

Writing the Sense of Loss in the Inner Self: A Narrative of Nakagami Kenji and Nagayama Norio in Late 1960s Tokyo *

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Abstract

Nakagami Kenji (1946-1992) is a post-war born novelist particularly known for his depiction of the interiority of transgressive young men. These protagonists are variously characterised as paper boy, illegitimate son, orphan, male prostitute, criminal or member of a social minority group such as Burakumin, Ainu or Korean residents in Japan. Nakagami's propensity to give representation to violent and socially stigmatised youth is evident even in his early writing about the nineteen-year-old, Nagayama Norio (1949-1997), who shot and killed four people in 1968. Immediately after Nagayama's arrest in April 1969, Nakagami wrote an essay entitled 'Hanzaisha Nagayama Norio kara no hōkoku' (1969, Statement by the Transgressor, Nagayama Norio), which included both recollections of Nakagami Kenji's own life and a fictional monologue by Nagayama Norio. Outlining the experiences of Nakagami and Nagayama, two young men who in 1965 each came to Tokyo from a peripheral area of Japan, this paper explores the former's insight into the inner self of transgressive youth. Through reading selections from Nakagami's early self-writing, I will profile two important elements which were frequently represented in literary production and also discussed in academic writing during the late 1960s. These elements are loss (*sōshitsu*) and interiority (*naibu*). In articulating these elements, I will refer to Akiyama Shun's 1967 essay entitled *Naibu no ningen (Humanity and the Inner Self)* which greatly influenced Nakagami's own articulation of loss (*sōshitsu*) and interiority (*naibu*). Akiyama's essay discussed individual interiority though examining the background experiences and writing of another young murderer, the eighteen-year-old Zainichi¹ Korean, Ri Chin-u (1940-1962), who was convicted of killing two young girls in 1958 and executed in 1962. I will reference Akiyama's work to discuss Nakagami's attempts to represent interiority.

Keywords

Japanese literature, *shūdan shūshoku*, *kōdo seichō*, periphery, Burakumin

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¹ Zainichi-Koreans mean Korean residents in Japan.

1. Introduction

Nakagami Kenji (1946-1992) is a post-war born novelist particularly known for his depiction of the interiority of transgressive young men. These protagonists are variously characterised as paper boy, illegitimate son, orphan, male prostitute, criminal or member of a social minority group such as Burakumin, Ainu or Korean residents in Japan. Nakagami's propensity to draw on representation of violent and socially stigmatised youth is evident even in his early writing about the nineteen-year-old, Nagayama Norio (1949-1997), who shot and killed four people in 1968. Immediately after Nagayama's arrest in April 1969, Nakagami wrote an essay entitled 'Hanzaisha Nagayama Norio kara no hōkoku' (1969, Statement by the Transgressor, Nagayama Norio),² which included both recollections of Nakagami Kenji's own life and a fictional monologue by Nagayama Norio. Outlining the experiences of Nakagami and Nagayama, two young men, who in 1965 each came to Tokyo from a peripheral area of Japan, this paper explores the former's insight into the inner self of transgressive youth. Through reading selections from Nakagami's early self-writing, I will profile two important elements which were frequently represented in literary production and also discussed in academic writing during the late 1960s. These elements are loss (*sōshitsu*) and interiority (*naibu*). In articulating these elements, I will refer to Akiyama Shun's 1967 essay entitled *Naibu no ningen (Humanity and the Inner Self)* which greatly influenced Nakagami's own articulation of loss (*sōshitsu*) and interiority (*naibu*). Akiyama's essay discussed individual interiority though examining background experiences and writing of another young murderer, the eighteen-year-old, Ri Chin-u (1940-1962) who was convicted of killing two young girls in 1958 and executed in 1962. I will reference Akiyama's work to discuss Nakagami's attempts to represent interiority.

2. Background of Nakagami Kenji

Nakagami Kenji was born in 1946 as the child of a single mother who lived with her four older children in the Kasuga district of the city of Shingū (pop. 31,500: 2013) in Wakayama Prefecture. Set on the eastern coast of the Kii Peninsula at the mouth of the Kumano River that marks the border of Wakayama and Mie Prefectures, Shingū is the largest centre in the region known as Kishū Kumano, which encompasses a large area of Nara, Wakayama and Mie Prefectures. Kasuga, the site of Nakagami's birth, was one of Shingū's *hisabetsu buraku*,³ Burakumin

² Although 'criminal' is the word generally used to translate the Japanese term *hanzaisha*, I use the word 'transgressor' when translating Nakagami's use of the word of *hanzaisha* given the writer's focus on Nagayama's transgressiveness rather than the nature of his crime.

