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Apologia

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Three Views of the Rising Sun, Obliquely: Keiji Nakazawa's A-bomb, Osamu Tezuka's Adolf, and Yoshinori Kobayashi's Apologia

"The twentieth century began with a futuristic utopia and ended with nostalgia," writes Svetlana Boym in *The Future of Nostalgia*.¹ This zeitgeist of looking backwards materializes in Japanese manga and anime as a belated rendezvous with World War II, as a gaze across half a century into the Rising Sun and the invariable averting from the blinding rays of wartime history. Japanese comics' "return of the repressed" entails a coming to terms with the collective trauma that allegedly ended in 1945, yet this yearning to engage a specific past of great pain is adulterated by the human instinct for pleasure and a withdrawal from pain. After all, any gaze into the sun results in a turning away, lest blindness or madness set in. Instead of staring into the sun himself, Van Gogh lets his sunflowers do that, maintains Georges Bataille. Bataille further casts this paradox of attraction and revulsion of the sun in the image of Icarus: "the summit of elevation is in practice confused with a sudden fall of unheard-of violence. The myth of Icarus is particularly expressive from this point of view: it clearly splits the sun in two—the one that was shining at the moment of Icarus's elevation, and the other that melted the wax, causing failure and a screaming fall when Icarus got too close."² Drawn to the best and the worst of times of Imperial Japan, the three

manga artists—Nakazawa Keiji in the 1970s, Tezuka Osamu in the 1980s, and Kobayashi Yoshinori at the turn of the century—manage to capture, in the words of Bataille, either “the preceding sun (the one not looked at) [which] is perfectly beautiful” or “the scrutinized sun [which] can be horribly ugly.”³ Rather than dwelling on Japan’s historical responsibility over the war, Nakazawa’s *Barefoot Gen* (1973–74, *Hadashi no gen*) represents the tragedy of the atom bomb from the lone perspective of a pacifist family, Tezuka’s *Adolf* (1983–85, *Adorufu ni tsugu*) gives vent to a bizarre anti-Semitic Hitler myth, and Kobayashi’s *Taiwanron* (2001, *On Taiwan*) peddles his right-wing apology for Japanese militarism.⁴ Either from the left or the right of the Japanese political spectrum, the wartime Rising Sun is viewed obliquely like Hokusai’s famous “One Hundred Views of Fuji.”

In order not to gaze unblinkingly at the sun or the Japanese wartime history, both Nakazawa and Tezuka locate their subject matter in the pacifist

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minority before, during, and immediately after the war. Favoring the left-wing liberal politics, the two manga artists make possible the English-speaking reader’s sympathy and even identification with the antiwar position of the protagonists, who are, needless to say, victims of conservative, militaristic forces of the time. Who can argue with the tragedy of *hibakusha* (explosion-affected person[s]) in Nakazawa, except

it is not balanced by any representation of Japanese aggression and atrocities? Indeed, there is no representation at all of Japanese oppression of its colonies other than one Korean character forced into hard labor in Japan. Tezuka weaves his version of the Hitler myth by means of, likewise, an antiwar protagonist. From Nakazawa’s A-bomb testimony, Tezuka moves into the controversial realm of, in Alvin H. Rosenfeld’s term, imagining Hitler.⁵ Yet the witness and the daydreamer are replaced on the threshold of the twenty-first century by Kobayashi’s virulent reactionary polemic. The antiwar position shifts into its nemesis, or Kobayashi’s diatribe advocating a revival of the Japanese spirit symbolized by militarism. Composed for the Japanese domestic market as well as, strangely enough, a sizeable market in Taiwan in Chinese translation, Kobayashi’s *On Taiwan* was not and will quite possibly never be translated into English. By contrast, in English translation, Nakazawa appeals to the global readership in terms of the antinuclear peace

movement and Tezuka in terms of the fascination for Hitler. Not only are the three artists looking, obliquely, at the sun, but the global audience does the same in English, Chinese, and other translations.

