

The Latticed Bars of Gender and Sexuality in Japan's Fifteen Year War

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Abstract

After giving background on my theoretical approach, I will illustrate attitudes toward manhood and the body during Japan's Fifteen Year War from Tatsuzo Ishikawa's novel Solders Alive (1938) and Osamu Dazai's short stories of the 1930s and '40s and his novel The Setting Sun (1947). While supporting the Empire, Ishikawa seriously criticizes many of its practices. Even more blatantly than Ishikawa, Dazai satirizes wartime definitions of manhood, after donning some camouflage to get past censorship. I also look back at Ryunosuke Akutagawa's short story "Hell Screen" (1918), teetering ambivalently on the cusp of change between the nineteenth-century and the militarization of the 1930s because this tale illuminates some of the sources (European and Japanese) for the "manly" detachment and sacrifice that weigh so heavily on Ishikawa's and Dazai's characters.

Key words

Japan's Fifteen Year War (1931-1945), constructions of masculinity, ideas about sexuality

In a collection of war paintings called WWII (1975), the American veteran and novelist James Jones remarks cryptically that U.S. servicemen should have understood Japanese soldiers' focus on "blood and violence and manhood," all tied in with "sexuality and sexual taboos and myths," because Americans have similar traditions (p. 110). Although he does not elaborate this provocative insight in his brief commentary on the art works, Jones's war novel The Thin Red Line (1962) does explore, with rare frankness, this trained linking of suffering and sexual response for American soldiers. Manipulating Masculinity: War and Gender in Modern British and American Literature (2006) gives close attention to Jones's indictment of American conceptions of manhood and sexuality for fueling war (Phillips, 2006, p. 183). This essay explores Jones's un-

developed suggestion that Japan's social constructions of sexuality and gender also contributed to Japan's Fifteen Year War (1931-1945).

The sources of these volatile attitudes for both West and East lie ultimately in ascetic strands of religion (whether Christianity or Buddhism) and in imperialism (whether European and American or Japanese). Britain, in order to gild its empire, adapted classical versions of belligerent, non-emotional masculinity that had furthered Athens' expansionist Peloponnesian War and the Roman Empire, as well as refurbished medieval European notions of chivalry. America followed Britain, trying (unsuccessfully) to fit "belligerent" with "civilizing," and ended up putting its ideas of masculinity into myths of cowboys and Indians. Japan could draw on a medieval samurai version of manhood and transform it into an engine that would help militarists jump on the imperial bandwagon that had already been driven so destructively by the West.

After giving background on this theoretical approach, an illustration of attitudes toward manhood and the body during the Fifteen Year War from Tatsuzō Ishikawa's novel Soldiers Alive (2003) and Osamu Dazai's short stories of the 1930s and '40s and his novel The Setting Sun (1956) will be presented. While supporting the Empire, Ishikawa seriously criticizes many of its practices. Even more blatantly than Ishikawa, Dazai satirizes wartime definitions of manhood, after donning some camouflage to get past censorship. This paper also looks back at Ryūnosuke Akutagawa's short story "Hell Screen (1918)", teetering ambivalently on the cusp of change between the militarization of the nineteenth-century and the 1930s, because this tale illuminates some of the sources (European and Japanese) for the "manly" detachment and sacrifice that weigh so heavily on Ishikawa's and Dazai's characters.

Theoretical Approach

This essay addresses not so much the causes, East and West, of the Fifteen Year War as the consent to it. The theorist Antonio Gramsci explains "consent" as a "collective pressure," exerted though "an evolution of customs, ways of thinking and acting, morality," in such a way as to make "necessity and coercion" seem like "freedom" (1971, p. 242). Louis Althusser similarly suggests that societies control people not only through Repressive State Apparatuses (censorship, beatings, jails) but also through

Ideological State Apparatuses (media, schools, religions); he defines ideology as the “imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (1971, p. 143, 162). Or, more simply said, ideologies are the stories that a given society tells itself. Althusser crucially signals that the way to perceive “natural”-seeming (but actually social) ideologies is to look for “contradictions” (1971, p. 147): whenever the good-sounding story clashes with what is really happening on the ground, or one ideology cancels out another.

Until recently, few critical studies have linked consent to war with ideologies about either gender or sexuality. For example, Eric Leed’s otherwise excellent book No Man’s Land looks at the stories people tell themselves about war and shrewdly traces these stories to their conventional and social determinants, yet when he discusses imagery making conquered land feminine, he falls back on the oedipal complex as a biological given rather than another story in need of a social explanation (1979, p. 162). Leo Braudy offers to illuminate War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity (2003), yet he never seriously questions his underlying assumption that men must fight biologically. Much more promising, Cynthia Enloe’s book (1989), Susan Jeffords’s The Remasculinization of America (1989), Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott’s Gendering War Talk (1993) (especially the excellent essays by Lynda Boose, Carol Cohn, and Stanley Rosenberg), and Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin’s The Women and War Reader (1998), all open up exciting new questions about the connections of gender prescriptions and war. Studies about the way sexual beliefs contribute to war are even more rare; see Wilhelm Reich’s The Mass Psychology of Fascism (1993), George Mosse’s Nationalism and Sexuality (1985), Liz Kelly’s “Wars Against Women (2000)”, and Maria Tatar’s Lustmord (1984). Japanese books that pose important questions on gender and sexuality that can be related to war include Gender and Japanese History, (Ed.). Wakita, Bouchy, & Ueno, and Noriko Kawahashi’s “Gender Issues in Japanese Religions”. Sabine Frühstück illuminates the uneasy ideologies tying both to distance and connect the present-day Japanese Self-Defense Forces and the Imperial Japanese Army.

Manipulating Masculinity (Phillips, 2006) contributed to this discussion by arguing that the polarization of gender (the construction of masculine and feminine as if they have little in common), along with the position-

ing of women as lesser, powerfully enabled the wars of the twentieth century. Societies that arbitrarily label a number of purely human traits “feminine” possess a tactic useful to war-making, for men are bound to detect some of these human traits in themselves--and then worry that they have strayed into a feminine, inferior realm. Placed in a constantly renewed insecurity about their status, men must scramble to amass “proofs” of masculinity. If a society also convinces its citizens that men love to fight and women hate to fight (or cannot fight), then that society can manipulate men to go to war, simply to verify that they are not women.¹ An important secondary thesis throughout *Manipulating Masculinity* (Phillips, 2006) is that a deep cultural ambivalence toward sexuality--a continuing devaluation of the body combined with an obsession with it--also fuels war.

