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Kobayashi/The Crab Cannery Ship and Other Novels of Struggle

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INTRODUCTION

KOMORI YŌICHI

Kobayashi Takiji was born on October 13, 1903, in the village of Shimokawazoi in Akita Prefecture, a snowy agricultural region of northern Japan. It was the year before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. His father Suematsu was the second son of a small landholder, but his older brother Keigi had invested family funds in business and failed, leaving Suematsu to deal with the consequences after he himself moved to Hokkaido. In the Kobayashi family history we see that stage in the capitalist development of Japan when small landowners and independent farmers, driven into bankruptcy and loss of their lands, were being sent into the industrializing cities and colonies to become wage laborers.

In 1907, when Takiji was four, his family emigrated to Otaru in Hokkaido—Imperial Japan’s first colony—to earn a living helping Keigi who had gone into business baking and selling bread under a sign that read “Mitsuboshidō Co of Otaru, Purveyors to the Imperial Navy.” After completing elementary school, Takiji continued to work at his uncle’s bakery, in exchange for which he received financial

assistance that enabled him to enroll in the municipal Commercial School. It was there that Takiji developed a strong interest in literature and the arts. Graduating fifth in his class in 1921, he entered the Otaru Higher School of Commerce. From this point on Kobayashi Takiji's life was riven by multiple conditions, which at times coexisted in a state of contradiction, at others in outright conflict or disjunction: his family were former landholders and ruined farmers; once mainland farmers and now colonial wage laborers; close relatives of the owner of a bakery but part of that bakery's proletariat. Consequently, he himself belonged both to the proletariat and to the intelligentsia that aspired through elite education to join the petty bourgeoisie. Awareness of these cleavages in his existence became deeply etched in Kobayashi Takiji at the time he began his higher schooling. He himself would later compare such a condition to "holding dual citizenship."

While serving on the editorial board of the school's alumni magazine, Takiji began to publish stories in journals such as *The Novel Club* and *New Literature*. Still full of literary aspiration, he nonetheless took a job upon graduation in 1924 with the Otaru branch of the Hokkaido Colonial Bank. This bank began as a semigovernmental, semiprivate enterprise whose object was the colonial development of Hokkaido and Karafuto (southern Sakhalin Island). Its initial capital was three million yen, and it extended long-term loans using as collateral the agricultural and residential land that the immigrants had plundered from the native population. From the time of the Russo-Japanese War, before Takiji's family had moved to Otaru, the bank began issuing bonds and during World War I, it grew into a trust company. Beginning with the "cultivation of Hokkaido," a euphemism for a war of colonial aggression, and with each subsequent war—Sino-Japanese, Russo-Japanese, World War I—the Hokkaido Colonial Bank expanded its operations and increasingly became an institution dedicated to financing imperialist ventures.

Six months into work at such a bank, the twenty-one-year-old Kobayashi Takiji met sixteen-year-old Taguchi Takiko at the Yamakiya, a small eatery whose principal business was in fact prostitution. The experience of falling in love with a woman from the lowest stratum of capitalist society's class system—a woman who had been

driven to commodifying her own sexuality—while working in a bank at the center of that system, imposed manifold disjunctions on Takiji. It also provided the germ of what would grow to become the core of his literature.



Hokkaido

Just about the same time, in 1925, a young writer named Hayama Yoshiki published a story called “The Prostitute” (Inbaifu), which became a virtual manifesto of the proletarian—i.e., working-class—literature in Japan: it made possible the linkage of prostitution with the growing class-consciousness of workers that labor power entailed the coerced transformation of their bodies into commodities. Reading the story in the autumn of 1926, Takiji wrote in his diary: “A straight punch to the heart!” He began to write short fiction with such titles as “Those Left Behind” (Nokosareru mono, 1927) and “Takiko and Others” (Takiko sonota, 1928), dealing with the reality of women at the bottom rung of society who were forced to sell their own sexual bodies as commodities. Later dubbed “the Takiko stories,” these pieces depict not only a refusal to surrender to conditions in which fighting back seemed all but impossible, but a tenacious search for avenues of opposition and resistance.

