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The State You're In: Citizenship, Sovereign Power, and The (Political) Rescue of the Self in Kazuko Kuramoto's *Manchurian Legacy*

Andrea Pacor

O my country and my home,
 I pray I never lack a city,
 never face a hopeless life
 one filled with misery and pain.
 Before that comes, let death,
 my death, deliver me,
 bring my days to their fatal end.
 For there's no affliction worse
 than losing one's own country.
 Chorus, from Euripides's *Medea*

- 1 *Manchurian Legacy: Memoirs of a Japanese Colonist* (1999) is the English-language memoir of Kazuko Kuramoto, a woman of Japanese ancestry born in colonial Manchuria in 1927, who was forcefully repatriated after the collapse of the Japanese empire in the Second World War. Repatriation began a trying time of adjusting to harsh post-war conditions in a homeland Kuramoto found, in many ways, foreign and inhospitable. Eventually, she set out to acquire US citizenship, thereby embracing a new national identity that appeared to function on a voluntaristic rather than an ethnic basis. This voluntaristic element is crucial in granting Kuramoto access to the naturalization that postcolonial China could not concede, especially to a daughter of former colonial masters. The biopolitical relevance of this memoir, I argue, emerges from each radical change in Kuramoto's circumstances marking a fracture in her relation with a sovereign state entity, beginning with the loss of her colonial identity as a Japanese citizen in Manchuria, and culminating with the restoration of political and ontological security in her acquisition of American citizenship.

- 2 The emergence of modern autobiography as a genre, its reception and criticism, are crucially linked to the idea of national identity as a principle of social aggregation and political legitimacy. Indeed, several literary traditions have claimed a special affinity with a form that transcends the mere record of a life to express a collective identity in all its historical and cultural specificity. American literary critics, for instance, have noted that autobiography enters the western literary canon more or less concurrently with the establishment of the United States as a new political subject, implicitly casting the entire form as the manifestation of the desire for self-government of the American nation (Olney 377–378). In this usage, the terms “American nation” or “America” become shorthand for the complex political, economic and cultural processes leading to the gradual creation of the new nation-state. As a result, a causal link is commonly assumed between the cultural nation and the body politic, whereby the latter is empowered and enabled by a rising to political self-consciousness in the former. Autobiography’s role is, then, to affirm a synecdochical relation between the autobiographical self and the nation, and to chronicle the degree and manner of the self’s inclusion in the collective entity. This is not intended reductively. Life writing in America, say, from Benjamin Franklin to Malcolm X, Anais Nin to Maxine Hong Kingston, covers a spectrum that is both broad and deep. It is broad to the extent that it represents subjectivities adopting a mainstream, marginal or oppositional stance; it is deep as new contributions challenge a naively normative reading of past autobiographies, and encourage the recurring revision of the existing paradigm of national identification and its founding myths.
- 3 In this spectrum, Kazuko Kuramoto’s *Manchurian Legacy* is a textual prism that refracts with particular intensity the political nature of the mechanisms through which the individual constructs a viable selfhood that is then validated in a relation of reciprocal recognition with the nation. In the modern world, the nation is the largest social group to remain open to individual identification; a group that is simultaneously abstracted in the concept of sovereign power and reified in the territorial boundedness of the state. In writers like Benjamin Franklin and Henry Adams the autobiographical act carries the subject’s implicit claim to representativeness and relevance to the national discourse; Kuramoto is denied access to this salvific stance. This is because the canonical autobiographical text does not generally function as a plea, a sort of application for acceptance in the national body, but as the belated justification of an already established presence. What is usually at stake is the self’s relative centrality within the social, cultural and political order to which one already feels one belongs. Not so with Kuramoto, for whom personal history intersects multiple crises of political sovereignty deriving from a dramatic failure of state power; crises in which the required isomorphism between individual and nation (the reified collective self) can only be (re)constituted through a radical ideological realignment towards a new political referent. Such forceful detachment of the self from the *polis* may derive from banishment, denationalization, genocide, civil war, catastrophic military defeat of the state of reference, occupation of the national territory by a foreign force, colonial and post-colonial displacement, or any other instance that severs the crucial relationship of reciprocal recognition between the individual and sovereign power.
- 4 This analysis will highlight elements in Kuramoto’s autobiographical narrative that intimate how, during the Second World War and in its aftermath, she finds herself in a zone of indeterminacy where the political underpinnings of national identification

dissolve. In the crisis, both the political mediation of national identity and the formal protection of the law become inaccessible to the individual, leaving her to stand completely vulnerable, as naked life, before the constitutive (rather than constituted) thrust of sovereign violence (Benjamin). This violence inevitably brings to the surface the original bio-political relation theorized by Giorgio Agamben and located in what he calls the “grey zone” of modern politics.