Exploring this double thesis for Japan, the author grants that many representations of the genders may seem, on the surface, totally different. For example, in a collection of last letters home from kamikaze pilots, Japanese airmen may picture themselves falling “like a blossom from a radiant cherry tree” (Richler, 1991, p. 570, 575), drawing on Buddhist imagery for the fleetingness of life. By contrast, no American man would likely compare himself to a fragile flower, instead projecting human fragility onto women alone. Actually, the comparison to a petal--for any flyer, not only a kamikaze pilot--gives a more honest sense of the vulnerability of flesh to metal, explosives, and height than most war language does, even if the focus on radiance of blossoms cleans up a blood splash. Nevertheless, if these two combatant cultures label sometimes different traits feminine, both zealously polarize the sexes and rank feminine as lesser to some degree. The same Japanese pilots who expected to die like cherry blossoms also frequently expressed gratitude for “this chance to die like a man” (Richler, 1991, p. 570, 573), just as a typical American infantryman signed up for World War II. Both cultures fashion their own versions of “womanliness” out of what are really just human traits, and, significantly, both keep men worrying if they might not be, somehow, women under the skin.

¹ To the question whether women’s increased presence in military forces has lessened this problem, the short answer is “No.” Female recruits have to learn to be “masculine” in the same terms that male recruits have to learn to be “masculine.”

In fact, in a concerted policy to maintain gender insecurity, Western society has consistently coerced military recruits with the taunt “womanly” (and its variants). British World War I soldiers nervously assured themselves that there were no “half-men at the front,” American units in World War II shamed a man for supposed “lace on his drawers,” and drill instructors during America’s war in Vietnam needled recruits as “ladies.” American soldiers in Iraq still police each other by taunting “pussy wimp,” all words for “womanly” (Phillips, 2006, p. 25, 86, 131, 192). Similarly in Japan during the Fifteen Year War, to fail in assigned tasks (or just to be a new learner) explicitly branded a male recruit a “woman.” Witnessing the treatment of a recruit, a female nurse reports that superiors not only slapped the young man “several dozen times” but also forced him to warble “like a bird,” reach through an arrangement of rifles like the “lattice-work” in the “pleasure quarter,” and sing out, *as if he were a woman*, “Hey, soldier, why don’t you come inside?” (Gibney, 1995, p. 41).

We can see from this example that gender casting for Japanese women vs. men stamped not only weak vs. strong, but also pleasure-giving vs. pain-giving (and pain-seeking; see section on the body). Even though gender and sexuality are different subjects, societies often try to link them. Thus a man who strayed into *any* realm labeled feminine (for example, if he questioned the war and therefore stood, like women of the time, outside the fight) was erroneously made to feel *sexually* at risk. As a commander in the novel Soldiers Alive (2003) warns his troops, they must win the Order of the Golden Kite for courage, or they would never attract the beautiful brides back home: “Without that Golden Kite-nothing. Mark my words” (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 93). The epithet “womanly” became displeasing to a man for two distinct reasons: because of women’s lower social status, and because of the false implication that such a man would become, in effect, “castrated,” reduced to women’s supposedly passive role.

Constructing the Latticed Bars of Gender

In his powerful novel Soldiers Alive (2003), Ishikawa exposes the contradictions in two particular definitions of manliness: the very old idea that men surpass women in “spirituality,” since women are all phys-

icality, and the idea that men are naturally more independent, self-sufficient, and unemotional than are women.

Ishikawa wrote *Soldiers Alive* (2003), his lightly fictionalized account of the Japanese invasion of China in the late thirties, at a furious pace, finishing in February 1938. The magazine *Chūō kōron* had sent Ishikawa to China in December 1937, and he arrived in the conquered capital, Nanking, in January 1938, only a few weeks after its fall. His magazine editors cut eighty pages from his manuscript and left many blanks elsewhere, as the editors omitted the murders of women and unarmed prisoners, as well as the pillaging (Cook, 2001, p. 155-56). Although Ishikawa regarded his novel as pro-Japanese, even this expurgated version revealed the brutality of the war too honestly for government censors, who prevented the magazine from distributing the cleaned-up novel. Authorities told Ishikawa he would receive a sentence of four months for writing such a book, but the government allowed him instead to return to China for the same magazine. In 1945, after the war, the author reconstructed the gaps from the magazine galleys and published his novel.

Haruko Cook reports, in her 2001 essay “The Many Lives of Living Soldiers,” that this 1945 publication met a “barrage of strong criticism” (2001, p. 164, 166). She says that post-war literary critics in Japan condemned Ishikawa for failing to denounce the war outright, either in the novel or in his later comments. Although Cook too leans heavily on his self-censoring, this author does not think that she gives him enough credit. Unlike the magazine editors’ version, the 1945 novel does not hush up the rapes and murders of women, the murder of other unarmed civilians and prisoners, and the widespread destruction of homes. The novel remains an invaluable, close-hand glimpse of the horrific cost of the war to the Chinese, as well as the psychological toll for Japanese soldiers. Ishikawa does not need to outright condemn in a narrator’s intervention because sardonic juxtapositions effectively undermine ideological claims by letting jarring details show off contradictions.

First, *Soldiers Alive* undercuts the wartime ideology that Japan would “spread enlightenment” in Asia and “brighten the universe” (Cipris, 2003, p. 2, 4) by showing dulling and darkening effects instead. An early scene set in China presents Japanese troops in a requisitioned house, which suddenly breaks out in flames. Furious, Corporal Kasahara arrests a youth loitering nearby, who mutters, with boldness and dignity, that

“setting fire to his own house is his own business” (Cipris, 2003, p. 59). Kasahara swings his sword. Although the blow does not quite behead the young man, it starts the blood gushing sufficiently to topple him into a creek, where he dies (Cipris, 2003, p. 60). Soon Kasahara is nonchalantly paring his calluses with a sword touched by a “reddish tinge. Fat stains had made it lose its luster and acquire the color of lead” (Cipris, 2003, p. 64). In another vivid scene, soldiers move on from abandoned homes, purposely failing to extinguish their cooking fires. In this negligent and contemptful way, “boiling clouds of black smoke darkened the sky over Wu-hsi, concealing the sunlight,” and eventually the whole city of 200,000 burns down (Cipris, 2003, p. 126). By his vocabulary of dulling the sword, losing luster, and blackening the sky, Ishikawa is consciously playing against and demolishing the claim that Japan was “enlightening” Asia.