NAKAZAWA KEIJI'S *BAREFOOT GEN*

Six years old at the time of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Nakazawa Keiji in his early career as a cartoonist refrained from the subject altogether, “hat[ing] the very mention of the word.” Nakazawa reminisced in “Introduction: My Hope for *Barefoot Gen*” in *Barefoot Gen: Out of the Ashes*, which was the fourth and last of the series:

But in October 1966—twenty-one years after the bomb—my mother died . . . When her body was cremated, I discovered something that made me tremble with rage: nothing was left of her bones. Usually the bones remain after cremation, but radioactive cesium had eaten my mother’s bones away, and they had turned into ash. The A-bomb had taken everything from me, even my precious mother’s bones.⁶

Nakazawa’s rage over the belated incineration and total erasure of his mother propelled him to confront the bomb. A classic return of the repressed, the cartoonist might have attributed to the bomb what is possibly a case of osteoporosis, a lifetime of calcium loss that would similarly leave little physical remains after cremation. This autobiographical detail makes all the more significant the episode in *Barefoot Gen* when the protagonist Nakaoka Gen retrieves his father’s and two siblings’ bones from the ruins, after an extended period of denial of their deaths. After all, the survivors of the Nakaoka family do not revisit the site of their house for the remains of the dead until volume 3, *Barefoot Gen: After the Bomb*, when they have long perished at the end of volume 1, *Barefoot Gen: A Cartoon History of Hiroshima*. The entire second volume, *Barefoot Gen: The Day After*, manifests Gen and his mother Kimie in various stages of psychological denial. Contrary to Christ’s advice, only the living can bury the dead. Gen’s family begin their return to reality once they come to accept the fate of the loved ones.

In 1972–73, Nakazawa serialized *Barefoot Gen* in *Shūkan shōnen janpu*, the largest weekly comic magazine in Japan. Art Spiegelman describes Nakazawa’s “draftsmanship [as] somewhat graceless, even homely, and without much nuance, but it gets the job done . . . The drawing’s greatest virtue is its

straightforward, blunt sincerity . . . It is the inexorable art of the witness.”⁷ Compared to Spiegelman and other graphic novelists of the same calibre,⁸ Nakazawa’s drawings appear to be artless, yet the simplistic, unadorned style befits the testimonial mode of bomb survivors. The story revolves around the survival of the Nakaoka family, the father’s antiwar stance turning them into scapegoats for wartime misery. Indoctrinated by propaganda and patriotic jingoism, the Nakaokas’ neighbors and the children’s classmates and teachers label them traitors, subjecting the pariah family to discrimination and violence. The only exception seems to be the decent Korean neighbor Mr. Pak, sympathetic because he himself is an oppressed minority. The metaphor of wheat, “push[ing] its shoots up” despite “winter frost” and human trampling, as the father explains in the opening panel, becomes the key to rejuvenating the surviving Nakaokas. Gen (meaning “root”) inherits this undaunted spirit, forever resourceful and of good cheer, particularly after the father, the oldest daughter Eiko, and Gen’s younger brother Shinji are consumed by the conflagration in the wake of the bomb.

The motif of death and rebirth repeats itself in the manner of a fugue from the wheat imagery to numerous “reincarnations.” Gen and the mother Kimie survive the blast purely by chance, protected by a concrete wall and in the attic. Having witnessed three members of her family burned to death, Kimie gives birth to Tomoko amid the rubble, yet Tomoko dies in her infancy due to either malnutrition or the radiation-caused cancer. Gen also rescues Shinji’s lookalike, Ryūta, and an Eiko substitute, the novice dancer Natsue. Gen’s pluck notwithstanding, Ryūta is forced to join the ruthless postwar underworld and Natsue is unlikely to realize her dream as a performer with her keloid-scarred face. Even the invalid painter Seiji is, figuratively, pulled back by Gen from the jaws of suicidal depression. Regeneration graces Gen himself in the concluding pages when he finds a fuzz of hair covering his bald head, parallel to the wheat seedlings after the bomb where the land is purportedly to stay barren for sixty years. This gallery of monstrosities, physically as in the case of *hibakusha* or socially as in the case of thieving orphans of Ryūta and his gang, illustrates Gen’s picaresque journey through hell. These supporting characters around Gen emerge and vanish in the narrative without much logic, akin to the chaos in Hiroshima.