³ *Hisabetsu buraku* literally means 'discriminated community – hamlet'. In contemporary Japan, hamlet areas (*buraku*) which are the focus of status (or caste) discrimination are called *hisabetsu buraku*. This term came into use in Japan in the late 1950s and was adopted by the media and in academic circles in the 1970s. Today, the term *dōwa chiku* (assimilation area) is used interchangeably as a way of referring to *hisabetsu buraku*. More precisely, *dōwa chiku* refers to *hisabetsu buraku* which have been designated by administrative agencies as being areas to which *dōwa* (assimilation) policies are directed. Excluding Hokkaido and Okinawa prefectures, there are six thousand such designated areas in Japan. People born in these areas are estimated to number about three million. Of the six thousand *hisabetsu buraku* areas, a 1987 government survey designated four thousand six hundred and three areas as *dōwa chiku*. Consequently it is generally acknowledged that there are more than one thousand *hisabetsu buraku* which, for a range of reasons, remain undesignated and lie beyond the application of the government's

districts, areas that are associated in the public imagination with the ‘outcast’ groups of premodern Japan.

In a 1983 essay, Nakagami explains himself as ‘the first child born from the encounter of Burakumin and letters’.⁴ Even after Meiji era legislative changes, such as the 1871 Emancipation Edict, and early twentieth century campaigns by Burakumin activist societies, such as the 1922 declaration by *Suiheisha* (The Levellers Society), poverty continued to prevent many Burakumin children attending school. According to Nakagami, the idea of compulsory education only became a reality and was finally introduced into Burakumin society after the end of the Second World War.⁵ Thus, while Nakagami, born in 1946, received the benefits of literacy from the new post-war democratic education system, his older half-brother and sisters did not have this opportunity. In a 1991 interview with his close friend, the critic Karatani Kōjin, Nakagami explains himself as a *bungaku shōnen* (a boy who was absorbed in reading). In spite of the fact that his family had no books, the writer notes in this interview how he accessed books from school libraries and collections which belonged to an afterschool children’s circle called *kodomo kai* that ran in his *hisabetsu buraku*.⁶

In 1965, the eighteen-year-old Nakagami left for Tokyo to take the enrolment exam for the prestigious Waseda University. 1965 was the year after the Tokyo Olympic Games, an event which, as Yumiko Iida explains, saw Japan project ‘an image of confidence as the newest member of the world’s leading industrial nations’.⁷ In the 1950s and 1960s, Japan’s role as special procurer for the United States military during the Korean and Vietnam Wars took the country into an era of *kōdo keizai seichō* (rapid economic growth).⁸ This growth saw the expansion of publicly funded projects such as the urbanisation of rural areas, including Nakagami’s hometown of Shingū and its surrounds. In this process Nakagami’s step-father became a successful builder who, although from a *hisabetsu buraku* community, had the financial means to aspire to send his wife’s son to an elite private university. Nakagami, however, never enrolled in university but remained in Tokyo as a *yobikōsei* (student of a school that prepares candidates for university entrance exams). He soon, however, stopped attending even preparatory school and spent most of his time instead listening to jazz, taking drugs, reading books and writing poems.

In 1965 Nakagami also became involved in writing for and, from 1967 to 1970, editing the literary magazine *Bungei shuto* (*Literary Metropolis*). This coterie magazine was where Nakagami served his apprenticeship as a writer. Among others affiliated with the magazine at that time were Tsushima Yūko (b.1947) and Kiwa Kyō (b.1945) who married Nakagami in 1970. In addition to this literary activity, from November 1967 the twenty-two-year old Nakagami began to participate in the violent New Left protests of the time known as *gebaruto* (*gewalt* from the German, which means employment of force in Japanese). Thus, in late 1960s Tokyo Nakagami took advantage of the financial support given by his successful step-father to live like a hippy, or to use the Japanese word, *fūten*.⁹

dōwa policies. See also: Teraki 1998, http://blhrri.org/blhrri_e/news/new104/new10402.htm.

⁴ Nakagami Kenji *zenshū* vol.15, p.306.

⁵ Nakagami Kenji *zenshū* vol.15, p.306.

⁶ Nakagami Kenji *hatsugen shūsei* vol. 4, p. 328.