- 5 In the newly emerged bio-political relation, Agamben argues, the biological body which sustains and carries human life is never simply left to itself, but always incorporated in the calculations of sovereign power. In turn, this sovereign concern for the citizen's body produces (calls into being), in specific locations and under precise circumstances, the naked life of the *homo sacer* as the threshold where nature and culture are articulated. This articulation, Agamben continues, occurs in a zone of indistinction between inside and outside where banishment takes the peculiarly modern and paradoxically legalistic form of the *state of exception*. In this state, or zone, political and ontological categories become fluid, bodies become malleable and open to fundamental re-inscription, with radical consequences for the subjects involved. This vulnerability and indeterminacy structures the traumatic experience Kazuko Kuramoto has recorded in her memoir. In turn, the memoir itself becomes the instrument of a recovery of the self under the postulate (empirically verified by Kuramoto) that the personal cannot function without the political. The rub lies in Kuramoto's unintentional proof that it does not matter which state-structure picks up the other end of the lifeline cast by the autobiographical subject, as long as one does. Once this is accomplished, the self is, once again, biopolitically anchored.
- 6 The bio-political paradigm, originally developed by Foucault to explain modern power and its need for docile bodies (Foucault 140–143), is not, however, transparent to the autobiographical subject. The latter is too intensely engaged in the construction of a coherent and autonomous individuality in the residual space between the limited demands of an intermediate social circle like the family, and the total demands of the nation-state. In part, this opacity stems from the pathos of nationalist discourse which labors to conceal the true nature of the bio-political relation. Only the loss of a political referent in the national state, either through expatriation, denationalization, banishment, or dissolution, can reveal how vertiginous the stakes are for the individual who stands to lose everything: identity and solidarity, freedom and possibility, and life. The stakes are high because, as Georg Simmel notes, the modern state seeks to undermine the internal cohesion of all intermediate groups which may function as alternative and (reasonably) self-sustaining social and economic structures.
- 7 This restructuring of family relations occurs, historically, as the modern state seeks a more direct rapport with the individual, bypassing all other social groups. For Simmel, the Platonic ideal state has “merely extended this line of development by dissolving the family altogether, setting in place of this intermediate structure only individuals, on the one hand, and the state, on the other” (Simmel 274). In this project, the category of citizenship is deployed to make the individualized subject directly visible to sovereign power in an unequal relation of reciprocal recognition that validates primarily the nation state and only secondarily our identity. As Hannah Arendt notes, when the French Revolution constituted naked human life as the bearer of universal rights in the declaration of 1789, this mere existence was immediately subsumed in the qualified life of the citizen (Arendt 293).

