Sep. 1980: 49.

²⁷⁶ Okuno Takeo and Kita Morio, “*Bokura no bungaku kien*,” *Kita Morio no sekai* (Tokyo: Shinpyôsha, 1979) 121.

²⁷⁷ Kita Morio, “Sôzaku yowa” (2), in *Geppô* (2) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 10 (1976) 3.

The writer/narrator named KITA MORIO explains in the prefaces of *The Lonely King* why he chose a king as the protagonist of the story.²⁷⁸ Because the story is intended for children, he thinks that he should choose someone whom he longed to become when he was a child. Then he remembers that he wanted to become both a king and a beggar. He also wants his story to have a sad tone. So he asks his nieces and nephews whom they think is more miserable, a king or a beggar. They come to a conclusion that a king is more miserable because he can do whatever he would like to do, which is boring, and he cannot quit being a king even if he does not like to be one. Therefore, KITA MORIO decides a king will be the protagonist of the first story of the trilogy and a beggar for the sequel.

Kita has produced a fair number of humorous works other than his *Dokutoru Manbô* series. The better known ones include *Jibago the Mysterious Thief* (*Kaitô Jibago*, 1967), *My Uncle* (*Boku no ojisan*, 1972), *My Dad is an Eccentric Man* (*Tocchan wa daihenjin*, 1981), and *The Casebook of Zenigata Heiji, the Detective, in London* (*Zenigata Heiji rondon torimono chô*, 1987). Some humorous stories are more suitable for schoolchildren and some are targeted for adult readers, but many of them can be read by both children and adults. Why, then, is the *Lonely* trilogy specifically subtitled as “children’s stories for both the young and adults”? A children’s story is usually intended for children, but from the subtitle, it is obvious that Kita wrote these “children’s stories” (*dôwa* 童話) intending them to be read by adults as well. In this section, I will discuss my

²⁷⁸ Unlike in *The Adventure of Kupukupu the Sailor* where the name of the character KITA MORIO is written in Katakana, in the *Lonely* trilogy, it is written in Kanji characters. Kita probably took the target age group into considerations.

ideas concerning why he called the trilogy “children’s stories.” However, before proceeding with this discussion, I will provide a summary of the three stories.

The Lonely King is a story of the king named Shahaji Ponpon Babasahib Aristocracy Al Acid George Stonkorolin XXVIII (hereafter he will be referred to as the King) of the Kingdom of Ston.²⁷⁹ He lost his father, the previous king, when he was only thirteen years old, and since then, the King has become a puppet in the hands of the greedy and sly Prime Minister of the country. The Kingdom is rich because it has oil deposits, which is discovered when the previous king’s burial ground was dug.

This Prime Minister is the one who gives the lengthy name to the King. In the Kingdom of Ston, a king’s name has only been “Stonkorolin” through successive generations. The previous king was simply Stonkorolin XXVII. However, the Prime Minister tells the King the necessity for him to have a lengthy name, saying that if his name is short, his signature would be imitated easily and might be abused. He also comes up with the most complicated signature for the King, which is written from bottom to top with lots of ornamentation added to each letter. Day after day, the King is confined in a room without a window and made to practice writing his signature without any contact with the outside world, and he comes to be a very naïve, ignorant, and stupid king.

When the King is seventeen, he marries Princess Laura, a three-year-old princess from another kingdom. The marriage is contrived by the Prime Minister who wants to create a bond between two kingdoms, but before the marriage takes place, the Prime

²⁷⁹ The location of the country is mentioned as unknown. However, the country has oil and the people from the country are described as those from Middle-East. So, probably Kita imagines the country being in the Middle East.

Minister adds an article to the kingdom's constitution that a king's wife should be divorced if she cannot bear a male heir within three years of marriage. The Prime Minister's intention is to have the King marry (and divorce) as many princesses as he can so that the kingdom will have a bond with multiple kingdoms. Of course Princess Laura does not bear a child within three years and is divorced when she is six. The King loves the infant princess and does not want to re-marry despite the repeated urgings from the Prime Minister.

While the King's cabinet is trying hard to find a prospective new wife for the King, a revolution occurs in the Kingdom. Fearing the safety of the King and himself, the Prime Minister arranges it so that the King flees to a very remote region called Asshua from which people believe the King's family originated, and the Prime Minister flees to a different place via a submarine. The King is told not to reveal his identity, and so he takes up a new name, John, and goes to Asshua, disguising himself as a new official dispatched to the region. Even though Asshua is a part of the kingdom, the news about the revolution has not reached there because it is such a remote, isolated region. People in Asshua have strong loyalty to the King but do not respect the official from the capital, as it has been the case that the officials who come to the region took advantage of the people's loyalty and ignorance, and they imposed high taxes on them. Even though they accept this new official, the King in disguise, they are very skeptical about him as he seems very naïve and unwise, and he does not impose new taxes as all the previous officials had done. People begin to wonder whether his naivety is intentional and that he is actually a spy from the capital.

In Asshua, the King meets a girl named Ann who is from England and resembles Princess Laura, and from her he learns that Princess Laura now lives in the United States. Her kingdom does not allow a divorced princess to come home, so she was sent to the United States. There she became famous for a while as a former queen of the mysterious Kingdom of Ston, and her photo was on the cover of *Life* magazine, her biography was published, and she was even on a TV commercial for the oil of the Kingdom of Ston.

Listening to his affectionate feelings for Princess Laura and how much he misses her, Ann begins to suspect his true identity. She lives with her eccentric scientist father named Dr. Challenger, and one day the King meets him. He takes the King to a cave, which he calls his Ultra-Secretive Research Institute. In the cave, he shows the King a bottomless pit in the ground, and tells the King that the pit goes to the other side of the Earth and that his daughter, Ann, came to Asshua from England through this pit in just three minutes. However, he says that he has successfully invited people from elsewhere through the pit but has never experimented with sending anyone to the other side of the Earth.

In the meantime in the capital, even though the revolutionary army has successfully occupied the palace, overthrown the kingdom and re-named the country as the Republic of Ston, they have no idea how to re-organize the country. After some debates, they decide that they would make their former king the president of their new republic. They soon learn that the King has fled to Asshua, so they advance their military to Asshua in search for the departed King. At the same time, the Prime Minister sends some envoys to Asshua to welcome back the King, knowing that the King is safe now that even the revolutionaries want him to be the president. People in Asshua are stunned

to hear that the stupidly naïve officer is actually the King, but upon learning that the revolution has occurred in the capital and the army is advancing towards their region, their loyalty to the royal family causes them to battle against the revolutionary army to protect their King.

Not knowing what to do and thinking that his existence itself is the cause of all the troubles, the King goes to Dr. Challenger to seek his advice. Dr. Challenger also believes that, even if he becomes the president of the new republic, he would still be a puppet as he had always been in the kingdom. He told the King that his disappearance is the best way to stop people from having the battle, and he suggests that he escape to the other side of the earth through the bottomless pit. While the King is in a state of uneasiness about the idea and is hesitating to do so, one of the Prime Minister's confidants finds the King. In order to escape from him, the King has no choice but to throw himself into the pit. Dr. Challenger urges him to go into the pit and tells him to meditate on the fact that he will be near Princess Laura in America. The King jumps into the total darkness of the pit, falls with an excessive speed, and loses consciousness. *The Lonely King* ends here.

The second of the trilogy is entitled *The Lonely Beggar*, which is written in the manner of detective fiction. The main character of *The Lonely Beggar* is a Japanese middle school student named Omorai Korori. His family, the house of Omorai, has been a prestigious beggar family since the mid Edo period. His father, Omorai Gatsueemon, is a bourgeois beggar who owns a stately wooden house with three big storehouses in a nice suburban area in Tokyo. Gatsueemon's father studied abroad in England in the Meiji period to observe the manners of British beggars. Gatsueemon studied in France in the

early Showa period, and he decides to send his son, Korori, to America to learn the modern ways of beggars. Korori first goes to Europe by ship to see European countries with a long history, then goes to New York by plane. While he was on board the ship, he meets an American gentleman from New York named Mr. Devilfather. He comes to like Korori and gives him his business card, saying that Korori can always contact him if he is ever in need.

In New York, there is a lazy beggar named Ben Stein who lives in a basement of one building. One day a pit suddenly appears in his room, so in order to see how deep it is, he throws some pieces of coal into it but does not hear any sound. Several days later, he finds a note coming from the pit, which is from Dr. Challenger, who is excited to learn that the pit is connected not only to England but also to America. Ben begins exchanging notes with Dr. Challenger and throwing/receiving things into/from the pit. More than a year later, a short chubby man comes out of the pit. That is, of course, the King from *The Lonely King* who, at the end of the story, jumped into the pit to escape from both the Prime Minister and the Revolutionary military. It took the King a long time to reach the United States because, despite Dr. Challenger's advice, he was so frightened of going into the pit that he forgot to keep meditating on his wish to go to the United States. At any rate, more than a year later, he is now in the United States where Princess Laura lives.

Not knowing what to do with the King, Ben takes him to the streets of New York City and teaches him how to earn money by forcefully washing the window of cars that stop at red lights. Contrary to his expectation, the King does very well and earns good money mostly because drivers love his comical chubby appearance and lovable face. Ben takes all the King's earnings, and in order to let him know that the King should be

grateful for being able to stay in Ben's basement room for free, he takes the King to a street where many homeless people are staying in the cold winter in New York. There, Ben finds Omorai Korori, a Japanese beggar who came to the United States for his beggar training. When Korori came to New York, all his possessions were stolen by thieves. When he tried to earn money by begging on the street, he was captured by the police. He has absolutely no money and, realizing that the begging method widely used in Japan does not work in New York, Korori has been at a loss and living on the street. Seeing that the King earns good money and therefore is useful for himself, Ben thinks that Korori could be beneficial to him as well and brings Korori home.

Korori and the King begin working for Ben together, but they also decide to earn some more money by other means. Korori decides to sell disposable lighters with a tag hanging from his neck saying "The Little Lighter Boy,"²⁸⁰ a parody of Anderson's famous tale "The Little Match Girl," and the King decides to use his one and only special skill – to write his lengthy signature and sell it. He reveals his real identity and starts selling his signature, but it does not sell at all. However, his sign saying "The mysterious signature of the former king of the Kingdom of Ston, 50 cent each" catches the eye of a famous photographer for Life magazine. He takes some photographs of the King and his signature, and they are published in Life. The magazine is seen by the Prime Minister, who is exiled in Zurich, Switzerland. He has been denied access to the Kingdom's vast amount of money in the Swiss Bank because it requires the King's signature, so he has

²⁸⁰ The original Japanese of this is *Raitaa uri no shōnen* (the boy who sells lighters), which shows clear connection to Anderson's tale "The Little Match Girl" which is translated into Japanese as "Matchi uri no shōjo" (the girl who sells matches).

been looking for the King. Now that he knows that the King is in the United States, he dispatches some of his subordinates to find the King.

In the meantime, Ben Stein is approached by a person who works for Mr. Devilfather, who has been exceptionally kind to him and provided him with his basement apartment for free. This Mr. Devilfather is the same person whom Korori met on the ship en route to Europe. The person who visits Ben tells that Mr. Devilfather would like Ben to repay the kindness he has been receiving from Mr. Devilfather by performing one act: to deliver chocolate bars to a person in Las Vegas. When the person breaks one bar, white powder comes out of it, which suggests that the chocolate bars contain drugs inside. The person urges him to be very careful as many people in the underground world are after the chocolates. Ben is very fearful about his mission. Then, when he goes outside, he realizes that he is followed by a suspicious person with an eye patch! Being afraid, he gives his mission to the King and Korori, and they leave for Las Vegas. However, Ben is later told by Mr. Devilfather that the mission should be completed by nobody but himself, and so he goes to Las Vegas himself. In Las Vegas, the King learns that Princess Laura is in one of the shows there, so he runs to the hotel where the show takes place, only to find in his great disappointment that the show had ended three days before and nobody knows Princess Laura's whereabouts. During the trip and in Las Vegas, the King, Korori and Ben are constantly followed by mysterious people -- the man with an eye-patch and a man with a leg prosthesis whom they believe to be professional killers, and two of the

Prime Minister's subordinates who have been ordered to capture the King in the United States. The story becomes very thrilling, just like a suspense novel.²⁸¹

The Las Vegas trip has all been plotted by Mr. Devilfather. He found Ben's long-lost mother in Las Vegas and wanted Ben to meet her. However, thinking that Ben's mother would not be happy to see him being such a lazy person, Mr. Devilfather wanted to wake Ben up by giving him what Ben believes to be a life-threatening mission. Both the man with an eye-patch and the man with a prosthetic leg are people who work for Mr. Devilfather. While Mr. Devilfather is revealing what he has plotted to Ben, the King, and Korori, he is notified that the former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Ston wishes to see him, so he leaves the room to see him. Frustrated that his subordinates have not been able to capture the King, the Prime Minister came to Las Vegas himself. He reveals the King's true identity to Mr. Devilfather, who seems skeptical, and tells him that he can prove it when he sees the chubby, young man in his room.

When Mr. Devilfather and the Prime Minister are going to see the King in Mr. Devilfather's room, it suddenly gets darker in the city of Las Vegas even though it is daytime. It is a flying saucer that is obscuring the Sun, and the announcement is made by the aliens in the flying saucer that they are from an Agricultural Association of another planet taking a tour to the earth. While observing the earth from the sky, the aliens came to be interested in gambling and wish to try it out. However, according to their research, their appearance is extremely disturbing to the earthlings. So, for their mutual benefit, they ask the people in Las Vegas to vacate the city for ten hours while they enjoy

²⁸¹ Kita writes that the fear of being chased depicted in the work is inspired by G. K. Chesterton's *The Man who was Thursday*. Kita Morio, "Sôsaku yowa" (2), in *Geppô* (2) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 10 (1976) 2.

gambling. They say that they will be able to transport people to where they would like to go, and they ask the citizens to walk toward the desert contemplating the place they desire to be transported to. While walking in the windy desert, people begin seeing illusions. The Prime Minister sees a big safe in the Swiss Bank where the Kingdom's money is stored, Korori sees his father, whom he has learned went bankrupt, and the King sees infant Princess Laura, who is crying in the bed because she urinated there by mistake. *The Lonely Beggar* ends here.

In one of the afterwords, the narrator says he fears that readers might not be happy after reading the story because there is no "conclusion," and thinks that they assume KITA MORIO is the kind of writer who cannot write a story with a proper conclusion. He defends himself by saying that life does not really have a conclusion as long as one keeps on living. Even if the King successfully meets Princess Laura and the story has a happy ending, a new story begins from there.

The last of the trilogy is entitled *The Lonely Princess*. As the title suggests, the story is focused on Princess Laura who married the King when she was three and was forced to be divorced at six. The story first recounts who she is and where she comes from – she is one of the princesses in an Islamic kingdom, the Kingdom of Moganbo, that is facing the Red Sea. Being a Muslim, the King has four wives and has many sons and daughters, but he is especially fond of Princess Laura. When the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Ston comes and suggests that Princess Laura marry the King of Ston, the King of Moganbo is unwilling to let her go. The King of Moganbo suggests that the Prime Minister can choose any of the other princesses who are the appropriate age for marriage, but Prime Minister refuses and insists that it should be Princess Laura who

marries the King of Ston. The Prime Minister wanted a princess who has no possibility of having a child so that she can be divorced within three years according to the constitution of Ston, and he needs to make that happen so that the rumor of the Kingdom of Ston being so mysterious would make the country more valuable to other countries.

The King of Ston and Princess Laura come to like each other very much, and she also realizes that the King is controlled by the Prime Minister. She comes to feel sorry for the King – he even does not have enough to eat and is constantly hungry because much of his food is eaten by the tasters before it reaches his mouth.

After she is divorced, she cannot go back to her own country because there is a law in the country that a divorced princess cannot return home. Therefore, she is sent to America where she gains instant fame because, America being young in history and having no royal family, American people are very curious about the young princess who married and is forced to divorce the King of Ston of a mysterious kingdom. The Prime Minister of Ston decides to take advantage of her popularity in America, and he uses her in a TV commercial to advertise the oil produced in Ston.

Her popularity, however, does not last long, and so she is put in the care of two American wicked agents and is forced to appear in a show in Las Vegas, but her show does not sell well. The agents decide to end the show earlier than is originally planned, and to send her back to the Kingdom of Moganbo and demand that her father, the King of Moganbo, compensate them for all the money they spent taking care of Princess Laura. While they are discussing how to get to the Kingdom of Mobango, they meet a French adventurer named San Pole, who has saved the Prime Minister of Ston and his crew while

they were on a submarine to escape from a country in revolution.²⁸² He agrees to take Princess Laura and her agents to the Kingdom of Mobango. His yacht, however, is destroyed by a group of bike gangs, and when his disappointment and anger are aired on national TV, an affluent man in New York named Mr. Devilfather contacts him. He feels deeply sorry for what the people in his country did to this French adventurer and he offers one of his yachts. San Pole, Princess Laura, and her two agents leave for the Kingdom of Mobango.

After long sailing and almost experiencing a shipwreck, their yacht reaches England, not the Kingdom of Mobango. In England, they are first tricked to work in a circus under extremely bad conditions but later saved by a man named Ray Challenger, who is the younger brother of Dr. Challenger, the crazy British scientist staying in the Asshua region of Ston, who has sent the King to America through the mysterious hole.

In the meantime, while the King of Ston is wandering in the desert in Las Vegas thinking about Princess Laura, he loses consciousness, and when he regains it, he has been returned to the Asshua region in Ston. He goes to see Dr. Challenger and tells him what happened after he reached New York via the mysterious hole. When Dr. Challenger hears that the King was almost but not quite able to meet Princess Laura in Las Vegas and how much he misses her, he feels sorry for the King and decides to help him meet Princess Laura.

Ray Challenger feels sorry for Princess Laura for what she has had to go through, and he tries to help her meet up with her mother again. However, he realizes that Princess Laura's father has passed away and one of his sons, who is a dictator, is taking a

²⁸² San Pole comes from a name of one of dish detergents in Japan, sanpôru.

control of the Kingdom of Mobango. The new king evicted all his father's wives from the palace but does not allow them to leave the country, as their current miserable situation might bring a bad reputation to the kingdom. But, with the help of Dr. Challenger and the space aliens who occupied Las Vegas for ten hours, the mysterious hole is created in the Kingdom of Moganbo, and Princess Laura's mother and her nanny are able to arrive in England through it. Princess Laura is finally able to see them.

As far as the Asshua region is concerned, they win the war against the Republic of Ston which is mentioned at the end of *The Lonely King*, and it becomes the independent Kingdom of Asshua. Princess Laura, her mother, and her nanny are transported to Asshua via the mysterious hole, Princess Laura marries the King, and the King becomes king of the newly established Kingdom of Asshua.

In the first afterword of *The Lonely Princess*, the author KITA MORIO relates how other characters who appeared in *The Lonely King* and *The Lonely Beggar* are doing: the Japanese beggar and one of the main characters in *The Lonely Beggar*, Omorai Korori, does not appear even once in *The Lonely Princess* but the narrator assumes he is probably doing well and working hard at his job of being a beggar. He also says that Mr. Devilfather must be doing well, too. Dr. John Challenger and his daughter, Ann, have returned to England. As for the malicious Prime Minister, he was unable to obtain the King's signature to withdraw the money from the bank in Switzerland, and he is probably still living in Zurich, but the narrator suspects that the money he has at hand is probably running low now and that he will get into financial trouble very soon. The sixth and therefore the last afterword of the trilogy ends with the following line: "Every human and

living creature, including a king, a beggar, and a princess, are lonely in one way or the other, aren't they."²⁸³

Perry Nodelman, a well-known scholar of children's literature, analyzes literary works for children and has arrived at some typical characteristics shared by many literary works for children. He states that in children's literature, (1) characters tend to be children or the child-like, which include humanized objects or animals, (2) story lines tend to follow the pattern of a character leaving home, learning the value of home, and then returning home again (home/away/home pattern), (3) thematic structure has binary oppositions in which various values are associated with being home as opposed to being away (e.g., if being home is associated with evil/safety/citizenship, being away is associated with good/danger/exile, or vice versa), (4) styles and structures are simple and repetitious with variation, and the stories tend toward fantasy, and focus on the action, and (5) stories imply optimism about the idyllic nature of reality, but the optimism is subdued by other possible interpretations.²⁸⁴ Of course, having all the above characteristics does not make a story children's literature, and children's literature does not have to contain all of the qualities, either. Knowing that, I would like to use Perry's characteristics as one guideline to examine what makes the *Lonely* trilogy a children's story. All three protagonists are either a child or a child-like. The King is twenty-three years old by the end of the trilogy. However, he retains the heart (or naïveté) of a child. Korori the Beggar is in middle school, and the Princess is nine years old by the end of the

²⁸³ Kita Morio, *Sabishii himegimi* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1977) 308.

²⁸⁴ Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer, *The Pleasures of Children's Literature* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003) 191-212.

trilogy. All the stories in the trilogy clearly fit into “home/away/home” pattern and “being home” and “being away” are contrasted with opposite values. In the case of *The Lonely King*, for example, the Kingdom of Ston is not a pleasant place for the King because of the vicious Prime Minister, but when the King reaches Asshua after some struggle, he is reunited with his nanny and, although it is not completely a happy place for the King because he has to hide his identity, he spends some peaceful time in the region. When he goes to the United States, however, he is forced to work for a nasty thief and has some difficult times, but he eventually goes back to Asshua where he can finally be united with Princess Laura. In *The Lonely Beggar*, Korori’s home is a safe place but his father sends him to America so that he can be trained as a beggar, and he encounters dangers in America. Eventually he goes back to Japan, although readers may suspect that a difficult reality will await him because his father is bankrupt when Korori goes back. In the trilogy, all three works have a repetitive structure and story lines: all have six forewords, six afterwords, and all begin with the same phrase, “For many children and the many adults who retain the heart of a child.” All the characters are forced to leave their home, and they are all used and manipulated by malicious people, but they deal with their manipulators with their naïve innocence. Obviously the trilogy is fantasy and focuses on action. There is not much subtle psychology of the characters depicted. As seen above in the summaries, the stories take place in various places such as fictional kingdoms, New York, Las Vegas, and England, and there are different elements presented throughout the stories. *The Lonely King* contains lots of exaggerated and pedantic humor, *The Lonely Beggar* has some elements of detective stories and mystery fiction, and the happy ending in *The Lonely Princess* becomes possible only because of

science fiction-like characters and elements such as a flying saucer, space aliens, a mad scientist, and the mysterious bottomless hole. The stories are unrealistic and in some parts illogical, but things still happen in the stories due to the supernatural power of space aliens, the mad scientist, and an improbable bottomless pit. Characters, whether they are good or malicious, are depicted straightforwardly, although vocabularies used in the stories are not necessarily simple. The *Lonely* trilogy contains most of the characteristics shared by children's stories that Perry Nodelman points out.

The stories contain many elements that are usually observed in children's stories. Then what is it that Kita wants to convey to "adults who retain the heart of a child" in the story written in a form of a children's story? I argue that is his nostalgia for his own childhood, which we find in "The Red Ghost and the White Ghost" above, and his satirical depiction (and therefore his criticism) of modern society. In *Adventures of Kupukupu the Sailor*, we see Kita's criticism of modern culture and civilization through the voice of some characters. The criticisms are directly expressed there. In the *Lonely* trilogy, Kita expresses his criticism explicitly in his forewords and afterwords using the voice of the writer/narrator KITA MORIO. For example, he writes in one of the forewords of *The Lonely Beggar* that "human beings like to compare themselves to others so much, and because of that, they struggle, suffer, or enjoy happiness in vain like fools." He also comments on the vicious Prime Minister of Ston in one of the afterwords of *The Lonely Beggar* and says, "Prime Ministers are shameful beings no matter what country you go to."²⁸⁵ The depiction of Princess Laura's instant and short-lived fame after moving to the U.S. is portraying people's and media's short attention spans. However,

²⁸⁵ See Kita Morio, "Sabishii ôsama," *KMZ*, vol. 10 (1976) 262 and 433.

more profound criticism of the society, as well as the nostalgia for his childhood, is subtly expressed in the depictions of the protagonists' loneliness. Below, I would like to discuss this point by examining how the protagonists' loneliness is depicted in the trilogy.

When we examine what makes the protagonists "lonely," there seem to be three characteristics that are shared by all the protagonists. The first characteristic of "loneliness" shared by the three protagonists is that they are all separated from their families, either due to a circumstance or by death, and specifically their mothers are absent in their lives. The King's mother passed away as soon as she gave birth to the King, so he never saw his mother. As for Korori, before he studies abroad in the U.S., he lives with his strict father and a butler but there is no mention of his mother. Therefore, we do not know whether his mother is living with them, separated from them, or dead. The Princess's mother is alive, but the Princess has been separated from her since she married the King when she was three years old. Therefore, although her mother is living, she does not see her mother for six years until she meets her again at the age of nine, and so the mother is basically absent in her life. Although Ann, a daughter of Dr. Challenger, is a sub character, her birth mother left her father long ago and Ann is not getting along with any of her stepmothers. All the protagonists spend their childhood years without their mothers.

The second characteristic is that people do not understand who they are because their appearances are deceiving. The King is a king who is normally considered one of the wealthiest and the most powerful people in the country. However, he cannot even eat enough to satisfy his hunger. He is constantly hungry because most of his food is eaten by his tasters before it is served to him. Even though he is a king, he has absolutely no

authority to do anything, except doing what the vicious Prime Minister tells him to do. The appearance is also deceiving for Korori. Although Korori is a beggar whom we assume to have little money, his family is a “prestigious” bourgeois beggar family, very wealthy, and lives in a big property in Tokyo. Although Korori’s father goes bankrupt in the middle of *The Lonely Beggar*, it is not because he did not earn enough money to support his family but because he donated so much money to orphanages and shelters to help those who are oppressed in society. He did not want to be unfair, so instead of donating money to some facilities, he wanted to donate to every single facility in the country. A beggar is considered an oppressed one, so the beggar financially taking care of the oppressed is antithetical. The Princess’ case is the same. Even though she is a princess, she has no home to go back to and is forced to work in a show in Las Vegas.

The third common characteristic is that all of them are exploited by people around them and they have nobody to turn to. The King is treated like a puppet by the Prime Minister in his own kingdom, and when he goes to New York, he and Korori are made to work for and by Ben Stein. The Princess is also exploited by agents who force her to work in a Las Vegas show, and who later try to send her back to her country so that they can get some rewards from her father who is a king. The Prime Minister, Ben Stein, and the agents all exploit the protagonists, making a pretense of doing them a great favor, and the protagonists, whether they are aware of being exploited or not, deal with the exploiters with their childlike naïveté. All the protagonists mature in the midst of the hardships they are going through, yet they still preserve their child-like naïveté that appears to some to be their stupidity or ignorance. As a critic and high school teacher Kuritsubo Yoshiki points out, they will never transform or grow to become people who

outsmart their exploiters.²⁸⁶ On the contrary, no matter what they go through, they still deal with situations and people with their innocence and naïveté.