Wartime government discourse not only insisted that Japan was spreading enlightenment but also that Japanese people were more “spiritual” than other peoples. This ideology of superiority conflicts, of course, with the ideology of equal Asian partners; boasting of spirituality does not look very saintly either. What could “spiritual” then mean? Generals assumed that “Japanese spirit (Nippon seishin)” would triumph over “materialistic” and therefore “weak-kneed” Westerners (Gibney, 1995, p. 125). However, the label “non-materialistic Japan” does not wash with its imperial aim of acquiring resources, a contradiction that puts Japan on the well-worn Western empire-makers’ path of claiming to have only religious-sounding “civilizing missions” but nevertheless brutally pursuing goods. In his novel, Ishikawa is particularly eager to mock whole flotillas of Japanese merchants and currency dealers pouring into Shanghai and other cities all along the route to Nanking (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 181). Asked by a soldier when he thinks the war will be over, one merchant hedges, “Well, I really don’t know,” clearly hoping the war will go on for his own profit (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 187). If these businessmen do not further the welfare of Japanese troops, they gouge the Chinese even more harshly. In Nanking, once the merchants have kicked the Chinese out of their shops, the new occupants refuse to sell to civilians let out of their crowded refugee zones on brief passes. Ishikawa focuses on the increasingly tattered, hungry, and bewildered Chinese civilians in contrast to Japanese soldiers “eating sweet bean jelly and drinking

soda pop” (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 170). A narrator’s voice does not have to rant, for the juxtaposition of mistreatment with treats exposes the falseness of the ideology proclaiming Greater East Asia *Co-Prosp erity* Spheres (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 170).

After the deceptive “non-materialistic” spirituality, another meaning supposedly conveyed by “spiritual” is “detached.” In Ishikawa’s novel, Lieutenant Kurata and his men long for something they call “spiritual freedom,” which seems to mean imperturbability and transcendence (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 78).² In context, it carries the jarring irony of wanting to be “spiritually” detached to the point of raping and murdering without batting an eye. Soldiers must repress both fear and pity, in order to keep a so-called level head, avoiding the distractions of worry or guilt. At one point Kurata takes pride in his “tranquil” feelings after a battle, but the omniscient narrator behind him is shrewd enough to wonder if “tranquil” might really just mean “stupefied” (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 94). The author may question only Kurata’s personal detachment, but he leaves the way open to examine the very ideal of detachment. What kind of ideal is it if it creates only “sleepwalking” men who become the “soldiers alive” of the title only when a wound jolts them into realizing that they do want to live, after all (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 133)? Ishikawa again undermines the ideal of “breadth of spirit” when Kurata feels that his “emotions soared” and asserts that he has achieved a great “brightness”—a word already charged for civilians with the “enlightenment” Japan was supposed to bring to Asia (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 110). According to the sardonic narrator, it might just as well be said that Kurata’s feelings “plunged,” rather than soared, to a place where the center of light was really “darkness” (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 110).

A further contradiction of “spirituality” with other ideologies emerges when Ishikawa locates detachment in a longing to secrete, “like a seashell,” a personal shield (2003, p. 118). Certainly Private Kondō has a right to want protection from in-coming fire, but it is clear that the sol-

² The word “spiritual” acquired odd meanings for civilians too. A nine-year-old girl evacuated from Tokyo records in her diary that a “spiritual training day” at school means calisthenics and games, presumably to learn the “spiritual” values of self-control and competition. Competition really means conquest, however; on another “spiritual training day for the whole school,” teachers instruct how to throw hand grenades while yelling at the children to “kill” (Yamashita, 2005, p. 289, 301).

dier even more urgently needs a barrier against guilty memories of murdering civilians. In a culture that supposedly values bravery, Kondō ironically retreats from his own deeds and their effects. “We’re brave” and “we’re detached” are not compatible ideals, since this kind of detachment is inherently cowardly and unable to bear the weight of human pity or to learn from human guilt.

Wartime Japanese society urged men toward detachment not only for the sake of manly “spiritual freedom” but also for the sake of manly emotional independence. In Ishikawa’s *Soldiers Alive*, Lieutenant Kurata worries that keeping a diary may be a suspect activity: “perhaps it was a womanish sentiment, but being unable to tell another about his final days struck him as much too lonely” (2003, p. 78). The need for contact with another human being—even the fictionalized, abstract human represented by confiding to a diary—has been parceled out to women, not men. Women may long for other people and care for them, but men must be independent, aloof, and alone. Nor must a man reflect or dwell on his feelings. Once a society gives the label “womanish,” with a pejorative tinge, to simple human impulses—such as talking—then that society can keep a man insecure and more likely to conform to supposedly “masculine” fighting, to mask these traits mislabeled womanly. Indeed, the brief diary entries that Kurata allows himself telegraph bare events and only the most conventionalized emotions: “November 20, 21. Rain. From noon 20 to noon 21, full-scale attack on Ch’ang-shu, 24 hours of severe engagement. Company commander [Captain Kitajima] has fallen. Infinite sadness” (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 109). It is left to the narrator to take the “tipping captain” down a peg, with his ostentatious white rabbit fur scarf flying, and to record Kurata’s real sadnesses, which have nothing to do with Kitajima (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 106-107).

Although Japanese society constructed the gender barriers as if they were solid, they instead resembled lattices, with permeable spots where assigned traits could migrate back and forth—but only under certain conditions and labels. If the manliness ideal entailed impassivity and independence, Japanese men (like all men) did, of course, feel emotions and loneliness. The Japanese military tried to manage this gap between role and reality by channeling soldiers’ emotional needs into specific kinds of attachment only. First, the military allowed a rather feminine submissiveness and devotion to a commander, cast as a “traditional” father or fa-

therly, feudal master.³ Ishikawa maintains that the troops “worshipped” Regimental Commander Nishizawa, who hobnobs with them enough to accept their offerings of roasted sweet potatoes, yet keeps his distance because his “very skin seemed to radiate valor” (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 61-62). Beyond this somewhat perfunctory description of father-worship, Ishikawa much more convincingly portrays the brother-bonds fostered within the unit. He even ends the whole book with Private Kondō’s desperate effort to catch up with his buddies, after he has escaped a court martial for wounding a geisha. He has, in a sense, tried to kill what he might call the “woman in himself” (more accurately, just the human need for affection), yet once out of jail, “he ran as if deranged. He had never before felt such solitude” (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 205). When Kondō reaches someone he recognizes, Private Hirao offers to take his rifle and puts an arm through his. Out of breath, Kondō can only gasp, “Thank you, thank you” (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 206). Yet in context, this postage stamp of camaraderie does little to remedy the isolation, fear, and nervous exhaustion pushing Kondō to psychosis and leaving all but the most limited characters warped and lonely.⁴