- 8 Arendt's work reveals that what it means to be human, and consequently the bearer of "human rights," is never, at any point, a settled question. This is because "humanity" is not an essential quality possessed by the subject but a battleground on which the individual's inclusion in this category is decided. As a result, the concept, one that is frequently deployed in a variety of political discourses (past and present), is fundamentally unstable, except for its concrete effects through modern legal frameworks of citizenship. The crucial question, here, is whether anything of value is left when the category of citizenship becomes inaccessible to the individual. Kuramoto's memoir raises fundamental doubts on the possibility of answering in the affirmative and bears witness to a modern catastrophe in which our collective political and cultural values do not measure up to our yearning (sincere or otherwise) to discover a universal humanity in ourselves and in others.
- 9 As a modern individual, Kuramoto finds herself positioned between state and nation, and is held there by national identity's dependence, for historical viability, on control of a newly established or existing state structure (cf. Breuilly, Gellner, Giddens, Hobsbawm, and Kedourie). The addition of the national dimension to the toolbox of political power has thus allowed the industrial, technocratic, and sovereign state to extend its already formidable hold on the productive body of the citizen-subject beyond the discipline of labor, military exercise and punishment, to the ideological determination of the ultimate limits of self, conscience and ethics. The nation-state's leverage on the individual is two-pronged: by extending or withholding positive reinforcement, it exploits our need to establish reciprocal relations with larger social circles; by threatening divestiture of the national attribute and, thus, complete dehumanization (the subject becomes a non-person), it exploits the primacy of state-sanctioned national identity as the sole recognized marker of inclusion and sole legal vehicle of associated rights (Arendt 290–302; Agamben, *Homo* 126–135). In turn, by documenting how Kuramoto's identity was questioned, negated, derailed and reconstituted, *Manchurian Legacy* exemplifies the functioning of these technologies of power in an array of concrete situations that only a rare combination of exclusion, mobility, necessity and possibility can bring to the foreground.
- 10 The ties between self-definition (even fruition of the self) and national identity are revealed in the opening chapter of the memoir and remain a central concern throughout. Kazuko Kuramoto was born in Dairen, currently Dalian, in eastern Manchuria, in 1927, the daughter of the local representative of the Japanese imperial government. Japan had acquired the city at the close of the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–05, and kept it until the arrival of Soviet forces, in 1945. Thus, Kuramoto forms her sense of self and of the ties that bind her to the larger social group in a province of the Empire where, as a member of the ruling elite, she enjoys significant privileges. But once the shield of colonial power is removed, with the Japanese defeat in World War II, these privileges abruptly come to an end and Kuramoto experiences a dramatic reversal of status from ruling class to refugee; from highest to lowest on the value scale of political relevance.ⁱ But let us proceed in order.
- 11 *Manchurian Legacy* revealingly sets off with a chapter entitled "The Young Patriot" in which Kuramoto introduces her family as it is being engulfed in the general mobilization of Japanese society for all-out war in the Pacific. Two brothers had already been drafted in the service of the Emperor, and now, close to graduation from a junior college for girls, Kazuko also wishes to do her part by enlisting in the Japanese Red

Cross Nurse Corps. Her admiration for the uniformed girl portrayed on the recruitment poster matches the tone and rhetoric of the propaganda to which she was exposed at school. The image before her speaks of romantic adventure, independence, and loyal commitment to the supreme good of the nation. To the attentive reader, it also suggests that while the discursive production of modern identity remains heavily gendered, the distinction between masculine and feminine roles is much less pronounced than in traditional society. The modern state, with its vast pragmatic needs, favors the erosion of old strictures and empowers individuals to stand up to anachronistic social models based on a relation of direct and exclusive subordination to the larger subject. Of course, this realignment of individual loyalty occurs at the expense of intermediate social circles like the family. The latter's system of mechanical solidarity can hardly compete with a political entity which recognizes the individual as the direct subject of sovereign power, bypassing all other social ties.

- 12 The disruptive force of state nationalism within the family manifests itself the moment Kazuko informs her parents she plans to join the Red Cross. The moment she voices her patriotic intentions, her mother and father are divested of their parental authority by the power of nationalist discourse which posits the nation as the highest moral and social value. Clearly, the force of this disruption does not stem from the specific institution (in this case the Red Cross), where power is directed inward at controlling the recruit, but from the state as the political entity that accords its many apparatuses legitimacy, unity of purpose and direction. Whereas separate institutions exercise specialized technologies of power and of the self to fulfill equally specialized functions (i.e. training nurses or soldiers), the nation-state, as a transcendent whole (transcending its bureaucratic subdivisions, that is), provides the affective focus of wide-circle social bondedness.
- 13 The individual, however, is not entirely powerless in this relation. Modern bureaucracy, economy, and warfare are all organized on the industrial model and thus necessitate the direct involvement of unprecedented numbers in all aspects of state life. The energies released by the mobilization of the masses to political and economic ends invariably accentuate the total character of the state, expressed in administrative form, which must now respond to the increased (though diffused) bargaining power of the general population. Due to the political risks involved in such bargaining, the modern state develops apparatuses and technologies for the production of loyalty based on the biopolitical idea that national homogeneity is a necessity which guarantees the biological life of the nation in the continuing political life of the state; the two become homologous. For this ideological operation to succeed, however, the nation must be naturalized. To this end, nationalist rhetoric deploys paternalistic analogies between the nation and the family which must constantly and simultaneously both co-opt and undermine parental authority to foster a sentiment of exclusive loyalty towards the state.
- 14 Unsurprisingly, though with little enthusiasm, Kuramoto's parents capitulate. They are, Kazuko senses subconsciously, trapped in a web of nationalist discourse which threatens to alienate their daughter if, by resisting her wishes, they force everyone involved to acknowledge the fundamental conflict of interests between family and nation in these specific circumstances. Neither Kazuko nor, for that matter, her parents, are equipped to see through to the biopolitical nature of the conflict. This is evident when the young volunteer is at a loss before her mother's anguish. After all,