Meanwhile, in 1927, three thousand people took part in Otaru’s second May Day celebration, making it the largest in scale north of Tokyo. A key impetus for this upsurge in the movement was the Isono tenant farmers’ strike, a signal event within the growing agrarian struggles in colonial Hokkaido. The previous year’s disastrous harvest caused by cold weather had led to a grave crisis for Hokkaido’s tenant farmers. One after another, furious strikes demanding reduction or exemption from tenancy rents broke out. A certain Isono Susumu, who operated a farm in Furano and was president of the Otaru chamber of commerce as well as a city council member—a perfect example of the “absentee landlord,” situated at a comfortable remove from the life-and-death struggles of his tenant farmers—not only refused to lower the rent but announced an increase, and when the tenant farmers refused to accede, he initiated a lawsuit demanding confiscation of their property and return of the land. The tenant farmers formed a strike group and prepared for action.

On March 3, 1927, the strike group made the arduous journey from Furano to Otaru. When Isono refused to negotiate, the strikers appealed directly to the citizens of Otaru, distributing leaflets and giving speeches, generating a flurry of verbal activity. All the speeches attracted overflow crowds, with thousands of people showing up.

In response, the citizens of Otaru sought every conceivable form of action in solidarity with the strikers. The result was an arbitration signed on April 9 that actually exceeded the strike group's demands, extending to guarantee of the tenant farmers' right to cultivate their rented land. That year, in other words, the slow spring days leading to International Workers' Day—May 1—were marked by a historic joint struggle by tenant farmers and the united labor union that produced victory in the international port city of Otaru.

June saw the beginning of the Otaru harbor strike, the first general strike by an industrial union in Japan. It started with a demand by 36 barge stevedores for a wage increase. The workers of Otaru, however, had already tasted victory achieved by waging a united campaign. Harbor workers of various occupations, indeed the majority, began to join the strike. Their families organized mass meetings, elementary school students went on strike, and the contents of the workers' demands were widely publicized among the citizens. Drawing on the experience of the joint farmer-worker struggle during the Isono strike, the Japan Farmers Union called on all its Hokkaido branches to act in solidarity with the Otaru workers.

Kobayashi Takiji was directly involved with the strikers, helping to write publicity leaflets on his way home after work at the bank. He began taking part in study classes with labor and farmer activists. This experience of a revolutionary struggle by an alliance of workers and farmers would bear fruit in his novella *The Absentee Landlord* (*Fuzai jinushi*), published January 1930, in the prestigious magazine *Central Review* (*Chūō kōron*), an indication both of his rising stature as a writer and of the general public's interest in proletarian literature.

The general election held in the year following these strikes marks the next step in Takiji's growing political engagement. In 1925, along with the draconian Peace Preservation Law, a General Election Law was enacted, providing for Japan's first general election based on universal male suffrage. It was announced for February 20, 1928. Takiji actively involved himself in the electoral campaign of the Communist Party member Yamamoto Kenzō, who ran as the Labor Farmer Party's official candidate from Hokkaido's first district. That experience was to find vivid expression in the novella *Journey to East*

Kutchan (*Higashi Kutchan kō*), published in the December 1930 issue of the mainstream general-interest magazine *Reconstruction* (*Kaizō*).

The proletarian parties won 8 seats out of 466 in the general election. The government authorities took a grim view of the open electoral activities by the supposedly outlawed yet reorganized Communist Party that had evidently reconstructed itself. Beginning at dawn on March 15, they launched a nationwide wave of mass arrests directed against activists affiliated with the Communist Party and the Labor Farmer party. More than 1,600 people were arrested overall, most of them in Tokyo, Osaka, and—third in the number of those detained—Hokkaido. Kobayashi Takiji portrayed this act of massive repression as one of psychological and physical violence in his story “March 15, 1928” (1928-nen 3-gatsu 15-nichi). He paid particular attention to depicting the distinct psychological responses to interrogation and torture on the part of his characters, who differed from one another in terms of class origins and way of life.