What remains constant is the grotesquerie and agony of survival. Numerous reports and testimonies of the atom bomb have familiarized twenty-first century readers with the nuclear horror, yet to see, page after page, the walking dead with peeled-off skin dragging behind, with the flesh torn clean off the bones, with melted faces, with maggots squirming in the wounds and

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flies feasting on corpses is so nauseating that the reading induces, as Robert Jay Lifton argues in *Death in Life* (1967),⁹ compassion fatigue. Although John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* (1946),¹⁰ Hachiya Michihiko’s *Hiroshima Diary* (1955),¹¹ Ibuse Masuji’s *Black Rain* (1970),¹² writers collected in Ōe Kenzaburō’s *The Crazy Iris* (1985),¹³ Kurosawa Akira’s *Dreams* (1990), and a host of others have shared their mushroom vision, either survivors’ close-ups or artists’ long shots, with us for decades, the rawness of Nakazawa’s art still assaults our senses. Nonetheless, the cartoonist balances the nightmarish images with comic conventions of physical slapstick and humor, courtesy of the indomitable Gen, the combination of which proves to be a saving grace, sustaining not only the Nakaoka household but also the reader.

The choice of wheat as a central metaphor is intriguing. Throughout the four volumes, the Nakaoka family teeter on the verge of starvation, from wartime rationing to the postwar collapse of economy, particularly for a refugee family, to the U.S. military “foodstuffs” Gen risks his life to steal from trigger-happy American guards. Such cans turn out to contain packs of playing cards and rubber balloons, an ironic reference to condoms and the sex industry accompanying the American GIs wherever they go. The never-ending search for food focuses on the staple of the Japanese diet, rice, against which is the Nakaoka icon of wheat, as if the cartoonist deliberately chooses an atypical Japanese food to embody the antiwar, dissenting spirit of the Nakaokas. The erstwhile un-Japanese sentiment comes to be embraced wholeheartedly in postwar Japan.

IMAGING HITLER IN JAPAN

Lionized as the “God of Comics” and “God of Animation” in Japan, Tezuka Osamu’s long career boasted of five hundred titles of manga and animations and about 150,000 drawn pages. His most representative works include, in chronological order from the 1950s to the 1980s, *Metropolis*, *Jungle Emperor*, *Tetsuwan Atomu* (or *Mighty Atom*), *Phoenix*, *Ribon no kishi* (or *Princess Knight*), *Black Jack*, and *Adorufu ni tsugu* (*Adolf*, or more precisely, “Tell Adolf”).¹⁴ Tezuka’s five-volume *Adolf* (subsequent references use volume number and page number) was serialized in the Japanese magazine *Shūkan bunshun*. Though *Adolf* was the first book by Tezuka to be translated into English, perhaps on

the merit of its sensational subject matter more than anything else, *Jungle Emperor* might be the one most familiar to the American public, thanks to its 1960s and '70s resurrection as the TV animations *Kimba, the White Lion*, which in turn inspired Disney's *The Lion King*. Despite Disney's denials, the resemblance of Kimba and Simba and that of a host of other characters and episodes underline the derivativeness of global cultural productions, Tezuka's *Adolf* included. As Jean Baudrillard declares of the postmodern age, "we live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning."¹⁵ The voluminous information on the Third Reich obtained by Tezuka, evidenced in the year-by-year comparative timeline of World War II appended to many chapters, gives way to the most sensationalizing, slanderous, and anti-Semitic hoax about the mass murderer, namely, Hitler was, to borrow Sander Gilman's coinage, a self-hating Jew.¹⁶ His artistic imagination seems captured not so much by the actual deeds of Hitler as by the large liberties promised to him by the free association of the name Adolf. Put another way, Tezuka pirates the given name of the mass murderer as a loaded "logo" to advance his "action thriller." Just as Disney plagiarizes his Kimba, Tezuka borrows from the Hitler kitsch. In so doing, the history of World War II constitutes merely the backdrop to a highly improbable plot involving three Adolfs.

In addition to Adolf Hitler, the other two Adolfs are: Adolf Kaufmann, born in Kobe of a German consular official and his Japanese wife, who is sent back to Germany and eventually becomes a ruthless German officer; and Adolf Kamil, the son of a Jewish-German refugee couple who ran a bakery in Kobe. All three Adolfs have something to hide. Hitler tries to conceal his alleged Jewish ancestry, for which he sends Kaufman on a mission back to Japan. A member of the Hitler Youth and later of the SD, Kaufman denies his Japanese, hence non-Aryan, blood. The Kamils flee the Nazis to Japan and the Jewish boy believes that he is entirely Japanese, even though his playmates call him "whitey." The two younger Adolfs are childhood friends turned deadly enemies.