she felt entitled to the same joyful parting ceremony her brothers had received when drafted into the Imperial Army, which involved a celebratory red rice meal and a war hero's public farewell to the triple cry of *Tenno-heika, Banzai!* (Long live the Emperor). At seventeen, Kuramoto's autobiographical persona fails to discern her family's true feelings about the war. Nevertheless, her recollection of her brother, Kay's, send-off records a clear note of sarcasm amidst the toasting and singing. Kay and his friends subvert the traditional cry to the Emperor (ideally, a Japanese soldier's last words before heroic death) to honor Kay's mother instead. Emboldened by the rice wine, they cry out: "*Okaa-san, Banzai!* (Long live Mother!)" (Kuramoto 3).

- 15 This is not to say that familial loyalty is an inevitable biological fact; only that, in the development of individual consciousness, it takes precedence over socialization in the larger group. It will thus continue to maintain a primary claim on an individual's sense of obligation, security, and trust. In this regard, Kuramoto's memoir clearly shows the traces of the conflict between the (for us moderns) irresistible biopolitical demand of national affiliation and the mechanical urgency of familial loyalty. Gradually, Kazuko realizes family and nation are not as homologous as nationalist discourse claims them to be.
- 16 This contraposition cannot be productively understood by applying the classical distinction between public and private on which the bourgeois theory of self and society is predicated, for it is too likely to derail analysis into false and simplistic dichotomies. Georg Simmel provides a more sophisticated heuristic in what he calls the "differentiation drive." Individuals, he maintains, are "surrounded by concentric circles of special interests"; not just two, like in the opposition of public to private, but many (Simmel 261). The self is thus embattled between, on the one hand, the individual search for autonomy and freedom and, on the other hand, the conflicting demands of intermediate social circles like the family, and large social circles like the caste, party, or nation. The literary translation of these tensions reveals how, for the modern autobiographical self, the allure of the national state is unmatched in breadth and intensity, also because "the larger circle encourages individual freedom, the smaller restricts it" (Simmel 269).
- 17 Simmel's differentiation drive proceeds in two directions: toward individualization and toward nondifferentiation (identity). As social groups increase in complexity, so increases internal differentiation between the entities that constitute them. The complexity of this model is immediately apparent if one considers, with Simmel, that the differentiation drive is not exclusive to the psychological person and her relations, but applies equally to groups. Like persons, groups also strive for individuality that can only come from internal cohesion. Such cohesion, however, comes at the expense of internal differentiation between individuals whose identity with one another (nondifferentiation) is stressed over their autonomy. The more complex and large the social group, the more it accentuates internal differentiation. This creates favorable conditions for the development of individual freedom where smaller groups would restrict it. This very process, however, diminishes the individuality of large groups that come to resemble other entities at the same level of structural complexity (thus, different states resemble each other more than any state resembles the social groups that constitute it, like, for instance, the family).
- 18 Applied to national identity, Simmel's heuristic reveals that a large group like the nation may yearn for an autobiography of its own. In political terms, to argue that a

social group possesses a distinct national character, a self, is, concomitantly, a claim for national self-determination and sovereignty to be realized through the seizing or establishing of a concrete state structure. Conversely, on the cultural level, national identity functions as an enormous echo chamber for projects of individual self-narration or self-invention, but only when these are aligned, ideologically, with the larger framework. When they are not, such attempts are considered to be irrelevant, displaced, competing claims from non-conforming subjects who may have to be ignored, relocated or silenced.