⁷ Iida 2002, p.119.

⁸ This paper follows the most official definition of the era of rapid economic growth that is from 1955 in which an economic boom called *Jin’mu keiki* started until 1973 in which the oil crisis occurred. See Tsuchida 2005, p.118.

⁹ Takazawa 1998, p. 9-15.

In 1958 – a decade before his becoming involved in the New Left *gebaruto* protest movement – Nakagami’s eldest half-brother, Ikuhei, hung himself at the age of twenty-four. Ikuhei lived separately from his mother and siblings because he did not join his mother’s new family with her common-law husband in a neighbouring town. A few years before his death, Ikuhei became an aggressive alcoholic and the school boy Nakagami and his mother were often a target of the drunken brother’s violent behaviour.¹⁰ In an autobiographical 1969 essay entitled ‘*Hanzaisha sengen oyobi waga bokei ichizoku*’ (Declaration of a Transgressor and my Matrilineal Family), Nakagami notes that his mother, who bore a total of six children to three different men (including Nakagami’s biological father), was effectively the head of his family.¹¹ Nakagami’s biographer, Takazawa Shūji, explains the writer’s *jōkyō* (leaving for Tokyo) as an attempt to escape from his homeland with its complicated family background, including the pall created by his brother’s death.¹² However, while Nakagami could escape physically, psychological escape was much more difficult.

Nakagami’s late 1960s’ self-writing and poetry often display a strong sense of guilt and loss (*sōshitsu*) regarding his half-brother’s death. This sense of lament is coupled with criticism of elite New Left activists who wrote about their own sense of fiasco and loss after the collapse of their 1960 protest against the conclusion of the US Japan Security Treaty (*Anpo*). In spite of strong popular opposition to renegotiating the treaty, the agreement was rammed through parliament by Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke (1896-1987), leaving the New Left leaders of the anti-*Anpo* protests feeling bereft and impotent. Iida explains that Left voices in the 1960s thus came to be increasingly represented by the ‘romantic’, ‘mute’ and aesthetically inclined expressions of political actions and ideas.¹³ Nakagami criticised this trend as ‘revolutionist sentimentalism’.¹⁴ While despising New Left writers, Nakagami was aware that, unlike his illiterate half-brother and half-sisters, he himself was one of the privileged youth who committed themselves to literature and activism. For Nakagami, literacy was a key aspect of the difference between himself and his half-brother. This difference was literally one of life and death.

The April 1969 arrest of the nineteen-year-old serial killer, Nagayama Norio, had a particularly strong impact on Nakagami. Immediately after the arrest, Nakagami started to write recollections of his own life interspersed with a fictional monologue by Nagayama. The result was the work entitled ‘*Hanzaisha Nagayama Norio kara no hōkoku*’, published in *Bungei shuto* in August 1969. As he later explained in a 1978 public lecture, Nakagami felt a close affinity with Nagayama for a number of reasons. Both came to Tokyo in 1965 and Nagayama worked in a jazz bar which Nakagami frequented. Both were born into a poor, fatherless family on the periphery of Japanese society.¹⁵ However, there were also significant differences. While Nagayama’s mother remained unmarried after her husband left home, Nakagami’s mother remarried to create a family (*ie*), headed by a patriarch. Despite being neglected by his biological father, Nakagami was well cared for and educated by his step-father. Nagayama, on the other hand, was almost illiterate. When considering the criminal actions of Nagayama, Nakagami realised that, as was the case with his half-brother, literacy – that is, education – was the most significant difference between

¹⁰ Nakagami’s family background information given here is based on Takazawa 1998 and 2002.

¹¹ *Nakagami Kenji zenshū* vol.15, p.137-138.

¹² See Takazawa 1998 and 2002.

¹³ Iida 2002, p.115.

¹⁴ *Nakagami Kenji zenshū* vol.15, p134.

¹⁵ *Nakagami Kenji to Kumano*, p. 61-62.

himself and the young transgressor of his own generation.