Not only does racial passing occur but cultural and generic boundaries are crisscrossed as well: the five-volume story spans Japan, Germany, and the Middle East; in terms of genre, the Holocaust seems too weighty a topic for comics. The vehicle for breaching borders of race, culture, and genre proves to be the narrator, Tōge Sōhei, a former college track-and-field star turned newspaper reporter. He covered the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games for a Japanese newspaper, and his communist brother was the one who passed on to him the documents of Hitler's birth. Tōge is pivotal to *Adolf* because,

unlike the three namesakes who are either murderous or angst ridden, Tōge is funny. Upright and unsophisticated, Tōge provides a great portion of the gags and laughs, central to the appeal of comics. On the other hand, Tōge offers a frame for the story befitting the grave, ponderous nature of the subject matter. The opening (1:12–14) and the conclusion (5:253) hook up like the two ends of a full circle as Tōge visits Kamil’s grave at an Israeli cemetery.

Similar to the conclusion of Art Spiegelman’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Maus I* and *Maus II* (1986, 1991) with the tombstone of his Holocaust-survivor parents, Tezuka captures the dirge-like quality of the Holocaust. But Tōge’s interior monologue, repeated at the beginning and the end of the story, spells the problematics of imagining Hitler or, put another way, of translating the Holocaust: “This is the story of three men named Adolf. Each Adolf lived a life that was very different from that of the other two . . . Yet the three of them were bound together by a single twist of fate” (1:12–14). In the last pages of the fifth volume, Tōge proceeds to remark that the story he is leaving behind “will be read by millions of ‘Adolfs’ all over the world” (5:251). Adolf becomes everyman who becomes Hitler. A chilling implication, Tezuka perpetuates Hannah Arendt’s theory of the banality of evil, except that the cartoonist ups the ante of the case study from Eichmann to Hitler.¹⁷

THE VOLUMINOUS INFORMATION ON THE THIRD REICH OBTAINED BY TEZUKA, EVIDENCED IN THE YEAR-BY-YEAR COMPARATIVE TIMELINE OF WORLD WAR II APPENDED TO MANY CHAPTERS, GIVES WAY TO THE MOST SENSATIONALIZING, SLANDEROUS, AND ANTI-SEMITIC HOAX ABOUT THE MASS MURDERER, NAMELY, HITLER WAS, TO BORROW SANDER GILMAN’S COINAGE, A SELF-HATING JEW.

While the hidden ideology is irresponsible and reprehensible, it is lightened considerably by Tezuka’s mastery of the medium. His techniques of storytelling enable him to traverse nations and time periods with great ease, albeit with many coincidences that require suspension of disbelief. The action and mystery, which Tezuka manages to maintain well over a thousand pages, testify to his power as a comic artist, but they jar against the somber, lamentational opening and ending. The plot revolves around the struggle over possession of documents proving Hitler’s racial background, including Hitler’s birth certificate and letters written by his mother to his Jewish grandfather. Both the Japanese and German secret agents, Adolf Kaufman among them, attempt to rob Tōge of these documents. Tōge, on the other hand, risks everything to protect the documents, which he repeatedly claims would “bring down Hitler.”

This brief sketch suffices to demonstrate the anti-Semitic drift of Tezuka's text. The Holocaust is attributed to Jewish self-loathing. In other words, by annihilating Jews from the face of the earth, Hitler denies, in effect, his own Jewishness. A viciously ahistorical interpretation of *Endlosung*, this approach finds eager advocates among modern artists trying to contain the genocide in individual psychosis, such as George Steiner's *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.* (1981)¹⁸ and W. D. Snodgrass's *The Fuhrer Bunker* (1977).¹⁹ Anti-Semitic rhetoric also rears its head in Tezuka's character of Frankenburger, Hitler's wealthy Jewish grandfather, who is said to have raped his German maid and to have sired Hitler's father. This follows the racist stereotype of lascivious Jewish males coveting Aryan women. Another stereotype of Jews surfaces in the Jewish girl Eliza's father, an opportunistic businessman. In order to survive, he not only collaborates with the Nazis but he encourages Eliza to befriend the Hitler Youth member Adolf Kaufman as an "investment" against any impending catastrophe.