The preceding year, 1927, Takiji had taken the initiative to join his abiding interest in literature with his strengthening commitment to the labor movement by taking on the responsibility of serving as executive secretary of the Otaru branch of the Worker and Farmer Artists Federation. The following spring, after the March 15 Incident, he took time off from the bank and went to Tokyo to meet Kurahara Korehito of the Japanese Proletarian Arts Federation (NAPF). Kurahara was the leading theorist of the Japanese proletarian literature movement. It was that meeting on May 5, 1928, that led to the submission and publication to instant acclaim of the novella “March 15, 1928” in the November and December issues of *The Battleflag* (*Senki*), the organ of NAPF. In February of 1929, Takiji was elected to the central committee of the Japanese Proletarian Writers League, formed through a reorganization of NAPF, and quickly followed up with the publication of *The Crab Cannery Ship* in the May and June issues of *The Battleflag*.

THE CRAB CANNERY Ship (*Kani kōsen*) was written on the basis of a painstaking investigation into an actual incident that took place in 1926. In a letter to Kurahara Korehito, dated March 31, 1929, Takiji

provided a detailed discussion of seven points concerning the novel's "intent." First, its protagonist was not a single character, but rather a *group* of workers. Second, there was "no depiction of *individual personality* or psychology" (emphasis in the original). Third, "various efforts had been made with respect to form" in order to facilitate "popularization of the proletarian arts." Current efforts in this direction had the air of a superficial intellectual attempt at popularization; this work, by contrast, sought to be "overwhelmingly worker-like." Fourth, it "dealt with a *unique* form of labor," taking place aboard a crab cannery ship. Such labor involved "a type of exploitation typical of colonies and undeveloped areas," and it had "the advantage of making transparently clear" not only "the conditions of Japanese workers" but also the "international, military, and economic relations" constituting those conditions. Fifth, the novel "dealt with *unorganized* workers." Sixth, it showed how capitalism, while "seeking to keep the workers unorganized," was ironically "causing the workers (spontaneously) to organize." Seventh, even though it was said that "the proletariat must unconditionally oppose imperialist wars," few workers understood why this was so. To meet this need the novel had to touch on "the economic foundation of imperialist wars, the machinery of imperialism that sets the army itself in motion." For this purpose, a "crab cannery ship offered the best setting."

In my judgment, these seven points provide the most systematic and precise commentary on the basic characteristics and structure of the novel. Nonetheless, I must underscore the significance of Takiji's recognition that the crab cannery ship presented "a *unique* form of labor." This was none other than the discovery of the crab cannery ship as a temporal and spatial zone in which the rule of law had been suspended.

Crab cannery ships were considered factories [factory ships], not ships. Therefore maritime law did not apply to them.

. . . Moreover the crab cannery ships were factories pure and simple. And yet factory laws did not apply to them either. Consequently, no other site offered such an

accommodating setting for management's freedom to act with total impunity.

Neither ships nor factories! The novel's narrative makes clear to the reader the double sense in which the rule of law had been suspended. What is more, since the ships were operating around Kamchatka, along the boundary of the Japanese and Soviet territorial waters, neither country's domestic laws applied. Thanks to its nature as a time-space zone absolutely beyond the constraint of law, the crab cannery ship made possible unlimited exploitation and plunder in "an accommodating setting," with "total impunity."

Takiji discovered the crab cannery ship to be a battleground—the site where, as Carl Schmitt points out, the rule of law is suspended. Yet because this battleground was not the site of a war being waged between nations, even the laws of war failed to apply on board the crab cannery ship. At the same time, however, a naval warship accompanied the cannery ship. The workers on board did not have the option of surrendering and withdrawing from the front. It was these characteristics of the crab cannery ship that Takiji identified as rendering the "international, military, and economic relations" transparently clear.

In the crab cannery ship, none of the laws pertaining to ordinary society apply. The workers aboard are not treated as human beings. "The Stuttering Fisherman," a man singled out among the fishermen by this linguistic feature, had first begun to stutter when the radio operator confronted him with the reality that manager "Asakawa doesn't think of you fellows as human beings." Being stripped of every shred of dignity that should be supported by law and confronted by conditions of constant exposure to naked violence had triggered a disorder in that very ability to use words that defines a human being.