- 19 Kuramoto's stint in the Red Cross introduces her to the loudest part of the cultural echo chamber linking the individual to the nation. The retrospective mode of the autobiographical act, however, reveals that this experience only accentuates Kuramoto's sense that the demands made on the individual by family and nation may be, at crucial times, incongruous. She begins to notice fissures in the dominant national narrative when the glamour of war is diminished by the depersonalizing strategies of military training and, especially, by the clear disparity between war as existential fact and its ideological representation. Although she never experiences combat, the dire need for medical personnel at the front prompts the school to admit her (and her cohort) to early hospital training. This involves the dissection of a cadaver, a Chinese "coolie," which provokes the most intense reactions in the young women in her class, both to the materiality of death and the dehumanizing effects of using an "other" (doubly so as non-Japanese and as corpse) as a pedagogical tool. Under institutional pressure, however, any temptation to generalize their revulsion is immediately suppressed: "None of us talked about this experience during the rest of the day, going through the motion of daily tasks as if nothing had happened" (Kuramoto 7). Only at night, in their beds, shrouded by darkness, they dare vent their distress with sobs and whimpers that, having no audience, remain empty of immediate political content.
- 20 In the Red Cross, like in the Army, the process of indoctrination in the national ideal reaches the operational limits of mere ideology and becomes more overt, harsher, less subtle. It is here that, for Kuramoto to resist total conformity and the concomitant flattening of the self on a particular institutional role, she must adopt an oppositional stance toward authority. The individual, as Erving Goffman argues, is not completely determined by his or her identification with, and commitment to a particular social unit or organizational structure; she is, rather, a "stance-taking entity" that always seeks some "elbow room" for the development of an autonomous self (Goffman 319–320). Total institutions like Kuramoto's Red Cross tend to encroach on this elbow room, make opposition unbearably costly, and force the individual to redefine her own selfhood by severely shifting the balance between nondifferentiation and individualization toward the former; toward identity (with others) and sameness. When no residual space is left, and the individual is reduced to a sheer state of necessity, a figure akin to the *Muselmann* can be produced; this figure, often mentioned by survivors of the Shoah as the last stage of dehumanization, as a form of living death before death, is the material foundation on which Giorgio Agamben theorizes the liminal bio-political figure of the *homo sacer* (Agamben, *Homo*).
- 21 If Goffman's model is applied to the individual's identification with the national state, however, where can the necessary oppositional space, the elbow room, be found? Is there a viable "outside" to the nation? Kuramoto's decision to join the Red Cross is only the first step toward a crisis that will force her to come to terms with this problem,

while her circumstances as a Manchurian Nisei (second generation Japanese expatriate) make conventional, hyper-patriotic solutions unavailable or unacceptable to her.