The translator Yuji Oniki writes in his "Introduction: Tezuka's Twentieth Century" to *Adolf: An Exile in Japan* that "The story revolves around the secret of Adolf Hitler's Jewish ancestry. The historical validity of this premise is less important than the fact that each Adolf in Tezuka's story represents not a particular race or nationality, but a particular 'mixed' circumstance." Such a casual dismissal of the anti-Semitic thesis from a then PhD candidate in comparative literature at the University of California at Berkeley is disturbing. It is tantamount to saying that the official whitewashing in Japanese history textbooks of the Rape of Nanking in 1937 is "less important than the fact that" atrocities take place in every war due to multiple causes. The translator's fashionable discourse of universalism obfuscates historical responsibility and collective memory; his promotion of a global village of mixed races and cultures makes possible amnesia over past traumas and contributes to ever-increasing racial and ethnic strifes. The translator's sentiment is echoed by Annette Roman, who as the editor of the *Adolf* series at Cadence Books, agrees that the plot is "somewhat contrived" but adds that "I am a child of survivors, but in a sense all of us are survivors of some kind." Roman's father is a Hungarian Jew who survived forced-labor camps, but her mother is a Protestant German who acquires the survivor status, in Roman's view, as a result of having endured the Allied bombings. Though of different generations and nationalities, Tezuka, Oniki, Roman, and perhaps many of their readers share in the willful abuse of terminologies and in the revisionism of collective memory.

Conceivably, fans of manga would defend Tezuka's shift from the historical Hitler to the fictitious Adolfs on grounds that Tezuka is, after all, a

Japanese, removed from the European continent where the drama of the extermination of Jews unfolded. Such apologists would surely contend that any representation of the Holocaust is bound to be a translation. A survivor's memoir such as Elie Wiesel's *Night* (1956)²⁰ and Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz* (1959)²¹ is certainly closer to the collectivity of human tragedies we have come to call the Holocaust than a fictitious work such as William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* (1979),²² D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* (1981),²³ and Sylvia Plath's various poems on her suicidal wish. The distance between *Endlosung* and its various translations—autobiographical or imaginary—may be one of degree rather than kind, though. Even Spiegelman's *Maus*, based on the life story of his survivor father Vladek, remains a representation of the Holocaust, as I argued in "Mourning with the (as a) Jew: Metaphor, Ethnicity, and the Holocaust in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*":

What a reader holds in the hands is several removes from the actual event—from the incomprehensible totality known as the Holocaust, to the fraction experienced and then selectively recalled by Vladek, to Art Spiegelman's "doodle drawings" based on the shaky recall of that fraction, and eventually to mass-produced, market-oriented "facsimiles" of Spiegelman's originals. The contrived spelling of *Maus* exemplifies at the outset the comics' artifice and, therefore, its removal from the reality of that animal.²⁴

Yet even as a Japanese artist transcribing his wartime experience onto the half a dozen pages of *Adolf* on the Japanese Royal Army's atrocities against the Chinese, Tezuka's representation is well-intentioned yet woefully inadequate. The artist's indulgence in fantasies over Hitler sharpens his failure to confronting Japan's own historical responsibility in the Chinese theater and elsewhere. The emphasis on Japan itself, furthermore, lapses into a self-congratulating reiteration of the sacrifices of dissidents in Japan, such as Tōge and his leftist friends, whose efforts, revealingly, concentrate on the outlandish scheme of exposing Hitler's Jewish ancestry rather than on sabotaging the Japanese war machine. After all, instead of *Adolf*, why did Tezuka not draw comics titled *Hiro* after the Japanese emperor Hirohito? Why does he expend so much ink—and Tezuka is meticulous in his drawings—on a foreign devil, Hitler? Perhaps the Japanese readers prefer an escape into the fantasy land of the Third Reich, hyped by the grotesque mass destruction. Even as fervent a manga critic as Frederik L. Schodt concedes that *Adolf* may have inspired the popular trend in Japan marked by "bizarre, fantastic theories about Jews . . . With subject matter ranging from recycled American and European anti-

Semitic tracts, to claims that Jews are a superior race and (guess what?) that Japanese—not Europeans—are actually the true Jews.”²⁵ Through the English translation of *Adolf*, Tezuka extends his influence from the Pacific Rim to the United States and around the world, educating the young on the plasticity of history and the thrill of imagining Hitler.