Of the "group" controlling and managing the crab cannery ship, the only individual given a proper name is the fishing operation's manager Asakawa. The character who falls victim to his homicidal violence is a youth belonging to the factory hands, the weakest "group" among the workers. He too is given a name, Miyaguchi. In other words, proper names are accorded only to the highest and

lowest members of the strata wherein naked violence is exercised by the strong over the weak. The others are only indicated by attributes that distinguish them within the group.

A personal name is used, however, to mark an important turning point at which the formerly “unorganized workers” begin to organize themselves. A fisherman who “had come through an agency in the Nippori section of Tokyo together with ten or so of his friends” and “who had long been bedridden with beriberi” dies. “*Everyone*,” we read, “resolved to stay up for the wake.” The incident occurs after everybody has taken “turns offering incense,” and the sailors and fishermen are sitting about “gathered in small groups.”

The Stuttering Fisherman steps up to the body and declares, without stuttering:

I don't know the sutras. I can't console Yamada's spirit by chanting sutras. But I've been thinking a lot, and here's what I think. I've thought about how much Yamada didn't want to die. . . . No, to tell the truth, I've thought about how much he *didn't want to be killed*. There's no denying that Yamada was killed.

It is when this fisherman breaks out of the naked violence and proceeds to correct his choice of words from “to die” to “*to be killed*” as a declaration of his anger, that the sailors—members of a different group—respond in agreement, calling out, “You're right.”

By 1933, *The Crab Cannery Ship* had been translated into Chinese, Russian, and English, and came to be read throughout the world. Since then it has been buffeted by the vicissitudes of history: suppressed during the years of intensifying repression and war, revived in the postwar years, and increasingly neglected in the depoliticization of society from the mid-1970s. Then, in twenty-first-century Japan, where the systematic dismantling of laws regulating employment had begun in 1995, *The Crab Cannery Ship* sparked a great boom. This boom reached a peak in late 2008 and early 2009, when activist groups that had previously campaigned separately combined into an “Anti-Poverty Network” and organized a “Dispatch Workers' New

Year Village” in Hibiya Park, right in front of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. At Hibiya Park, unorganized workers gathered together for the first time, helping each other to organize, creating anew a social community in the form of a “village,” and giving rise to a movement that directly confronted the state with the demand to heed the constitutionally guaranteed right to life. Kobayashi Takiji’s theory of collective action continues to be valid in the twenty-first century.

DURING THE SECOND wave of repression directed against the Communist Party and its supporters known as the “April 16 Incident” of 1929, forty people were arrested in Otaru. Takiji himself was taken into custody on April 20 and his house searched. In September the Hokkaido Colonial Bank demoted Takiji from researcher to teller, and on November 16 he was fired. In March of 1930, Takiji moved from Otaru to Tokyo and became deeply involved in the activities of the Writers’ League. From the middle of May, together with Eguchi Kiyoshi, Kishi Yamaji, Kataoka Teppei, and other writers, he took part in a lecture tour of Kyoto, Osaka, and Mie Prefecture to raise funds for the defense of the journal *The Battleflag*. Suspected of financially assisting the Communist Party, Takiji was arrested on May 23 by officers of the Shimanouchi police station in Osaka and kept in detention for two weeks, during which time he was tortured. On August 21, charged with violation of the Peace Preservation Law, Takiji was incarcerated at the Toyotama prison, and released on bail on January 22, 1931.

In July, having been elected member and secretary general of the standing central committee of the Writers’ League, Takiji rented a house in Mabashi, in Tokyo’s Suginami ward, sent for his mother from Hokkaido, and set up a household with her and his younger brother. From August 23 to October 31 he serialized his first newspaper novel, *A Portrait of New Women (Shin josei katagi)*, in sixty-nine issues of *Miyako Shinbun*. This novel, whose title was later changed to *Yasuko*, was never suppressed and was published without a single word censored.