The first characteristic I mentioned is physical loneliness as well as psychological but the second and the third characteristics are purely psychological. Although they are surrounded by people, nobody truly understands them and they are constantly misunderstood. It is symbolic that, in the case of the King, people admire the retouched portrait of the King that the Prime Minister circulates around the country, which does not even resemble him. It feels surely lonely if nobody really sees who you are rather than what you are. Even when you are physically close to someone, if that person exploits you, it is an even lonelier situation.

Through these depictions of the protagonists' loneliness, Kita seems to express his childhood memories and his criticism of modern society. First, I would like to discuss how his childhood experience is reflected in the protagonists' loneliness. Both the King and Korori have a figure who replaces their absent mothers.²⁸⁷ Korori has a butler who has been serving the family for three generations and who is very protective of Korori. When Korori's father decides to send Korori to study abroad in the U.S., the butler is the one who convinces the father, who believes that a beggar does not need to speak a word, to let Korori take English lessons so that he will not be in trouble when he arrives in the United States.²⁸⁸ The butler also gives Korori extra money even though the father tells

²⁸⁶ Kuritsubo Yoshiki, "Kita Morio • shuyô sakuhin no bunseki, *Sabishii ôsama*," *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 39.12 (1974): 125.

²⁸⁷ The Princess has a nanny, but I am not including her in the discussion because nothing much is said about the nanny, except that she came to see the Princess in England from the Kingdom of Mongabo with her mother.

²⁸⁸ Kita Morio, "Sabishii ôsama," *KMZ*, vol. 10 (1976) 275-276.

him to give Korori only enough money to allow him to reach the destination.²⁸⁹ Just like a mother, the butler serves as a cushion between Korori and his strict father. In the case of the King, he has a nanny who took care of him like a mother. The nanny seems to play an important role in *The Lonely King*.

When the King was an infant, he had a nanny but when he had become old enough to start monarchical education, the nanny was considered no longer necessary for the King and was sent back to where she was originally from. The King was very sad at the beginning but gradually forgot about her in his busy schedule. When the Prime Minister is searching for the King's second wife, he shows the King a nude picture of Marilyn Monroe in order to awaken his sexual instinct. When the King looks at the photo and mistakes her breasts for a couple of oranges with which he is obsessed, the Prime Minister tells the King that they are not oranges but breasts, and says that the breasts are much more desirable than oranges. When the King hears the word "breast," his nostalgic memories of his childhood start to come back to him.

[The nanny] was a gentle nanny. Even after the King became old enough not to be breastfed, she loved the toddler King from the bottom of her heart, even more than she did her own children. She often held him on her lap and did such things as telling a story of old regional legends or singing lullabies.

While listening to her stories, the toddler King used to unintentionally touch her breasts because he had gotten used to doing so. To tell you the truth, her breasts no longer produced milk, and they were even sagging, but they were soft and big, and the nipples were protruded. When the King pressed them as if they were door bells, the nipples were buried into her soft, hilly breasts. But, after a while, they gradually and slowly recovered their original shape, just like a sprout that comes out from the ground in the spring.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 276 and 289.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 54.

His desire to see the nanny becomes manifest when he is heading to the Asshua region to escape from the revolution in the capital. In the following scene, the King is totally exhausted; he is separated from his followers, and he has been walking for many, many days without any food or drink in the extremely hot weather.

His mind stopped working in a logical manner a long while ago. In his foggy consciousness, a short, fragmented thought comes and goes.
“... It is extremely hard, it’s hot, I feel dizzy... But I must go ...”
“Where? Where on earth am I going?”
“... yes, to the Asshua village. But, why?”
“I’ll soon die. ... I know it because I feel I am going back to the place where I was before I was born.”
“... I’ll definitely die, so before then, I have to reach the Asshua village. But why?”
“That’s right, I have to see my nanny before I die, because she must be waiting for me there.”²⁹¹

When he has absolutely no energy left to keep going, he comes to the conclusion that dying is so much easier than living this way.

The King dragged his body, which did not feel like his own, to a cliff. ... Then his sight began to blur again. The bottom of the valley was filled with a white foggy entity, and it began to swirl and gradually took shape, the shape of a human face, the face of the woman whom he had missed so much.
“Nanny!”²⁹²

The above scene is strikingly similar to one scene in *Ghosts*, one of Kita’s strongly autobiographical fictional works. In the scene, the adolescent protagonist goes into the mountains in the Japan Alps and loses his way in the thick mist at night. Just like the King, he is completely exhausted in the cold weather. He is “feel[ing] the familiar hand of death on [him] again, coldly at [his] collar and at [his] throat.”²⁹³ Then the following description ensues:

²⁹¹ Ibid., 127.

²⁹² Ibid., 128.

²⁹³ Kita Morio, *Ghosts*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1993) 187.

For some time I had been aware of a vague white shape drifting ahead of me. In the darkness, in the fog, it seemed to be waiting there, a ball of mist perhaps yet moving gently on ahead, beckoning, inviting; and instinctively I followed it. ... I strained my eyes, keeping that dim shape constantly in sight. It was her. It was the face I had never been able to remember.

... I opened my mouth, straining for the word, and when I said it I heard it echoing in my ear,
“Mummy!”²⁹⁴

In both stories the protagonists, who are actively or passively pondering about death in their extreme exhaustion, see the illusion of the face of a person who is very important to them in the mist. In *Ghosts*, the mother plays a very crucial role. The protagonist is separated from his mother before he reaches school age. Even though he does not remember the mother's face, he unconsciously but constantly looks for the image of his mother. This Jungian insight that is apparent in *Ghosts* is not present in *The Lonely King*. However, just as *Ghosts* has a strong autobiographical element, it is not too far off to assume that, as Yamanaka Yasuhiro suggests, the importance of the nanny in *The Lonely King* also derives from Kita's experience during his childhood.

As mentioned earlier, Kita writes about his nanny, Nanny Matsuda, in some of his essays. He writes in one essay that Nanny Matsuda “raised us children more tenderly than my mother did.”²⁹⁵ In another essay, he recalls the time he had an acute kidney disease in his fifth year in elementary school and had to be in bed for a few months, and he writes, “What saddened me most at that time was that Nanny Matsuda, who could have tenderly taken care of me who was bedridden, had already gone.” Then he

²⁹⁴ Except for the last line, the translation is Dennis Keene's in Kita Morio, *Ghosts*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1993) 187. I translated the last line as it appears in the original Japanese text to show the similarity between the passage in *The Lonely King* and that of *Ghosts*.

²⁹⁵ Kita Morio, “Bochi,” *Dokutoru Manbô kaisôki* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbun Shuppansha, 2007) 24.

remembers the time Nanny Matsuda passed away: “We children cried quite a bit. Especially I cried for a long time in a bathroom hiding myself from everyone, thinking that I now have nobody who could protect me any more.”²⁹⁶ It is obvious Nanny Matsuda holds a special position in his childhood experiences and memories.

Referring to Akutagawa Ryûnosuke’s being raised by his aunt, Yamanaka Yasuhiro writes that “[Ryûnosuke]’s ‘aunt experience’ is so significant that it formed a big portion of his psychological life.”²⁹⁷ It seems it was not unusual for those who were born into a well-to-do family in Tokyo in pre-war Japan to be raised by an aunt or a nanny in the family. Naka Kansuke, for example, recalls his childhood memories with his aunt, whom he refers to as *Obasan*, in his most famous novel *The Silver Spoon* (*Gin no saji*, 1913, 1915). Although Kansuke was raised by his aunt, he still lived with his strict and emotionally distant mother. He writes in one of his essays that “feelings of love for my father and mother have inexplicably diminished, perhaps because of the unnatural restrictions and suppressions I suffered during my childhood,” and he also writes in another essay that he has no recollection of having been loved by anyone other than people like *Obasan*.²⁹⁸ Ryûnosuke’s mother was physically and psychologically absent because she suffered a mental illness less than eight months after she gave birth to him.²⁹⁹ Ryûnosuke writes at the very beginning in his autobiographical fiction entitled

²⁹⁶ Kita Morio, “Chiisana oshiire no koto nado,” *Dokutoru Manbô tsuisôki* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1979) 83.

²⁹⁷ Yamanaka Yasuhiro, “Kita Morio no dôwa sekai to sono himitsu,” *Risô* Sep. 1980: 53.

²⁹⁸ See Naka Kansuke, “Haha no shi,” *Naka Kansuke Zenshu*, vol. 6 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1990) 356. Naka Kansuke’s “The Silver Spoon” (*Gin no saji*) is included in *Naka Kansuke Zenshû*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989) 183.

²⁹⁹ Sekiguchi Yasuyoshi, *Akutagawa Ryûnosuke – Tatakai no shôgai* (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbunsha, 1992) 14.

“Death Register” (Tenkibo, 1926) that he has never felt close to his mother.³⁰⁰ In Kita’s case, his mother left home when Kita was six and was not allowed to come home for about twelve years. However, although she was physically absent in the house for most of Kita’s childhood, Kita and his siblings went to visit her once a week in his uncle’s house where she stayed, and they spent a part of their summer vacation in an inn at the seashore. When he visited her on weekends, “the mother whom [he] saw once in a while seemed especially kind.” Kita continues:

She never did that in Aoyama, but she went to the kitchen and made for us cream custard, gelatin dessert, among other things, by herself. Sometimes she took some meat out from the refrigerator without getting permission [from my uncle], and we, just my mother and her children, got together to have *sukiyaki* in her room. ... She was a selfish person, but, due to her being separated from her children, her motherly instinct seemed to be aroused.³⁰¹

When he spent his summer at a seaside inn with his mother, he was elated “as if [he] had gained all the wealth in the world” because his mother allowed him to order almost every day his favorite pork cutlet sandwich, which was not possible when he was living with his father in Tokyo.³⁰² Kita retained a wonderful image of his mother during his childhood partly due to his separation from her. Kita writes, “Even though our nanny constantly raised us with her very tender care, going to see our own mother once in a while stirred special feelings in our hearts.”³⁰³ Unlike Akutagawa Ryûnosuke and Naka Kansuke, who felt loved only by their aunts while growing up, Kita enjoyed his relationships with both his mother and nanny.

³⁰⁰ Akutagawa Ryûnosuke, “Tenkibo,” *Akutagawa Ryûnosuke zenshû*, vol. 13 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996) 234.

³⁰¹ Kita Morio, “Nezu yama,” *Haha no kage* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1994) 35.

³⁰² Kita Morio, “Yakôchû,” *Haha no kage* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1994) 54.

³⁰³ Kita Morio, “Nezu yama,” *Haha no kage* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1994) 33-34.

Kita portrays in *Ghosts* the protagonist who, just like Kita, was separated from his mother when he was very young, and his constant search and his admiration for his mother. The protagonist narrator calls the childhood memories, specifically memories about his mother, “personal myths.”³⁰⁴ It is, then, not unreasonable to assume that Kita names the *Lonely* trilogy “a children’s story” for both adults and children because in the works Kita depicts his personal myths – his childhood memories with his nanny. It is a children’s story for Kita because he expresses his affection, appreciation, and nostalgia towards his nanny who took care of him so tenderly during his childhood. After all, myths and children’s stories, according to Kita, are of the same origin.³⁰⁵

Next, I would like to discuss how his criticism of modern society is expressed through the depictions of the “loneliness” of the protagonists in the trilogy. It is interesting to note that some critics see Kita himself in the image of the King who is lonely. Shinoda Hajime says that everyone has to unwillingly play the role of the King at one time or another in one’s own life, and that Kita Morio skillfully expresses the subtleties of how that happens in the form of children’s story. Shinoda concludes his critique by saying, “[Kita Morio] usually has nothing to do with ‘I-novel.’ It is very rare that he exposes himself as openly as he does [in *The Lonely King*].”³⁰⁶ Shinoda does not explain in what way Kita is playing the role of the King, but Kuritsubo Yoshiki goes into a deeper examination in his critique of the work. Quoting Mishima Yukio’s essay stating that Mishima finds his own private space in theatrical plays and sports because journalists do not leave him alone, Kuritsubo analyzes that a “children’s story” is Kita’s private

³⁰⁴ Kita Morio, *Ghosts*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1993) 1.

³⁰⁵ Kita Morio, “Omoide no kaigai dōwa,” *Manbōhakase to kaijin Mabuze* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1984) 122.

³⁰⁶ Shinoda Hajime, “Kaisetsu,” *Shinchō gendai bungaku*, vol. 49 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1978) 396.

space where he can express himself and his suffering caused by the journalism that keeps running after him, treating him as a popular writer. The King is a puppet and is being exploited by the Prime Minister, and so is Kita who is exploited for profit by the journalism that does not leave him alone.³⁰⁷ Kuritsubo continues:

The extreme loneliness of <the King>, the protagonist of this children's story, is that of the writer. One can say that it is the writer's rebellion against journalism. He expresses his loneliness in the form of a children's story. Just like Mishima Yukio was forced to go into <sports> to enjoy his own solitude and free time as an escape from Japanese journalism, Kita Morio was cornered to write a <children's story>. <The children's story for adults> is an advertising phrase for *The Lonely King*. If that means an adult taking a refuge in the world of children, it is fine. However, if that indicates that the emotions and affairs of the adult's world are told in the form of children's story, children who have insights will not forgive this. It is because <children's stories> should not be used as a tool for concealment of self.³⁰⁸

Kuritsubo does not state whether or not he thinks Kita uses *The Lonely King* as a tool to conceal himself, but his critique is similar to Dômeki Kyôzaburô's that was quoted earlier. Dômeki states that, even though the *Lonely* trilogy sold a vast number of copies, the stories are not of high quality. Kuritsubo, on the other hand, focuses on the writer who is forced to produce popular stories that sell many copies, just like a puppet performing according to a puppet master's will. And, therefore, he claims that the loneliness of the King, who is a puppet, is actually the loneliness of the author who is also a puppet of Japanese journalism.

The points made by Shinoda and Kuritsubo are interesting. However, I think what Kita wants to depict in the trilogy is not only about himself but also about the "loneliness" of people in the modern society in general. In that sense, the trilogy can be

³⁰⁷ Kuritsubo Yoshiki, "Kita Morio • shuyô sakuhin no bunseki, *Sabishii ôsama*," *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 39.12 (1974): 124-25.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 126.

read as a sharp criticism of society. Every adult is more or less wearing a mask in public to hide his or her true self, yet it is lonely and sad when people do not really understand who you are. As a member of the community, everyone is expected, or forced, to do certain things or behave in certain ways. However, being aware that we are depending on the community for survival, the only thing we can do is to pretend to be naïve and keep doing what is expected of us to do, just like the King, Korori, or the Princess who all naively and obediently follow the instructions of their exploiters. It is sad to see this kind of reality even in a fictional work. At the same time, adult readers might see themselves in such exploiters as the Prime Minister and Ben Stein. If a person turns out to be useful, do we not use the person for our or the community's benefit?

A child reader may enjoy the trilogy as a comical work with many exciting, unrealistic characters and elements in it, but an adult reader will see the characters and occurrences from a different angle. In this sense, the *Lonely* trilogy – *The Lonely King*, *The Lonely Beggar*, and *The Lonely Princess* form a story for both children and adults. Although the trilogy has a so-called happy ending with the King and the Princess getting married again in the newly established Kingdom of Asshua, where there are seemingly no malicious people, Kita warns the readers that there is no “happily ever after.” By saying in the afterword of *The Lonely Beggar* that there is no happy ending in real life and that, even if one becomes happy, one will never know what happens in the future as long as one is alive, Kita is adding his pessimistic view of life to this trilogy. The Japanese word *sabishii* as in *Sabishii ôsama* means lonely, but it also means sad, cheerless, deserted, and melancholy. The word *sabishii* is the feeling readers may feel after reading the works, though they may have a good laugh at the exaggerated humor and gags in them.

Kita Morio has written in a variety of styles, and even within the genre of children's literature, his work is broad, ranging from translation of foreign children's stories into Japanese, and of classical Japanese tales into plain modern Japanese for children, to writing stories for very young children and for adults who retain the heart of a child. This clearly indicates the important position children's literature holds for him.

When comparing Kita's children's stories written for differing age groups, it is notable that he uses different characters, vocabulary, and styles that are appropriate for readers in each of the targeted age groups. At the same time, there are common characteristics shared by his children's stories for different age groups. The protagonists of his stories are not successful people or are, rather, inferior ones. This characteristic is shared by his work in other genres as we have seen in chapters two and three. Whether in serious, autobiographical stories, comical works, or in children's stories, Kita's focus is always on someone who is powerless, weak, and unsuccessful. Also, Kita's children's stories usually do not have happy endings, which is common in other children's literature. Even in his stories that have a happy ending such as those in the *Lonely Trilogy*, Kita expresses his pessimistic view on humans through the voice of the narrator demonstrating that there is no such thing as "happily ever after" in this life. Some of Kita's children's stories are deeply rooted in the autobiographical elements of his life, especially in his childhood experiences and memories. It can be said that children's literature is the place where Kita can safely express the nostalgia he feels for his childhood.

Chapter 5: Other Works

Kita Morio turned eighty-three years old in May of 2010, and although he has not produced much in recent years, he has published two collections of essays recently. They are *Manbô's Last Big Gambling* (*Manbô saigo no ôbakuchi*, 2009) and *The Manbô Family's Journey of Remembrance* (*Manbôke no omoide ryokô*, 2010). Also, Kita's correspondence with a literary critic Tsuji Kunio, who had been Kita's friend since their higher school years, has just been published on July 30 of 2010 as a book entitled *Friendship in Our Youth – Correspondence between Tsuji Kunio and Kita Morio* (*Wakahi no yûjô – Tsuji Kunio • Kita Morio ôfuku shokan*, 2010).³⁰⁹ According to an advertising blurb for *Manbô's Last Big Gambling*, Kita had been in a manic state again which was triggered by the fact that Barack Obama was elected and became the President of the United States in 2009.³¹⁰ Whatever the reason, the publication of his recent books was welcome news to many of Kita's readers. In the previous chapters of this study, I have examined Kita's representative works in distinctive genres, namely, serious fiction, humorous fiction, and children's literature. Indeed, he is a writer of versatile styles, and in his long writing career, he has produced numerous works in different genres. In this

³⁰⁹ The correspondence between Tsuji Kunio and Kita from May of 1959 to February of 1961 has been published in a literary magazine *Shinchô* in 2009. See Tsuji Kunio and Kita Morio, "Pari Tôkyô ôfuku shokan," *Shinchô* Aug. 2009: 6-63.

³¹⁰ Shinchôsha, *Manbô saigo no oobakuchi*, 2010 <<http://www.shinchosha.co.jp/book/306236>>.

chapter, I would like to mention some of his other important works which overlap or combine genres: humorous works, serious works, and other genres.

Humorous works:

a. The Manbô series:

Kita's humorous works can be roughly divided into two categories: essay-style works with humor, and his comical, humorous stories. Most of his humorous essay-style works are called the Manbô series (*Manbô-mono*) as they have Dr. Manbô or simply Manbô in their titles. Even if a work is a collection of essays, if the title of the collection has Dr. Manbô in it, the work has one consistent theme. On the other hand, if simply Manbô is given in a title, the work tends to be a collection of miscellanies.³¹¹ Although he has produced many works in the Manbô series, only eight works have titles that contain Dr. Manbô in them. They are *Doctor Manbô at Sea* (*Dokutoru Manbô kôkaiki*, 1960), *Dr. Manbô's Record of Insects* (*Dokutoru Manbô konchûki*, 1961), *Dr. Manbô's Concise Dictionary* (*Dokutoru Manbô shûjiten*, 1963), *Dr. Manbô's Stopover* (*Dokutoru Manbô tochû gesha*, 1966), *Dr. Manbô's Record of Youth* (*Dokutoru Manbô seishunki*, 1968), *Dr. Manbô's Record of Recollection* (*Dokutoru Manbô tsuisôki*, 1976), *Dr. Manbô's Record of His Medical Office* (*Dokutoru Manbô ikyokuki*, 1993), and *Dr. Manbô's Record of Reminiscence* (*Dokutoru Manbô kaisôki*, 2007). Four of these works are autobiographical, two are humorous essays, and two are collection of essays with a consistent theme.

³¹¹ Kita states that the collections of miscellanies sell better than his serious works, and therefore, he produces literary miscellanies to earn a living although he is not proud of them. See Kita Morio, "Sôzaku yowa" (15), in *Geppô* (15) supplement to *KMZ*, vol. 15 (1977) 1. This clearly indicates that the majority of his readers prefer to read his humorous, light-hearted essays.

a. 1: Autobiographical essays:

Four of the Dr. Manbô autobiographical works are *Dr. Manbô's Record of Youth*, *Dr. Manbô's Record of His Medical Office*, *Dr. Manbô's Record of Recollection*, and *Dr. Manbô's Record of Reminiscence*. *Dr. Manbô's Record of Recollection* deals with the time period from his childhood to near the end of his middle school days, *Record of Youth* depicts his higher school and college years in Matsumoto and Sendai, and *Record of His Medical Office* is an account of his days while he was working as an assistant in the Department of Neurology at Keiô University School of Medicine. His most recent work in his Dr. Manbô series, *Dr. Manbô's Record of Reminiscence*, does not deal with a specific time period of his life but is a collection of essays in which he writes about various stages and events of his life and the people whom he has met, and it covers from his childhood and school years to his present day as an elderly man. Of these four works, the most well known one is, without doubt, *Dr. Manbô's Record of Youth*.

Kita writes that *Dr. Manbô's Record of Youth* is one of his best selling books and that many of the letters sent to him from his readers mention this work, adding that the readers express their desire to experience the higher school life Kita had experienced.³¹² Many wish to experience the youth and tumble vigor with which the students lived their lives, the close camaraderie shared by the students, and the deep bonds that developed between students and professors. Indeed, the first half of the work in which Kita talks about his days in Matsumoto Higher School is very informative about the lifestyle of students in a higher school, which came to an end in 1949 when the new 6-3-3-4 school

³¹² Kita Morio, "Sôzaku yowa" (13), in *Geppô* (13) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 13 (1977) 3.

system was introduced. One of the Matsumoto Higher School graduates who entered the school one year after Kita writes of his experience in the dorm as follows:

The first night we entered the dorm, ten plus sophomore students performed something called “storm,” in which they taught us freshmen the dorm song and the “*dekansho*” dance with frantic enthusiasm.³¹³ It was really like a storm. On the second night, we danced like mad men at the foot of the tower of Matsumoto Castle. It was a baptism to dorm life. The following night, we all thought we would be able to sleep peacefully, but soon after we fell asleep, the next storm attacked us. It was what was known as the “Storm of Preaching.” Several sophomore students violently opened the door and came into the room with loud noises from dragging their wooden clogs, hitting basins, and screaming the “*dekansho*” song. They turned off the light, so we were trapped in complete darkness. We three incoming students reflexively got up and sat down on the futon. *I*, who was sitting further from the door was the first to be victimized. – they pressed us by shouting and What is the purpose of your life? What is the significance of living in the dorm? babbling these questions. When we made some intelligent or decent remarks, their angry voices went up an octave higher and they drummed with wooden clogs even louder.³¹⁴

The writer of this essay continues and tells us that one of the sophomore students mentioned was Kita. Kita depicts these “storms” and other traditions in a higher school student’s life in detail in the work, but he also writes of the chaotic situation a higher school student experienced immediately before and after the war. For example, when he and his classmates enter Matsumoto Higher School on August 1, 1945, the students are sent to a factory to work immediately after a brief commencement.³¹⁵ When the school resumes on September 20, not many classes are offered but, instead, students have to work outside to turn a former drill ground into a vegetable field to secure their food.

³¹³ “*Dekansho*” song was popular among higher school students. The meaning of *dekansho* remains unclear but one of the explanations is that it is a combination of the first syllable of three German philosophers’ names, *Descartes*, *Kant*, and *Schopenhauer*.

³¹⁴ Kobayashi Tetsurô, “Kita Morio no ita Matsumoto,” *Tosho* May 1998: 12.

³¹⁵ Although the new academic year starts in April in the Japanese school system, all the accepted candidates to higher schools were instructed to enter them on August 1 that year due to the conditions near the end of war. See Kita Morio, “Mezurashiku shizunda kakidashi,” *Dokutoru Manbô seishunki* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1968) 13.

Even if classes are scheduled, many classes are cancelled due to the fact that teachers are too weak from hunger to work. The school is eventually closed in December due to the shortage of food and it does not resume until March of the next year. The new incoming students are to enter the school in April, so the protagonist and his classmates are to become sophomores without spending much time studying during their first-year.³¹⁶ Kita writes, “We became the dumbest sophomores in the school’s history.”³¹⁷

The first half of *Dr. Manbô Record of Youth* is devoted to Kita’s days in Matsumoto Higher School where he is introduced to literature and Thomas Mann’s works and loses his interest in becoming a physician. The second half of the work depicts his life after entering University of Tōhoku School of Medicine. Although he becomes a medical student, he begins to believe that, just like Tonio in Thomas Mann’s *Tonio Kröger*, he is destined, or cursed, to be a writer, and he often skips classes and starts producing poems and short stories in his university days. Just as in higher school, he spends good times with his friends during the daytime. However, when he is alone at night, he clearly realizes that he is “wearing a mask” in front of them.³¹⁸ His inner thoughts at that time, such as his youthful ideas, his anger and frustration towards people and things around him, and irritations of not being able to write and the uncertainty about his future, are expressed in the work by quoting some of the entries of the diary that Kita kept while he was studying at the university. All of the diary entries of his university

³¹⁶ Because of the chaotic situation immediately after the war, the incoming students did not enter the school in April after all, and they entered the school in fall in 1946, just like Kita did in 1945. Kita Morio, “Kyōshi kara shite hendearu,” *Dokutoru Manbō seishunki* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1968) 39.

³¹⁷ Kita Morio, “Kyōshi kara shite hendearu,” *Dokutoru Manbō seishunki* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1968) 39.

³¹⁸ Kita Morio, “Monokaki o kokorozasu,” *Dokutoru Manbō seishunki* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1968) 160.

days that he kept between 1948 to 1953 were later serialized in a magazine *Ch ûk ôron bungei tokush û* in 1987-88 and published as a book from Ch ûK ôronsha in 1988 under the title *The Diary of One Youth (Aru seishun no nikki)*. The diary includes some of the poems that Kita later published as well as his preliminary ideas about novels, so this is very informative when studying about Kita's earlier works.