3. Background of Nagayama Norio

Nagayama Norio was born in 1949 in Abashiri, Hokkaido, as the seventh of eight children. Abashiri was notorious for the prison which opened in 1890 and functioned effectively as an internment camp for both recidivist criminals and political prisoners. The latter included the first chairman of the Japanese Communist Party, Tokuda Kyūichi (1894-1953), and the former long-time leader of the same party, Miyamoto Kenji (1908-2007). In his autobiographical novel entitled ‘Naze ka Abashiri’ (1984, Somehow, It Was Abashiri), Nagayama wrote of the shock he experienced at the age of seventeen when he saw ‘Abashiri Yobito Bangaichi’ (literally meaning outside of the Abashiri Yobito area) as his legal address on the statement of his family registry (*koseki*).¹⁶ This stigmatised image of Abashiri is an important element when considering Nagayama’s case.

As Ishikawa Yoshihiro, who conducted a psychiatric examination of Nagayama while the young man was in prison, notes,¹⁷ Nagayama’s childhood is an important aspect to also consider when examining the young man’s crimes. After his father became addicted to gambling, Nagayama’s mother went back to her hometown in Aomori leaving four children including the five-year-old Nagayama in Abashiri. Although the children rejoined their mother in 1955, Nagayama’s childhood was spent in extreme poverty and dysfunctional family circumstances. He was neglected by his parents, abused by his siblings and later become a batterer of his younger sister and niece. He was also frequently absent from school.¹⁸

In 1965, after graduating from junior high school, Nagayama came to work in Tokyo through a middle school/high school leaver group employment system known as *shūdan shūshoku*. This was a mass-organised employment system for groups of graduates from rural junior high schools or high schools instituted in the post-war era to facilitate the nation’s rapid economic growth. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, junior high school graduates were especially popular for many small-scale factories and stores whose business output had dramatically increased with the mass production and consumption of the post-war economy.¹⁹ According to Sugayama Shinji, the term *shūdan shūshoku* was a popular caption of the mass media which reported on the arrival at Tokyo’s Ueno Station of ‘baby-faced-fifteen-year-old boys and girls [...] from farm villages in Northern Japan’ on specially designated ‘trains to transport school leavers looking for work’. These images, which were reported every spring ‘during cherry blossom season’ throughout the era of economic growth, made a strong impact on the consciousness of the Japanese public and normalised the notions of both group immigration for employment by junior high school graduates and the ‘common’ sense of these students going ‘to work immediately after graduation’.²⁰ In ‘Hanzaisha Nagayama Norio kara no hōkoku’, Nakagami saw Nagayama as the ‘banished’ son of ‘a matrilineal family’.²¹ This is the same expression that he uses in reference to his half-brother’s separation from his siblings following the young man’s exile from his mother’s

¹⁶ See Nagayama, 1984.

¹⁷ See *ETV tokushū Nagayama Norio hyaku jikan no kokuhaku: fūin sareta seishin kantei no shinjitsu*.

¹⁸ See *ETV tokushū Nagayama Norio hyaku jikan no kokuhaku: fūin sareta seishin kantei no shinjitsu*.

¹⁹ Katayama 2010, p.12-14.

²⁰ Sugayama 2000, p. 34-38.

²¹ *Nakagami Kenji zenshū* vol.15, p. 238.

home by her creation of a new patriarchal family. Nagayama's exile from his home as a young man was the result of *shūdan shūshoku*.

There is an important difference in Nagayama's experience of *shūdan shūshoku* compared to that of graduates before the mid-1960s. In 1965, the year Nagayama started working in a small fruit market in Tokyo, more than sixty percent of middle school students continued on to high school education. As a result, the labour market began to draw more on high school graduates than junior high school graduates. While initially lionised as 'golden eggs', another popular mass media caption, the fifteen-year-old *shūdan shūshoku* graduates soon came to be regarded as symbols of poverty and underachievement (both of which were often closely related to the financial circumstance of their families) and to indicate a gap in society between rich and poor.²²

Also in 1965, the negative connotations of Abashiri became even more evident following the release of the smash hit movie *Abashiri Bangaichi* (literary meaning 'outside of Abashiri district', translated as *Abashiri Prison*) starring Takakura Ken (b.1931). This film became the first in the hugely popular *yakuza* film genre with a number of sequels released until 1972. Because the address in his family registry was also 'Abashiri Yobito mura bangaichi', Nagayama was misunderstood and humiliated by his employer and co-workers as if he himself had been born in prison or had a criminal record. He eventually quit the fruit market and drifted from one job to another in Tokyo.²³

Nagayama's 1968 crime occurred in these economic and cultural contexts. Between October 1968 and April 1969, using a handgun that he stole from the American army quarters in Yokosuka, Nagayama killed a total of four people – a security guard in Tokyo and then Kyoto and a taxi driver in Hakodate and then Nagoya. At that time he had no job. In prison, Nagayama became an enthusiastic reader of literature and philosophy and wrote many autobiographical essays and novels. His first and best-selling autobiographical work, *Muchi no namida (Tears of Ignorance)* was published in 1971. In 1983, he was awarded the *Shin'nihon bungaku shō*, (New Japanese Literature Prize) for the novel *Kibashi (Wooden Bridge)*. In the same year, his death penalty was determined by the Supreme Court of Japan. On August 1, 1997, Nagayama was executed at the age of forty-eight.