The narrative begins with a court scene in which Taguchi Sango, a poor tenant farmer and older brother to the sisters Okei and Yasuko,

is sentenced to six months' imprisonment. A love triangle involving a girl named Kiyō has caused Sango to stab landlord Yoshimine's son, a fellow coordinator of the Sunada Village Young Men's Association. In the course of the investigation, a court officer closely questions Sango, insinuating that more was involved than resentment at having a girl taken away. "Didn't your hatred of him as your landlord also play a part?" The officer is trying to ascertain whether Sango had committed a simple criminal offense, or whether there was the possibility of a political offense.

At this point Sango recalls being told by a woman from his village—who with no land to till even as a tenant, lives as a day laborer and works in a "cheap noodle restaurant" in town—that "love affairs demand the luxury of free time." In order to pay overdue rent to the landlord, Sango had been toiling at all sorts of manual work to earn wages: performing hired labor, piling up gravel, cutting timber, digging irrigation ditches, and fishing for herring. Consequently, he does not possess "the luxury of free time" that he could devote to "love affairs." Under wretched conditions of employment, wage laborers cannot even have a love life. This fact exposes the exploitation and plunder that characterize the class relations between landlords and tenant farmers. Yet it had never occurred to Sango to demand a rent reduction from the landlord Yoshimine. When a strike of tenant farmers broke out in the neighboring village of Tsukigata, he had gone as coordinator of the Young Men's Association to conduct arbitration.

The person most dissatisfied with such a brother is his younger sister Yasuko. She was an excellent student and head of her class at a school attended by pupils from Sunada and Tsukigata villages, but she had been confronted with the reality that only a rich child can go on to a higher school. It stands to reason that when, in the course of the Tsukigata strike, night soil is thrown at the house of a landlord whose daughter is one of the group going on to middle school, Yasuko ends up dreaming that she herself had done it. Around the time that the rich children advance to middle school, Yasuko begins work at an eatery that is frequented by workers in Otaru's factory district.

A different experience makes her older sister Okei confront the reality of being a woman. While her brother is being interrogated,

Okei notices that “little Yamagami Yoshi,” daughter of a family that lost the tenancy dispute in Tsukigata, has been arrested for engaging in prostitution to earn “one yen and fifty sen.” A policeman tells her that with Yoshi’s father punished for the strike and unable to find employment, the family is making a living with the money that the young woman brings in. As Okei wonders what kind of life lay ahead of her now that her brother was to be gone, she cannot help thinking that selling one’s body might become a part of it.

When men who support a family by selling themselves as labor power become unable to sell that commodity, the only way for that family to survive is for its women to take on much cheaper forms of wage labor agonizingly close to prostitution. The only choices are working at an eatery or a cheap noodle restaurant, and after that, selling one’s body. Okei and her mother, having been driven out of Sunada, move to Otaru where Yasuko is living. With the help of the owner of the restaurant where Yasuko works, Okei gets a job on a piecework basis at a pea-sorting factory where green peas are handpicked for export. As a wage laborer doing her best to support her mother, Okei works from six thirty in the morning until five in the evening to earn about seventy sen, or as much as one yen when she works until nine.

Meanwhile, Yasuko, who has been receiving an education about the labor movement from Yamada, the “union man” who comes to the eatery, is asked to persuade her sister to allow the room shared with their mother to be made available for clandestine meetings. Having permitted the union people to use the room, Okei comes to agree with Yamada’s view that working-class women must be liberated from the “double chains” of men and capital. She is thrown into turmoil when she hears Yasuko’s confession that she is “moving in” with Yamada and devoting herself full time to the union.

Yamada thinks that unless millions of women like Okei can be helped, the movement will not truly take root. As Okei tries to give Yamada and Yasuko’s activities what support she can, she receives a declaration of love from Yamada’s fellow activist Sasaki. While she tries to find a way to participate in the movement without abandoning life with her mother, the ensuing wholesale arrests throw the characters’ relationships into chaos.

The novel *Yasuko* explores the whole range of literary subjects that Kobayashi Takiji had taken upon himself to pursue as a writer: state power and the legal system, criminal offenses and political offenses, resistance and slavery, cities and farming villages, class conflict and class consciousness, wage labor and prostitution, men and women, production and reproduction, spiritual love and sexual love, political consciousness and political practice. These subjects are delineated in the vivid changes taking place in Okei's body and mind, and they are constructed so that readers take them on as their own issues.