As losses mount, camaraderie is diverted into devotion to the bones of dead buddies. Already loaded with equipment, soldiers are enjoined to carry ashes: “None of the bones had been sent to the rear since the landing at Pai-mao River; all continued to advance in their comrades’ embrace” (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 128). While this substitute embrace does allow a needed outlet for grief, authorities may appropriate the ritual to stoke a desire for revenge, to keep the fighting going. Ishikawa’s most shallow character, Corporal Kasahara, does act to avenge losses, more out of fury that his team could lose a point than from any personal grief, and certainly without noticing that a perfectly understandable self-defense

³ John Dower argues that “traditional family morality” was a late nineteenth-century construct, to bolster the idea of the industrial boss and the emperor as fathers to the Japanese and to the colonized peoples, who were defined as Japan’s “child” or “younger brother.” Dower points out that even in the feudal era, only the samurai class was held to a patriarchal family system, which was not deeply rooted among rural or urban populations (1986, p. 279).

⁴ At least in training, a constant emphasis on hierarchy seems to have badly stymied camaraderie. Hiroshi Noma’s novel *Zone of Emptiness* (1956) depicts slightly higher-ranked privates tormenting recruits of lower ranks and differing class backgrounds with random kicks, while constant pique, suspicion, and beating plague the troops (p. 69-71).

of their country has motivated Chinese firing. Western militaries have at various times similarly appropriated grief for their own ends. After the American War in Vietnam, psychologist Jonathan Shay (1994) argues that commanders hurt soldiers by belittling grief as womanly or sick (giving pills) and exhorting men, “Don’t get sad, get even” (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 63).

Only after the war ended did Ishikawa manage to publish his novel that cast at least some doubt on the wartime “manly” requirements for “spiritual freedom” and emotional detachment. By contrast, Osamu Dazai was able even during the war to satirize several manly qualifications of the time: fighting in imitation of a samurai; depriving or killing oneself, mainly for self-display; suppressing “soft” emotions such as pity in favor of visible anger and bluster; and placing value on death rather than life. Dazai was able to mock these constructions of manliness, despite the censors, because he resorted to fantasy, allegory, and retellings of earlier writings (medieval tales and the seventeenth-century burlesque writer Saikaku). His novel The Setting Sun (Dazai, 1956), after the war, also used indirection, as well as a few direct statements, to repudiate conceptions of manliness.

As early as his first published collection of stories, Dazai in the story “Romanesque” (Dazai, 1993a) caricatured a man determined to make “fighter” his whole self-definition. Jirôbei starts his training after he offers to get an umbrella for a girl he sees outside a bar, but by the time he bullies the owner into lending the umbrella, she has already gone, and the other drinkers tease him. Jirôbei vows revenge, solely for “looking ridiculous,” not realizing how ridiculously large the gap between meager cause and violent response: “If a man offends you, strike him down. If a horse offends you, strike it down” (Dazai, 1993a, p. 115). The story mercilessly dwells on the absurdities of spending three years to practice a fist, until finally he is “so musclebound that it took him a full minute just to turn his head to the left or right” (Dazai, 1993a, p. 118). The tone shifts, however, from comedy to pathos when Jirôbei finally marries the girl--only to kill her accidentally while demonstrating a punch. This portrait of quintessential “fighter” ends with Jirôbei in jail, composing a poem on the senselessness and loneliness of his trained, manly image: “With cheeks flushed red, / I whispered to the wall of stone: / ‘I’m tough, you know!’ / The wall made no reply” (Dazai, 1993a, p. 121).

In three other wartime stories, “The Mermaid and the Samurai” (Dazai, 1989b), “The Chrysanthemum Spirit” (Dazai, 1993b), and “A Poor Man’s Got His Pride” (Dazai, 1989b), Dazai also mocks the wartime revivals of samurai values not only for this focus on the fight, but also for a preference for death over life (often with no cause stated for which one would die) and excessive self-sacrifice. In “Mermaid,” Konnai kills a half-woman, half-fish said to be causing storms at sea. Although he tells only a friend, the friend boasts of the deed, so that a skeptical courtier taunts Konnai for making up a mermaid. Konnai vows to find the mermaid corpse as proof, avenge himself on the courtier, and then kill himself for any offense to the daimyo for killing his courtier. In what seems to be a broad mockery of most war aims, the friend laments, “To think that all for some meaningless debate over mermaids, a worthy man must die!” (Dazai, 1989b, p. 72). Actually, three die, when the friend kills the courtier and then himself, and Konnai exhausts himself trawling for the mermaid body, his own corpse washing up “so entangled with seaweed that at first he was mistaken for the mermaid he’d claimed to have shot” (Dazai, 1989b, p. 78). All these exercises for men to distinguish themselves from that dreaded being, Woman, leave everyone prematurely degraded into the common human mortality.

In the story translated as “The Chrysanthemum Spirit (Dazai, 1993b),” originally called “A Tale of Honest Poverty,” Dazai continues to expose the poverty of contemporary definitions of manliness, including self-sacrifice. An older man, Sainosuke, who has let his house fall apart, claims to be the best guardian of chrysanthemums, the national flower of Japaneseness. However, he soon finds that a young traveler, Saburô, temporarily lodging with his sister in Sainosuke’s shed, grows far better seedlings. The young man offers to split the field and sell his plants to help the owner, but the latter blusters that it’s “obscene” to make money on the “noble-minded” chrysanthemum: “Sainosuke spewed out this rebuke in the gruff and guttural tones of a samurai issuing a challenge” (Dazai, 1993b, p. 52). Here he exhibits two traits of the times promoted as “manly,” aggressiveness and determined self-hurting, but his more perceptive guests judge him as both “childish” and a “madman” (Dazai, 1993b, p. 53, 50).