4. 'Statement by the Transgressor, Nagayama Norio'

As previously noted, immediately after Nagayama's arrest in 1969, Nakagami produced the essay 'Hanzaisha Nagayama Norio kara no hōkoku'. Nakagami writes his view of Nagayama's crime accompanied by both recollections of his own (Nakagami's) life and a fictional monologue by Nagayama. In comparing the similarities and differences between the lives of Nakagami and Nagayama above, I have noted that Nakagami was cared for by a step-father who became a successful builder. It was this man's generous financial support that permitted Nakagami's idle life in Tokyo. Although acknowledging this as a significant difference between his own life and that of Nagayama, Nakagami nevertheless felt a strong affinity with Nagayama and regarded himself as 'one of many (boys like) Nagayama Norio'. Haunted by the question: 'why wasn't I

²² Tsuchida 2005, p.6-15.

²³ See Nagayama 1990, p.191-193 and *ETV tokushū Nagayama Norio hyaku jikan no kokuhaku: fūin sareta seishin kantei no shinjitsu*.

the transgressor Nagayama Norio,²⁴ Nakagami sought to understand why he chose to become a writer and to use a ‘fountain pen’ and not a ‘pistol’.²⁵

While repeatedly writing that he can never know the inner self (*naibu*) of the *shūdan shūshoku* boy (Nagayama), Nakagami tried to understand Nagayama’s crime as the latter’s attempts to overcome his ‘pain at the principle of identity’ (*jidōritsu no fukaisa*). Before examining key terms such as ‘inner self’ and ‘pain at the principle of identity’, I will cite a passage by Nakagami which probes the difference between himself and Nagayama. In this passage, Nakagami refers to another young murderer, the eighteen-year-old Ri Chin-u (1940-1962). Ri was convicted of killing two young girls in 1958 and was executed in 1962. In the late 1960s, the interiority of this young Zainichi-Korean murderer was often presented in cultural production. The narrative of Ri was adapted in the film entitled *Kōshikei* (1968, *Death by Hanging*) directed by Ōshima Nagisa (1932-2013). Akiyama Shun’s 1967 essay collection, *Naibu no ningen (Humanity and the Inner Self)*, which I will discuss below, also addresses Ri’s interiority. Rather than identifying with Ri, however, I have noted how Nakagami was drawn to Nagayama’s experiences as similar in some ways to his own.

For Nagayama, there was never any inner self (language). Why did he lack this? To answer this, rather than draw on the one known as Ri Chin-u, perhaps I should refer to the experiences of my own self who stands face to face before Nagayama Norio. By doing this, I can perhaps understand why I must regard him as a person who can only express himself externally through actions such as crime, a person who lacked an inner self, and so come to understand how he tried to claim that self, came to identify with himself. I feel this will help me know more about Nagayama.

Why do I write?

Why do I commit the crime of writing rather than an actual crime when writing is a crime that denies – we might use the French and say ‘*non*’ – consciousness, denies imagination and denies the other who refuses eternal salvation?

Why do I use a fountain pen and not a pistol?

Why don’t I push myself ahead in the world but retreat instead into the infinite depths of my own self? What can my writing achieve?

I feel I have discovered that writing is a way of survival. Nagayama Norio thought that through action (crime) he could overcome his own pain at the principle of self-identification.

And at that moment he did grasp his own identity. But once Nagayama, who had then fulfilled his inner self, ceased acting, this self was overwhelmed by anxiety, dissociation and boredom. [...] He had no language by means of which he could express these.

Pain at the principle of identity (*jidōritsu no fukaisa*) was frequently discussed in Japanese literary material in the 1960s. In the above passage, I understand the concept as it is suggested in the writing of Haniya Yutaka (1909-1997). In Haniya’s novel, *Shirei (Dead Spirits)*, which was intermittently written between 1946 and 1995, the young male protagonist questions his self-identity: ‘He murmured “I am...” but he could not continue after that to say the word “me”. To

²⁴ *Nakagami Kenji zenshū* vol.15, p.230.