IN OCTOBER 1931, while in the process of completing *Yasuko*, Kobayashi Takiji joined the illegal Japanese Communist Party. The invasion of Manchuria, a vast region of northeast China, by the Japanese Kwantung Army was in full force. On January 28, 1932, the war of aggression expanded to Shanghai, and the puppet state of Manchukuo was "founded" on March 1. Between late March and May, two leading figures in the Japanese Proletarian Culture League, Kurahara Korehito and Nakano Shigeharu, were arrested. Around this time, Takiji supported a campaign to revoke the dismissal of temporary workers at Fujikura Industries in Gotanda, which would become the setting for *Life of a Party Member* (*Tōseikatsusha*). On April 3, after consulting with Miyamoto Kenji and other comrades, Takiji made the decision to engage in underground activities in order to rebuild the culture movement in the face of ever intensifying repression. Toward the middle of that month he married Itō Fujiko, who had helped to connect him with the workers at Fujikura. At the end of August, he completed *Life of a Party Member*.

In postwar Japanese society, this work became the basis for a negative evaluation of the novelist Kobayashi Takiji. Literary critic Hirano Ken charged that the treatment of "Kasahara" in this novel reflected the existence of a "housekeeper system," and that it revealed "a contempt for human beings whereby the end justified any means." Detecting within the text "the supremacy of politics" of the Japanese Communist Party, Hirano expanded his critique into a debate on "politics and literature." Critic Ara Masahito also condemned the

“masked egoism” of the protagonist, who, lacking a “personal life of his own,” was willing to sacrifice Kasahara for his causes.

Such criticism holds true only on the basis of a most peculiar premise: that among the novels by Kobayashi Takiji, a writer who did not use the “I-novel” technique that treats the author and the protagonist as one, only *Life of a Party Member* equates the protagonist with the author, and moreover makes the author identical with the organization that is the Japanese Communist Party. What cannot be overlooked, however, is that *Life of a Party Member* is structured in such a way that the first-person protagonist’s narration is subjected to the criticism of other characters and relativized by their words.

In the course of a conversation between the first-person narrator/protagonist Sasaki Yasuji, a male comrade called Suyama, and a female comrade named Itō Yoshi, the talk turns to Itō’s marriage. Suyama says, “I hear she’s planning to wait till after the revolution. When our comrades marry, even though they’re Marxists, a three-thousand-year-old consciousness still latent makes them try to turn Yoshi into a slave.” To this, Itō icily retorts: “You’re just making a confession about yourself!” It is here that an important theme of *Life of a Party Member* manifests itself.

A “slave” is an instrument capable of speech, whose human rights and liberties have all been stripped away, who under a master’s rule and command performs compulsory labor without compensation, and who moreover is bought and sold as a commodity. Itō sees through to the desire concealed in the men’s joking, and “with a chilly expression,” rejects it. Though the change in her expression lasts only an instant, “I”-Sasaki does not miss it. Should we deal with our fellow human beings sympathetically as individuals like ourselves, or should we utilize them only as implements to serve our own desires? The very relations among the novel’s characters pose this fundamental question to the “party members.”

What is important is that the activities that “I,” “Suyama,” and “Itō” are engaged in within “Kurata Industries” constitute a movement demanding workers be treated not as implements, but as human beings who possess individuality and dignity. When the war against China began, the factory “stopped manufacturing the electric wires it

had been making, and began to manufacture gas masks, parachutes, and airship fuselages.” In view of the war’s expansion, the hastily improvised war plant hires six hundred temporary workers and after supplying the army with the products, plans a mass dismissal of as many as four hundred. At this point, party members “I,” “Suyama,” and “Itō” move in, and while using the factory newspaper to protest the long hours and low wages that prevail at the plant, seek “to clarify the substance of imperialist war through everyday dissatisfactions.”