The protagonist graduates from the university and his internship period at the university hospital is nearing the end at the end of *Dr. Manb ô Record of Youth*. The work ends with the scene in which the protagonist learns about his father's death and rides on a night train to go home to Tokyo. In his bag is a draft of *Ghosts*, his first novel, that is almost complete. This ending is significant in a way that suggests a cycle in life: when the father, who is a prominent tanka poet, passes away, his son is about to start his literary career and his adult life.

a. 2. Humorous Travelogues:

Among his humorous travelogues, *Doctor Manb ô at Sea* is the most prominent work, but Kita also wrote other travelogues. Two works, *Doctor Manb ô at Sea* and *Dr. Manb ô's Stop Over*, are categorized as travelogues, although the latter does not portray one specific trip but contains essays related to travel, and other than these, he produced more travelogues in his humorous style. He writes that, although he is not fond of traveling, because of the success of *Doctor Manb ô at Sea*, he has been asked to write a travelogue.³¹⁹ In chronological order, he published the following travelogues: *Doctor Manb ô at Sea (Dokutoru Manb ô k ôkaiki, 1960)*, *Napping in the South Pacific (Minami taihei y ô hirune tabi, 1962)*, *The Moon and Ten Cents (Tsuki to jussento, 1971)*, *Manb ô*

³¹⁹ See Kita Morio, "Ryokô girai," *KMZ*, vol. 15 (1977) 184.

Manic Concert (*Manbô kyôshi kyoku*, 1977), *Manbô in the Village of Sleep-Walking* (*Manbô muyôkyô*, 1978), *The Travel Diary of an Undutiful Son* (*Oyafukô tabi nikki*, 1981), and *Manbô's Nostalgic Revisit to Europe* (*Manbô aishû no yôroppa saihôki*, 2000). Although it is not strictly a travelogue, *Manbô's Excursion Ticket* (*Manbô shûyûken*, 1976) contains essays related to his travel to Europe, Madagascar, and the Soviet Union along with essays on miscellaneous topics. The destinations of these travelogues that are not obvious from the titles are as follows: *The Moon and Ten Cents* deals with his trip to America as a reporter on Apollo Eleven's launching for Asahi Shinbunsha. In this work, he depicts his eccentric behavior owing to his manic state in New York and in Cape Kennedy, Florida, but he also portrays frantic excitement about the launch of Apollo Eleven not only in America but also all over the world, the competition between America and the Soviet Union, and the civilization that heavily depends on computers with humorous but critical tones. In this sense, the work can be read not only as a travelogue but also as his criticism of civilization. *Manbô Manic Concert* depicts his trip to the Mediterranean and the South Pacific, and *Manbô in the Village of Sleep-Walking* talks about his trip to Central and South American countries, including Mexico, Columbia, Brazil, and Peru. In Brazil, he interviews some Japanese immigrants for his future novel entitled *Under the Shining Azure Sky* (*Kagayakeru aoki sora no shita de*) Volume One of which was published in 1982. *The Travel Diary of an Undutiful Son* is about his trip to Paris with his mother and his wife. As in other works, he depicts himself/his alter ego as an inferior person, in this case an undutiful son, and contrasts himself with his energetic and intrusive elderly mother.

a. 3. Collection of Essays:

Kita has written numerous humorous essays in magazines and newspapers, and many of them were later gathered and published in book form. Kita's representative work among these collections of essays is *Dr. Manbô's Record of Insects*. The essays included in the book were originally written for a weekly magazine named *Shûkan kôron* from January to August of 1961. Although all the essays in the collection refer to insects and teach readers some facts about them, the essays do not simply talk about insects. In each essay, insects are introduced in relation to Kita's childhood memories or interesting stories related to the insects and insect collectors. Therefore, the work can be enjoyed by readers even if they are not interested in insects. For example, in a section entitled "The Story of Cicadas" (Semi no hanashi), Kita introduces various stories related to cicadas, such as a specific species of cicada found in North America, and Kita's favorite poem by a Greek poet that reads, "How lucky male cicadas are. It's because female cicadas do not utter any sounds." There are also facts about an entomologist Fabre's efforts to prove the deafness of female cicadas, his father Mokichi's argument with a literary critic Komiya Toyotaka over the possible species of cicada that appears in Matsuo Bashô's famous poem, "Stillness -/sinking deep into the rocks/cries of the cicada," Kita's own encounter with one species of cicada in Hakone, a method children in Okinawa employ to catch cicadas, among other episodes.³²⁰ In these episodes, Kita skillfully inserts some scientific facts about cicadas. Kita's vast amount of knowledge on insects and trivia are humorously presented in *Dr. Manbô's Record of Insects*.

³²⁰ The translation of Matsuo Bashô's poem is from Haruo Shirane, *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Bashô* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) 228.

c. Humorous fictional stories:

As discussed in Chapter 4 of this study, some of Kita's humorous fictional stories can be classified as a "crossover" stories for both children and adults. Other than the works discussed in Chapter 4, some of his representative works in this genre include *My Uncle* (*Boku no ojisan*, 1972), *Observing from a High Place* (*Takami no kenbutsu*, 1965), and *My Dad is an Extremely Eccentric Man* (*Totchan wa daihenjin*, 1981). *My Uncle* was originally serialized in a magazine for middle school students, so the story is specifically intended for young people, but the other two works can be easily enjoyed by both children and adult readers.

My Uncle is written from the perspective of Yukio, a sixth grader in an elementary school, about his ineffectual uncle who teaches part-time at two colleges. He is single and does not earn enough income, so he lives with Yukio's family. The uncle loves to read nothing but boy's comic books, he brags about his foreign language skills but does not seem to be fluent in any foreign language, and he is too shy to talk to a woman at his *miai*, an interview with a view to marriage. He becomes obsessed with winning a foreign trip award offered by some food companies and orders everyone in the family to eat nothing but the food produced by those companies, but he does not win any awards in the end. In the mean time, Yukio writes an essay about his uncle's comical behavior and sends it to a children's magazine for a prize competition. His essay wins the second prize and he is awarded a trip to Hawaii, and his uncle insists that he accompany Yukio. The story depicts the uncle's incompetent actions and behavior in Hawaii. The end is rather abrupt: Yukio meets one Japanese-Hawaiian family, and when Yukio's and the uncle's tourist visas are about to expire, the family sends only the uncle

back to Japan and allows Yukio to stay in Hawaii for a little longer. Yukio sees the uncle's plane leaving and feels sorry for him. Compared to *The Adventure of Kupukupu the Sailor*, which was also serialized in a magazine for middle school students, *My Uncle* is not up to that quality.³²¹ However, the story shares some similarities with Kita's other stories intended for children: the story contains educational elements and didactic messages, and the main character is a lovable but underachieving person. In *My Uncle*, Kita nonchalantly explains the exchange rates of currencies, certain limitation of bringing out Japanese currency overseas, the history of Pearl Harbor and Hawaii in general, and the suffering that early Japanese immigrants to Hawaii had to endure. In the afterword of the story, he also presents a didactic message: "Every country should cooperate with one another to make this world better. It is not good to think only about your own country's interests. I ask you to learn to know more about Japan, and at the same time, learn about its relationship to the world. That, I believe, would make this world better."³²²

Although the story of *My Uncle* is told from the standpoint of a nephew, the main character of the story is the uncle. Kita writes in the afterword that he incorporated into this story his experiences of having been a useless uncle to his nieces and nephews.³²³ Kita's tendency of portraying himself as an ineffectual person in his autobiographical works and of depicting the main character as an inferior person in his children's literature merge in this story.

³²¹ Kita himself thinks that *My Uncle* is far inferior to *The Adventure of Kupukupu the Sailor*. See Kita Morio, "Sôzaku yowa" (4), in *Geppô* (4) supplement to *KMZ*, vol. 9 (1976) 3.

³²² Kita Morio, "Boku no ojisan," *KMZ*, vol. 9 (1976) 216.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 215.

Observing from a High Place was originally serialized daily in a local newspaper called *Kawakita shinpô* in 1964. This is the first serialized novel that Kita wrote, but he had rough going writing the serialized novel. Kita confesses that having to write three and a half pages every day put him under a lot of pressure, and that all he could think about was to write for a few days ahead. By the time the serialization was over and the story was published as a book, it had become his least favorite work.³²⁴ The story is told from the perspective of a cockroach. The cockroach travels from one character's house to another's by slipping into the character's pocket, and speaks of what he observes at the characters' houses. Natsume Sôseki depicts the world of humans through the eyes of a cat, but Kita writes, "I did not have [Sôseki's] *I am a Cat* in mind [while writing this work]. If I had, my work could have been a little more well thought out."³²⁵ Although the work is not one of Kita's best works, as he himself admits, his attempt to write a story from the perspective of the cockroach is an interesting one. Some elements from other works are reused in this work, such as some depictions from *Doctor Manbô at Sea* and one character being a stingy uncle, as in *My Uncle*, recycling that clearly shows Kita's struggle in creating the work.

In *My Dad is an Eccentric Man*, the story is told by Sakurai Yasuo, the son of Sakurai Denkichi who is extremely eccentric. Denkichi was a son of very rich man, and when his father died, he inherited quite a bit of money. However he spent all the money he inherited in vain and is too lazy to work. Now he and his family barely survive on the 50,000 yen that his older brother sends them every month. His older brother, Den'emon,

³²⁴ Kita Morio, "Sôsakû yowa" (13), in *Geppô* (13) supplement to *KMZ*, vol. 15 (1977) 3.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

who does not have a wife or a child, has used the money he inherited wisely and he now is a billionaire, but he suddenly dies in an accident. Since Denkichi is the sole surviving family member of Den'emon, he inherits the vast amount of money that Den'emon left, and his eccentric behaviors come to the fore. He purchases land in one of the most expensive residential areas in Tokyo and builds a gorgeous mansion. But, after learning that 75 percent of his inherited money will be taken by the government as inheritance tax, he suddenly becomes very cheap. He tries to earn money in unusual ways such as by putting a vending machine in his house and asking guests who visit his mansion to purchase their own drinks from the machine. In order to participate in the Moscow Olympics, which Japan has boycotted, he creates his own kingdom that is independent from Japan and participates in the Olympics as a player from the Kingdom of Denkichi. The story depicts how Denkichi manages his Kingdom of Denkichi in his weird, eccentric way, but in the end, the Kingdom declares war against Japan, gets defeated, and Denkichi is arrested.

Even though *My Dad is an Eccentric Man* may be considered one of Kita's absurd, humorous works, it includes Kita's sharp criticisms of Japan, such as its high taxes and the boycott of the Moscow Olympics in 1980. Denkichi thinks that "boycotting the Olympics because of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan may be the right thing to do. However, half of the Japanese population feels pity for those players who have been practicing very hard for four years aiming to participate in the Olympics. I'm sure some think that Japan is blindly doing what the U.S. wants us to do."³²⁶ When Denkichi is defeated in the war against Japan and gets arrested, people from many

³²⁶ Kita Morio, *Totchan wa daihenjin* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1993) 115.

countries send letters to the Japanese government and ask them to lessen the charge against him. When Denkichi is released from prison, the majority of the Japanese citizens are very happy about the news, and even the Presidents of the U.S. and France send Denkichi congratulatory telegrams. Many people in Japan as well as in other countries have favorable opinions about Denkichi, whose actions have been rebellious against the Japanese government. This, in itself, is a strong criticism of Japan.

Kita Morio's strange behavior while he is in a manic state is well known, and Kita himself created the Republic of Manbô Mabuze, which he claimed to be independent from Japan. Several Japanese writers have created new countries, but what is interesting about Kita is that he actualized the new country in reality with his energy coming from his manic state.³²⁷ It can be safely said that Kita actualizes other ideas and desires while he is in a manic phase in this humorous fictional story, *My Dad is an Extremely Eccentric Man*.

Serious Works:

While producing numerous humorous essays and stories, Kita has written serious works as well, although *The House of Nire* published in book form in 1963 still remains the most prominent work among his serious literary works. The literary critic Shinoda Hajime praises Kita for having versatile writing styles, saying that Kita's versatility is not limited to writing in different genres but, even within a genre of serious literature, Kita

³²⁷ For example, Inoue Yasushi's *Kirikiri-jin* (1981) is a story of people living in a remote village who are fed up with Japan and decide to create an independent country.

has an ability to write short, medium length, and long works.³²⁸ Indeed, as Shinoda points out, Kita has produced serious works in a variety of lengths.

a. Short Stories:

In 1981, Kita published a collection of short stories entitled *Kita Morio jisen tanpenshû* (*Kita Morio's Short Stories of his Choice*). In the collection are ten of Kita's earlier short stories of his choice. Of these, I would like to discuss two works: "At the Mouth of the River" (Kakô nite) and "Death" (Shi).

It has been a customary for an Akutagawa Award winner to write a short story immediately after receiving the award. "At the Mouth of the River" was written for that purpose. As mentioned in Chapter three of this study, Kita states that he intentionally did not write down things in *Doctor Manbô at Sea* that could later be developed into a more serious work.³²⁹ "At the Mouth of the River" is one of the serious works that Kita wrote based on his experience during his voyage on Shôyô-maru. The setting of "At the Mouth of the River" is the Port of Antwerp. It is depicted in *Doctor Manbô at Sea* that, due to extremely dense fog, Shôyô-maru cannot leave the Port of Antwerp as scheduled. So "Doctor" grabs his camera and sets out for town and writes humorously about what he sees and hears in town, although the depiction of the foggy town in early spring is lyrically expressed. "At the Mouth of the River," on the other hand, has a depressing tone. In this short story, the protagonist is also a ship's doctor whose ship is stuck at a river-mouth in Antwerp due to heavy fog. It has been three months since the ship left

³²⁸ Shinoda Hajime, "Ririshizumu no gappu kara," *Kita Morio jisen tanpenshû*, by Kita Morio (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1981) 187.

³²⁹ Quoted in Saitô Kunio, "Kaisetsu," *Haari no iru oka*, by Kita Morio (Tokyo: Pharaoh Kikaku, 1991) 268. Also see Kita Morio, "Sôsaku yowa" (10), in *Geppô* (10) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 6 (1977) 1.

Japan, so the protagonist and other crew members are quite tired. The ship, which cannot move due to dense fog, is depicted as analogous to the protagonist's mind. Just as everything becomes unclear in dense fog, so is the protagonist's mind. He cannot distinguish the land from water in the fog, and at the same time, the lines between reality and dream become unclear to him. He is not sure whether what has happened a little while ago actually took place in reality or in the dream. Just as another ship suddenly and unexpectedly appeared close by in dense fog, some thoughts, even things in the past that he has almost forgotten about, unexpectedly come to his mind. The ship is stuck in the fog, and so is the protagonist's mind. He is stuck in his chaotic, foggy thoughts, and only depressing thoughts come to his mind. He says, "It is this fog that exhausts my nerves."³³⁰ As a literary critic Awazu Norio points out, the strange fog permeates the protagonist in this story.³³¹ He is invaded by the fog both literally and figuratively. However, probably it is not just this protagonist who is invaded by the fog. Radar in the ship's operation room indicates many ships being immovable in the fog, and that seems to suggest in a metaphorical sense that many people are also psychologically stuck and immovable.

Both in *Doctor Manbô at Sea* and "At the Mouth of the River," how a ship warns other ships of its presence is depicted. Although what is described is similar, the way it is depicted is quite different. The following is the scene in *Doctor Manbô at Sea*:

From time to time we rang our bells as if to confirm each other's continued presence. The freighter was equipped with a fine big bell at the bow, but at the stern someone clanged on what might have been a large frying pan. This instrument had been selected after considerable experimentation with oil

³³⁰ Kita Morio, "Kakô nite," *Kita Morio jisen tanpenshû* (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1981) 42.

³³¹ Awazu Norio, "Kaisetsu," *Hoshi no nai gairo*, by Kita Morio (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1973) 268.

drums and God knows what else. ... I stayed on the bridge for about two hours to help ring the bell. It was earsplitting up close, and each time the foghorn next to it blew I set a new personal record for the standing high jump.³³²

In “Kakô nite,” the same situation is depicted as follows:

... [S]ome crew members walked around in the steering house as if they had nothing to do. Occasionally they came outside and rang the bell that was equipped at the stern of the bridge. ...

“That was a frying pan, Doctor.”

“That was what?”

“You’ve just heard the strange sound, haven’t you? It was the sound of hitting a frying pan.”

“I hate the sound,” another crew said, making a wry face. “But wasn’t it an oil drum?”

“No, it’s the sound of a frying pan. An oil drum doesn’t make such sound. Believe me.”

Such conversation did not interest me at all. On the contrary, everyone’s irritation was clearly transmitted through their words, and I did not want to force myself to join them.³³³

The scene in *Doctor Manbô at Sea* depicts a sense of a festive atmosphere, and unexpected objects such as a frying pan and an oil drum add comical elements. On the other hand, in “At the Mouth of the River,” the same unexpected objects are not comical at all but become the sources of irritation. Comparing the descriptions in both works clearly shows how Kita manipulates the material in order to create a special effect – comical effect in *Doctor Manbô at Sea* and dark tones in “At the Mouth of the River.”

In “Death,” recollections of Mokichi are recounted while depicting Mokichi’s corpse, autopsy, and his funeral service through the eyes of the protagonist, obviously Kita’s alter-ego.³³⁴ When the funeral is over, the protagonist goes back to Sendai with a couple of Mokichi’s bones in his pocket. The story ends with the description of the

³³² Kita Morio, *Dr. Manbo at Sea*, trans. Ralph McCarthy (Tokyo: Kôdansha International, 1987) 185-86.

³³³ Kita Morio, “Kakô nite,” *Kita Morio jisen tanpenshû* (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1981) 41.

³³⁴ My translation of “Shi” is included at the end of this study.

sensual dream that the protagonist recently had. The literary critic Fukuda Hirotoishi writes that “Death” is comparable to Kôda Aya’s excellent work *Rinjû*, which also deals with her father Kôda Rohan’s death.³³⁵ Kita also recalls in his essays that Kawabata Yasunari gave him a letter praising “Death” as a masterpiece. Kita thinks that the work is not a masterpiece even though it is a very meaningful work to himself, and he suspects that Kawabata might have had a premonition of his death and so a well-known literary figure’s death scene in the work might have especially spoken to him.³³⁶

However, although the work was received favorably by some, it was brutally criticized by other literary critics, Kawakami Tetsutarô, Kitahara Takeo, and Yamamuro Shizuka, in the literary magazine *Gunzô*. Yamamuro points out that Kita wrote an essay on the same material in a weekly magazine shortly before “Shi” was published, and he says that, compared to the essay, “Shi” is nicely composed as a novella. Yamamuro, however, continues that putting the protagonist’s sensual dreams at the beginning and the end of the work is Kita’s facile attempt to make the essay-like story into a novella, and he continues that these dreams are unnecessary elements in the work. Kitahara says that inserting the dreams is Kita’s self defense mechanism because Kita is not strong enough to deal with Mokichi’s death straightforwardly as a writer. Kawakami criticizes Kita’s writing style as being not that of a novelist as he can only “narrate” but does not possess the ability to “describe.”³³⁷

³³⁵ Fukuda Hirotoishi, “Kaisetsu,” *Tenjôura no kodomotachi*, by Kita Morio (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1975) 226.

³³⁶ See Kita Morio, “Ningen to Manbô,” *KMZ* vol. 15 (1977) 31, and Kita Morio, *Seinen Mokichi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001) 195-96.

³³⁷ The terms Kawakami uses are “*narêshon*, ナレーション” (narration) and “*disukuripushon*, ディスクリプション” (description). For these criticisms, see Kawakami Tetsutarô, Kitahara Takeo, and Yamamuro Shizuka, “Sôsaku gappyô,” *Gunzô* Apr. 1964: 226-230. Kawakami further says that even

Another critic, Hinuma Rintarô, later published his opposition to these criticisms. written from this worldview.³³⁸ Hinuma's argument seems valid: right before a He writes that Kita included the sensual dreams in the work to emphasize the duality of the world in that the world consists of both austerity (represented by Mokichi's death) and vulgarity (represented by the sensual dreams), and that *The House of Nire* is also description of the sensual dream at the very end of the story, there is also a description of the dream the protagonist frequently has after his father's death. The protagonist says that, since his father's passing, he has been having a frequent dream about Aoyama where he spent his childhood years and about his father. This kind of dream is not mentioned at the beginning of the story, and it obviously shows the protagonist's nostalgia toward his father and the childhood when he spent time with the father induced by the father's death. However, the sad tone of depicting his dreams about the father quickly changes when he says that he still keeps having sensual dreams. Even immediately after going through a life-changing event like the father's death, he is still prone to the vulgarity of the life of humanity, and the dreams about his father and about sex are well contrasted in the scene. As Hinuma concisely states, Kita depicts the human condition in which nobody is able to escape this duality of life. I would also argue that the sensual dreams are effectively used in the work to show the cyclical events of life in that the son is entering adulthood when the father is leaving this world.

b. Medium-Length/Long Works:

Kita's masterpiece *The House of Nire* is written as a form of narration, rather than description. This point is opposed by Hinuma Rintarô who states that *The House of Nire* is one of the rare novels that possess both qualities of narration and description. See Hinuma Rintarô, *Gendai sakkaron* (Tokyo: Nanbokusha, 1966) 248.

³³⁸ See Hinuma Rintarô, *Gendai sakkaron* (Tokyo: Nanbokusha, 1966) 247-48.

There are two important long works that Kita produced after *The House of Nire*. They are *Under the Shining Azure Sky* (*Kagayakeru aoki sora no shita de*, Part One in 1982 and Part Two in 1986), a literary account of the Japanese immigrants in Brazil, which won Kita the *Nihon Bungaku Taishô* (Japan Literary Award) in 1986, and the critical biography of his father Saitô Mokichi, which consists of four volumes: *Mokichi in Youth* (*Seinen Mokichi*, 1991), *Mokichi in the Prime of Life* (*Sônen Mokichi*, 1993), *Wandering Mokichi* (*Mokichi Hôkô*, 1996), and *Mokichi in his Last Years* (*Mokichi Ban'nen*, 1998). The work was awarded the Osaragi Jirô Prize in 1999.

Several years before Kita wrote *Under the Shining Azure Sky*, he produced a medium-length novel entitled *The Drunken Boat* (*Yoidorebune*, 1972), which consists of five short stories. The five, independent stories are sandwiched between a prologue and an epilogue narrated by “Ore,” meaning I or me in a vulgar way. “Ore” explains in the prologue and epilogue that one of his ancestors got shipwrecked and drifted away to Mexico, and that some of his uncles and aunts were inspired by the ancestor’s story and they also left Japan to live in a foreign country. In the epilogue, “Ore” says that he also would like to leave Japan to see foreign countries some day. The first story after the prologue is about his ancestor, Santarô, and his experience of drifting on the Pacific in the Edo period. The story is based on *Voyage to the East Inquiry Record* (*Tôkô kibun*).³³⁹ The second episode is the story of his aunt who lives in Shanghai during the colonial

³³⁹ *Tôkô kibun* (東航紀聞) is a record of stories told by sailors whose ship was wrecked in 1841 and were saved by a Spanish ship and taken to Mexico. After they came back to Japan in 1844, they told their story to members of the Kishû clan, and the 10 volumes of *Tôkô kibun* was compiled by the Kishû clan. (Only 6 volumes of them have been found and they are in the National Diet Library in Japan.) For more information on *Tôkô kibun*, please see Ikeda Akira, ed., *Nankai kibun • Tôkô kibun • Hikozô hyôryûki* (Tokyo: Yûshôdô Shuppan, 1991).

period, the third is of his other aunt's experience of living in Nepal with her British husband, the fourth is about his psychiatrist uncle who studied abroad in Canada, became a staff member at a mental hospital in Prince Edward, and later moved to New York and became a successful psychiatrist. The protagonist of the last story is a young American lady named Mary and the story takes place in Wyoming. A reader later learns that she is a descendent of Santarô, the main character in the first story who drifted and eventually ended up in Mexico. Each story is independent and has no connection to other stories except for the fact that the main character of each story is a relative of "Ore," and that all stories, other than the last one, depict Japanese people living in foreign lands. As the literary critic Matsumoto Tsuruo points out, except for the first story, the depiction of the time when the story takes place is given minimally and the focus of the story is more on the space.³⁴⁰

Kita states that, at around the time he was writing *The Drunken Boat*, he began collecting materials to write a novel on Japanese immigrants in Brazil.³⁴¹ The theme of Japanese people living in a foreign land that appears in *The Drunken Boat* is developed with the specific historical backdrop in this long novel, *Under the Shining and Azure Sky*. Being asked about his motivation for writing this novel, Kita answered as follows:

I traveled overseas when ordinary people still weren't able to go abroad freely. ... When I went to Tahiti, I heard ... from an anthropology graduate student, Hatanaka Sachiko, that some immigrants were still living on the island. So, I rented a car and drove around Tahiti looking for them. Finally we found one of them. He had poor eyesight and I felt so sorry for him. Then the words slipped out of my mouth, "Don't you want to go back to Japan?" He replied, "I try to put the desire out of my mind, because it would be impossible now." I regretted that I

³⁴⁰ Matsumoto Tsuruo, "Kita Morio shuyôsakuin no bunseki: Yoidore-sen," *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshû*, 39, no. 12 (Oct. 1974) 119.

³⁴¹ Kita Morio, "Atogaki," *Kagayakeru aoki sora no shita de* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1982) 463.

asked him the question. It was my first time to see the sad reality of Japanese immigrants. ... When I went to a cemetery in New Caledonia, the native people's graves looked bright with white flowers being offered. One section of the cemetery was devoted to Japanese people's graves. Those Japanese who led a successful life there had their own tombstones with their posthumous Buddhist names engraved on them. Then I noticed a monument under a big tree with thick foliage, on which "Japanese People's Grave" was engraved. It was a grave for those Japanese who could not do well in New Caledonia, and the back of the monument was crowded with about thirty to forty names written on it. That made me think of those who had had sad lives there, and it occurred to me that I should write a story of immigrants. So, I have had this idea in mind for a long time, probably since 1960 or 1961.³⁴²

He also mentions that he saw an emigrant ship to Brazil in Yokohama in 1961 and that the sight of little children sadly standing on a deck of the ship really touched his heart.³⁴³

One of the best known works that depicts the suffering of Japanese immigrants in Brazil is Ishikawa Tatsuzô's *The Emigrants* (*Sôbô*, 1935), which earned him the first Akutagawa Prize in 1935. The work focuses on the final week that immigrants-to-be spend in Japan at a camp in Kobe. In a way, *Under the Shining and Azure Sky* shows what happened to them after these people arrived in Brazil.³⁴⁴ This long novel consists of two volumes: Volume One covers from 1908 to 1923 when the Great Kantô Earthquake hits Japan, and Volume Two from 1925 to 1946, one year after the war. Volume One begins with a scene in 1908 in which the first group of Japanese immigrants are on their way to Port of Santos in the State of Sao Paulo, Brazil on a ship named Kasato-maru. Those people decided to go to Brazil, trusting the words given by an immigration

³⁴² "Hawai ya Nyû Karedonia de imin no hisansa o shiru," *Nikkei Shimbun* 27 June 2007
<<http://www.nikkeishimbun.com.br/2007-75imin-tokusyu-A.html>>.