Although masculine self-sacrifice is usually claimed for a community’s sake, the story shows it up as mainly for self-advertisement. In his os-

tentatious self-hurting, Sainosuke refuses not only a simple, decent way to make a living but also the bride whom he covets for her “tenderness and purity” (Dazai, 1993b, p. 56). After he grants a portion of the yard to the young man--hoping solely to gloat at the other’s failure--the guest’s plants instead flourish, and he builds a bigger house on the property. Out of gratitude, Saburô offers the owner marriage to his sister, but “manly pride” again pushes Sainosuke into a “queer sort of argument,” that he can’t afford a betrothal gift: “Not that I have anything against your sister, mind you,’ he said and laughed what he hoped was a hearty, manly laugh.” Sainosuke won’t move into the siblings’ house, but he relents enough that she can live in his slovenly, “honest poverty” (Dazai, 1993b, p. 56). However, when she brings in a hibachi and vase, he automatically rejects any gain and rushes off to camp in a lean-to, to segregate the “pure” (himself) from the “corrupt” (her and her hibachi). The narrator pronounces, “It was all quite ridiculous, but once a man has spoken, there’s no turning back” (Dazai, 1993b, p. 58). After Sainosuke finally returns after two nights of shivering in the cold, the sister laughs, “So much for moral fiber” (Dazai, 1993b, p. 58). The story insinuates that what Japan had been calling manly sacrifice, purity, and morality in the ‘30s and ‘40s turns out to be a bankrupt program of self-hurting, refusal to admit a wrong, and obstinacy.

Similarly in “A Poor Man’s Got His Pride” (Dazai, 1989a), based on a story by Saikaku, a poor samurai, Harada, gets a gift from a relative to pay debts, but so averse is he to good fortune that he decides to drink up the ten coins with samurai friends. After insisting that all the guests handle the coins, one goes missing. All offer to strip and shake out their clothes, until one guest, Tankei, hesitates about shaking his clothes. At that moment, a coin shows up under the lamp, *and* his wife comes in with a coin that rode into the kitchen on a plate. Now with eleven coins instead of ten, Harada will not accept this new good fortune either, insisting on an elaborate scheme so the anonymous donor--who must have been trying to get Tankei off the hook--can retrieve his coin. The story mocks Harada because self-sacrifice is clearly not for *others* but for a manly image of samurai *self*; such a man “cringes and sweats” when he has prospects of gaining even such a “trifle” as the eleventh coin, but “he seems transformed when threatened with a loss, mustering fine-sounding arguments and striving to deprive himself” (Dazai, 1989a, p. 160).

Harada, along with Saioyuke in “The Chrysanthemum Spirit,” (Dazai, 1993) helps no one with his sacrifices but strives to hurt himself solely to prove he is “man enough” stoically to withstand pain.

If these portraits of supposedly long-ago samurai look preposterous, Dazai clearly uses them to satirize wartime promotion of the samurai as a present-day ideal. The war revived the historical association of Zen Buddhism with “Bushido,” the traditional way of the samurai warrior, to elevate “composure,” “disdain of life,” and “friendliness with death” as the highest values (Victoria, 2006, p. 96). The modern soldier, like the old samurai, must be “manly, full of self-respect and self-confidence, and at the same time full of the spirit of self-sacrifice” (Victoria, 2006, p. 58). One veteran who unexpectedly survived a suicidal, manned torpedo unit remembers his motivation: “There’s an old expression, ‘Bushidō is the search for a place to die.’ Well, that was our fervent desire.... I was happy to have been born a man” (Cook & Cook, 1992, p. 309). Civilians too were drilled that “self-denial” and “self-control” earned a Japanese citizen highest marks for “racial virility” (Dower, 1986, p. 230). Because Zen teachers often dunned in the need to “act” with “no thought” (Victoria, 2006, p. 101, 177), they left the way open to neglect any questions about the “just cause” that supposedly moved a soldier, and instead let him strike out against others more for “manly” self-image than for community.

In fact, Zen teachers in the late 1930s were enjoining soldiers to read the Hagakure, a text from 1716 praising earlier samurai (Victoria, 2006, p. 219-220). According to the author, Tsunetomo Yamamoto, each samurai had, first, to prove himself not-a-woman, and, second, he had to demonstrate his disdain for bodily life; not only would he lose it, but he’d be *better off* without it. Yamamoto spent long paragraphs explaining that *the* most important thing warriors could do was grow a mustache because if one samurai decapitated an enemy and took the head to his leader, the absence of mustache might make someone think he’d slain a lesser enemy, a weak woman, and if he himself were decapitated, the absence of a mustache might make a leader think that he himself was that lowest of the low, a woman (Victoria, 2006, p. 74). Dazai’s samurai Konnai who ends up misidentified after his death for the mermaid is the perfect send-up of such fears.

After the war was over, Dazai published the novel The Setting Sun

(1956) that also rejected wartime definitions of manliness. Naoji, a disturbed veteran, is able to repudiate the terrible brutality trained into soldiers, immediately before his suicide. He traces such training to the combined influence of Friederich Nietzsche from the West and a Hagakure-style samurai version from Japan. He confesses that already in high school he had learned to worship an “aggressively sturdy stock,” whose supposed “energy” really masked cruelty (Dazai, 1956, p. 154). Although he does not directly name Nietzsche, Naoji’s language of scorning a “slave mentality” and rejecting “tenderness” for its supposed weakness (Dazai, 1956, p. 157, 178) recalls that Nietzsche’s complete works were translated into Japanese and published between 1911 and 1929 (Parkes, 1991, p. 192).

Graham Parkes claims that “There is a striking contrast between the utter indifference toward Nietzsche on the part of the Japanese fascists and the zeal with which their counterparts in Germany and Italy were appropriating--and willfully distorting--his ideas to their own political ends” (Parkes, 1991, p. 195). Nevertheless, if the Japanese government did not officially borrow from the philosopher, educated readers popularized his sometimes aggressive language. Such language could only reinforce the alluring example of aggressive Western imperialism, which was bitterly resented, but also envied and copied. Without Nietzsche’s accompanying skepticism toward all political leaders, his notions about the beauty of a “will to power” (Nietzsche, 1968), the need for natural masters to rule natural slaves (Nietzsche, 1966a, p. 391-392), the value of countering modern lassitude through exciting action at any cost, whether in “raptures” or “terrors” (Nietzsche, 1966b, p. 575), and the supposed weakness of pity--all fit well in a Japanese culture relying more on militarism.

Dazai’s character Naoji admits that in his youth he got sucked into that militarist mindset but he now regrets his poor judgment: “I wanted to become coarse, to be strong-no, brutal. I thought that was the only way I could qualify myself as a ‘friend of the people’... I had to reject my mother’s gentleness... be cold to my sister” (Dazai, 1956, p. 154). In his Nietzschean terms, he and many others believed that vital “energy” should replace “weak” kindness. However, a militaristic “will to power” did not generate more life after all, only a gross multiplication of death, in the wanton killing of others and a killing off of important

parts of oneself, such as gentleness, affection, and pity.