The translation and publication of *Adolf* for the English-speaking, hence world, market are underwritten by the “colonization of the mind” already manifest in the Japanese texts. Tezuka’s trademark of Japanese female characters with Caucasian facial and physical features have undoubtedly endeared his postwar readers longing for beauty and power embodied in the West. Accordingly, the geisha Kinuko (Honda Sachi) in fact resembles Rosa Lampe, a German Barbie doll with an unrealistically proportioned body and impeccable face. With exactly the same face, Kinuko has slightly darker pupils and wears a geisha’s hairdo and kimono. Japanese women in the Western image have cloned themselves in manga and other forms of cultural production. The economic superpower of Japan continues to fantasize itself in terms prescribed by Western media and icons.

KOBAYASHI YOSHINORI’S ON TAIWAN

As manga and anime fans around the globe are enamoured by the fantastic rather than political nature of the genre, Kobayashi Yoshinori is not as well-known a figure as Tezuka Osamu and Miyazaki Hayao. Nonetheless, Kobayashi’s manga enjoys a considerable domestic market, particularly among right-wing conservatives and, further afield, pro-Japan Taiwanese. When the Chinese translation of Kobayashi’s *On Taiwan* was published in Taiwan in 2001, an uproar raged over its apologia for Japanese militarism during World War II, for colonization of Taiwan and other parts of Asia, and for postwar nationalism in Japanese and Taiwanese politics. Protests erupted over the representation of the “benevolent” Japanese colonization of Taiwan and, in particular, over the claim that Taiwan’s aboriginal military units and comfort women “volunteered” their service to Japan. While the historical entanglement and political intricacy of the controversy escapes the attention of global fans, Kobayashi’s manga has touched a raw nerve in Japan and Taiwan, unleashing furious public debate.

Undoubtedly, Kobayashi is the spokesperson for Japanese discontent over postwar liberal democracy, indulging in the golden past of Japanese colonialism, perpetuating a revisionism of the war. Along with right-wing

politicians, Kobayashi has even contributed to the diluting of the history of the war in Japanese textbooks.²⁶ Kobayashi stands for a revolt against what he sees as “masochistic” liberal guilt over wartime aggression and atrocities. In addition, he embodies the fear of the rise of China in the twenty-first century, in reaction to which he raises the specter of Japanese nationalism. Breathing new life into the revisionist project in *On Taiwan*, the cartoonist buttresses his case by virtue of prominent pro-Japan personages in Taiwan, including ex-President Lee Teng-hui, industrialist Hsu Wen-lung, and long-time Taiwanese independence activist Jing Mei-ling. The Nipponophile chorus from Taiwan is lauded by Kobayashi as the last sanctuary of the good old Japanese spirit, preserved like a time capsule among many Taiwanese over the age of sixty who were educated and came of age during Japanese colonialism of Taiwan in 1895–1945, uncorrupted by left-leaning culture in Japan proper. The Taiwanese writer and critic Chen Ying-chen quotes the historian Dai Guojun in attributing Lee’s and other Japan zealots’ motives to an “accomplice structure.” Chen contends that these pro-Japan Taiwanese have been so implicated in Japanese interests and their sense of identity so inextricably bound to Japan that they must idolize Japan and turn a blind eye to its historical faults.²⁷

OWING TO SUCH POLITICAL FAULTLINES IN JAPANESE AND TAIWANESE DOMESTIC POLITICS, AS WELL AS TO INTERNATIONAL TENSIONS AMONG CHINA, THE UNITED STATES, JAPAN, AND TAIWAN, ON TAIWAN, DESPITE ITS NARCISSISTIC KITSCHINESS AND DISTASTEFUL DIATRIBE, BURSTS OPEN TAIWAN’S SILENCE OVER JAPANESE MILITARISM.

In terms of Taiwanese history, Lee and his cohort find in Kobayashi’s comics an echo of their nostalgia for the past, prior to the island’s takeover by Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist troops in 1949. In the shared pro-Japanese sentiment, Lee and like-minded Taiwanese forge a common identity against Chiang and the “mainlanders,” the occupying force that brought the white terror, such as the February 28 Incident, in which Taiwanese dissidents were persecuted. The exponential growth of the Chinese economy and might across the Taiwan Strait further fuels Taiwanese paranoia over the affiliation of mainlanders in their midst. Taiwan independence becomes a rallying cry against reunification with China alleged to be the dream of Taiwan’s mainland population. Owing to such political faultlines in Japanese and Taiwanese domestic politics, as well as to international tensions among China, the United States, Japan, and Taiwan, *On Taiwan*, despite its narcissistic kitschiness and distasteful diatribe, bursts open Taiwan’s silence over Japanese militarism.