³⁴³ Haniya Yutaka and Kita Morio, *Sabishii bungakusha no jidai: "môsôbyô" tai "sôutsubyô,"* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1982) 4.

³⁴⁴ *The Emigrants* is the first part of the trilogy. Part Two is entitled *Southern Sea Route* (*Nankai kôro*, 1939) and it depicts the emigrants' forty-five days in the ship en route to Brazil, and Part Three, *People Without Voices* (*Koe naki tami*, 1939), portrays the emigrants from the time they arrive in Brazil to the time they start working in a colony.

company during its campaign that people would be able to achieve prosperity if they work hard at a coffee plantation in Brazil. They believe that coffee trees are “money trees” and that they will be able to return to Japan in a few years with lots of money. But soon they realize that the promises given by the immigration company are false. Volume One depicts the hardships and struggles that these earlier immigrants went through in order to survive. Immigrants coming to Brazil on Kasato-maru are sent to several coffee farms, but by the time they arrive in Brazil in June, the season for harvesting coffee is almost over. They are also treated like slaves and their working conditions are miserable. In addition to this, the price of coffee takes a nosedive, so it is very difficult to get by on their piecework wage. Consequently, many of them eventually leave the farms, go into town, and get different jobs such as being a house-servant, a carpenter, among others, without being able to understand Portuguese. The subsequent immigrants’ conditions are a little improved, although still miserable, because the Japanese government and immigration companies had learned from the experience of people who came on Kasato-maru. Some Japanese people decided to establish their own Japanese colony. One of those is Hirano Un’pei, who came to Brazil as one of the interpreters for the immigrants. He was in charge of twenty-three Japanese families, went to Guatapara Farm with them, and eventually was trusted by the Brazilian owner and was given a position as Vice Manager. This was an exceptional success for a Japanese person. However, he strongly felt that there would be no future for Japanese immigrants as long as they were employed on Brazilian farms, so he left the farm, and after some hardships, he finally developed his own colony where every Japanese in the colony owned their lots. Unfortunately, this, too, is hit by a series of disasters such as the epidemic of malaria, which claims eighty lives in

a year, and an attack by vermin, which left them barely any crops that year. Hirano eventually passes away from Spanish flu at the age of thirty-four. Volume One is the story of how Hirano and other earlier immigrants struggle in order to survive under such harsh, adverse conditions.

Volume Two depicts the immigrants' lives after 1925, although past events appear from time to time. In addition to portraying immigrants in the State of Sao Paulo, it also depicts the hardships immigrants undergo in the Amazon region, some of whom originally came to Peru as contract laborers for Peruvian cotton and sugarcane plantations. Those people also worked under extremely harsh conditions in Peru, so, upon hearing that there was a rubber boom in the Amazon region, some of them moved there to work as rubber workers. Volume One depicts a couple of Japanese people, Hashimoto and Watanabe, who fled from Peru to Bolivia, and eventually to Manaus in the State of Amazon, Brazil via snowy Andes Cordilleras in early 19th century. Volume Two depicts them and other Japanese people working as rubber workers in the Amazon Basin. Because of the rubber boom, they make good incomes and, although others tend to spend money in town, Watanabe saves up a great deal of money hoping to eventually go back to Japan. However, the rubber boom soon comes to an end when the British people smuggled the seeds of the rubber tree and started to plant them in South Asia. Brazil lost its monopoly and the price of rubber declined precipitously. Watanabe, Hashimoto, and others finally decide to leave the region and go to a bigger city to find better jobs and hopefully to find the way to go back to Japan, but the night before their departure, someone, probably one of his fellow Japanese workers who knew Watanabe had lots of

money, attacks him by striking his head with a blunt instrument. Watanabe not only lost all his savings but he becomes a human wreck with no memory of anything in the past.

Those people who work as rubber workers in the Amazon region are not official immigrants to Brazil but originally immigrated to Peru. But in 1929, the Japanese government begins sending people officially to the Amazon region through a company named Companhia Niponica de Plantação da Brasil S/A (*Nanbei takushoku kabushikigaisha*). Unlike the first groups of immigrants in Sao Paulo who came to Brazil to be employed as contract laborers in local farms, those immigrants in the Amazon Basin are to establish a colony and cultivate the lands that they either purchased or received from the Brazilian government. Volume Two tells of pioneers in two Japanese colonies in the Amazon Basin, Acará Colony and Vila Amazônia, and the adversities they encountered and the success they accomplished. Acará Colony meets a similar fate to that of the Hirano Colony described in Volume One. Because of the infertile soil, the cacao plantation and other crops fail. Although they have enough knowledge about malaria, a complication of malaria called Blackwater fever breaks out to which quinine, the only medicine they have and know would cure malaria, does not work at all. The epidemic claims many people's lives. Companhia Niponica de Plantação da Brasil S/A tries to shift their focus from cacao plantations to mining, but this also fails and the company eventually abandons the colony. The depiction of Acará Colony ends here, but later in Volume Two, it is briefly mentioned that those people who remained in the colony have succeeded in their pepper tree plantation. It is mentioned that, when the price of pepper hits the ceiling after the war, pepper was called "black diamonds" and people in the colony earned good money.

As for Vila Amazônia, people begin emigrating there in 1931, many of whom are students of a higher school named Kôô Takushoku Gakkô, which was established exclusively for the purpose of educating young people to become future leaders of emigrants in Brazil. They engage in jute cultivation as they see a good future in jute. After several years of failure, they finally succeed in jute cultivation to the extent that one of the major newspapers states that “Japanese turned green hell into gold.”³⁴⁵ The work also depicts the problem of finding suitable wives for those younger students in Vila Amazonas.

Volume Two also continues to depict lives of Japanese people in Sao Paulo. Their lives and standard of living were improved from how they were depicted in Volume One. However, different kinds of adversities are waiting for them. When Japan enters the Pacific War in 1941, Brazil severs diplomatic relations with Japan, and Japanese immigrants are unfairly treated and oppressed. When the war ends in 1945, they have to face a big problem within the Japanese community. Due to the lack of information in their own language, people are not well-informed about the war. Consequently, the Japanese people in Brazil are divided into two groups: those who believe that Japan has won the war, the *kachigumi* faction, and defeatist or *makegumi* faction who accept Japan’s defeat in the war. Some secret societies are formed among the *kachigumi* people and they persecute the *makegumi* people, accusing them of being traitors. The *kachigumi* people burn down *makegumi* people’s silk-worm cultivation for the reason that their silk would be used to make parachutes for the U.S. military. Some

³⁴⁵ Kita Morio, *Kagayakeru aoki sora no shita de*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1986) 151.

makegumi people received death threats and some were assassinated. This long novel ends when the Japanese community in Sao Paulo is still in this chaotic state.

The novel covers the period of about forty years from 1908 to 1946, from the time the first emigrants to Brazil left Japan to the year after the end of the Pacific War. There are numerous characters in the novel and many of them are actual persons, such as Uetsuka Shûhei, who was later called “Father of the Japanese immigrants,” Watanabe Tomi “Margarita,” known as “Mother of the Japanese immigrants,” Oyama Ryôta, who first succeeded in growing jute in the Amazon Basin, Gibo Kamata, a genius gamester known as Ippachi, just to name a few. The work, however, is not simply the history of well-known Japanese immigrants in Brazil. More than those people whose names are still remembered today are numerous “unnamed” immigrants. Those unnamed people’s lives are portrayed through the depiction of fictional characters. Although there is no single protagonist in this work, the story begins and ends with certain fictional characters and they are the main characters of the work. Kita’s depictions of historical personages tend to focus on what they do, but his fictional characters are depicted more vividly. It is worth recalling that what motivated Kita to write this long work is his seeing a communal tombstone of Japanese immigrants in New Caledonia and the sight of little children sadly standing on the deck of the emigrant ship to Brazil in Yokohama. In other words, his motivation to commit to this project was to bring those immigrants, whose names would not be remembered in history, back to life in the work. It is no surprise, therefore, that the fictional characters who represent the unnamed people are the main characters of this work. Just as the narrator relates to common people in *The House of Nire*, the narrator’s eyes in the work are fixed more upon the fictional characters.

The major fictional characters that appear many times throughout the novel are Yamaguchi Sakichi, Sakuma Shirô, and their family members. Both Sakichi and Shirô came to Brazil in 1908 on Kasato-maru, but their personalities are totally different and they are depicted as contrasting characters. Sakichi is a lazy person who does not work hard but is a talker, but when people are going through hardships while working in a Brazilian farm, they enjoy Sakichi's talk even though they know it is not the truth. Under harsh working conditions, people need to have hope, and even though Sakichi's big talk, such as his being from a prestigious family in Japan and his intention of eventually owning a farm with one million coffee trees, did not exactly give them hope, it entertains them and uplifts their dark, oppressed mood. However, as time goes by and new immigrants come to Brazil, Sakichi's braggadocio is not received well. Moreover, because of his eccentric personality, there is no woman who is willing to marry his sons, and eventually his sons remain single. Sakichi's tall talk in the end develops into that of a manic patient, and he is treated at a mental hospital.

Sakuma Shirô is a hard worker. After he lost his older brother and the brother's wife to malaria, he leaves his younger sister to the family he trusts and leaves the farm to work as a laborer to build train tracks. He comes back to the farm after several years with the money he saved as a laborer and keeps working hard in a colony. During and after the war, in contrast to Sakichi who suffers mania, Shirô struggles with depression. The source of his depression is his strong desire to go back to Japan and his not being able to do so. His strong desire and being a "*kachigumi*" person are exploited by a group of swindlers and he is scammed. They tell Shirô that he has been specially and secretly chosen to go back to Japan on the fleet of Japanese ships, the ticket is given to him free of

charge, and that they would even purchase the land he owns as he would not need it any longer, although they can only pay one-tenth of the market value. Shirô and his brother-in-law sell everything, go to Sao Paulo, and exchange the money they received for their land into Japanese yen at the dealer specified by the swindlers. They receive four-thousand yen in old bills from the dealer, not knowing that these bills are no longer used in Japan and therefore as worthless as pieces of paper. At Port of Santos, they wait for the day that the fleet is supposed to arrive. That day finally comes, but, of course, the fleet of Japanese ships never appears, but even ten days later, they are still waiting for the fleet to come.

What is depicted in Volume Two is more positive compared to Volume One. Even though people still struggle, their efforts begin to have success, such as pepper and jute cultivation, and some are beginning to engage in more prestigious occupations. Yet the fact that Volume Two begins with the story of Watanabe and ends with of Shirô, both of whom are on their way to make rather successful livings in Brazil but are attacked or scammed by fellow Japanese and lose everything in the end, shows the reader the tragic realities of numerous Japanese immigrants in Brazil. However, although the novel tells tragic stories of the immigrants, humorous depictions of some characters help to maintain a certain uplifting mood in the story.

Kita writes in 1981 in the afterword of Volume One that this novel is going to be a trilogy, but after five years, in the afterword of Volume Two, Kita declares he decided not to write Volume Three in which he originally intended to write up to the present time when Japanese immigrants' lives in Brazil are stabilized and prosperous because he had

no confidence in completing such an enormous amount of work.³⁴⁶ He later talks about the ending of the novel during an interview with a reporter of *Nikkei Shimbun*. Even though he wanted at heart to end the novel with success stories, it was more effective as a novel to end with tragic stories.³⁴⁷ A Latin American literary scholar Noya Fumiaki also thinks that ending the story tragically is effective, as it depicts the decline of the country Japan, which the immigrants considered their “home.”³⁴⁸ In *The House of Nire*, Kita depicts the decline of one family over three generations and shows how insignificant people are in the great flow or the river called “time.” Similarly, in *Under the Shining and Azure Sky*, Kita depicts the insignificance of humans in “space.” One of the higher students who came to the Amazon Basin says this: “After all, humans are small and our lives are evanescent. Compared to us, how enormous the nature of the Amazon is.”³⁴⁹ *Under the Shining and Azure Sky* is, along with *The House of Nire*, Kita’s representative epic novel and is one of the rare works in the history of Japanese literature that treat the topic of Japanese immigrants in Brazil.

Kita Morio has written numerous essays on his father Saitô Mokichi, and he co-published the book entitled *This Father (Kono chichi ni shite, 1980)* with his older brother Shigeta in which they discuss what kind of father Mokichi was. The book contains their conversation, and it humorously depicts Mokichi’s personalities. He later writes a four-part biography of Mokichi that was first serialized in a literary magazine

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 402.

³⁴⁷ *Nikkei Shimbun* is a Japanese newspaper in Sao Paulo, Brazil, targeted to Japanese immigrants and expatriate employees. Kita’s interview is published in *Nikkei Shimbun* on June 27, 2007. “Hawai ya Nyû Karedonia de imin no hisansa o shiru,” *Nikkei Shimbun* 27 June 2007 <<http://www.nikkeishimbun.com.br/2007-75imin-tokusyuu-A.html>>.

³⁴⁸ Noya Fumiaki, “Kaisetsu,” *Kagayakeru aoki sora no shita de*, by Kita Morio, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1989) 313.

³⁴⁹ Kita Morio, *Kagayakeru aoki sora no shita de*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1986), 242.

Tosho under the title “Things about Mokichi” (*Mokichi arekore*) in 111 installments over the duration of eleven years from 1988 to 1999 then later published from Iwanami Shoten in four volumes in 1991, 1993, 1996, and 1998. This work is a serious study of the life of Saitô Mokichi and is, in many ways, a culmination of Kita’s writings on Mokichi. Kita writes in a foreword of the first part of the work, *Seinen Mokichi*, that he was repeatedly requested by a publisher to write a biography of Mokichi. Kita continues:

It is shameful for a humble son like me to write about an accomplished father. That is why, even after reaching the late years in my life, I procrastinated to write about him. However, about three years ago, I was hospitalized with a suspected twisted bowel, then had 12-13 polyps removed from my large intestine in two different hospitals, but I still did not feel well. I am dramatic and timid in everything, which is the only thing I had inherited from my father, and I thought that at last my final days had come. So, I dared to write about my father.³⁵⁰

Several people have written scholarly books on Saitô Mokichi and his biography, but what makes this work different from those is that Kita offers new interpretations of some of Mokichi’s poems while providing information and episodes on Mokichi that only the family members would know. However, even though he is depicting his father in the work, he makes an effort to depict Mokichi not as a son but as a writer. Kita’s inner conflict about his position as a son and writer while writing this work is observed in the following episode: In Chapter 17 of *Sônen Mokichi*, Kita writes about some literary scholars’ suspicion that Kita’s older sister, Momoko, was not actually Mokichi’s child, and Kita says that he agrees with this widely-believed rumor.³⁵¹ However, Kita later

³⁵⁰ Kita Morio, “Maegaki,” *Seinen Mokichi: “Shakkô”~ “Aratama” jidai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001) iii-vi.

³⁵¹ Towards the end of Mokichi’s study abroad in Austria and Germany, Teruko went to see him. They met in Paris and traveled around Europe for four months. Momoko was born only seven months after they met in Paris. Therefore some literary scholars suspect that Momoko is not Mokichi’s daughter and that Teruko went to see Mokichi all the way to Europe in order to make it seem like Momoko is Mokichi’s child.

writes an addendum to the chapter, stating that he would like to withdraw his previous remarks he made in the chapter and says that he actually believes Momoko was, indeed, a child of Mokichi. Kita explained the reason why he temporarily thought that Momoko was not Mokichi's daughter: he says that he was swayed by an argument made by a scholar who insisted on this point, but he also admits that, as a person of the pen, he thought he should eliminate all his feelings towards his father as a son and devote himself to being a writer and that might have influenced his thinking.³⁵²

This work could not be written by any scholar other than a member of Mokichi's family, and in this sense, this book sheds new light on the study of Mokichi.

Other Genres:

Although Kita's works in other genres can also be categorized as "serious" or "humorous," I would like to point out three genres in which Kita writes: they are mountain literature (*sangaku shôsetsu* 山岳小説), mystery fiction, and science fiction. Early on in his career, Kita produced short stories that take place in the mountains. "Along the Mountain Ridge" (Iwaone nite, 1956), "Atypical Appearance" (Igyô, 1959), and "At the Valley" (Tanima nite, 1959) all take place in the mountains, and in "The Boy" (Shônen, written in 1950, published in 1968) and *Ghosts*, as the literary critic Okazaki Masahiro points out, the protagonists go through life-changing experiences in the mountains.³⁵³ Kita also wrote a long novel entitled *Graceful White Mountain* (*Shiroki*

³⁵² Kita Morio, *Sônen Mokichi: "Tsuyujimo"~ "Tomoshihi" jidai* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2001) 155-162.

³⁵³ Okazaki Masahiro, "Yama to gakureki ni kansuru shiron: Kita Morio 'Igyô' o chûshin ni," *Kaishaku* August 2007: 40.

taoyakana mine, 1966), which is based on his experience of participating in a Diran Peak expedition as the team doctor.

His mystery stories are one genre of what he calls “entertainment,” and they are in a way a parody of existing mystery fiction. For example, in “Nippon-maru Murder Mystery” (*Nippon-maru satsujin jiken*, 1993), a narrator/protagonist named KITA MORIO tries to solve the mystery of the disappearance of an elderly man from a ship. Although there is a suicide note by the elderly man and it seems he committed suicide, KITA MORIO believes that it is not a suicide but a murder case. He attempts to act as if he were a detective, but nobody on the ship takes him seriously. In the end, it turns out that the elderly man is Akechi Kogorô, a well-known detective character in the works of the famous mystery fiction writer in Taishô and early Shôwa period, Edogawa Ranpo. Akechi Kogorô was to catch a spy for the Soviet Union who is on the ship, so his pretending to have committed suicide was a part of his plan and the captain and other members already know about this. KITA MORIO, who knows nothing about it, tries hard to solve the mystery and is depicted as an utterly stupid person. In his longer work *Gentleman Thief Zhivako* (*Kaitô Jibako*, 1967), Adolf Hitler, James Bond, Arsène Lupin, Akechi Kogorô, and a Japanese writer KITA MORIO are all parodied.³⁵⁴ More than twenty years later, Kita wrote a sequel entitled *Revival of Gentleman Thief Zhivako* (*Kaitô Jibako no fukkatsu*, 1992) in which Kita parodied these characters as well as newer characters such as Detective Colombo. These entertainments were received well, and his *Gentleman Thief Zhivako* was cinematized in 1967 and also was adapted to a TV

³⁵⁴ This title is the combination and parody of Gentleman Thief Arsène Lupin, a series of detective fiction written by French writer Maurice Leblanc, and Doctor Zhivago, a novel written by Russian writer Boris Pasternak.

anime entitled *Dr. Manbô & Gentleman Thief Zhivako: From Space with Love* (*Dokutoru Manbô & Kaitô Jibako: Uchûyori ai o komete*) which aired in 1983.³⁵⁵

However, what Kita was interested in is the genre of science fiction. He expresses his fascination with science fiction as follows:

I was first introduced to the world of science fictions through the Sci Fi series published by Gengensha. That was the first science fiction series published in Japan. ... However, the series was discontinued, probably because Japanese people were not ready to read science fiction at the time.

I like Hoshi Shin'ichi's works, but at that time he was producing exclusively humorous short science fiction. So I was planning to write a long, serious science fiction myself. However, soon Komatsu Sakyô appeared on the literary scene. There was no way I could compete with him in terms of his knowledge of science and his ability to write a long work. So I gave up my plan.³⁵⁶

He did not produce a long science fiction but wrote some short stories. Some of his representative short stories include "Immoral" (Furin, 1958), "The Empty Field" (Akichi, 1961), and "Purchase" (Kaimono, 1964).³⁵⁷ "Purchase" is written in a humorous style, but "Immoral" and "The Empty Field" have a serious tone.

³⁵⁵ The title "From the Space with Love" is from the second in the James Bond spy series film "From Russia with Love" produced in 1963.

³⁵⁶ Kita Morio, "Sôsaku yowa" (4), in *Geppô* (4) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 9 (1976) 3. Gengensha began publishing a series of the translation of American Science Fiction in 1956 but was well known for its mediocre translation, and eventually went out of business in 1957. Hoshi Shin'ichi was one of the leading science fiction writers in Japan in the 70s and 80s and was well known for his short science fictions such as "Bokko-chan." Komatsu Sakyô is the writer who wrote *Japan Sinks*, which became the best selling book in 1973.

³⁵⁷ Among these works, "Akichi" has been translated into English as "The Empty Field" and included in the book entitled *The Best Japanese Science Fiction Stories*. See Kita Morio, "The Empty Field," trans. Kinya Tsuruta and Judith Merrill, ed. John L. Apostolou and Martin H. Greenberg (New York: Barricade Books Inc., 1997) 62-73. "Akich" is also included, along with his other science fiction stories, "Zeitaku" (1962) and "Ijiwaru Jisan" (1962), in volume 35 of *Sekai SF zenshû*. See *Sekai SF zenshû*, ed. Ishikawa Takashi and Fukushima Masami, vol. 35 (Tokyo: Hayakawa Shoten, 1971).

“Immoral” begins with a shocking utterance: “So, are you saying that you cannot kill her?”³⁵⁸ As one goes on reading the story, it is gradually revealed that the work is set on a planet where creatures with tentacles live underground. On this planet, there are many more females than males, and females can bear only one child. Therefore, in order to increase their offspring, a male has to kill his wife once she bears a child, marry another female, have her bear his child and kill her afterward. Males are expected to marry ten times. However, the protagonist, Kaa, truly loves his first wife, H p î and he refuses to kill her. His mentor, Kuikui, tells him that no one can change the rule and that he has to kill H p î. H p î herself wishes to be killed by Kaa because that has been decided. Eventually Kaa kills H p î brings her body up to the ground and buries her.³⁵⁹ With a depressed mind, he looks at the sky and notices the Earth, and he wonders whether loving one’s wife until her natural death is also as shameful as it is on his planet. The structure of this story is well constructed so that the information a reader would like to know, such as where the story takes place and the nature of the characters, are not given at the beginning of the story but are gradually revealed to the reader.

As Nada Inada points out, although this work can be classified as science fiction, it is also a social criticism.³⁶⁰ Kuikui instructs Kaa not to think about the rule at all but just follow it, adding that, if he does not obey the rule, he will be ostracized. H p î wishes to obey the rule and be killed rather than keep on living against the rule. The work criticizes those people who simply follow rules “without thinking” and who do so just

³⁵⁸ Kita Morio, “Furin,” *KMZ*, vol. 2 (1977) 128.

³⁵⁹ In this story, creatures live underground and dead bodies are brought up on the surface of the ground.

³⁶⁰ Nada Inada, “Kaisetsu,” *Kita Morio shû*, by Kita Morio, *Shinchô nihon bungaku*, vol. 61 (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1968) 701.

because it has been “decided.” At the same time, it points out the danger that exists in our social system where everyone is expected, or rather obligated, to follow rules.

“The Empty Field” is one of the three vignettes included in an omnibus work entitled “Three Petite Bourgeois” (Sannin no shôshimin, 1961). Each of the three stories feature an episode that depicts a male protagonist, and in “The Empty Field,” the protagonist is a young man who is probably a company employee in his late 20s. One evening, he walks by children who are playing in an empty field, and he remembers the time when he was playing there as a child. When he was a child, the field was covered with grass, and he discovered many fascinating insects in the bushes on the hills next to the field. But now the field had been developed for building lots and rows of cookie-cutter company houses were standing there. He sees a group of people who are waiting for a flying saucer to appear and believe that it will surely come this day. He also meets an elderly man who is killing time because he does not get along with his daughter-in-law at home. When the evening deepens and there is no sign of a flying saucer, everyone – those waiting for a flying saucer, the young man, and the children – but the elderly man leave the empty field. When everyone is gone, the elderly man’s shape begins to seem like that of a non-human.

“The Empty Field,” too, criticizes Japanese society for its high economic growth in the 60s. Just as the empty field has been destroyed and made barren due to economic growth, so have the people. The protagonist feels that he himself is like the barren field and the treeless hillside, and he has no hope for his future. The elderly man’s young daughter-in-law gets irritated so easily even by small events, such as the elderly man feeding his grandchildren fish sausage. The children who are playing in the field

comment on the adults saying that all adults are as grumpy as “a fence gate with rusty wire.”³⁶¹ Since people feel so barren and empty inside, they need to have something to believe in in order to keep living and have hope for the future, even if this “something” is as absurd as a flying saucer. Thinking it is absurd, the young man himself begins to seriously believe, just for a short period, that a flying saucer will come and it will renew everything on this earth, even change him to a new person. It is because this is the only hope he has for the future. The elderly man’s changing his shape into a non-human suggests he is the space alien whom people are waiting for. This, of course, makes the work a science fiction story, but it also gives the elderly man’s words some authority. He tells the young man that, although people are waiting for a flying saucer believing that it will come that day, the fact is that they do not know. His criticism of people who think they know what they are doing but do not know anything is more credible if the words come from someone who has higher authority than just an old man. The work has a quality of science fiction, but it also depicts how high economic growth in Japan has affected people.