A brief glance at a 1918 story by Ryūnosuke Akutagawa will help summarize the sources in Nietzsche and in a warped Buddhism for the ideas of a supposedly weak pity and of “spiritual freedom” that we have just seen in Dazai and Ishikawa’s critiques. Akutagawa is said to have been strongly influenced by Friederich Nietzsche (Parkes, 1991, p. 192). In “Hell Screen,” an artist, Yoshihide, makes a deal with a feudal lord to paint the fires of a Buddhist hell; the lord will provide a “model” by burning a live woman tied in a coach. When he chooses as victim the artist’s own daughter, Yoshihide darts forward but quickly pulls back in favor of his art. In the end, Yoshihide receives “punishment” for his complicity in the death, in that he hangs himself after finishing his painting. Yet the narrator, a courtier, seems to both condemn and admire the artist. Though he blames the artist’s arrogance and sinister quality throughout the story, he also records the courtiers’ awe and reverence for Yoshihide, for abandoning his pity and observing the brutal scene in a detached manner.

Onlookers stigmatize Yoshihide’s one instant of compassion not only because of the involuntariness of the brief movement to save his daughter (control would be more manly), but also because of the supposedly womanly and animalistic qualities of pity. In fact, the story represents Yoshihide’s feeling for his child by projecting it onto a pet monkey, whom the lord’s mischievous son nicknames “Yoshihide,” after the painter. Only the daughter is allowed to pity the teased monkey, quarantining pity as “womanly,” and only the monkey, in turn, repeatedly takes pity on the daughter. Early in the story, the animal tugs the narrator forward to interrupt the lord’s sexual aggression against her, and in the end the animal leaps into the burning carriage, “putting his arms around the straining girl” (Akutagawa, 1956, p. 330).

Although it may seem as if the story rebukes the men for failing to achieve the empathy of a mere monkey, the monkey’s “timid” bow in the scene of harassment and his crying out at her death both brand the pet as less strong than the artist (Akutagawa, 1956, p. 324). Meanwhile, the narrator and the other young men in attendance stand in awe of the artist who is able to coolly absorb aesthetic details. With “a strange feeling of worship... we watched him like a Buddha unveiled” (Akutagawa, 1956, p. 331). Horrifyingly, these courtiers forget about the fervent wish

of Amida Buddha to *alleviate suffering*, in favor of a Buddhist equanimity construed as *indifference to suffering*. The meaning of detachment is warped, away from a humble desire to let go of personal fears and desires (in order to help others), into a monstrous desire for one's personal safety from the emotional vulnerabilities of caring.

Through the courtiers' awe for the artist, the story seems to reflect real ambivalence in the zeitgeist preceding the Fifteen Year War. The country was assigning pity to women only, disdaining women as "animalistic," warping Buddhist detachment away from compassion, and admiring a Nietzschean energy and aesthetic; the net result is to subtract "compassion" from the roster of "manly" traits. We saw the danger of such a subtraction vividly exposed in the fictions of both Dazai and Ishikawa.

Hating the Body

During the war, the state enjoined self-sacrifice and austerity for both soldiers and civilians. Now, self-sacrifice in Japan, as in the Christian West, often hovered uneasily between two very different motives. One was to sacrifice oneself for the safety of a larger community. As elsewhere, this desire to do right for others was often assuaged in the vaguest terms. One special-attack pilot goads himself to "body-crash" for "eternal peace" and "progress," but during none of the months he writes his diary does he see any peace, and he surveys more destruction than progress (Yamashita, 2005, p. 75). Nor does he ask for proof that invading China had anything to do with protecting Japan, let alone protecting China, construed at home as Japan's "child" (Dower, 1986, p. 283). The other possible motive for sacrifice veers off from community to self, to prove that I am brave enough and man enough to do the deed that will make me the "Kami" or "demi-god" (Gibney, 1995, p. 24), or to prove that I do not value this lowly and filthy bodily life at all, as the samurai disdaining life (Victoria, 2006, p. 96).

Novelist Ishikawa insightfully assesses this sadomasochistic mindset in one of his characters on the battlefield: "in despising the enemy he came unawares to despise himself as well.... the men lost the capacity to deem their lives and bodies precious" (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 133). Actually, this precept works in the other direction too, so that learning to devalue

one's own naked body, its sexuality, and its very incarnation leads to a disregard for others' bodies and lives too. War in Japan attacked the bodies of its own soldiers first. While brutalizing recruits is certainly not unknown in the West, it was the "rule" under the Rising Sun (Gibney, 1995, p. 23). In the retrospective letters to *Asahi Shimbun* in 1986-1987, veterans bitterly remember the results of their beatings: a ringing in the ears for forty years, or no hearing at all in one ear, or a perpetual remembrance of precisely 264 blows (Gibney, 1995, p. 28, 43, 54). The veterans speculate that officers abused them to make soldiers obey any order as a "reflex action," or to make them turn resentment at ill-treatment toward "the enemy"-though the abused man may instead have dreamed of shooting his own officer (Gibney, 1995, p. 24, 28, 54). Perhaps the most poignant account of brutal treatment comes from a recruit who hated both the "education-by-beating" and the encouragement to supplement poor supplies by stealing, but when he later found his own charges pilfering, he beat them all with the stolen shoes until one confessed. Realizing that he had internalized the very practice of abuse that revolted him, he laments, "This wretched memory of military life will probably never leave me" (Gibney, 1995, p. 43).

The attitude toward sexuality fares no better than the attitude toward the body in general, with the same mix of hatred toward self and other. Although the Japanese soldiers depicted in Ishikawa's *Soldiers Alive* treat all Chinese civilians with contempt and casual harm, they deal out their harshest scorn and brutality to women, in part because of the men's attitude toward their own desires. The novel relentlessly presents episode after episode of the most graphic misogyny.⁵ When the troops conquer ahead of their supplies, they simply "live off the land" (i.e., plunder the peasants), but "foraging for meat" becomes an excuse, as well as a euphemism, for "looking for *ku-niang*" (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 86). Using this

⁵ Misogyny in Japanese religion is said to come from both Shinto folk practices and "the Buddhist precepts against sexual indulgence" (Kawahashi, 2006, p. 327). Although early Buddhism admitted women to "prominent and honored places both as practitioners and teachers," those possibilities disappeared under "institutional andocentrism" and a disgruntled shunning of women by ascetics (Sponberg, 1992, p. 7-8). Such monks were not beyond ranting, "Verily, woman is said by the Buddha to be the great demon king, able to devour all people, a fearful thing" (qtd. in Wakita, 1999, p. 57). Sacralizing the Fifteen Year War seems to have brought with it the worst monkish attitudes toward women.