²⁵ *Nakagami Kenji zenshū* vol.15, p.224.

voice this would definitely have been indescribably painful.’²⁶ As Morikawa Tatsuya notes in his 1968 essay on Haniya, *jidōritsu no fukaisa* resonates with the idea proposed by Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) of ‘being in itself’,²⁷ and the fact that ‘[m]an is all the time outside of himself: it is in projecting and losing himself beyond himself that he makes man to exist; and, on the other hand, it is by pursuing transcendent aims that he himself is able to exist’.²⁸ In 1960s’ Japan, Sartre’s theory of existentialism was widely read and provided the theoretical framework for New Left student activity which might be interpreted as an attempt to overcome social alienation. Activity of this nature is *angājuman*, i.e. *engagement* in Sartre’s term.

As previously noted, the term, *naibu*, comes from Akiyama Shun’s 1967 essay collection, *Naibu no ningen* (1967, *Humanity and the Inner Self*). This essay discussed the interiority, *naibu*, of the individual by examining the background and the writing of the eighteen-year-old murderer, Ri Chin-u. Before examining the term, *naibu*, I should confirm that Nakagami’s essay entitled ‘Hanzaisha Nagayama Norio kara no hokoku’ appeared *before* Nagayama started publishing his writing. Therefore, Nakagami’s view of Nagayama as a person who ‘never’ has ‘inner self (language)’, but ‘can only express himself externally [through action such as crime]’ is restricted to before the late 1960s. I have explained above how at that time, the other young murderer, Ri, had already written extensively about his own background and his crime. To Nakagami, Ri, who had demonstrated the ability to express himself in writing, is in Akiyama’s words, ‘*naibu no ningen*’, that is, a person who has an ‘inner self (language)’. As previously noted, after his arrest Nagayama, too, started writing autobiographical narratives while in prison. This signifies that Nagayama also eventually found ‘writing’ as ‘a way to survive’. It is interesting to note that once Nagayama became to express himself in written language, Nakagami no longer felt such an affinity with this young man. In fact, in his 1975 essay entitled ‘Toki wa nagareru...’ (Time Goes By...), Nakagami severely criticised material by Nagayama, including *Muchi no namida* and *Jinmin o wasureta kanaria tachi* (*Canaries That Forget The People*, 1971), as the latter’s exploitation of language to justify his crimes on the grounds of social problems such as poverty and a dysfunctional family. Nakagami writes that this self-justification by Nagayama is logically the same as that of the police, bourgeoisie, citizen society and the nation that the latter regards as his enemies.²⁹ In other words, Nakagami’s identification with Nagayama ceased once the latter also began to express himself in writing.

As Hasumi Shigehiko and Karatani Kōjin note, Nakagami’s depiction of transgressive male protagonists is heavily influenced by Akiyama’s perspective of Ri’s interiority.³⁰ Akiyama wrote:

We cannot deny the relationship between the crimes of individuals who have withdrawn into themselves and psychoanalytic thinking. It seems to me, however, that, in their need to assert themselves, the crimes of these individuals draw on points that psychoanalysis has had no option but to abandon. While psychoanalytic ideas have been instrumental in establishing and developing views of the interior world that are accepted by the wider society, in the process they destroyed the tiny insect which has lived in this inner world for

²⁶ *Haniya Yutaka zenshū* 3, p.125.

²⁷ See Morikawa 1968.

²⁸ Sartre 1948, p.55.

²⁹ *Nakagami Kenji zenshū* vol.15, p.239-242.

³⁰ See comments by Hasumi and Karatani in *Kindai Nihon no hihiyō* (*A Critique of Modern Japan*). Asada, Karatani, Hasumi and Miura 2002, p. 185-189.

so long. This insect is the ‘self’ that each person has – no matter who they are. This is not the ego of everyday language. This is the I which tries to mean only I and which, refusing to be categorised, refusing to be analysed and refusing to be defined, is the most meaningless and the most uncertain existence in the world.