“Purchase” does not include such social criticism and is written in a comical manner, but it poses an interesting question as to what “sanity” and “insanity” are while the story itself revolves around two main characters traveling through time. The protagonist is a psychiatrist who works in a mental hospital where he meets a young novice scientist, Mikita. Mikita is treated as a mental patient because he claims he invented a time machine, but the protagonist explains that Mikita is labeled as an

³⁶¹ Kita Morio, “The Empty Field,” trans. Kinya Tsuruta and Judith Merrill, *The Best Japanese Science Fiction Stories*, ed. John L. Apostolou & Martin H. Greenberg, (New York: Barricade Books Inc., 1997) 66.

abnormal person because nobody believes in a time machine. After interviewing Mikita, the protagonist judges that Mikita is normal, or rather, the protagonist becomes very interested in Mikita's invention. So he releases Mikita from the hospital and helps him construct a time machine. Mikita successfully builds the machine and they begin traveling through time. While enjoying the experience, they begin to wonder if they can take advantage of time travel to make themselves wealthy in the current life. Their plan seems to be flawless, but in the end, it does not work out. Then Mikita suggests to the protagonist that they go back to the mental hospital. The work ends with Mikita's words to the protagonist: "After all of this, we'd better go back to the mental hospital, don't you think? I mean, both of us. You, too, as a mental patient."³⁶²

The main characters' plan to use time traveling as a mean to make themselves wealthy fails because they forget to take one principle about "time" into consideration, which is that once an event in the past is altered, there are consequences of the change in the future. This principle is not new but used in some other works of science fiction, but the story is still enjoyable to read.³⁶³ However, what makes the story unique is not the story per se but the comments Kita offers through the protagonist's utterances about mental patients, hospitals, and sanity and insanity. For example, regarding the line between sanity and insanity, the protagonist says that "the thoughts of the majority of people at a given time are considered normal" and gives an example stating that "in the medieval era when people had delusions about witches, those who believed in witches were considered normal." Kita uses and puts his knowledge and experience as a

³⁶² Kita Morio, "Kaimono," *KMZ*, vol. 9 (1976) 261.

³⁶³ For example, "A Sound of Thunder," a 1952 science fiction short story written by Ray Bradbury (1920 -) revolves around this principle. See Ray Bradbury, "A Sound of Thunder," *The Stories of Ray Bradbury* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980) 231-241.

psychiatrist into this work, which makes this work unique and interesting. Also, the last lines of Mikita in which he suggests that both the protagonist and himself go back to the hospital provide an unexpected twist to the story: has the event taken place in the real world, or has it occurred only in the protagonist's and Mikita's delusions?

Kita Morio has successfully written in a variety of genres. He does not consider his serious literary works more highly than children's stories, nor does he value writing historical novels more important than comical, humorous works. He has challenged himself to write in a variety of genres, and he has produced well-regarded works in each genre as illustrated in this chapter. There are other writers who have produced both comical and serious works at the same time, but not many have produced such a wide range and variety of works as Kita Morio has. In this regard, Kita Morio holds a very unique and important position in the history Japanese literature.

Although Kita's works vary as we have seen, there are certain characteristics in Kita's writing that cut across different genres. In the conclusion, these traits are examined and discussed.

Conclusion

This study has attempted an overall descriptive treatment and assessment of the life and works of one of Japan's most prolific and versatile modern writers. Kita Morio began to appear on the Japanese literary scene in the middle of the 1950s. He was first nominated for the Akutagawa Prize in 1956, and his first publication in a commercial literary magazine was in 1958. His comic travelogue became a bestselling book immediately after its publication in March of 1960 and in July of the same year he received the Akutagawa Prize for another, more serious work. Kita's appearance on the literary scene is immediately after that of the group of writers who are called *Daisan no shinjin* or the "Third Generation of New Writers." Members of the group are those who appeared in the Japanese literary scene around 1953 and generally include Yasuoka Shôtarô (1920-), Yoshiyuki Junnosuke (1924-1994), Shôno Junzô (1921-2009), Miura Shumon (1926-), Agawa Hiroyuki (1920-), Endô Shûsaku (1923-1996), Kojima Nobuo (1915-2006), and Shimao Toshio (1917-1986). The "Third Generation of New Writers" is a makeshift category of writers who are randomly grouped together based almost solely on generation, and therefore there is a lack of unity as a literary group and each writer has his own characteristics.³⁶⁴ Even so, scholars find some common traits among

³⁶⁴ Van C. Gessel, "Postoccupation Literary Movements and Developments in Japan" *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan*, ed. Ernestine Schlant and J. Thomas Rimer (Washington, D.C.: Wilson Center Press, 1991) 208. The lack of shared literary interest and goals among the members of the group is also examined in Van C. Gessel, *The Sting of Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) 41-48. Also see Kokusai Bunka Shinkôkai,

these writers and their literary works. For example, Hasegawa Izumi lists five common characteristics shared by them: 1) each became known as a writer after receiving the Akutagawa Prize, 2) they enjoy writing about their trivial everyday lives, 3) they are apolitical, 4) their works include autobiographical elements, and 5) they utilize humor to express their inner nihilism.³⁶⁵ Van C. Gessel adds that the members share their dislike for philosophizing in literature. He further states that, because the members focused on everyday human activities rather than on philosophy or ideology of literature, they became successful in depicting people's struggle in modern society.³⁶⁶ Although Kita is not considered a part of the Third Generation of New Writers because he appeared on the literary scene a little after they did, his writing shares some of the characteristics that Hasegawa lists. First, although Kita became famous because of his publication of *Doctor Manbô at Sea* four months prior to his receiving the Akutagawa Prize, he was virtually unknown before the publication of this humorous travelogue despite of the fact he had published some works in commercial magazines. Second, Kita's works, especially most of his humorous essays, portray everyday life. Third, his work is apolitical and does not express his ideology. Fourth, many of Kita's works contain autobiographical elements as well. Fifth, although some of Kita's works are comical and humorous, many critics point out the pessimism expressed not only in his serious works but also hidden beneath his comical, humorous writing. As Isogai Hideo states, Kita Morio can be positioned as an

Introduction to Contemporary Japanese Literature – Synopses of Major Works – 1956-1970 (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1972) xvii – xviii.

³⁶⁵ Hasegawa Izumi, *Sengo bungakushi* (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1974) 14-16.

³⁶⁶ Van C. Gessel, *The String of Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) 49.

extension of the Third Generation of New Writers in the history of Japanese literature.³⁶⁷

Below I would like to elaborate some of the points mentioned above by examining overarching traits in Kita's writing.

Kita's works vary, as described in this study, from stories for little children, to comical science fiction, to numerous humorous essays in which Kita's literary persona, Dokutoru Manbô, holds forth on various topics, from sad love stories, to one of Japan's longest and most popular family epics, to a long historical novel that depicts the lives of Japanese immigrants in Brazil based on his detailed, painstaking research. However, even though he writes in such diverse genres, there seem to be common characteristics shared by the various genres in his writing. Kita's works (a) are apolitical and do not express ideology, (b) contain autobiographical elements, and (c) are either written from a perspective of an inferior or with the narrator's eyes fixed on insignificant people and affairs.

Compared to those writers who appear on the literary scene at around the same time as Kita, such as Ishihara Shintarô (1934-), Kaikô Takeshi (1930-1989) and Ôe Kenzaburô (1935-), Kita does not express his political views at all. The work that is considered the most ideological among Kita's works is *In the Corner of Night and Fog*, which deals with a psychiatrist's attempts to save mental patients from Nazi Germany. However, this is not anti-war literature nor does Kita advocate humanism in the work. The psychiatrist who attempts to save mental patients is not doing so because of his humanistic heroism but because those patients are "precious" for his study. As Himura

³⁶⁷ Isogai Hideo, "Sengo bungakushi no naka no Endô • Kita," *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyôzai no kenkyû* 18.2 (1973): 75.

Rintarô precisely points out, the main theme of this work is human madness – the madness of the Nazis as well as that of the scientist.³⁶⁸ Yamada Hiromitsu also writes about the work, pointing out the fact that none of the psychiatrists in the work actively resist the Nazis but each try to save their patients in their own way, and Yamada concludes that this is not overt resistance literature.³⁶⁹ Kita himself also states that he does not want this work to be read as a story of humanistic resistance against the Nazi party, and he says that the basis of this novel is the sadness he felt as a child for mental patients who were marginalized and treated with prejudice by others in society.³⁷⁰ Because of the topic that the work deals with, it can be considered anti-war or anti-Fascist literature, but what Kita wanted to depict is the sadness of the mental patients and the psychiatrist's attempts to save them, which end up in vain. In this sense, the work that is considered Kita's most ideological is neither political nor ideological. As I have argued in this study, some of Kita's works contain social criticism, but even this is not expressed straightforwardly. His critiques are expressed either very subtly or comically so that they do not sound serious. As Okuno Takeo writes, Kita is the kind of writer who “does not go against the society or the times” but “writes whatever pleases him in his little corner of the world.”³⁷¹ However, this does not mean Kita's work is of lesser quality than those works that reflect the political or ideological views of the writer. In fact, it can be safely said that not being ideological is Kita's ideology.

³⁶⁸ Hinuma Rintarô, *Gendai sakka an'nai* (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobô, 1967) 186.

³⁶⁹ Yamada Hiromitsu, “Kita Morio • shuyô sakuhin no bunseki: *Yoru to kiri no sumi de*,” *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 39.12 (1974): 111.

³⁷⁰ Kita Morio and Shinoda Hajime, “Monogatari no jûkô to shadatsu – Kita Morio shi ni kiku,” *Kokubungaku kaishaku tokyôzai no kenkyū* 18.2 (1973): 39.

³⁷¹ Okuno Takeo, “Tanpen ni tsuite,” *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 89.

Kita's works also contain many autobiographical elements. In chapter two, I have demonstrated that Kita often writes about the same material from different perspectives. I also would like to add that Kita uses the same elements based on his experience again and again in different genres. The most recurring themes are, as we have seen in chapter two, his family and himself. He writes about himself and his family in an introspective novella, in a family saga, in many essay-like works utilizing a documentary style, and in a variety of humorous essays. He portrays people in his family sometimes comically, seriously, emotionally, or from a detached perspective. His memories featuring his nanny depict not only a character in a family epic but also a character in his fairytale-like children's story. His experiences of journeying all over the world as a ship's doctor are used in his humorous travelogue, in serious, analogical works, and also in one of his children's stories. This is not to say that Kita Morio is incapable of creating a story totally independent from his experience. On the contrary, he has created stories that take place in foreign countries (and even on another planet) that he has never visited, the most notable of these being *In the Corner of Night and Fog*. However, because Kita uses many of his experiences repeatedly in different genres, even when a reader reads a fictional story, he or she tends to identify the character as the writer Kita Morio himself.

Take the short stories, "Captain" and "At the Mouth of the River," for example. The protagonists of both stories are ships' doctors. If one has some knowledge about the writer's life, one would immediately associate the ship's doctor in the story with the writer himself. A similar thing can be said about "Death," a short story in which he depicts the death of the father. Even though Kita calls this work *shōsetsu*, what is depicted in the work is the account of the father's death, and all the characters in the story

have the same names as their counterparts in real life. Dr. Manbô is Kita's literary persona and is not the same as Kita himself, but it is very difficult to draw a line between Dr. Manbô and Kita himself, and between some of his stories and his real life. A reader tends to read many of Kita's stories as if they were his real life stories.³⁷² What is interesting is that Kita has written fictional works but also numerous essays, and in the essays he has had opportunities to talk about his fictional work concerning what parts of his works really happened to him, what parts were fiction, and how he turned his experiences into fictional works. Not many writers have this kind of opportunity,

A third common characteristic is that Kita's works either focus on someone who is unimportant or who is written about from the perspective of an inferior/insignificant person. As I argued in chapter one, the protagonist of *Ghosts* feels that his mother and sister belong to one group and his father and himself the other, and even though he wishes to become like the mother and the sister, he is keenly aware he will never be able to. In *The House of Nire*, we see that even the omniscient narrator is unable to get into the mind of Nire Kiichirô, the most significant person in the Nire family, but the same narrator is able to clearly depict the thoughts of the people who belong to the "cookhouse," the place where ordinary, unimportant people for the Nire family gather together. The narrator's eyes are clearly fixed on people who are labeled "inferior." In chapter three of this study, I argued that the affairs of both people and the nation are depicted comically from the perspective of a citizen of the country defeated in the war. We saw this was the case in his *Dr. Manbô at Sea*. In the same work, Kita's alter-ego, "Doctor," is portrayed

³⁷² Kita also says that many of his readers mix what happens in a story with the writer's real life. Kita Morio, "Sôzaku yowa" (1), in *Geppô* (1) supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 5 (1976) 1.

as an inferior doctor who is curious and eager to do anything except his job. Kita's literary persona, Dr. Manbô or Manbô, is always depicted as someone who is unlucky and not successful in his Manbô series.³⁷³ Yet, unlike a character in some works of Dazai Osamu (1909-1948), who thinks he is insignificant and indulges in self-pity, Kita's Manbô is free from a similar inferiority complex. He either laughs at his problems by depicting himself very comically, or he seriously tries to solve his (usually trivial) problems with all his ability and power, and the more serious he is, the funnier it is.

In my examination of Kita's children's stories in chapter four, we also see that the protagonists in many of his children's stories are not successful: ghosts who cannot scare people, a student who hates to do his homework, and a king who is a mere puppet of a prime minister. Whether it is a serious work or a comical one, the central character tends to be a rather insignificant person, and if his literary persona is present in the work, it is most of the time self-denigrating. Because the central character is not significant, there is a certain sadness prevailing in his serious works, but this same insignificance becomes the source of laughter in his humorous works.

Kita is considered one of the most popular Japanese writers, at least in the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s. There is no doubt that his popularity owes to his comical, humorous works, but I would also argue that the fact that his works deal with insignificant people and affairs contributes to the popularity of his writing as well. With the development of Japan as an academic career-based society in the 1960s, the 1970s,

³⁷³ Reed M. Peterson writes, "In his Manbô series, ... Manbô holds himself up as an exaggerated version of the human imperfection and struggles of life that each person born into mortality experiences." Reed M. Peterson, *An Account of My Perplexities: The Humorous Essays of Kita Morio*, diss., U. of Arizona, 2009, 254.

and the 1980s, success and failure were defined by one's academic record or career. While much of society was focused on success, Kita's literature depicted unimportant, unsuccessful, insignificant people. We have seen that Kita felt after the war that nothing was significant, and his pessimism can be observed in such works as *In the Corner of Night and Fog* in which the psychiatrists' attempts to save their patients end up in vain, and in *The House of Nire*, in which people and their affairs are depicted as utterly meaningless in the flow of time, or *Under the Shining Azure Sky*, where people are portrayed as small, fragile, and powerless in front of nature. However, Kita is also able to portray his belief that when nothing or no individual is significant, that there exists no insignificance, either, and that is why his characters, especially in his humorous works, are free from self-pity. He also brings down to earth what is considered "significant," exposing it to laughter through his comical writing, yet even in his comical works, he casts benevolent eyes towards the lonely, ordinary, insignificant person. In this sense, Kita gives insignificance some "meaning" in his literature. It is not surprising that his work was popular in the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s, especially among younger people, who were probably tired of being driven into the rat race or who were left behind in the competitive society of the times.

As mentioned earlier, although Kita Morio is one of the most important and prolific postwar writers in Japan, he has received little sustained critical attention among literary scholars. Other than the speculations that Kita's comical work might have negatively affected his reputation as a writer as pointed out earlier, critics mention the difficulty of analyzing Kita's work as a whole. Okuno Takeo adeptly describes Kita

Morio's literature, stating that people can enjoy and experience it but it is difficult to analyze using critical or logical terms.³⁷⁴ Also Akiyama Hayao says that it is not easy to write about Kita's literature and that he is one of the writers whom literary scholars have a difficult time writing about.³⁷⁵ This may be due to the fact that Kita's writing style is so versatile, and also it could be because Kita is not a political writer and his literature does not stem from his beliefs or ideologies.

J. Thomas Rimer writes that "*The House of Nire* [...] maintains a central position in the canon of postwar Japanese fiction."³⁷⁶ I also would like to add that the versatility of Kita Morio's writing style holds a unique position in the history of Japanese literature, and it is my hope that this study contributes to a deeper appreciation of the author and his work.

³⁷⁴ Okuno Takeo, "Harappa no bungaku," *Kita Morio no bungaku sekai* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1978) 10.

³⁷⁵ Akiyama Hayao, "'Yûrei' to 'Manbô'" no tairitsu," *Kita Morio no sekai* (Tokyo: Shinpyôsha, 1979) 138.

³⁷⁶ J. Thomas Rimer, "Kita Morio (1 May 1927 -)," *Japanese Fiction Writers Since World War II*, ed. Van C. Gessel (Detroit: A Brucoli Clark Layman Book, 1997) 88-92.

Appendix: Original Translations

THE RED GHOST AND THE WHITE GHOST³⁷⁷

(“Akai obake to shiroi obake”)

1963

By Kita Morio

Do you know a place called Aoyama Cemetery?

It is a large cemetery in Aoyama, Tokyo. My house used to be right next to it.

When I was a child, I thought the cemetery was much, much bigger than it is now, and it seemed endless. In truth, the size of the cemetery has not changed. Rather it appeared to go on forever from my perspective as a child.

There was a song that goes like this:

Out from Aoyama Cemetery
Three white ghosts come gliding, three.
Two red ghosts come following after.
Last of all a student boy
With big, floppy breeches on:
Flippety, floppety, flap.³⁷⁸

When we little kids sang this song, the cemetery seemed even scarier. There were many old, enormous trees in the cemetery, and even during the daytime it was shadowy and dim, making us feel that it was a frightening place. The cemetery was not just inhabited by such relatively benign spirits as Red and White Ghosts. There were also

³⁷⁷ This story first appeared in *Dizunî no kuni (The Land of Disney)* in 1963. This original text is in *KMZ*, vol.8 (1977) 330-334. All translations included in the appendix have been done with permission of the writer, Kita Morio.

³⁷⁸ This translation of the lyrics is by Dennis Keene that appears in Kita Morio, *The House of Nire*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984) 9.

Blue Ghosts and Purple Ghosts, and far more demonic phantoms, monsters, one-eyed goblins, giants, and fifty-five thousand five hundred and fifty-five evil spirit foxes and badgers that inhabited the place, or so it seemed to we children. These malevolent creatures resided behind every tombstone as well as in cavities of the ancient trees covered with moss.

However, we eventually grew up. We turned from being small kids to medium size kids, and from medium size kids to large size kids. As we grew older, sixty-six thousand six hundred and sixty-six scary ghosts and evil spirits gradually decreased to about three thousand, then to three hundred, then to thirty, then to only three, and at last they totally disappeared.

How silly we were. There were never any ghosts there at all, we said to each other.

However, there were still ghosts after all. The only ones remaining in the cemetery were one Red Ghost and one White Ghost. Both creatures were little and not very scary. Or perhaps we shouldn't say "creatures" but rather "both of these individuals," since they spoke the human language.

The two ghosts were grumbling to each other behind a tombstone.

"Times are not good," said the Red Ghost. "In the past, human beings were frightened of us. Little children were so fearful that they wouldn't come into the cemetery in the evening. On a rare occasion when we found a child in the cemetery after dark, I would show the top of my head or the end of my tail, and the kid would be so

frightened he'd fall down, jump up, and flee, dropping a baked yam or candies in his haste to get away."

"It wasn't just children," the White Ghost declared indignantly, "Even the grown-ups were afraid of us. The educational system taught everyone that there were no such things as ghosts. Now we're unemployed!"

"If things go on as they are, they'll be no reason for us to be here. We're going to have to frighten these humans in a big way," the Red Ghost said, folding his arms defiantly across his chest.

"But, even if we appear before them, they won't believe we're ghosts. They'd probably think we are just odd shaped balloons or old cloth thrown away on the street. "

"This is the age of commercialism," said the White Ghost becoming excited. "We're going to have to advertise ourselves in a sensational manner."

"That's right. We'll show those humans that we are still alive." The two ghosts began to feel more confident.

The two ghosts then proceeded to take out the heirlooms of their ancestors that they had hidden in the cavity of the tree. These were things like tops and marbles that children had lost, and old coins – one-*sen*, five-*sen*, and ten-*sen*. There were also gold and silver treasures. Because these treasures had been passed down generation to generation for thousands of years, they consisted of all kinds of things.

The two ghosts, with the money they had, hired a band of ten street musicians who were dressed as clowns, and they rented a convertible. They put a banner on the car and paraded with their band of musicians down the main avenue of Tokyo.

Doo, Dee, Doo, Boom, Boom,

What raucous and stirring music the band made!

The two ghosts rode in front in the convertible and twisted their heads around and waved their tails.

A noisy crowd of people gathered, wondering what this commotion was all about.

“Hey you, what is this parade for?” one gentleman asked a clown in the band.

“None of us know, either,” the clown replied. “Ask the strange-looking ones in the convertible.”

The gentleman ran alongside the convertible and shouted, “What in heavens are you two?”

“I’m a ghost,” the Red Ghost replied, trying to sound as frightening as possible.

“That’s right,” the White Ghost added. “And I’m a ghost, too,”

“Well, Mr. Ghosts,” the gentleman said, not appearing frightened in the least.

“You both appear to be most amusing characters.”

“We can transform our appearance,” the Red Ghosts replied. “We can stretch ourselves out and shrink at will. What about that? Pretty scary, huh?”

“I’m not scared. I think you are just amazing!” the gentleman said, clapping his hands.

“Will both of you sign a contract with me?”

“What?” The two Ghosts exclaimed in unison.

“A contract. This is what I do,” and the gentleman gave business cards to both the ghosts. On them was written, “Advertising Bureau Chief, Red and White Brand Bubble Gum Company, Ltd.”

“We’d really like you both to go on television for us. Your colors are just right. And, if you are able to stretch yourselves out and shrink, there is nothing better.”

The Red Ghost and the White Ghost turned around and began whispering to each other.

“What kind of deal is this?” said one ghost.

“Well, we must keep up with the times,” replied the other. “If we go on television, the entire country will learn about us. This is the best advertisement in the world.”

“All right, then. Let’s give it a try.”

And thus it came to pass, the two ghosts appeared on television.

The TV commercial was for Red and White Brand Bubble Gum. The two ghosts popped some bubble gum in their mouths, chewed, and blew bubbles, and as they did, they expanded themselves like a balloon.

The commercial became extremely popular.

As a result, “Red and White Brand Bubble Gum” changed its name to “Ghost Brand Bubble Gum.” Children would settle in front of the TV, just waiting for the commercial to air and then the jingle for the commercial would begin.

Ghosts, ghosts, our dear ghosts,
Expand, expand, more and more
They grow as big and rolly polly as they wish
How wonderful it is!
Ghost Brand Bubble Gum

“How fascinating!” or “What cute ghosts they are!” everyone watching exclaimed with such words of admiration..

A flood of fan letters came in with comments such as these: “My beloved little ghosts. I cannot sleep at night if I don’t see you on television,” or “Dear Red Ghost, you are so cute when you flip your tail! I am ecstatic. Let me visit you.”

Every day fifty-five thousand five hundred fifty-five fan letters were delivered to the Red Ghost and the White Ghost.

In the beginning, neither ghost felt bad at all. Whether humans or ghosts, everyone likes to be popular and celebrated.

Still, they were ghosts, and they felt guilty for not scaring people and for being treated so nicely.

The ghosts had grown rich and were living in a big apartment and had purchased, among other things, an electric heater, a TV, and a stereo. They now slept in a bed whereas they used to spend the night in thickets, the hollows of trees, and other such places.

One night while they were sleeping peacefully in bed, the two ghosts woke up suddenly and both felt a heavy weight on their chests. Their room was in total darkness. Corpse candles began flickering here and there, and an unpleasant wind that smelled like blood blew through the room.

“What is that?”

Terrified, the two ghosts clutched each other tight.

Suddenly something like a shadow appeared from nowhere.

“Eek! It’s a ghost!” The Red Ghost screamed. The White Ghost was also trembling like a leaf.

Then there came a very spooky voice.

“You insolent ones who have forgotten your mission as ghosts, shame on you! You will pay for this.”

The ghosts could hear the clanking of chains and the growls of supernatural beasts. Then in the dim light there appeared ghosts so scary that anyone would faint at the first sight of them. There were Japanese ghosts, Chinese ghosts, Western and Afghani ghosts, and all sorts of other ghosts who glared with terrifying glittering eyes at the Red Ghost and the White Ghost.

“I’m scared, I’m scared!”

The two ghosts clung to each other tightly and trembled all through the long night.

Since then, the two ghosts have not appeared before even one living human being. The bubble gum company looked high and low for them, hiring an army of searchers, a total of ninety-nine thousand nine hundred ninety-nine police, private detectives, and idle curiosity seekers, but the two ghosts were not to be found.

The two ghosts must have repented their former ways and are in training on how to frighten people. So where are they now?

I think they are still in Aoyama Cemetery where they must be hiding behind this tombstone or that tree cavity.

If you go looking for the Red Ghost and the White Ghost, you just might find them. But I must warn you. If they ever come out again, this time they might be really, really scary.

Death³⁷⁹

(“Shi”)

1964

By Kita Morio

In February of 1953, I was undergoing practical training as an intern at a university hospital in Sendai. The training was nearing its end, so I could be as lazy as I wanted if I chose to be. I was more concerned about the national medical exam that was coming up in April.

A majority of those who took the medical exam would pass. Therefore, if I failed, it would be shameful and humiliating. Even though that was on my mind, I still could not motivate myself to study. Others appeared to feel the same way.

Medical students study one year longer than those in other colleges. Moreover we have to spend a year as an intern. On top of that, we have to take this exam. At this point, we had had enough of exams. We were tired of tests and did not want to take them any more.

Because of this mental state, many of my fellow students were more into drinking than studying.

³⁷⁹ The story first appeared in the March 1964 issue of *Sekai*. The original text is in *KMZ*, vol. 5 (1976) 226-243. He calls this work one of his rare I-novel. See “Sôzaku Yowa” (1), in *Geppô* 1supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 5 (1976) 3.

Thinking back, we all drank too much even though we were students. First, we used to go to a big liquor store near Sendai Station. At the time, the liquor store put some tables and chairs inside and served alcohol at retail prices. The store was right in front of a big cabaret, where there were American soldiers in the Occupation Forces drinking whisky directly out of small bottles. Those of us who went to the cabaret were stingy enough to get half drunk on cheap liquor before going there. We would go to a small tavern in Higashi Ichiban-chô. We also stopped at a bar to look for acquaintances we had gotten to know in the tavern, and they often bought us drinks knowing we were still needy students. We drank a lot, exhausting our credit or scrounging on others.

At that time, I dreamed quite often and read books on dreams by Freud and Ellis. Since I was interested in dreams, and since I was planning to go into psychiatry, I was thinking that I should do some research on dreams. For these reasons, I wrote down my dreams, one after another. The more I grew accustomed to doing it, the more detail I could record. When I woke up in the middle of the night, I immediately turned on the light on the nightstand and wrote down my dream in the notebook besides my pillow. There were times that, just as Ellis described, my intestines were making weird noises when I had a nightmare, and I was slightly excited about that.

The dreams that I gathered this way varied greatly, but there were many that concerned sexual desire, whether directly or indirectly. I was at that stage in my life then.