Of course, war turns human beings into instruments of murder, namely soldiers, and suspends the enforcement of laws. The party members make it clear that a similar thing is occurring on the home front, too, right there at the factory. At first they try planting assistants in order to turn the words and human relations manifested in everyday conversations at the factory into instruments for the purpose of organizing the workers. One time, the “assistant” at a gathering of women workers remarks that under the present working conditions “we can’t even whisper words of love!” and other voices chime in with “That’s right” and “That’s true!” As they continue, these voices begin to change into voices of human anger and demand: “Not that we can do much with the kind of daily wage we’re getting!” “This company is heartless, and that’s the truth!”

Even Itō was surprised by this. Before she herself had noticed it, the talk of “whispering about love” had transformed itself into a discussion of the workers’ treatment by the company. The “assistant,” too, was astonished. Without any prodding, the conversation had turned into an attack on their maltreatment by the company.

The intent of the party members to try to turn words, logic, and women workers into instruments is completely overturned. The remark “we can’t even *whisper words of love*,” deploying humor to denounce conditions that disavow human individuality and dignity, causes a shift in the logic by which the women workers themselves perceive those conditions. Through words that prompt them to recall that they are human beings endowed with individuality and dignity,

the women workers acquire on their own the logic to denounce the company's treatment of people. The party members are astonished by this process.

Let's compare this scene with the one in which Kasahara has lost her job, and the narrator's life with her has reached a dead end. "I" proposes that she consider "becoming a café waitress." Kasahara, "not looking at me, her voice surprisingly calm and low," says "You mean, for the sake of your work, don't you?" And then she screams, "I'll do anything, I'll become a prostitute!" There is no question that Kasahara's outraged scream is a thoroughgoing criticism of the narrator. It is a denunciation of his regard for her only as an instrument, of his refusal of mutual understanding.

The word "sacrifice" that "I" uses in relation to Kasahara when he reflects "I, too, was sacrificing nearly my entire life" is in fact a central concept in the dispute between the company men and the party members over the collection of money for comfort packages to be sent to the front, and as such is positioned at a pivotal point in the novel. A reformist leader, who is using such money collecting as a screen for "Red hunting," points out that "on the factory floor our comrades were exploited by capitalists, but once on the battlefield, they are being sacrificed to enemy bullets." Therefore, given that soldiers were fellow workers, "collecting money for the comfort packages was a legitimate response."

Sacrifice denotes offering one's life for the benefit of others. The "enemy" having been established, it comes to mean that the soldiers at the battlefield are fighting for the people, in other words "for the whole nation." Itō and Suyama make it clear to everybody that such an assertion is nothing but "a trick to make us think" that something is true when in fact it is not. Suyama declares, "In every single situation, we are sacrificed for the benefit of the capitalists." He positions this question as "a turn from quantity to quality." What is being challenged is the quality—the actual substance—of "sacrifice": for whose benefit, and for the sake of what, are we to offer our lives? Furthermore, as "I" himself realizes, "we must conduct our struggle not through dogma, but through consent." Logic that concerns itself only with the quantity and greatness of sacrifice and ignores its substance

is bound to lead to an affirmation of war. This is at the heart of the novel's criticism.

How Takiji might have developed the theme of the antiwar struggle in relation to solidarity that insists on human dignity and individuality can never be known. The text as we have it concludes with the words "End of Part One" and a dedication to "Comrade Kurahara Korehito." Takiji was tortured to death at the Tsukiji police station in Tokyo on February 20, 1933. His novel was published in the April and May issues of the magazine *Central Review* under the title *Tenkan jidai* (*Times of Change*), for there was no way that Takiji's preferred title could be printed under the circumstances. As it was, the handwritten manuscript, comprising 80 pages of 400 characters each, was censored in 758 places, with nearly 14,000 characters suppressed.

The editorial postscript to the April issue of *Central Review* contains the following words: "In our literary section, we are publishing a posthumous masterpiece by Kobayashi Takiji, a leading light among our country's creators of working-class literature! As we remember Takiji's years of hard struggle and his heartbreaking death, it is precisely this interrupted work that we regard as his truly monumental achievement."