Through referring to the self-writing of the young transgressor, Ri, Akiyama demonstrates the existence of a ‘self’ which refuses to be categorised, analysed or defined by universal principles. Citing an excerpt from Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891)’s ‘Bad Blood (Mauvais Sang)’ in *A Season in Hell* (1873), ‘[t]hey won’t kill you any more than if you were a corpse’, Akiyama explains that Ri commits crime to defend his own self through voluntarily putting himself in the circumstances of being rejected by the *gaibu* (the exterior world).³¹ Because of this, Akiyama regards Ri as a *naibu no ningen* who can only fulfil his inner world through acts of his imagination, i.e. killing girls and then writing narratives of these crimes and of himself. In these activities, he finally realises that his own self is useless. Ri’s crime was the result of this paradox. While Akiyama’s approach to *naibu* resonated with existentialism, he investigated the issue of ‘self’ without resorting to any hegemonic interpretation or psychoanalytic study of identity. Akiyama’s ideas are also distinct from the Sartrean *engagement* favoured by New Left activists. Reading their work as ‘revolutionist sentimentalism’, Nakagami despised the writing of the New Left activists, particularly their portrayal of themselves as vulnerable while ignoring the hegemonic power of their ability to write.

Drawing on Akiyama’s interpretation of Ri, Nakagami argues that, at least until the time of his commission of crime, Nagayama has never had *naibu* i.e. language. That is, like Nakagami’s half-brother, Nagayama, the young condemned criminal who was illiterate, could not rely on ‘writing’ as ‘a way to survive’. Nakagami also notes that Nagayama’s inner self (*naibu*) was characterised by pain at the principle of identity. This paradox of *naibu* signifies that there was a sense of loss (*sōshitsu*) in Nagayama’s inner self, a sense that derived from the ‘anxiety, dissociation and boredom’ which attacked the youth of the time and resulted in frustration and uncertainty regarding the inner self

Akiyama’s view closely parallels Nakagami’s motive for writing as explained in his 1968 autobiographical essay entitled ‘Kakuzai no sedai no fukō’ (The Misfortune of the Generation Armed with Wooden Sticks).

These days, I am thinking of giving literal representation to my bare boyhood. To do so, I have to trace back – not to the points at which I was unified with exterior theory or knowledge – but to the points at which my writhing pathos radiates my feelings.³²

It was after writing this short essay that Nakagami became familiar with Nagayama’s case and subsequently wrote ‘Hanzaisha Nagayama Norio kara no hōkoku’. Identifying with Nagayama Norio, this work was also Nakagami’s very first attempt at ‘giving literal representation’ of his own boyhood as a foundation for articulating the sense of loss in his inner self.

³¹ Akiyama 1991, p. 128.

³² Nakagami 2012, p.175.

5. Conclusion

This paper has explored the differences in the lives of two young post-war born men, Nakagami Kenji and Nagayama Norio, each of whom went to Tokyo in the late 1960s from a peripheral area of Japan. We firstly profiled the similarities and differences in the family background of the two men. Each had a similar family structure, which, to use Nakagami's words, was a 'matrilineal family' headed by a mother. The significant difference in their backgrounds, however, relates to literacy, that is, to education. Since, as Nakagami observes, 'writing is a way of survival', the capacity to write literature determined the choice of life and death facing the lonely youth afflicted by a strong sense of loss (*sōshitsu*). While Nagayama's impoverished background condemned him to the experience of the group employment system referred to as *shūdan shūshoku*, Nakagami was one of the (so-called) privileged youth who relied on the financial support of their families to choose to commit himself to literature and, briefly at least, to New Left student activism. Like Nakagami's uneducated half-brother, however, the 'baby-faced' junior high school graduate, Nagayama, lacked literacy and was therefore automatically 'banished' from his home and sent to a distant place to work.

Reading Nakagami's 'Hanzaisha Nagayama Norio kara no hōkoku' permitted us to examine the writer's insight into the young transgressor, Nagayama Norio. Nakagami's view of the sense of loss (*sōshitsu*) that gripped Nagayama's inner self (*naibu*) and the young offender's pain at the principle of identity (*jidōritsu no fukai sa*) was examined with reference to other 1960s material, especially the work of Akiyama Shun. Akiyama's essay inspired Nakagami to realise that Nagayama's crime was enacted to overcome a sense of loss in his inner self. The crime, however, paradoxically heightened the young man's anxiety, producing pain at the uncertainty of self. While acknowledging that writing is a crime of negation against 'consciousness, imagination and the other who rejects eternal salvation', Nakagami nevertheless turned to writing as an act which permitted the representation of his own inner self without being overcome by a sense of loss. This was Nakagami's strategy for remaining alive – surviving – without the need to kill either himself or the other.

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