I quote here a few of my dreams:

The dream I had at dawn. The girl *I* from Motokazuhira is in the room and she kisses me. She comes back to the room, there is a note she left saying something like she would not submit herself to me. Feeling of her teeth that bite my tongue is so real. Then my older brother comes in (she hears his footsteps but does not let go of my tongue) and he asks me to help with his patient. When I

come back to the room, there is a note she left saying something like she would not submit herself to me.

In the beginning I am riding on a bus or a train. I have a gun in my hand. I am upset because a man was stopping me from sitting down on a seat, then I realize that it is actually the gun being stuck and making me unable to sit down. A woman is looking at my gun suspiciously. I get off at the station near my house, then a female conductor runs after me. She accuses me saying that the ticket I gave to her was fake or stolen. I, too, become upset and suggest to her that we go to the police station or anywhere she wants us to go to. Before I know it, we are in front of a dining hall in a department store. She and I are no longer upset with each other. Before going into the police station, I tell her, "Let's eat something." I intend to treat her but she quickly purchases dining tickets. When I look at the tickets, they are for a fixed menu meal. Thinking that I do not want her to spend money on me, I tell her that I don't want such things, just coffee or tea will do, and I have her return the tickets. The tea was only 40 yen for two cups, and the salesperson had an expression of disappointment on her face.

There were more intense dreams.

I kill a baby. There are spots, one between the ribs and the other further below, that, if we insert a scalpel there, the baby will die immediately. But I forget where those spots are and the baby does not die easily. Without thinking, I cut him again and again, and cut his intestines into pieces. He cries with a distorted face, and I get scared. Soon a police officer arrives to investigate, and he finds drops of blood on the *tatami* or some kind of mat. I am resigned, knowing that I will be arrested...

If I force myself to analyze this dream, it appears to stem from the fact that, some time ago, I was about to sleep with a woman but decided not to because she told me she was fertile.

I was spending my days slovenly, drinking quite heavily and having dreams related to sexual desires without studying much for the medical exam.

On February 25, I came back to my boarding house at around 4:00 AM completely drunk with my friend Mr. Shinoi. In high school, Mr. Shinoi was one year my senior. He was a member of the track and field club and was always running. His face was familiar to me. I met him again when I was on the train with two or three of my

friends to take the entrance examination at the university in Sendai. He failed to enter college the previous year and was waiting for another chance to enroll, and he was going to Sendai to take the exam, too. We both felt strongly that we could not fail after the failure of the previous year. Whenever our conversation referred to subjects on the exam, he said, “I don’t know about these things,” and he opened his book in a hurry. He seemed to be good-natured but rather helpless. Fortunately both Mr. Shinoi and I, his junior, passed the exam, and we became classmates at the medical college. He was still a senior in drinking alcohol and most else, so we still called him with “Mr.” and elevated him above us.

At one point, Mr. Shinoi was living with a woman who worked in a bar, but then he dumped her. Because of this, I envied him and showed him respect.

That evening, I drank heavily with Mr. Shinoi and, since his boarding house was further away, we came back to my boarding house and squeezed into one futon.

That night, I had many dreams, among them was a dream about my father. I was traveling somewhere in the countryside, and it seemed my father was there, and we appeared to be at a gathering hosted by my father’s admirer. My father – the poet named Saitô Mokichi – was already advanced in years. When I went home to Tokyo that winter, he was already becoming senile, so I was expecting that my father would not be with us for long. However, even though I recorded my dreams almost every night, my father never physically appeared in them. Though vague, I know I had a dream about my father, as I felt his presence even if he did not appear.

In the morning, a telegram arrived. My room was on the second floor but the foyer was next to the stairs so I could clearly hear the man’s voice, “Telegram!” In an

instant, I associated this with my father's death and was startled by the moment in spite of my hangover. The telegram was addressed to "Watanabe," my landlord, so I went back to sleep.

Early that afternoon I heard another telegram being delivered, but I thought this one too was for Watanabe, so I did not even try to get up. It seemed the elderly housekeeper was out, so half awake and half asleep, I heard Mr. Shinoi get up and go downstairs. Then I heard the man at the door say, "Saitô Sôkichi," which is my name. I was rather shocked and sat up on in my bedding, and looked at the telegram that Mr. Shinoi brought me. It was from Tokyo. "It has finally come," I thought. When I opened the telegram, as I expected, was written: "father in critical condition. come home soon. shigeta." Shigeta is the name of my older brother.

I do not remember what I thought or how I felt at that time.

I quickly checked the timetable for trains to Tokyo, but unfortunately there was nothing until that night. Mr. Shinoi saw I was at a loss and urged me to call home. Since there was no telephone in the boarding house, I used the phone in the house across the street. The call went through within 15 minutes. My older brother picked up the phone. "How is he?" I asked. I heard my brother, also a doctor, say one word on the phone, "*Gestorben* (Dead)."

Suddenly tears came, and my voice trembled. I couldn't help it. There was an abrupt upheaval of my feelings that I did not expect. I called the telephone bureau to check the phone charge, but tears flowed ceaselessly, and I was ashamed.

I returned to the boarding house and had a late lunch with Mr. Shinoi. I started to calm down and told some boring jokes.

My father's death was timely and expected. His brain had stopped working long ago, and his body hung on in a frail state of dotage that was painful to observe. The father that I had known ever since I could remember had long ago disappeared from this world.

After the war, my father suffered from pleurisy in Ôishida, where he had moved for safety from the U.S. bombing raids. His body began to decline very quickly after he contracted the illness. Around 1949, he began to have difficulties walking. He was also slightly paralyzed on the left side of his body. His first heart attack occurred in February of 1951. Then in the April of the next year, he had two serious consecutive attacks. His breathing became fast, and cyanosis appeared on his lips, hands, and feet but he still managed to survive.

Considering his age and medical history, such physical decline was inevitable. Along with his physical decline was his mental atrophy, as he had suffered brain damage, which probably stemmed from hardening of the arteries in his brain over a period of time. This was the cruel physiological aspect of aging for which there was no cure.

When I went home in October of the previous year, I saw him in this condition. If nobody was around, he would get up from his bed and would bang on the door shouting, "Hey, hey!" I supported him and tried to get him to walk, but he would moan, "Ouch, ouch!" so loudly that it caught me off guard. He was no longer able to speak a complete sentence clearly. He would be helped to a dining room chair, then to a rattan chair in his room, and then to the floor but was not comfortable regardless of where he was. Then he would yell, "Hey, hey!" in an aggressive sounding voice in order to force

someone to help him get up again. He was so decrepit that when he said such simple things as “thank you,” like when I helped him to sit on a chair and put a blanket on his lap, his words took me by surprise.

One day I found him repeating “inferior, inferior...,” but he was unable to say the rest. I imagined that he wanted to say that he was an inferior creature.

When I went home on New Year’s Day, my father’s condition had worsened, and he could no longer walk on his own. We would help him to a chair and feed him a meal, but he sometimes tried to eat with his fingers. He peeled an orange with his trembling hands and put the peel in his mouth. When he saw me, he showed almost no reaction. It once was the case that when I went home during a break, he was very happy to see me.

The incontinence had already started. No matter how many times we urged him to let others know when he needed to urinate, he could not do it. After he wet the bed, he let us know by calling us, “Hey, hey.” Therefore, there was a strong odor of urine around him. When we tried to put him down on the futon, he sometimes rolled out of it. He constantly made a beastly cry, “Hey, hey.” I thought of the horrible death of Chamberlain Christoph Detlev Brigge, who screamed and groaned in Rilke’s *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*. When we went close to my father, he grabbed our arms. His fingers retained quite a bit of strength, and when he grabbed my arm, it was painful. He could no longer speak in phrases or words, as he had already turned into an imbecile.

I looked at him with mixed feelings. Nothing remained of his former self. He seemed a living corpse. Compared to other family members who had to constantly take care of him, I had an easy part. After several days, I could leave my father and return to

Sendai. I found it painful to look at him. Perhaps I should have spent more time being with him while I was at home during my vacation, but I never did. I always had excuses to leave the house with errands to run.

According to my father's collected works, he composed only twelve poems in the 27th year of Showa. All the twelve poems were not necessarily composed that year, so one can say he composed almost no poems.

Among the few is this poem:

Before I realized
the Sun has set
I who live in
this world
am probably nearing the end as well³⁸⁰

According to my mother, he wrote down this poem, without anybody noticing, on paper that was placed next to his bedside. We can say that this is about the last poem he composed. According to his collected of works, the following poem is listed at the end.

In my mouth,
I taste only bitterness
But it is not my concern
I try to sleep
In my bedroom in the daytime³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ The original poem reads as follows:

<i>Itsushika mo</i>	いつしかも
<i>Hi ga shizumi yuki</i>	日がしづみゆき
<i>Utsusemi no</i>	うつせみの
<i>Ware mo onodukara</i>	われもおのづから
<i>Kihamaru rashi mo</i>	きはまるらしも

³⁸¹ The original poem is:

<i>Kuchinaka ga</i>	口中が
<i>Mohara nigaki mo</i>	専ら苦きも
<i>kaerimizu</i>	かえりみず
<i>hiru no fushido ni</i>	晝のふしどに
<i>nemuramu to suru</i>	ねむらむとする

These poems must have been composed by early summer at the latest. When my father could no longer write poetry, his health declined quite rapidly. By New Year's Day of 1953, Shôwa 28, he was in a miserable state as I mentioned earlier.

Then, in the early afternoon of the 25th of February, I was informed of his death. I admit that receiving the news when I was hung-over was disgraceful, but his death was not early or late. It happened when it was intended to happen – or so I thought when I had calmed down.

I had one relative in Sendai and mailed him a letter to let him know that I would be returning to Tokyo on that evening's train. The temperature was quite low, and the sky was totally overcast and wintry, with translucent light surrounding the area. Only the clamor of the children's voices could be heard. Next to the mailbox was a dog, and when I held out my hand to him, he pressed his extremely cold nose into my palm. In a nearby school, workers were tearing out broken glass from the windows and dropping it to the ground. The sound of glass falling on the ground resounded sharply.

Even after I came home, I had nothing to do until at evening came so I lay down on the bed. It seemed that the sad feelings were gone. I felt hollow and empty as I kept thinking that my father was not in this world any longer.

The 7 o'clock news on the radio reported the death of my father while I was having dinner with other people in my boarding house. I felt that even this news was reporting about someone else, not the father I knew.

I got on the 8:20 express train that night and even though it was an express train, it would not arrive in Tokyo until early the next morning. I have never been accustomed to sleeping on trains. While being jolted on the night train, I could see tiny water drops gathering together on the window, and when the train stopped at one station, I saw a street behind the platform wicket shining as if it were wet. When the train stopped at another station, I got off and stood on the platform as there was a longer wait for another train. The drizzling rain was light but cold.

While continuing to be jolted on the next train, I was overcome by depressing thoughts about my father, as if it had all happened in a far-away country.

Ever since I was a child, I thought of my father as a short-tempered person, for he often got angry. When he was in a rage, he clicked his tongue and his body trembled. I could never get used to his anger. Just hearing my father become angry at someone scared me.

On one occasion, a guest showed up at our door. He appeared to be a member of *Araragi waka* group, a man who had come to Tokyo from the countryside. The maid told the guest that the master was lying down due to a cold. The guest, however, insisted that he have a look at the master's face since he had gone to a lot of trouble to travel such a long distance. A little after the maid went upstairs, my father rushed downstairs making a big noise, the noise that can be only expressed by the word "impulsive impudence" which my father often used in his poetry. Then, he exploded in anger. "I really caught a cold and was lying down. Do you think I was lying to you?" In such cases, he never spoke just one word but went on and on and trembled with uncontrollable rage for about

five minutes. I was just an elementary school student at the time and was so terrified that I felt like my body shrank as I listened to what was happening behind the paper screen.

When my father got angry with all his might and soul, it was generally directed towards someone he was familiar with, such as a family member or a close friend. He would often get angry even about trivial matters.

He wrote in an essay about a rude interpreter he encountered when he was trying to have a Western female patient moved to another hospital.

... The head nurse in my branch hospital was conferring with the interpreter who was staying at the hotel. The head nurse was asking him to transfer the patient to another hospital. I did not know what he was saying to her, but their conversation did not seem to go anywhere. So, I took the phone and told him again about transferring her. Then, to my surprise, he rudely stated, “What is it about?” and “When did I promise you such a thing?” I was enraged, and I immediately corrected his language, and ordered the director of my hospital to transfer her to M. Hospital.

As he once wrote, when he was angry, he became “mad with rage,” “relentless,” and he “controlled others.” It was like a war or a battle. It was hard for those who were subjected to his anger to tolerate it.

When I was in the first grade of middle school, I received a bad grade in English dictation. I should not have shown it to him, but I did on the spur of the moment. Then he flared up and told me to bring him the English textbook right away, and he made me do dictation for nearly an hour. My father was extremely busy and usually paid little attention to his children, but once he was enraged, he himself gave the dictation exercise, and we were gripped with fear.

Though my father could be a frightening person, generally speaking he doted on his children. His affection stemmed from his ego and his strong personality, but his

attentions were suffocating and not welcomed by his children. Frankly speaking, he was concerned with the boys than girls and loved the ones more who did better in school. I did quite well in elementary and middle school, so I can say that I was favored with his affection. However, until I graduated from middle school, I only thought that we were disadvantaged to have such a frightening father.

My older brother, and older and younger sisters naturally liked our mother more than our father. Our mother was separated from our father since I was little, and she was living with my uncle in the main family home. It was not until the spring of the year at the end of the war that our mother was allowed to come home. Until then, we secretly went to our uncle's house on days like Sundays to meet our mother. When we had not seen her for long periods of time, she seemed very tender. We felt that the day that we could go to see her was enjoyable and wonderful. The fact was that our mother was also an egoistic woman, so obviously two selfish people could not get along. At any rate, we children did not understand such subtle human interactions, so we all bore a grudge against our father for kicking our mother out of the house.

It seemed our father was so busy that he permitted us secretly to go to see her. Once, when he asked me where I had been, I told him a lie. Then I remember that he severely scolded me, accusing me of having become a liar.

He composed the following poem:

How sad, how sad!
Like a bolt of lightning
flashing through me
I have found myself hating
even my own children.³⁸²

³⁸² The translation is by Amy Vladeck Heinrich. Amy Vladeck Heinrich, *Fragments of Rainbows: The Life and Poetry of Saitô Mokichi*, New York (Columbia University Press, 1983) 95.

His anger at the time might have been similar to the feeling he wrote about in the poem.

He had a self-centered affection towards his children, but it was also true that he was tyrannical.

When I learned how to play *sh ôgi* in my first or second year in elementary school, he was amused and rather delighted. However, when I reached the point where I became so enthusiastic about it that I cut out the game charts in the newspaper or when I began to beat him, he told me I should not play *sh ôgi* any more.

My father was rather unskilled at *sh ôgi*. In keeping with his personality, he furiously took the offensive by first placing a rook at the center position and then moving both silver generals. If he succeeded in breaking through the opponent's central line, he would win by a wide margin. However, once the opponent defended against his attack, it was the end for him. He was unyielding and hated to lose, so when he was defeated by Kôda Rohan by a wide margin, he bought a book on established tactics of *sh ôgi* at a night stall and studied some moves with me, an elementary school student at the time, as his companion.

He prohibited me to play *sh ôgi* by saying this: "Until you enter college, just devote yourself to studying. Once you get into college, I'll allow you to take lessons. If you start studying under a master, you'll soon be in the senior class."

This promise was a total lie. Even after I entered college, he never allowed me to take *sh ôgi* lessons, and he kept telling me to study more diligently.

I could accept being forbidden from playing *sh ôgi*, but it was a big shock for me when he kept me from collecting insects. I began collecting insects at the end of the elementary school, and when I was in the second or the third year in middle school, I became obsessed with the desire to become an entomologist. Because collecting insects was banned, I could not subscribe to a periodical of one amateur insect collectors' club and have it delivered to my home address. Therefore I asked a hospital driver to subscribe to it for me under his name. One day my father caught onto this and both the driver and I were sternly reproached. I do not believe that collecting insects was a bad hobby, but he did not allow me to do anything that might interrupt my studies. He consistently insisted that I study. I hid in my desk drawer some books that were not on school subjects. As soon as I heard his footsteps coming towards me I would instantly shut the drawer. Fortunately, there was a distinctive sound to the way he walked.

He often asked me about the result of tests in school but in his uniquely illogical manner:

“Were you able to answer everything correctly?”

When I replied that I could do most of them except one, he impatiently pressed me harder,

“Why not? Why couldn't you do it?”

No matter what he said to me, there was nothing I could do about the fact that I did not get everything correct. However, my father was extremely slow to understand such things, and he kept grumbling over and over.

“Why couldn't you do it? Why not?”

Every time he did this to me, I could not help but think I was unlucky to have such father.

When I was in the fourth grade of middle school I failed on the entrance examination to a higher school, and he spent a long time being angry and unreasonably scolding me. I passed the secondary exam of Tokyo University Special School of Medicine, which existed during the war. I had a yearning for a white lined cap that was worn by higher school students, so I was naturally planning to take the entrance exam of higher school again. I had one more year left in middle school, so taking the entrance exam again did not mean I would become a *rônin*. However, since the state of the war was becoming more and more severe, my father thought that I should go to the Special School of Medicine, fearing that I might be drafted before entering higher school. At times like this, it was often the case that he fretted over the problem too much to make a decision, so he took me all the way to Professor Hirafuku Ichirô in the Department of Pathology at Tokyo Imperial University to consult with him. On the way back, he thought about it again and again, and finally ordered me to go to the Special School of Medicine. It did not matter whether I wanted to or not. When I slowly nodded with overwhelming sadness, he suddenly became tender and bought me a specialized, expensive book on insects.

Three days after I started to go to the Special School of Medicine, he summoned me and asked, “Sôkichi, how old are you?”

“I’m nineteen.”

“Nineteen? Then I made a calculation error of your age. If that is the case, you won’t be drafted. All right, how about this – would you like to try getting into higher school again?”

After I went back to the fifth year of middle school, I understood that he was concerned about me, but I still could not help thinking that he was an oppressive and selfish father.

Considering such things, I spent my days in fear of him, feeling uncomfortable in his presence, and more or less holding grudges against him. This, however, changed all of a sudden in the year the war ended.

Thinking back now, it was a frantic year. That year I passed the entrance exam to Matsumoto Higher School but continued to work in a factory, where middle school students had been mobilized. In April, my father moved to Yamagata Prefecture for safety. Then, later, the factory where we were working was burned down. At the end of May, my house was also burned down. I left home for the first time in my life and went to Matsumoto. This change in circumstances as well as the fact that I was reaching adolescence might have affected me. In my relatives' house, where I was staying after my house was burned down, were my father's poetry books. I received one of them entitled *Cold Cloud* and left for Shinshū.

Until that time, I had seldom read literary books and had never read my father's poetry. On my father's bookshelf, I found a book entitled *Nagatsuka Takashi* he had written. I read the title as *Nagatsuka bushi* and thought that, even though he was a poet, he had studied folk ballads.³⁸³

The war was going against us day by day. Even in Matsumoto, B-29's often flew over in formation to drop mines on the port in Niigata. There was a secret military

³⁸³ Nagatsuka Takashi (1879-1915) was a poet and novelist. The Kanji character for "Takashi (節)" can be also read as "fushi/bushi" which means "melody," and it is often used at the end of a name of Japanese traditional folk ballads such as Narayama-bushi, Shōnai-bushi, Sōran-bushi, among others.

project in a camouflaged commerce school building that stood across the school ground from the dorm, and they were repeatedly experimenting on a rocket engine. We could hear roaring sounds at various intervals, and we observed a large volume of white smoke. However, the town of Matsumoto seemed very quiet to me in contrast to the Tokyo I had fled, a city where only tiles, pebbles, and ashes remained. At night in Matsumoto, all I heard were the clamoring voices of frogs in the nearby rice paddies. It was my first experience to hear such indescribable cries of frogs. In other words, it was precisely as written in the poem, “I hear distant frogs sounding from the sky.”³⁸⁴

I read my father’s poems with strong emotion. I am ashamed to write this, but for the first time in my life I trembled as I was reading. It was probably the sentimentality of adolescence, but the image of my father I had retained for so many years had suddenly and drastically changed. My father was no longer frightening and unbearable, but he was transformed into the poet named Mokichi. I also obtained his book entitled *Morning Fireflies*, which contained the poems of his choice, and I read it avidly. This book made a deep impression on me. It was because the places and the environment with which I was familiar since my childhood, such as Aoyama Cemetery in my neighborhood and the mental hospital where I was born (though I hated it), were mentioned in the poems.

Before long, I became a fan, or worshipper, of Mokichi.

³⁸⁴ The phrase is a part of the poem composed by Saitō Mokichi. The entire poem is as follows:
Shi ni chikaki/haha ni sohine no/shinshin to/Tohota no kahadu/Ten ni kikoyuru
As I lie beside my mother/who is close to death,/piercingly the call/of frogs in distant
fields/echoes in the heavens.

The translation is by Amy Vladeck Heinrich. Amy Vladeck Heinrich, *Fragments of Rainbows: The Life and Poetry of Saitō Mokichi 1882-1953*, New York (Columbia University Press, 1983) xi.

In the July before the end of the war, our dorm was closed, so I was able to go to Yamagata where my father had been evacuated. It was such a strange feeling and I felt humbled. However, arriving in Yamagata after making the very difficult trip at the end of the war, I found my father, as always, rebuking my mother in an unbearable tone. She was staying there with him after our house in Tokyo was burned down, and he was constantly being irritated by trivial things. Most of all, he was infuriated by fleas. In short, it was best to see the person Mokichi in his books. When I was closer to the real Mokichi for long, I felt suffocated and could not stand him. Even so, when he went out for a walk, I took out his collections of poems such as *Red Light* and *Unpolished Gem* and copied some of them in my little notebook.

My secret admiration of him lasted long after that. When I was attending school in the provinces, the further away I was from him, the stronger my feelings for him grew. I attended a college in Sendai, so this situation lasted for a long time. I went home for every vacation, thinking that, since he was getting older, I should show him more devotion before it was too late. However, the more days I spent with him, the more oppressed I felt, and could not help but desire to go back to Sendai as soon as possible.

For example, even after becoming a college student, I was warned against smoking. When he was young, my father smoked heavily to the extent that “the smoke came out of his behind,” but he stopped smoking for health reasons, and he forced his own beliefs on his sons. One day late at night, thinking that he would not notice my smoking because he was asleep, I lit a cigarette in the room next to his bedroom. Before I inhaled once or twice, his angry voice pierced through the paper screen door. “Sôkichi, are you smoking!?” He had animalistic instincts about such things.

I spent my summer vacation alone with my father in a cottage which was next to our main summerhouse in Hakone. All summer long I was in charge of cooking, and we lived in only two rooms, so I felt a quite bit of strain. He had me mow the lawn, clean leaves from the gutter, and clean the house. During the entire period I was working, he was standing right next to me, supervising and instructing me and clicking his tongue. He could not entrust things to others because he wanted everything done his way. During the first half of the vacation, I was feeling delighted and honored to spend time with my father, but, to be honest, during the last half I got sick of being with him. Most of the time, I had to secretly read books other than those on medicine. I had to go into the woods to smoke a cigarette two or three times a day because smoking was banned by him. On rainy days, I had to smoke under my umbrella.

Even so, when I was cleaning his room, I enjoyed stealing glances at what was written down in his little notebook that was left on his desk. As he grew older, he became weaker. He used to study very vigorously during the summer, but as he aged, his composition declined. If I found a good poem in his notebook once in a while, I was delighted but when I saw mediocre poems, I felt he had aged. That summer, he did not compose much but was concerned about the people to whom he lent the main summerhouse. He was also worried about some bugs that had bred in his bamboo wicker trunk. Occasionally he quizzed me on medicine and when I could not answer, he clicked his tongue and got upset, saying, “Even I, who studied tens of years ago, remember this. How come you, a current medical student, can’t remember it!?”

After my suffocating vacation was over and when I went back to college in Sendai and distanced myself from him, I started to have feelings, something similar to infatuated love, towards my father.

I loved my father and I despised him, and these feelings alternated for a number of years, but I still could not respect him as much as my heart would have liked.

... I arrived at Ueno Station at 5:20 AM and changed to a local train. The sky began dimming around Ikebukuro. When I exited Shinjuku Station, the misty rain was falling there also. I took a taxi and arrived home at around 6:00.

Because my family did not conduct a wake for him, it was very quiet at home. My younger sister was still up and took me to my father's bed-cum-living room. My mother was sleeping in the next room, but she did not get up to come to see me. His corpse was laid out under a silk futon. He used to sleep under an older futon, but now a beautiful futon covered him. His body would never move again.

I removed the cloth that had been placed over his head and looked down at his dead face. At that moment, as expected, I was startled. I saw a skinny, pale, and somewhat sharp face. His beard (which I heard a nurse had shaved a few days earlier) was sparse, and there was still a little swelling around his mouth. His cheekbones were protruding slightly, and his closed eyes seemed narrow and small. His short eyelashes contrasted with his long eyebrows. As I observed him for a while, his face, with his mouth slightly open, was the sleeping face I was familiar with, but obviously he already belonged to the harsh world of death. I heard my younger sister sobbing behind me. There was no other sound in the room, and it felt very cold.

I went to the dining room and drank tea, then went back to the room where my father lay, this time by myself. I felt a certain happiness at being able to view his face as much as I wanted without being interrupted by anyone. I lifted the futon and touched his skinny feet then traced his face with my fingers.

His earlobes were large and still had not become stiff. His cheeks and forehead were cold to the touch. Underneath the light grey wool socks, his ankles were already rigid and could not be moved, and the skin just above his shinbones was as cold as ice. The hands joined together on his chest were also too stiff to move. However, his wrists were not as cold and it felt as if a pulse were still beating there. I spent some time looking at my father and touching his body, which was no longer breathing.

At 8:00, there was a eulogy given by Yūki Aisōka, and a recording of my father reciting his own poems was broadcast on the radio.³⁸⁵ The recording had been made many years earlier and contained several of his poems, including the following:

As evening drew on,
on radish leaves fell the
early winter rain;
In pain, in loneliness,
How it was raining!³⁸⁶

The way he recited his poems was faltering; he recited the third verse in complete isolation, adding the fifth verse again in isolation. At around the time that the broadcast was over, those who were to help us started to arrive, and it began getting crowded in the house.

³⁸⁵ Yūki Aisōka (1893 – 1974) was a poet and essayist. He studied poetry under Saitō Mokichi.