Chinese term for “young women” further distances the men from their own behavior, as does the word “meat” instead of “person”; if they employed the more familiar Japanese term for “women,” they might think of sisters and pull back. With such verbal shields, Corporal Kasahara rapes Chinese victims, then murders them, then steals any rings. Noticing such rings on a number of his men, Lieutenant Kurata congratulates himself that he has damped down his earlier disgust at war and can now laugh in the most highly prized manner, offhandedness “I’d love one for a souvenir for myself.” Kasahara “gleefully” advises the lieutenant that he will have to wait for the next city on their destructive path toward Nanking: “It’s already too late for Ch’ang-shu. Not a female in sight. Something happened to them all. Ah, hahahaha!” (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 111). The scene ends eerily with Kurata failing to discipline his men and Kasahara casually sweeping into his innocent word “Something” the rape and murder that have “happened” to “all,” as if with no agents for the crimes. In fact, historians estimate that Japanese troops, with some officers’ complicity, raped 20,000 women in Nanking alone (Gibney, 1995, p. 61).

This intensely hostile behavior toward women derives in part from scorn of the body in general, men’s or women’s. In a line that may seem to express ease with one’s own body (though small care toward another’s), the narrator in Ishikawa’s novel accepts as a matter of course the establishment of two military brothels staffed by Chinese women in Nanking, since “men’s natural fleshly desires, exacerbated by tedium, needed to be relieved” (Gibney, 1995, p. 171). The apparent approbation of sexuality is a delusion, however, for this explanation implies that beyond sexual intercourse, there is no way to “relieve” sexual feelings—i.e., masturbation is not a socially condoned option.

Although men’s desires may at times receive the favorable label “natural,” the body still carries a residual scorn as “unspiritual.” Japanese society negotiated this patent contradiction within ideologies—men’s pleasure is good, men’s pleasure is bad—by claiming that women’s bodies were more physical than men’s, and so women were more at fault for any proscribed sexuality with men—and for any other problem too.⁶ In one bi-

⁶ This ruse for ignoring a contradiction by naming women more physical than men was by no means confined to Japanese society. See Maria Tatar’s *Lustmord* about German society

zarre and grisly scene from *Soldiers Alive*, a looting Japanese soldier discovers the naked corpse of a Chinese woman whose breast has been eaten by cats. After insisting that the room smells of milk or that she must have been “pregnant, I tell you,” he spits in disgust (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 189). He seems to recoil more at the whole idea of pregnancy or lactation and at *her* for attracting the cats, rather than registering any disgust at his fellow soldiers who had stripped, raped, and murdered the woman. The misogyny that manifests in his comrades’ extreme violence, as well as in this latecomer’s disdain, bespeaks a fear and hatred of embodiment in general. Such fears derive ultimately from ascetic versions of religion (some strands of Buddhism and Hinduism in the East and some versions of Christianity in the West) that make incarnation and/or further re-incarnations the disgrace of an “unenlightened” soul. In Japan, old beliefs of Buddhist and Shinto priests that the presence of women would be a “pollution” lingered a long time in the culture (Kawahashi, 2006, p. 327).⁷

Although the named “naturalness” of men’s pleasure was supposed to license taking whatever they wanted, instead, any desire or actual contact seems to leave many of Ishikawa’s characters with a guilty sense of straying from a detached, independent, unimpassioned state, all reputedly more “spiritual” as well as more “masculine.” This guilt may in part explain the “rage” that always accompanies sexual scenes (Kawahashi, 2006, p. 89). When a group of soldiers saunters through the burned-out streets of Chih-t’ang specifically looking for women, they scarcely see any, so well hidden are they because of the growing reputation of the invaders for rape. However, when Private Kondō manages to spot a young woman through the lattice-work of her farm, the men break down

after World War.

⁷ Dazai’s story “Schoolgirl” shows survivals of this view of women as polluted and “impure” (p. 70). Written in the first-person voice of a teenage girl, the story portrays her as intelligent and observant. However, when she uses very misogynistic language about her body, she seems to ferry a male point of view rather than that of a real woman’s: “Women are so disgusting.... The unbearable smell you get from handling goldfish--it’s as if that smell covers your entire body.” She wants to get a disease and sweat until she is “all skin and bone, maybe then I’ll be cleansed.” On the other hand, the author might be condemning the priestly views that could produce such internalization of disgust, since he has her add, “Or maybe it’s impossible, as long as you’re living and breathing, to avoid being impure. I wonder if I’m beginning to understand what real religion is all about” (1988, p. 70).

her door; she pulls out a revolver, but it misfires. Yelling “Who the hell is this woman” and “Let’s strip her and find out,” Kondō tackles her: “Somewhat embarrassed lest his words be interpreted as an expression of lust, he added in a small voice, ‘She might be a spy. Maybe she’s got something on her’” (Kawahashi, 2006, p. 88). Others strip her, but as soon as her body is exposed, he plunges a knife under her breast, whether in “rage or lust he could not tell” (Kawahashi, 2006, p. 89). Kondō might be enraged at his danger from the gun a few minutes ago, but at some level he must recognize her self-defense, ratcheting up his pique that he cannot claim innocence. He follows the same psychological route in foisting off a pretend seduction onto her, when really he is upset that he himself feels desire and cannot reach the bodilessness that he has been taught he should achieve.

At the very end of the book, when this same character Kondō and his buddies visit Japanese geishas shipped to China by homeland businessmen, the soldiers are still projecting their own guilts onto women. Kondō does feel bad about his crimes of murder and abuse, but they are oddly secondary to the “crime” of being embodied at all. A white cat at the geisha’s window makes him think of “vengeful female ghosts” (a staple of Japanese folklore) and, specifically, in an obvious rush of guilt, of the earlier woman whom he knifed as a “spy” (Kawahashi, 2006, p. 193). Yet for the men in “this annihilated city of death,” just the sight of a “gaudily dressed woman possessed a sinister, terrifying quality” (Kawahashi, 2006, p. 194). The soldiers quickly cover over their own sinister quality as the obvious annihilators of the city by completely sexualizing women and making them the scapegoat, both for destruction and for men’s own, feared sexuality. Indeed, Kondō longs to send off this scapegoat into oblivion: “An irresistible urge to kill a woman suddenly blazed up within his chest. Stunned by its intensity, uncertain whether it was symptomatic of nervous collapse or pent-up lust,” he does fire on the geisha, grazing her arm (Kawahashi, 2006, p. 195). The Japanese military police arrest Kondō—after all, he is harming Japanese property, not expendable Chinese women—but he is soon released, to keep up troop strength.