Delving into topics somewhat serious for comics, Kobayashi even attempts to chronicle Taiwanese history and political struggle. But he often willfully distorts historical facts. A case in point: the Taiwanese resentment against the arrival of Chiang's nationalists is aptly captured in the Taiwanese saying at the time: "dogs leave; pigs come." "Pigs" refer, of course, to nationalists, whereas Kobayashi seems to feign ignorance over the meaning of "dogs"—Japanese colonists. In general, Kobayashi presents a simplistic version of complex social issues. He even gets basic statistics wrong: he claims that mainlanders constitute 16 percent of Taiwan's population, Taiwanese 82 percent, aborigines 2–3 percent, leaving out the Hakanese altogether, as if this large minority does not exist. With all his trouble, Kobayashi's agenda is self-serving. His sycophantic hero worship of Lee Teng-hui and the discovery of the Japanese spirit in certain Taiwanese are tautological and ultimately bestow honor on the old Japan. If Lee and Hsu Wen-lung embody the "warrior" or "samurai" tradition, then they are neither Taiwanese nor Chinese. Rather, they are the real Japanese long vanished in postwar Japan.

Working in cahoots, the cartoonist and pro-Japan Taiwanese attribute to Japanese colonialism nearly all the modern amenities on the island, from its unique species of rice, the irrigation system, the Sun-Moon Lake, the railroads, the infrastructure for electricity, the sugar industry, and whatnot. Kobayashi even compares Japanese colonization favorably with British India, with the former bent upon improving living standards on Taiwan. In his narcissistic and polemical style, Kobayashi is the protagonist in *On Taiwan*, marked by the ant-like antennae of hair overhanging his forehead. Seeking a verisimilitude of real people, Kobayashi tends to blow up the characters' faces and heads. With political idols such as Lee Teng-hui, Kobayashi invariably draws Lee as looming large, godlike, over the panel. Kobayashi also resorts to actual photographs for key moments in this loosely organized travelogue across Taiwan and memorable audiences with Taiwanese luminaries. Unlike Nakazawa and Tezuka, whose comics lend themselves to the tastes of different segments of manga fans globally and are hence translated into the global lingua franca of English, Kobayashi is translated into Chinese and marketed in Taiwan only, for the right-wing reactionary Japanese politics is not embraced elsewhere.

The look back by three manga artists casts the rising sun during World War II in varying light to perpetuate their respective artistic and ideological interpretations. Ultimately, the massive sufferings caused by the Holocaust and wartime Japanese atrocities are perhaps too weighty for comics and even for literature as a whole, resulting in gazes that are all somewhat oblique.

Notes

1. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiv.
2. Georges Bataille, "Sacrificial Mutilation and the Severed Ear of Vincent Van Gogh," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl with C. R. Lovitt and D. M. Leslie Jr., 61–72 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).
3. Georges Bataille, "Rotten Sun," in *ibid.*, 57–58.
4. Nakazawa Keiji, *Barefoot Gen*, vols. 1–4 (subtitled, respectively, *A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima*, *The Day After*, *Life after the Bomb*, and *Out of the Ashes*) (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1987–94). Tezuka Osamu, *Adorufu ni tsugu* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1985); trans. Yuji Oniki in 5 vols. (*Adolf: A Tale of the Twentieth Century*, *Adolf: An Exile in Japan*, *Adolf: The Half-Aryan*, *Adolf: Days of Infamy*, and *Adolf: 1945 and All That Remains*) (San Francisco, Calif.: Cadence, 1995–96). Kobayashi Yoshinori, *Taiwan lun* (On Taiwan), Chinese translation (Taipei, Taiwan: Avanguard, 2001). Kobayashi's Chinese translator is not named.
5. Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *Imagining Hitler* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). When Alvin H. Rosenfeld published *Imagining Hitler* in 1985, he was well aware that much was being excluded from his purview of fictions and narratives in the United States and the West. Indeed, just as *Imagining Hitler* came out, Tezuka Osamu's *Adorufu ni tsugu* (translated as the five-volume *Adolf*) had been serialized for two years in the Japanese magazine *Shūkan Bunshun*.
6. Nakazawa Keiji, "Introduction: My Hope for *Barefoot Gen*," in *Barefoot Gen: Out of the Ashes*, x.
7. Art Spiegelman, "Foreword: Comics after the Bomb," in *Barefoot Gen: Out of the Ashes*, vii.
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