³⁸⁶ The translation is by Amy Vladeck Heinrich. Amy Vladeck Heinrich, *Fragments of Rainbows: The Life and Poetry of Saitō Mokichi 1882-1953*, New York (Columbia University Press, 1983) 27.

Only once in my life, I wanted to make clear my own will to my father and expressed my disagreement with him in a letter (it was impossible to express my own will directly to his face). I wrote to him that I wanted to study zoology in college, but my father seemed to be shocked by that. He sent me a letters in which he wrote in a polite form of Japanese at the beginning:

○ I fully sympathize with your love for zoology. I also loved zoology during my boyhood and adolescent years. ○ By the way, if you major in zoology, how will you actually make a living after graduating from college in three years? Let's suppose that you will engage in research for a while as an assistant at college while not making much money, but after that, would you become a teacher? Or, are you going to be a technical expert somewhere? How do current zoologists make their living? That is what I would most like to know and am concerned about. I assume that probably they are not making enough money and they feel anxious especially when they start a family. ○ If it were a peaceful time, I would have planned for Shigeta, too, that he would engage in research and get his degree. However, that was not possible after the defeat in the war. Right now there seems to be no future in psychiatry, so I have been thinking when I wake up in the middle of the night that you should major in surgery and set up an independent hospital from Shigeta. If you major in surgery, I believe you can make a living, and you can feed your family. Even if you become an assistant at college, you would still be able to make enough money. That is basically what I wished for you. However, if you go into zoology, things would turn out quite contrary to my expectation, and I am afraid that your life would be difficult. ○ In middle school, students usually follow their parents' opinion about studying as they do not have any of their own. However, in higher school, their ideas about studying begin to sprout, and therefore they become idealistic. So, you are not alone, Sôkichi. Probably almost 100% of the higher school students feel the same way. However, because it is very difficult to realize one's ideal, there are so many people who live a difficult life. Therefore, "idealism" is, after all, ordinary and immature, and it is a mere sentiment of adolescence. What I would like you to do is to look seriously at the reality (*gegenwärtige Wirklichkeit*). I would like you to face squarely Japan's defeat and the situation of our family (specifically, the problems of tuition and the cost of living). (a) Zoology is similar to basic medicine, so I'm afraid it will not bring you enough money, and you will spend all your life being a teacher, (b) Currently Shigeta has seven people in his family and he constantly has debt. He barely supports his family using royalties from my books. I am already advanced in life. I have reached the state of an "old body left behind." ○ I am sending you this letter with my infinite love for you. Upon examining and clearly considering things, write me a reply as soon as possible. It has been the case that your letters do not respond to my questions, so pay special attention to

answer my questions in your letter. ○ Also, it must be inconvenient to study if you live in a boarding house that is far from school. Tell me honestly and immediately what your current grade average is and where you stand among your classmates. ○ I am not planning to forcibly deny your will, but things must be thought over and over again. Therefore respond to me quickly. In the field of medicine, surgery seems to be as enjoyable a subject as *praktische Medizin*. What is your opinion on this? There are many people who wish to change their majors from zoology to medicine, but there are few people who desire it the other way around. (I'm telling you this from a practical point of view).

○ You must have been saddened after reading my previous letter. It is totally understandable. It is because you think that what I told you goes against your desire or aptitude. ○ Enclosed are general responses from those who major in zoology at Tokyo Imperial University, therefore it is very relevant to you. Please read it calmly. These people need have no concern about earning a living, so they are different from you. It is very difficult for you to show your true worth if you major in zoology. ○ Let's talk thoroughly when you come back to Tokyo this winter vacation. Until then, please study with all your might."

The letters became harsher.

○ The reason I encouraged you to live in the dorm is because I thought it would be more convenient for you to study. On the contrary, it turned out to harm you. It was my mistake that I cannot regret more. It is too bad that you were incited to become a committee member. ○ I am writing this after careful consideration and asking other's opinions. Stating my conclusion first, I still want you to become a medical doctor. Please make a concerted effort in this direction as you have been doing. This is a request to you from your elderly father. A parent-child relationship is totally pure and there is no way that I can sit back calmly and watch you as a spectator. My love for you is also pure. I now imagine how you will be grateful for my advice when you turn forty years old. If you go against my advice and became a zoologist and submit yourself to teaching, how would you feel? My concern is nothing but love for my child.

○ Professor Miyaji wrote me and informed me of your grades. You are 26th out of 42 students, and you are especially bad at mathematics and physics. At this level, it is impossible for you to enter medical school at Tokyo University. ○ Sôkichi, you were excellent in scholarship when you were a child, and you belonged to a group of honor students throughout elementary and middle school. So why is it that you are not excelling in higher school, as this is the most important time for you to study? It is because you have become stupid. It is because you have been enjoying an idealistic arrogant higher school spirit and are not fully conscious of the realities of life. I warned you again and again about this, but you did not follow my advice. However, it is not too late. Wake up as soon as you read this letter, throw insects out of your life, and study with all your might. Get credit as an excellent student as you truly have been. Higher school is the

place where you should truly be brought down to reality. How stupid you are to spend time and energy collecting insects! ○ I would be greatly saddened if you have not determined to go into medicine and continue procrastinating in your studies. I felt sad when I saw your exam grades this September (probably some professors graded you with sympathy, so your actual result may have been lower than what it is). I'm concerned about your entrance exam next spring. For zoology or botany, even a person with weak intellect could get in without taking an exam. However, it will not be the same for medicine (especially medicine at Tokyo University). That is why students are studying so hard to get in. At this most important time, you should not be concerned about a female red purple butterfly or Fabre. You were an excellent student before getting into Matsumoto Higher School. After entering a higher school, you thought too much of yourself and became stupid. How awful this is! ○ Even a medical doctor cannot make a living as easily as he used to be able to. A medical doctor has to make a great effort. Shigeta is struggling more than I could have imagined. ○ However, medicine is an interesting field. You are interested in zoology and botany only because you still do not know how interesting medicine is. If you study medicine, you will find it very complex and deep. I heard that the study of medicine includes many other subjects including zoology and botany. ○ Burn this letter that talks about your aspiration. Also, respond to this letter immediately. ○ Put all your efforts into the study of the subjects that will be on the entrance exam, such as physics, mathematics, chemistry, German, among others. If there are some students who come to visit you at your boarding house, immediately send them away. Do not be defeated by higher school idealism and by being flattered. This is your father's utmost order. ○ I have written the above in a state of excitement, so forgive me.

I gave up on going into zoology. I did not have strong enough nerves to go against my father's wish after receiving letters such as these.

... At around 9:30, a Buddhist monk chanted a sutra at my father's bedside.

Then we put him in a car and laid him down on a futon, and took him to the Department of Pathology at Tokyo University for an autopsy. It was performed by Professors Miyake Hitoshi and Hirafuku Ichirô. We had difficulty removing the kimono from his rigid body, and we laid him on the autopsy table. There were only a few things in the autopsy room, and its floor was bare concrete. It was quite cold there. My father's naked body was

surprisingly skinny. His arms and legs were skin and bones, and his pelvis and rib cage stood out prominently. The abdominal area was beginning to change color and it was tepid. The warmth coming from the decaying body seemed to be a reminder of life.

A scalpel was inserted and slice down from under the neck to the pubic bones all in a breath. His skin and muscle were quickly removed and his intestines were exposed. Also the rib cage was dissected and his chest cavity disclosed. His left lung was stiffly attached to it and was not removed easily. I was gazing at their fast work along with my brother and uncle, who was also a medical doctor. I should be grateful to my father for his letters, because now I could observe my father's corpse being autopsied without flinching, thanks to having specialized in medicine.

We could see a great deal of calcification at the apex of his lung. In his right lung, tumors had formed an egg-sized hardened lesion. The right ventricle of his heart was hypertrophied and the arteries that ran all over his body had become stiff to the extent that they could be described as "crunchy." His kidneys had contracted to half of their normal size, as the medulla had cut into them, and the cortex was narrowed down to a thin line. The skin of his head was removed and his skull was sawed through. His grayish-white brain, which looked as if it were covered by Japanese isinglass, was also shrunk, and it seemed smaller than normal, as if shriveled up. In short, one could say that his body was used up and exhausted everywhere. As I thought before, he was destined to die at this time. That fact made me feel relieved and at the same time piteous.

At around 1:20 PM, the autopsy was finished. The blood on his legs and arms was wiped off, the open dissections were sutured, and he was laid down again on the

stretcher. Shavings were put in his abdominal cavity, and after his head was sutured he looked pretty much as he had before the autopsy.

After bringing his corpse back home, we put him into a coffin. We laid him in with a mattress and then removed it, stuffed paper pillows around him, and then closed the lid. The house was chaotic with those who came to pay their condolences. There had been a cold rain all day until evening.

Two days later was the cremation day. The chanting of the sutra started at 9:00 in the morning, then the lid was taken off the coffin so we could view his face one last time, and we put flowers around his face. My father's face looked paler, thinner, sharper, colder, and more sunken than the day before yesterday. His eyes were firmly closed. Surrounded by various colors of flowers, his pale face looked even smaller. The ridge of his nose looked pointed. In the end, the youngest infant daughter of my older brother was brought over in her mother's arms. When the baby looked inside the coffin, she cheerfully and happily uttered, "Grandpa." My younger sister cried even harder. My older sister, who had been hysterical for a long while, was scolding our younger sister for weeping, but the older sister's face was most unsightly as it was a mess with tears. She told me angrily to give her my handkerchief since she left hers downstairs.

The coffin left the house a little after 10:00. When we arrived at the crematorium, the sky was filled with soft, spring light. Our younger sister was constantly crying, and our older sister was angrily scolding at her.

After waiting for a long time, we picked up his bones. The entire ceremony was carried out quickly and in a business-like manner. We put his bones into two urns in order to bury one in his hometown of Yamagata. There were some coals that were still

red among his bones in a metal container. The bones looked extremely white and frothy.

“Father, you’ve finally turned to bones,” I thought. After returning home, once again there was a sutra chanting.

My diary entry.

The time passes while doing this and that, the house is in a great hubbub and I just feel tired. Yesterday it was especially crowded. We gave numbered tickets at the foyer for their overcoats and shoes, but it was chaotic with people coming and leaving. At night, It got somehow grew quiet. We put all the flowers that were delivered in a room where the altar was. The room was filled with flowers and looked beautiful.

The entry for the following day.

At around 10:00, most of the guests had returned home. My mother told me to go to bed, yet she was the one who opened the door and came into the room. At around 11:00, Keiko (my brother’s child) woke up and did not go back to sleep as she was still excited. Shigekazu (my brother’s child) also did not sleep so easily. It might be the case the commotion of adults has been transmitted to the children. At around 11:30 I felt exhausted and could finally take a bath.

The entry for the diary two days later.

The funeral. The warm rain fell all night long and then it somehow cleared up. Sky was overcast but quite warm. It was just so gloomy. Sutra chanting started at 9:30 in the morning. As I held the mortuary tablet, it started to drizzle again a little before our departure.

In the evening, we saw Uncle Shirobei and others off, then went to the Lion in Ginza and drank a fair amount of beer. Mr. Satô Satarô told me a story: when I was little, I asked my father as he was holding either his scissors or knife, “Papa, if you die, will you give this to me?” Then my father said, “Children are strange. They’re already thinking about the death of a parent.” Came home at 8:00. It was the first night in many days that no visitor arrived. Only the gas heater was making sounds in the quiet room. Our mother brought us our father’s filthy pajamas, towels, and other things, and distributed them to my brother and me. She said that she had to clean up things quickly because she would not live long, either. I was told that, at 10:00 at night, Ms. K. K. (she was a mental patient who had been asking my father to marry her) knocked at the entrance door that was already closed, and she burned incense as people would normally do and left.

I stayed in Tokyo for eight more days. One night, I opened the urn, took out four or five pieces of his bones and wrapped them with paper. I went back to Sendai with them.

I wrote in my diary, "I drank beer in the dining car. The price of beer went down to 145 yen."

After returning to my room in the boarding house I tried hard to study for the state medical exam, but it did not go as smoothly as I had hoped.

My diary entry: "I drank so quickly and went bar hopping at Suntory Bar, Number One, Nagisa, etc".

I dreamed as frequently as before. I often dreamed about the landscape of the neighborhood in Aoyama where my house stood so long ago, and also I had sentimental dreams about my father quite frequently. They were different from my previous dreams.

There were dreams again, some dreams related to my sexual desire:

The dream I had at dawn. *S* was there. It seemed I caressed her cheek a little. Then I realized that she was lying down and naked from the waist up. Her breasts were, to my puzzlement, sagging, yet they cast a dark shadow and were beautiful. It was as if I were looking at a painting without any color. So, after staring at her for a while, I said something like she looked beautiful. She, then, lifted her head looking shy, and tried to hide her breasts ...

PURCHASE³⁸⁷

(“Kaimono”)

1964

By Kita Morio

I indulged myself in a sort of play. I determined that the fellow was not mentally ill.

I am a doctor who works for a public mental hospital. There are about 450 mentally ill patients in this hospital. Other than the director of the hospital, there are only six physicians including some who commute from a university hospital only two days a week. Therefore, each full-time physician like myself has to oversee nearly 100 hospital patients.

This is a pathetic situation. In addition to seeing hospital patients, we examine outpatients and are also expected to conduct our own research. Thus, we make only a cursory examination of our hospital patients as we make our rapid rounds. If I were to meet each individual patient and ask his or her condition, I could see no more than five patients a day, so it would take a month to finish examining all the patients in my care.

³⁸⁷ The original text is in *KMZ*, vol.9 (1976) 248-261. The story was originally published in the magazine in the May 1964 issue of *Ôru yomimono*. It was a Science Fiction special issue, and therefore the title of the story was changed to “Taimu mashin” (Time Machine) when it appeared in the magazine. See Kita Morio, “Sôzaku yowa” (4), in *Geppô* 4 supplemented to *KMZ*, vol. 9 (1976) 3. Although the story has been translated into Russian as “Time Machine,” I go by its original title “Kaimono” as Morio originally named it. The work is included in *KMZ* as “Kaimono.”

In other words, a hospital patient receives a thorough examination from his or her doctor only once a month.

Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that Mikita who is no mental patient – or so I believed – had been confined in this hospital.

Mikita is not my patient. He had been diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic. There is nothing so difficult, in certain cases, as the diagnosis of the paranoid form of schizophrenia. This is because, other than the fact that the patient has delusions, he does not lack intelligence in other areas and is, so to speak, a normal person. For instance, if there is a woman who claims to have been raped by her gynecologist, it would be difficult for a third party to judge whether it actually happened or whether she was delusional. However, upon further examination, one finds that she claims to have been raped here and there many times to the extent that her story defies common sense. A common symptom of a patient with this illness is that they tend to have delusions that seriously strain credulity, for example, “I am a lover of the crown prince,” or “I was once the husband of Elizabeth Taylor.” If someone insists on such things, he or she needs to be admitted to the hospital.

In Mikita’s case, he claimed that he was capable of assembling a time machine. If this was all there was to it, to be honest, it would be difficult to judge whether he was psychotic or not. However, because the assistant professor at a certain university, the person who brought him to the hospital, insisted that a time machine was entirely impossible to create and could never be actualized, Mikita was diagnosed as mentally ill and ended up being admitted to the hospital. Mikita, who had just turned thirty years old,

was an assistant in the university's physics laboratory. It was said that Mikita had begun creating a strange machine using, without permission, the school's materials.

The hospital, which admitted him as a delusional patient, did not consider his condition rare. Patients' delusions or auditory hallucinations often acutely reflect the times. It is common for a patient to have a paranoid delusion that he or she is being monitored by someone. In the past, patients frequently insisted that the criminals observing them were hiding beneath the roof. However, nowadays, with the popularity of the television, many claim that they are being monitored by a TV camera. Some say that they are exposed to radiation, and others claim they are extraterrestrials. In recent years, the literary genre science fiction is becoming popular. Psychiatric patients will probably be among the first to incorporate the world of science fiction into their lives. Thus, the emergence of a time machine maker was not really remarkable, perhaps being sufficient to occasion a few jokes and laughter in the doctors' conference room.

However, I was definitely interested in the patient, Mikita. This is because I am not good at doing steady orthodox research but have a habit of trying to make all-or-nothing breakthroughs. Once I invented a hiccup therapy, but it did not work. In psychiatry, stimulation therapies such as insulin and electric shock treatments are often used to treat mental patients. As an experiment, I gave a patient a drug that strongly stimulated his diaphragm and caused drastic, artificial hiccups. According to my theory, the patient should have gotten better. Unfortunately, his continuous hiccups still have not stopped to this day, so it is impossible to judge if his illness has gotten better. Because of this incident, I was severely reprimanded by my superior. In order to restore my good name, I next made a huge coil which a man could get into. I then put a patient in and

applied electrical current to it. In this case, I am certain that the patient improved. However, when we took the patient out of the coil, he made a miss-step off the ladder, fell down, and broke his jaw. He is still unable to speak. My superior was enraged, and he ordered me to never conduct a new experiment again. However, I know the patient got better. The beauty of the treatment was that the coil was made dextrally, with the whorls rising to the apex in counterclockwise spirals from the opening at the lower right.³⁸⁸

It was, thus, only natural for me, who had the potential to be an inventor, to become interested in a patient who claimed to have invented a time machine. I did not believe that such a machine was possible in reality, but it was fun to fantasize about it. If there were such a thing as a time machine, I could go to a world 100 years in the future and bring back a therapeutic instrument or medication for mental illness that would be much more advanced than what we have now. It was pleasurable to just imagine the surprise on the face of my hated superior.

By chance, Mikita happened to be under the care of my superior, so I went to see him while this senior doctor was out. Mikita was a skinny young man, who was around my age. He had a vacant expression.

He was probably receiving large amounts of Chlorpromazine, a medication that treats delusions.

“No matter how much medication you give me, it won’t help,” he said as soon as he saw my doctor's white coat. “I’m not sick. When I take the medication, it makes me

³⁸⁸ The antonym of dextral, sinistral (左巻き) means a “crazy person” in Japanese slang.

sleepy and I cannot stand it. If I keep taking it, eventually I'll become a real mental patient."

I learned nothing from his words. A real crazy person would make these comments, and a normal person would probably say the same thing, too.

However, when I looked at him, I intuitively felt something. What on earth is the difference between insanity and sanity? Is it not the case that the thoughts of the majority of people at a given time are considered normal? For example, in the medieval era when people had delusions about witches, those who believed in witches were considered normal. If one were to draw a line from extreme insanity to extreme normality (I know this is a strange expression), it would obviously be difficult to draw a line in the middle separating the two. However, as doctors, we have seen many insane people. If we see a patient with typical paranoia, although we would not be able to clearly pinpoint the reason, something strikes us, as with a sixth sense. If a person is mad, we sense it immediately, different from perceptions of ordinary people would.

When I saw Mikita's face and heard his voice, I didn't sense anything crazy about him.

I took him to my private office and offered him a cup of tea. I didn't mention anything about his illness. I told him that I also liked to invent things and I'd like him to teach me about physics. While we engaged in idle talk, Mikita gradually let down his guard, became fairly eloquent, and even began to smile. He said that this was the first time he'd been treated like a human being since he'd been admitted to the hospital. In a subtle way, I asked him questions about magnetism, entropy, and so on. His answers

were extremely precise, and it proved that at least his intelligence was not impaired. Still, the question as to whether he was delusional or not remained unresolved.

“By the way,” I asked, “I heard you’re able to make a time machine. Is that right?”

“Yes, probably,” he replied ambiguously, grinning.

“So, tell me more about it. How is time structured?”

“Time?” he said, “There is not a single scholar on earth who can precisely explain time. Frankly speaking, I don’t understand it all either.”

“But, can you make a time machine without understanding the essence of time?”

“It’s the same for you doctors,” he remarked with a grin, “You treat mental illness without understanding anything about it. As for electrical shock therapy, you only know that it works. I have heard that you don’t know how it works.”

“There is a theoretical explanation, but it’s still a hypothesis.”

“If hypotheses counted, there would be any number about time. For instance, there’s a theory that time is a coiled spiral. On following the coil, it takes decades to make a circle. However, if we compress the coil and make the wires connect to each other, we might be able to travel from one point to tens of years ahead of us or behind us. Decades could become hundreds or thousands of years.”

Setting aside the topic of time, I proceeded to the critical matter of the principle behind his time machine. His answer was that he did not know anything about the principle behind the machine. He said that one evening he had a very vivid dream in which he clearly saw a blueprint for the machine. I was disappointed to hear that, but while I was talking to him, I became more and more convinced that he was not crazy. He

may have been simply obsessed by an innocent invention mania. If that was the case, there was no need to lock him up in a mental hospital.

“I don’t believe you are sick, but using materials at the university without permission was not a good thing, don’t you agree?”

“It was a mistake,” he admitted. “At the time, I was impatient. I didn’t have a clue as to the principles of how a time machine might work, so my only alternative was to actually make one, If I didn’t try, I wouldn’t be able to prove anything. I felt pressured at the time.”

“Alright. If you promise me that you won’t make the same mistake again, I’ll teach you a method to be discharged from the hospital.”

Mikita was not my patient, but I wanted to show up my superior, so I explained in detail to Mikita the trick of how to be discharged from the hospital. First, he would have to admit that he was sick, then he would pretend to wonder why on earth his mind was occupied by such a strange idea. I also told him how he should behave and how he should explain himself, and so on and so on.

“I came up with those ideas a long time ago.”

“Then, why didn’t you act on them?”

“I just felt I shouldn’t... I felt bad to deceive you doctors.”

I chuckled ruefully.

“At any rate, I wish you a successful return to the outside world. You’d better choose more carefully a place to assemble your time machine. Also, in the event you’re able to create a small experimental machine, let me be a part of the experiment.”

“Of course, doctor.”

After that, I became busy for about a month. When I next visited the ward where Mikita was, I found out that he had already been discharged from the hospital. I checked his medical record and read my hated superior's handwriting recording the following: "His delusion has totally disappeared. A reportable case of an example of the positive effect of Chlorpromazine. Decided to discharge him."

I couldn't help but grin.

However, a few days later, in the evening, when I came back to my apartment, there was a man waiting for me at the front door. It was Mikita.

"What happened?"

"Doctor, thanks to your advice I was able to leave the hospital," he replied. "I've decided to follow your suggestion."

"Suggestion? What was it?"

"That I should carefully choose the place where I build my time machine. You were right, doctor. If I thoughtlessly assembled the machine just anywhere, I'd have to go back to the hospital. This time, I'll choose a safe place."

"A safe place? Where?"

"I'll live with you in this apartment and assemble the time machine here. I'll be safe here, right, doctor? You'll contribute some money, won't you?"

I was taken by surprise, but for some reason I let him into my apartment.

"How much do you think it will cost to build your time machine?"

"If I follow my first blueprint, it would cost at least billions."

"That's impossible," I waved my hands to stop him.

“But, it’s really strange,” he continued without paying attention to me. “The first blueprint that I saw in my dream was extremely precise. However, while I was forced to take the medication at the hospital, I began to dream about simpler and simpler drawings. Metaphorically speaking, I first dreamed about a jet plane, but now I dream of a glider or a model airplane.”

“So, how much would the model airplane cost?”

“Let me see, depending on how I do it, it would probably cost twenty- to thirty-thousand yen...”

“That’s too cheap. I won’t trust a time machine that costs only twenty- thousand yen to build.”

“Of course, its performance wouldn’t be good. It wouldn’t be able to go to the future and the past freely, but instead, it might allow us to go to only one point at a time. Even so, that’d be wonderful, wouldn’t it?”

I will not record the details of our conversation here. In the end, I gave him the go ahead to live with me. It is hard to live in this world without having dreams. Compared to going out to a salon bar, building a time machine for only twenty thousand yen is a bargain indeed.

I was fairly satisfied with simply having that dream, but to my surprise, Mikita actually started to build something in my small apartment room. He bought many alumite basins, and explained that they would become the outside wall of the time machine. In addition, he purchased numerous items including vacuum pipes, batteries, and copper wires.

“What is the power source for the machine,” I asked for fun. “Do you need to make a strong magnetic field, or do you need a large amount of electricity?”

He responded that though he would need to use the power of dry-cell batteries to some degree, the main power source would be a rubber band.

“A rubber band?”

“Yep,” he was already talking to me in a buddy-buddy manner. “This machine is extremely simple, you know. Think about a model airplane. It flies with rubber bands.”

“Oh, I see,” I said as if I were stupid. After all, it would cost only twenty thousand yen.

While I was on duty at the hospital, Mikita kept working diligently and completed the machine in less than a month.

“This is the crudest one, so it can only go ten to twenty years forward or back at best,” he said. “I hope it’ll go to the future, even if it’s only twenty years. I wonder how much the world will have advanced by then. Twenty years from now, a mental hospital will have a machine that can identify someone like me as a normal person.”

I doubt it, I thought.

Anyhow, we decided to experiment with the machine, so we quietly brought it to the nearby grounds of a shrine. Fortunately, our first machine was a fold-up one, so it was convenient for us to transfer it. Behind the shrine was a little cliff that was seldom visited by people. They usually did not come up to the cliff. Even if it travels ten or twenty years into the future or the past, as long as the shrine and the cliff are here, then the machine won’t suddenly appear on a busy street.

Mikita explained, “Twist this rubber band. This will become the power source to start the machine. Even if you twist more, it won’t make the machine go farther. Once the machine reaches a different time, it will bounce back to the starting point due to the distortion of time caused by time travel. We should be able to stay there for about twenty-four hours. We can’t travel freely with a machine whose engine is merely a rubber band.”

He assembled the machine in a grove on top of the cliff, added some canned food and bread in case of emergency, and got into the machine. There was not much room left once he was in. I, of course, was not planning to get in.

“Well then, I’m leaving,” he extended his hand to me. I shook his hand with a serious look on my face. This play cost only twenty thousand yen, so the best thing was to enjoy the drama, I thought.

The lid of the machine was closed. I stepped down a little just in case – although I did not believe it would really move. The machine started to zoom. I could not believe what I saw next but the machine with Mikita in it began spinning around like a top. It picked up momentum, eventually spinning at a lightening speed to the extent that it looked like a gray mist. Then, it suddenly disappeared. There was nothing there.

I stood frozen. I cautiously extended my hand to the space where the machine had been. I felt nothing. Mikita and the machine had disappeared.

I was stunned and wandered about for about two hours. I remembered Mikita saying that he would be staying at the destination for about 24 hours. So there was nothing I could do but go back to my apartment and drink whisky. That night I kept

having strange dreams about Mikita. In one dream, the machine defied our expectation and went into the future thousands of years from now, and Mikita was put in a zoo. In another one, he went to the past tens of thousands of years ago and got run over by a dinosaur.