Within this important scene, we see that men’s misogyny and trained fear of their own bodies fuel war in several ways. First, misogyny makes the appeal to a made-up masculinity more effective; the taunt “oh, are you a woman” to sting a man reluctant to fight smarts more painfully

if women are placed lower in the social hierarchy. Next, Kondō feels guilt just for having desire, but he projects it onto a woman--and kills her. These actions in turn produce more guilt, but instead of admitting his wrong and changing his ways, he resents being saddled with unpleasant regrets precisely by doing what his society has taught him was right: seek dominance, avoid attachment, follow orders. Not knowing how to resolve the impasse, he takes out his resentment by shooting yet another woman. The initial guilt just at being embodied makes wars more horrific against civilians.

Kondō's trained fear of the body contributes to war in another way. During his brief detention for shooting the geisha, he finds that he is ready to submit to military punishment or to military life again, either one (Kawahashi, 2006, p. 200). His inability to deal with his own and his society's confused impulses about sex makes him more willing to submit to the military's complete dictation of his actions; he seeks an "escape from freedom," to use Erich Fromm's (1941) striking phrase in his book by that title. Moreover, Kondō (as well as, from time to time, Kurata and other characters) wouldn't mind dying in this war, because then he could receive the punishment he half feels he deserves. At least he would receive the ultimate respite from having to think about his actions.

One way to get rid of the confusions of sexuality while still skimming some of its pleasure is to try to displace it. Ishikawa's striking habit of linking "rage or lust" in the same phrase, as if they were somehow equivalent explanations for atrocities imply that he, for one, believes the intensity of violence as a substitute for sex (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 89). Propaganda artists seemed to think so too, drawing bayonets in an erect position. One cartoon urging increased agricultural production showed a rice stalk bristling with blades, all aimed toward the bare buttocks of three tattered American airmen (Dower, 1986, p. 197). Calling the bayonet "the poor man's counterpart to the samurai's sword carried by officers," John Dower suggests that "for the Freudian analyst, the wanton frenzy with which these conscripts plunged this weapon into Allied prisoners as well as defenseless people everywhere in Asia must be of more than passing interest" (1986, p. 43-44). Without needing to accept Sigmund Freud's hypothesis of a *biological* connection between male sexuality and subjugation, violence, or cruelty (1962, p. 280-281), one could

point to the rhetorical and *social* training of soldiers, in many countries, to equate weapons with genitals (Phillips, 2006, p. 86-88, 171-172, 196-197). One Japanese veteran who survived a manned torpedo unit recalled the typical, sexually tinged slang before a possible launch. Because he has lingered to say goodbye to some reserve officers, the others have already changed to the proper clothes by the time he is just starting to strip naked:

They all gathered around, leering, giving me a hard time. “Hey, guys, look the other way, I have to change my F-U,” I said, referring to my loin cloth. “Yokota, there’s nothing to be ashamed of,” Yamaguchi said. “No cute girls here. What’s the matter, your main gun just a water pistol?” I turned my back and quickly put on my loin cloth. “You stingy bastard!” he said. “Your cannon looks even smaller than my ‘side arm’.” “Yamaguchi, you’ve got two?” asked Shinkai. “Naw. I call it a ‘side arm’ when things are peaceful.” We laughed until our sides ached. (Cook & Cook, 1992, p. 310)

If the non-aroused penis rests at “peace,” the erect penis must be at war: against women? against a designated enemy, whose conquest proves one’s fitness for sex? Indoctrination subtly slides from the shaky idea that war prepares for sex to the dubious idea that war feels as good as sex and adequately substitutes for it. This same veteran recalls that he kissed his Kaiten torpedo on its nose: “I didn’t know anything about kissing then, but I kissed my Kaiten without thinking” (Cook & Cook, 1992, p. 309). He may accept that the Kaiten will help him prove potency to the girls back home or to his buddies, or even that he will find an outlet for a partner’s absence in warfare.

Taught to think that aggression against the enemy assuages sexual desire, Japanese soldiers may also have displaced an imagined erotic release into violence against themselves. Before his last flight, one kamikaze pilot sent rose-patterned silk to an old girlfriend and left a poem: “Embracing the perfume of the pure wild rose / the decks of enemy ships / I will smear with my blood” (Yamashita, 2005, p. 76). As he holds the silk,

his poetic image tries to substitute spurting his blood for spurting his semen--though one wants to warn him, "There's no comparison!"

Conclusion

All over the world, empire-makers have benefited from good-sounding "civilizing missions" and "enlightening" conquests (while also using their contradictions). In addition to denying materialistic motives (but still dangling material gains), empire-makers have assured their soldiers of becoming a "man" (while fostering gender insecurity) and have scorned the body (while obsessing over sexuality). Although ideologies of gender and the body are not usually placed high on the list of contributors to war, these two social constructions effectively intertwine with other causes for war and lend them their emotional force.

In the Japanese society that sustained the Fifteen Year War, masculinity and sexuality were perceived as tainted by "impure," "uncontrollable" femininity and "unspiritual" embodiment, ideas inherited from various strands of Shintoism and Buddhism. A Nietzschean idea that promoted pity as "weakness" and warriorhood as "energy" reinforced a warping of Buddhism away from its compassion and all toward "detachment." Although ideologies insinuate themselves as "natural" and unquestionable, some artists were able to expose their internal contradictions. Despite censorship, Osamu Dazai managed to satirize the "manly" samurai focus on depriving oneself for the sake of showing "control," reverencing death over life, and stifling "gentleness" in favor of what was called strength, but which Dazai sees as really "brutality" (Dazai, 1956, p. 154). Without needing to give editorial comment, Ishikawa's novel *Soldiers Alive* warned, through jarring juxtapositions, of the dangers to Chinese victims (physical) and to Japanese troops (psychological) in striving for supposedly manly independence, emotionlessness, and detachment. The novel exposed that the claim to spread "enlightenment" to Asia may only blacken the skies with smoke, and the reach for "spirituality" may only "plunge" the troops into a "stupefying" lack of pity (Dazai, 1956, p. 94, 110, 126). We need to keep hunting for such contradictions in ideologies and heed those artists and thinkers who can reveal them, so that we can protest the dangers of these social constructions.

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