The next day, I took a day off from work and stayed on top of the cliff behind the shrine from early in the morning. Around 24 hours after the time machine's departure of the day before, something like a gray mist began to emerge. Its spinning gradually slowed down and eventually stopped completely. The lid, which was made by putting basins together, opened and Mikita stuck his head out.

He looked tired. He also had white powder here and there on his clothes.

"How was it? Have you really been somewhere, I mean, to the past or the future?" I shouted with excitement.

"It was a success," he spoke in few words, but he did not seem very happy.

"I traveled through time for about twenty years. Not to the future but to the past. It's too bad I went to the past. It was right after the war and there was nothing there. Damn it, I wish I could have gone to the future."

"Don't say that. If what you have said is true, this is very significant. Let's just go back to the apartment so you can tell me more of your story."

According to Mikita, the time machine landed in the dead grass on top of the cliff of the same shrine he departed. The shrine itself had not changed much, but when he looked down from there, the town was ruined – it was half burned down and shanties were lined up everywhere. The people who were walking around were dirty and appeared to be cold.

Mikita walked to the train station which stood a short distance away. There, he took out his wallet to buy a newspaper, but he discovered that the thousand-yen bills he had with him had all turned into confetti.

“It seems that something abnormal happens to paper due to the resistance of going against the current of time. This also happened to the tissue paper I had.”

He, then, took out a coin to buy the newspaper, but the middle age woman who was selling papers gave him a suspicious look. “What kind of coin is this? 100-yen? I’ve never seen such a thing.”

He hurriedly left the area, but not before seeing the date on the newspaper. The date was March 26, Shôwa 21, 1946.

The front of the station was crowded with black market stalls. They were selling things to eat like steamed potatoes, dried potatoes, peanuts, rice balls, and other stuff like work gloves, coarse socks, cast-metal pans and kettles, and canteens. Suddenly he came up with an idea, and went back to the time machine to get some canned food that he had brought with him just in case. As soon as he put them on the street, they were all sold out. By selling them, he acquired some new 10-yen bills on which the picture of the Diet building was printed – most bank bills had been converted to new ones but some old bills that had a certificate sticker attached to them.³⁸⁹ With these, he could get on the train and have a look around. At one station, he was sprayed with a lot of DDT, which was used to prevent the typhus infection.

“Look. I brought back some of the currency as evidence. Here it is.”

³⁸⁹ The conversion into the new currency happened in Shôwa 21 (1946). At this point, the old bills were made invalid. However, in order to cope with the shortage of new bank bills, existing bills with certificate stickers were considered valid. A bull bill was an old 10-yen bill. Because the picture of a bull was printed on it, it was nicknamed as such.

“Oh, the long forgotten bills. ... But, this is strange. Didn’t you say paper turned into confetti when traveling in time?”

“Yes. That happened when traveling to the past, but not on the way back to the present. See, this paper is intact, too.”

Dried potatoes were wrapped in newspaper. I could easily recognize the letters indicating the date, Sh ôwa 21.

At this point, I became fascinated with and very serious about the machine – and we repeatedly performed experiments. I decided to quit going to the hospital to work any longer and also began traveling through time in the machine. As a result, we discovered some unfortunate things.

With the machine, we could only go into the past and were never be able to go to the future.

Our destinations were also limited. We could only go from about February of Sh ôwa 21 to February of the following year. Even within this range, we could not control what day we would arrive. Therefore, what day we would be going to was all up to God.

When we traveled to the past, paper became tattered, but nothing happened to it when we came back to the present. Other than paper, nothing seemed to be affected.

The time machine would arrive in the past and bounce back to the present in 24 hours. Therefore, if we were not on board by then, there would be the danger that we might be left in the past. We also couldn’t go from the past to the further past. In sum, through experimentation, we discovered these points.

If this was the case, you might think, we should have raised some money and made another, more improved machine. But that was not possible because Mikita was not dreaming of blueprints any longer. I would say it was through sheer chance that Mikita was able to create even this time machine. Therefore we had no choice but to make the most of this machine, even with its limited performance.

What we thought about next, because we were pathetically materialistic, was how we might make a profit with the machine.

However, when we looked at Shôwa 21 from that perspective, it was at a time that had nothing to offer us. Even if we brought a lot of cheap canned food with us and sold it at high prices, the money we would earn in the past would be worth little in the present because of inflation. What good would it be for us to bring back new inventions of the time, such as a cigarette roller or a “new” convenient toaster?

“Ah, ah,” Mikita grumbled, “I wish we could go to the future. Then, we could bring back a machine that would cure cancer. If we could only go three or four times farther into the past, then we could find items that would be valuable antiques in the present.”

“Wait, how about gambling?” I exclaimed. “They must’ve had horse racing back then. If we could obtain a newspaper from the past and check the results...”

“No, it’s no good. Even if they had horse racing, we wouldn’t know exactly what date the time machine would arrive. If we could bring all the newspapers of Showa 21 and 22 to the past, we’d first sell our canned food, then check the newspaper of the day, and use the profits at the racetrack. But, if we were to take the newspapers to the past, they’d be destroyed. We wouldn’t be able to read them.”

“How about buying stocks?”

“That’s no good, either. Of course, stocks would appreciate, but even if you have the initial stocks, they wouldn’t be worth much. During the twenty years, there’d be many profitable offerings, but we’d have no chance to increase the value of our stock then.”

Through all of this we continued our salami-slicing business. First, we loaded up as many inexpensive canned goods and coarse socks as we could and went to the past. However, if we sold them at the black market, the boss of the territory would threaten us. So, we sold them on the street. Because the labels of the cans were all ruined, we had to open one can as a sample. It was at a time when there was nothing, so we could easily sell everything we brought. With the proceeds, we purchased postage stamps. Since stamps from that time had appreciated in the present, we could earn some money but not a lot. It would be a different story if we could buy jewelry or expensive antiques there and bring them back to the present, but it was impossible to purchase these items with the proceeds from the canned food.

I suggested to Mikita that we bring a transistor radio or a small television to the past, but Mikita disagreed.

“If we do that, we’d change the past and that would affect the present as well. It would be dangerous.”

“But, weren’t you hoping to bring back something from the future to the present? Isn’t it the same thing?”

“You’re right, but now we know we can’t go to the future. Anyway, I don’t feel good about it. My subconscious tells me so. The time machine was the product of my subconscious in the first place, you know.”

“But we’ve already intervened in the past. We took lots of canned food there and brought back their postage stamps...”

“Those small things wouldn’t have much affect. Bringing televisions to Shôwa 21 would be different and dangerous, as they were invented much later.”

I struck my knee when the idea came to me.

“Hey, we didn’t think about something very important. In Shôwa 21, we were living but were still kids. Why don’t we find ourselves or my father, who died three years ago, and give them some advice? For instance, we can advise them to buy some stocks because the Korean War will start soon...”

“That’s even worse,” Mikita shook his head. “Nobody would believe you. Worse yet, meeting with ourselves in the past is a terrible idea. That is the most dangerous thing we could do when traveling through time. I’m instinctively opposed to it absolutely.”

“Then, why don’t I stay back in 1946? I will memorize as many historical events as I can before I go, and there I could become a great prophet. But wait, then there would be two of me existing at the same time. One’s thirty-three years old and the other is fifteen. Who on earth is the real me?”

I grasped my head with my hands in confusion. Mikita still had a stern look on his face and repeatedly shook his head.

One day I was browsing through a magazine and happened to find the autobiography of Tanzawa Jirô. Nowadays, there is nobody who doesn't know this genius painter. In fact, he recently had an extensive solo show, and I heard that the prices of his paintings were hitting the ceiling.

However, at the start of his career, he was very poor. After the war, he was on the verge of starvation, and he could not even afford paint. His painting was accepted at the Nitten Exhibition for the first time in 1947, and that gave him an opportunity to lead a life as an artist.

Mikita was complaining.

“Why do we always go to only one place? Of all the possible points in time, why do we always go to the same boring time just after the war. I assume that time is in the shape of a helix. There's the argument that if a time machine were to be created in the future, a time traveler could appear at any time. However, we have not met those travelers, and therefore, a time machine is implausible. However, it has been recorded that, at one point in the past, there seems to have been time travelers who appeared. So, it makes perfect sense that, if time is a spiral, even an advanced time machine can travel to only a limited time period due to the fact that it travels from one point of the spiral to the other.”

I was more focused on the magazine article than listening to Mikita. “Hey, Mikita, you understand paintings, don't you?”

“Paintings? Not really.”

“But, you must know Tanzawa Jirô, right?”

“I've heard of his name. What about him?”

“Look at this. It was in 1947 when Tanzawa Jirô’s work was accepted at Nitten Exhibition for the first time. That’s right after our time machine usually arrives. After that, he began to make his name as a painter and eventually became one of Japan’s master artists. But, before that, he was extremely poor and thought of giving up painting. This is a great opportunity.”

“Opportunity? What opportunity?”

“You idiot. We could meet unknown, impoverished Tanzawa Jirô. We could probably purchase his paintings for next to nothing. Then we bring it back here, where it is extremely valuable.”

“I see.” Mikita had a serious look on his face and crossed his arms.

We made a careful plan. The plan did not seem to have any faults. We traveled through time to the past many times, sold canned food, and hid our proceeds on the grounds of the shrine. In the mean time, we exerted our utmost efforts to locate Tanzawa Jirô’s house – of course the one where he was living in Shôwa 21 – but this was more difficult than we had supposed. This was because he was a totally obscure young man at the time.

Finally, Mikita pretended to be a newspaper reporter and called Tanzawa Jirô of the present time.

“I am working on your biographical sketch... Where were you living after the war?”

“I drifted from town to town after I was discharged from military service, and I didn’t even have a house,” the master replied.

“Do you remember where you were living in Shôwa 21?”

“Shôwa 21... If I remember correctly, it was in front of the Nishi-Ogikubo Station. There was a public bathhouse near where I lived, and I was renting a room from the Nishida family.”

“Do you remember the address?”

“Address? I don’t remember. Do you need the address for my biographical sketch?”

“No, no. Thank you for your time.”

Mikita hurriedly hung up, but his purpose was accomplished.

Soon after that, Mikita located the house. It was a dirty, half-ruined two-story house that had not been bombed in the war – and he confirmed that a young man named Tanzawa Jirô was boarding on the second floor. When he visited there, the young man was out and also it was the time that Mikita had to return in the time machine.

I went there next and soon found Nishida’s house. Luckily, Tanzawa Jirô was in. Young Tanzawa was very pale and his sunken eyes were keenly sharp.

I quickly looked around the house. There was an unfinished painting in the middle of the room. It was an abstract painting and simply looked like a chaotic dark lump. There were five or six small paintings set against one wall. There was a canteen, a toaster, some sweet potatoes and orange peels scattered on the tatami floor. The way he was living was about what I had expected.

“What do you want with me?”

The pale young man asked, a glitter in his sharp eyes.

“I’m buying some of your paintings.”

I intentionally behaved in a very high-handed manner.

“My paintings?” He obviously seemed surprised.

“My paintings are not for sale.” He murmured but his voice sounded faint and trailed off, being almost inaudible due to his hunger and frustration.

“I didn’t come here to argue with you.” I took a thick bundle of 10-yen bills that we hid on the grounds of the shrine out of my pocket and threw it on the tatami floor.

“I’ll take all of your paintings. Yes or no?”

He hesitated for a while, but then weakly nodded. I saw ecstasy and deep sorrow in his eyes at the same time.

I immediately began gathering his paintings. Then, he abruptly said, “Are you going to take this painting, too?”

“Of course.”

“But it’s unfinished.”

“That’s fine.”

I didn’t talk any more. All the paintings were small, and I had no problem carrying them by myself. I left the young man, who was taken aback, and I left the house.

Mikita was, of course, very happy when I returned to the present.

“One, two, three, ... six of them. These will pay us a fortune.”

“If I could go back just a few days later, I could bring a few more paintings.”

“Wait, wait. Don’t be greedy. These are enough. They all have his signature. Only this one is unfinished so maybe it would be just as well to sell this at a higher price.”

The next day, we visited an art dealer with high hopes.

At first, we could not believe what we heard. The dealer said,

“Tanzawa Jirô? I’ve never heard of such a painter. Is this is what he painted?
We only deal with artists of major stature, as you see.”

We were shocked, exasperated, and immediately went to another dealer but the result was the same.

We soon realized that there was no painter named Tanzawa Jir ô, or at least not one who was famous.

“What the hell is happening?”

I mumbled vacantly.

“I don’t know,” Mikita replied with a disheartened look.

Then, after some silence, he began speaking with a serious look on his face.

“We might have interfered in the past too much. That’s why the present has changed.”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s that unfinished painting by Jirô. I thought I’d seen it before, but now I think that it was the one that was accepted at the Nitten Exhibition. Because we took the painting, he didn’t get into Nitten and therefore he never became famous.”

“Come on, we only took six paintings. We did Tanzawa Jirô a favor. He couldn’t sell even a single painting. He was weak with malnutrition, and we left him a considerable amount of money. He could have bought delicious food or some paints. It would have enabled him to be able to produce more and more paintings than ever before.”

“But, it didn’t go that way,” Mikita still looked disappointed and continued. “In fact, Tanzawa Jir ô has disappeared. I guess he, who existed in Sh ôwa 21, might have

purchased liquor with money from the clouds. The unfinished painting might have determined his future destiny. He must have given himself up to cheap liquor.”

“Then, what happened to him?”

“I don’t know. He might have starved to death, or maybe he quit painting,”

Mikita said pensively. “What is obvious is ... we have buried a genius painter.”

“What should we do?”

“Hmm. If we go back to the past again, we might be able to arrive at a point after you purchased the paintings. In that case, we can give him back his paintings. But, I’m not sure if we can travel through time any more. I have a feeling that the time machine is about to break down. My subconscious has been telling me so.”

“Can you make a new machine?”

“Probably not. Recently I haven’t had any more dreams...”

Then Mikita looked back at me, and said with a thin smile.

“After all of this, we’d better go back to the mental hospital, don’t you think? I mean, both of us. You, too, as a mental patient.”

THE CAPTAIN³⁹⁰

(“Sench ô”)

1976

By Kita Morio

Until a little while ago, I was wandering in a mysterious world that induced an numbness of the mind, just as Alice in *Alice's Adventure in the Wonderland* experienced.

The town of Alexandria looked organized on the surface, but once you stepped into the back alleys of the town, the landscape was disorganized and filthy.

Most of the walls of the buildings were falling off, the streets were dusty, and the smell of horse waste hung in the air. Some people were noisily selling fruit and vegetables from their carts, and others put oil on an iron board to bake flat bread that was unique to this region.

In contrast to these loud venders was an old man with grey hair quietly sitting on a chair in a house with crooked eaves. There also was a man, wearing white clothes with a long hem, squatting down as if he were an inanimate object. Some people, without uttering a word, were having a cup of coffee while playing a board game like Japanese chess. The landscape was indicative of sluggishness and corruption and was the epitome

³⁹⁰ First published in the January 1976 issue of *Shinchô*. The original text is in Kita Morio, *Makkurake no ke* (Tokyo: Shinchyôsha, 1985) 7-17.

of poverty and the mundane. While walking through those back alleys, I felt as if I were drawn into a world that was spiritless yet brilliant.

However, I always came to my senses, which could be described as a sad awakening. It was because, in the end, I always came to a broad main street where a train ran.

My mood, similar to that of being intoxicated and enchanted, was totally destroyed. The lightly shaded sky was blue and the sun was fierce. There were many cars running, and I felt as if I had awakened from being bewitched by some kind of spell.

I was a ship's doctor on a Fishery Agency's survey ship. The day before yesterday at the port of Alexandria we offloaded a crewmember who had been suffering for some time from chronic appendicitis. He was to have surgery here. This was because I did not have enough confidence to operate on him myself. It was outside my specialization.

The captain and other crewmembers who were in higher positions than me went to visit Cairo, but due to my responsibility as the ship's doctor, I stayed on board and then went to visit my patient in the hospital. When I had time to spare, I wandered around the nearby town, and every time I did so, I was struck by the same impressions of the mysterious that I mentioned previously.

That main street seemed to be where the hospital stood. In the evening I began walking back to the port for the ship when a large figure suddenly blocked my way. I am not short but this fellow appeared to be gigantic to my depressed mind.

His hair was half gray, the tip of his nose was sharp, and his dark brown skin was oddly coarse. Contrarily, his brown eyes were sparkling with softness.

He asked me in English, “Are you Japanese?”

“Yes.”

“Are you a crew member of the Shôyô-maru?”

“Yes, I’m the ship’s doctor.”

“Is that so? I’ve read about the Shôyô -maru in the newspaper.”

He spoke boldly and extended his hand and I immediately extended my hand back and we shook hands. The skin of his palm was hard and his grip was quite strong.

I remembered that Shôyô-maru was about to set out for long-line fishing in the Red Sea with Egyptian ichthyologists on board. It was a cooperative survey of Japan and Egypt, and that probably was the reason the article was written about the Shôyô-maru in the paper.

Proudly he said, “I’m a captain. I was a captain for a long time.”

I looked at him again. He was wearing a relatively old brown suit but, contrasting to that, was wearing a new red tie that fit loosely around his neck. He was big and probably 15 centimeters taller than I am. His age was probably close to seventy. It might sound strange, but I did not notice that he was an old man until then.

I murmured like a mentally disabled person, “... Really.”

“I can sail the boat without having ○○. For forty years I was sailing to XX and XXX in the Red Sea.”

The ○○ he mentioned was probably some kind of a surveying equipment but I was not familiar with it. XX, I suspected, was the name of the place, but I did not understand that, either.

“Stars, you know, as long as I can see stars, I can sail any ocean,” said the old man in a way that a little child might brag about himself.

“Mikasa. Do you know the Mikasa, Doctor?” he asked.

He must have been talking about the warship Mikasa. I nodded.

He looked upward, and had an expression on his face as if he were recalling something.

“I have a model of the Mikasa in my house. Japanese captains used to visit me in my house.”

I imagined that he probably retired a long time ago and now had no more visitors.

“I’m going out for dinner with my friend,” he said while looking at his watch, “But why don’t you come to my house tonight? You can bring other crew members as well. Is the captain here, too?”

“He’s in Cairo now.”

“Too bad. At any rate, I’ll give you my address.”

He took a notebook out of his inside pocket and began writing some words with a pencil. His fingers were slightly trembling. He licked his pencil once. His lips were thick.

“This is my address,” he tore the page and gave it to me. “If you show this to the cab driver, he’ll know where it is. I can’t offer you a meal because I’m going out to see someone now, but I’ll be home by seven-thirty. You can come anytime after that.”

He extended his hand.

“By all means, please come. See you then.”

“I’ll try...,” I answered as I did not know what else to say.

When I returned to the ship and went up the ladder, I bumped into the Chief Officer.

“Chieficer³⁹¹, I met a man who called himself a captain,” and I then told him about the old man.

“Would you like to go to his house with me tonight? He seemed to be an interesting person but I don’t know how long it’d take to get there.”

“Let’s ask that guy.”

The Chief Officer showed the piece of paper with the address on it to an Egyptian watchman on deck and exchanged some words with him.

“No way, Doctor. He said it’s very far away, probably about forty minutes by car.”

“Forty minutes...”

Back then the availability of foreign currencies was quite restricted, so none of us had much money.

“Instead, why don’t we go to the place we went to last night? That would be much more fun.”

“OK. Let’s do that.”

We could purchase several glasses of liquor with the money that we would have to pay to take a taxi for forty minutes. I felt slightly guilty about the old captain who had a model of the Mikasa, but I was easily swayed by the Chief Officer’s suggestion.

We went to a bar named Hollywood after supper, but were rather disappointed there. I was sort of hoping that a pretty girl would show up, but the only ones who came

³⁹¹ This is the shortened word for “chief officer.” In Japanese, it is written as *chōfusā* (チヨフサー).

to our table were two old women who were also with us the night before. Those women, however, were very good at heart. We had gone to the bar the previous night because a confidence man took us there. The women told us that the swindler had contracted with the bar and that he took a commission, and they warned us not to come with him any more.

Two days later, the Shôyô-maru left Alexandria for the Red Sea. The eldest person among the ichthyologists was Professor G, who seemed to be close to seventy years old. Compared to the old captain who was tall, the Professor was short and heavy. He had rheumatism and brought his own injectable medication, and he asked me to inject it. Every morning after breakfast I went to Professor G's room with a sterilized syringe and injected the medication in his arm. According to the instructions, it was supposed to be injected intramuscularly. I thought it would be safer and less painful to inject it in his hip, but felt I was not in a position to suggest that. The Professor showed his bare arm and nodded as if confirming to me to use his arm. After the shot, he told me with a slightly husky voice, "Thank you, Doctor."

"You're welcome," I said, and that was about all the conversation I had with him. Whenever I looked at the plump Professor, I could not help remembering the old captain who was so large and whose eyes were soft. When I went back to the ship at that time and invited Chief Officer to go with me to the captain's house, had I not anticipated that a very pretty granddaughter of the captain might greet us? I surely did. When you spend a long time out at sea, some thoughts that you would never think while you were on land come to mind. However, as time passed, I began to think of the extreme opposite.

The captain is probably very lonely and his wife may have died long ago, and he probably does not have any children. Even if he did, his children are living in far away places. He was not dressed poorly when I met him, but he probably is not affluent either, and the furniture in his house must be old. He, however, has many models of ships that accumulate dust, one of which is that of the Mikasa. In a house where people seldom come to visit, he is quietly remembering his past when he led an active career. That was the way I began to imagine him. He told me he would not be able to offer us a meal, but it was probably because he had nobody to cook for guests. If we had visited him in his dark room that evening, he would have repeated his bragging under the influence of a little bit of liquor, "I don't need ○○. As long as I can see the stars, I can sail anywhere."

The days slowly passed as I was thinking these thoughts. It was late at night when the ship was about to go through the Suez Canal. I was lying down on the upper bridge and fixing my eyes on the desert that lay a flat, deep black on both sides of the canal. The temperature dropped quite a bit at night in the desert. I put a jacket on but still felt chilly.

"After I pass through this canal," I thought, "Japan will seem much closer." Things about Japan, memories of my childhood, this journey on the ship that we had been on for four months, the scenes of the back alleys in Alexandria that attracted me as if they had bound me with a spell, and other thoughts would come to mind with a feeling of odd sentiment. "Thank you, Doctor," Professor G's husky voice, "I'm a captain," the old man's strained, bold voice, sneaked into my thoughts as well. Then the feeling of regret that I did not go to visit the old captain that night strongly came over me. No matter how much I regretted it, there was absolutely nothing I could do about it now.

In the meantime, while quivering with the sound of the engine, the ship was still slowly advancing in the calm water channel in the midst of the dark desert.

“As long as I can see the stars...”

The stars, so big, bright, and shining were piercing my eyes.

MEALS MY MOTHER MADE FOR ME³⁹²

(“Haha no aji”)

1966

By Kita Morio

Editors frequently send me requests for essays about “My Mother’s Home Cooking.” I always reject these requests. This is because my mother was entirely too strange to have ever created “mother’s recipes” in the conventional sense.

When it comes to speaking of the food my mother made with her own hands, I’m at a loss. Until the end of the Second World War, my mother never even boiled rice. When all the maids left, she finally had to cook rice on her own, and to everyone’s utter surprise, she was able to do it.

There is no doubt that my mother was raised as a beloved and spoiled daughter of a rich family, and that she grew into a woman of extravagant tastes. That said, she did have an inner fortitude. And in the years immediately after the end of the war, she was the one in our family who most cheerfully endured such deprivations as awful tasting food and shabby garments.

At present she is seventy years old, but she still uses the subway and other public transportation and will not get into a taxi. One reason is that she is cheap, but another, as

³⁹² First published in the October 1966 issue of *Shiseidô chein sutoâ* (*Shiseido Chain Store*), and later republished in some of his collections of essays. The original text is in Kita Morio, *Manbô no asa to Mabuze no yoru* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1986) 76-78.

she explains, is because she wants to keep the strength of her legs and hips. When I am about to call for a taxi to go on a slightest errand, she'll scold, "A young man like you shouldn't be so bloody lazy."

Recently, my mother participated in a package tour of the Middle East and Africa. Uncharacteristically she asked me to accompany her, and since she could only be regarded as aged, I decided to accompany her for the first time in a long time on her travels.

Apparently she still considered me an elementary school student, and on boarding the aircraft, she found her seat with much dispatch and called me over, "Quickly! Come sit here. You'll be able to look out the window."

At the airport upon our arrival, she instructed me to use the public restroom there because there was no attendant and I wouldn't have to tip.

At the hotel, she advised me, "They have chilled water here. Make sure you drink your fill." And then, "You drink and smoke too much," she persistently cautioned. Going through customs in foreign countries, she lectured, "You're going to have to tip everybody. So, exchange some of your bills for coins now while you can." She was a constant source of detailed and trivial advice.

I am a middle age male who has had some experience of travel, but parents will be parents and there is nothing I could do but meekly accept her suggestions.

The most difficult problem I had in staying in the same room with my mother was my nightcap before bed. In most hotels, one is usually provided two glasses. It was my custom to mix a very strong whisky highball in one, put iced water in the other, and drink from them alternately.

In the room with my mother I was certain there had been two glasses, but I could only find one. I finally discovered the weird scene of my mother's dentures in the missing glass.

My mother took it upon herself to bathe first and then she would tell me, "I filled the bath tub for you. Please hurry up and take your bath." But the bath she fixed for me was either too hot or too cold, and I was never able to get into the water without considerable adjustment of the temperature.

On one occasion, my mother called, "There is no bath towel in here," and she came flying out of the bathroom almost naked. Even though she was a woman, I was hardly delighted to see a strip show put on by my 70-year-old mother.

There was one thing my mother wasn't good at and that was unlocking the hotel room door. Once the door had a double lock, and even I had difficulty opening it. Thereupon, my mother suddenly grabbed a hold of a foreign gentleman who was passing in the corridor. He was not an employee of the hotel but a guest, and she sternly commanded, "Open this door."

I had originally intended to accompany my mother in order to help her on her journey, but it turned out that the exact opposite situation resulted and I was the one who was constantly receiving my mother's assistance. She never once got sick. Indeed, she was incredibly healthy and active throughout the trip until the end. On days of scheduled activities, I was the one who was exhausted. We frequently woke up at 5:00 in the morning, and since it was my usual custom to sleep until noon, this schedule was agonizing.

At the end of the day sightseeing, I collapsed in exhaustion on the bed, and my mother turned to me and said nonchalantly, “I feel the end of my life is soon approaching, and before I go, I want to visit the South Pole.”

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