- 22 Kazuko's desire to serve in the military state apparatus unmasks a disquieting disparity between the official rhetoric of Japanese femininity, derived from traditional models that emphasize purity and submissiveness, and the readiness with which this rhetoric is set aside for the sake of achieving the state's operational and strategic goals. This ideological disharmony surfaces in the memoir when a baffled cousin Toru can only rationalize Kazuko's decision to join the auxiliaries as an attempt to overcome social strictures on feminine behavior. His perplexity becomes even greater when he tries to make light of her "playing soldier" and is informed that *they* (for she is no longer an individual but part of a group) had received drills from a regular army sergeant. Expressing the surprise of a society not yet entirely up to speed with the necessities of the modern state, Toru exclaims: "Drills? Girls doing drills?" (Kuramoto 23).
- 23 Induction in the Red Cross marks Kazuko's transition from the relative autonomy of civilian life to a regime that shows many of the characteristics of a total institution. As a cadet nurse she is segregated from her habitual social surroundings, including family and friends, and is integrated in a regime that leaves no room for the expression of individuality or dissent. In this regime (or regimen) all activities conform to a comprehensive rational plan, fulfill specific goals, are collective and coordinated, and occur according to a predetermined schedule. Privacy is abolished by communal living and by constant staff surveillance; all aspects of life are supervised and directed by a single authority; all communications with the outside are monitored and censored, as Kazuko realizes when the Chief Nurse confronts her with a personal letter in which she describes the Red Cross as a "glorified prison" (Kuramoto 7-8).
- 24 Kazuko's dissatisfaction with institutionalized life makes her more receptive to the subversive discourse she encounters in a letter from her childhood friend, Kunio. Bitter over the conduct of the war and the Japanese military and the civilian elite's blindness to impending defeat, Kunio lashes out against the generational sacrifice in pursuit of national goals. He and Kazuko realize that war quickly turns from a profession, or a duty, or a romantic adventure, into an existential condition in which the individual is entirely at the mercy of vast and irresistible forces locked in their own operational logic. Drilling, coordination, the use of technology, industrial and strategic planning, give war an appearance of rationality that does not hold up against the reality of its conduct. In this exchange, Kunio and Kazuko have glimpsed the fundamental nature of the modern state: the inclusion of biological life in the calculations of sovereign power; a condition clearly reflected in the total character of modern warfare which, in turn, is best defined as the mobilization of civil society and all national productive forces to one single end (cf. Poggi 112).
- 25 Since no aspect of social and individual life is exempt from state interest, if not direct supervision, the aims of industrialized warfare are radicalized in the contraposition of total victory to total defeat. A case in point is the Potsdam Declaration of July 26, 1945, with which the U.S., Britain, and China demanded Japan's unconditional surrender, promising utter destruction if the terms were not accepted. Japanese negotiators unsuccessfully sought a Russian mediation to obtain acceptable peace terms; they proposed disarmament and demobilization, the conduct of war-crime trials under Japanese law. However, the terms excluded explicitly the presence of occupation forces on the home islands, and required the preservation of the figure of the Emperor. At this

point in the war it was clear that, for the Japanese, “unconditional surrender [was] the only obstacle to peace” (Zinn 423). Clearly, for the upper echelons of the Japanese Army annihilation was preferable to the complete surrender of national sovereignty, and, even after the allies made good on their promise of destruction by dropping the first atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, army representatives continued to maintain that Japan should resist invasion at all costs (Beasley 249).

- 26 In the nation-state model, any loss or limitation of sovereignty appears to political actors as an existential threat to the state and the entire national population. War of this kind, total war, dramatizes to the point of absurdity the crucial link between the attribute of nationality and political citizenship for the determination of what constitutes a human being and a life worth living. The prospect of losing citizenship rights is, thus, terrifying, as is clearly exemplified in Kuramoto’s record of the fear and sense of abandonment that engulfs the colonists after the Japanese surrender, notably *before* her home town is overrun by enemy troops. With the sudden collapse of the imperial structure, she and her family are transformed instantly into refugees in her native Manchuria. Indeed, the very intensity of her reaction to the radio announcement of the surrender reveals the ideological inevitability of the nation in modern state politics, and the subordination of individual identity to the national idea.
- 27 From the inception of her memoir, Kuramoto makes it quite clear that she considered Manchuria her home. It is also clear that, by joining the Red Cross, she proclaims her loyalty to Japan, to which Manchuria is politically attached, but from which it remains geographically, historically, and culturally distinct. Piqued by her display of patriotism, cousin Toru provokes her into a clever “nationality game” in which statelessness is, simultaneously, square one and the highest penalty. After baiting her to say that Koreans are “almost” Japanese, he asks: “Suppose you were stateless, and given a choice of becoming Korean or Manchurian, which would you choose?” Unhesitatingly, Kazuko answers “Manchurian” and argues that her choice is motivated exclusively by familiarity with Dairen and her complete ignorance of Korea (Kuramoto 25). Toru, who expected this answer, readily counters that, as a Manchurian Nisei, she is equally ignorant of Japan. What is, then, the source of a connection so powerful to induce her to put her life on hold and don a uniform that symbolizes loyal service to a country she has never seen? After all, as Toru understands, the choice is between two equally alien alternatives of national affiliation.
- 28 Kuramoto’s immediate rejection of Korea is disingenuous, but very revealing of the contradiction between the nationality principle and the political economy of imperialistic expansionism. According to Kazuko, Koreans were *almost* Japanese. In other words, the annexation of 1910 made them part of the Japanese state, as subjects, but not of the Japanese nation. Since nationality is now crucially linked with sovereignty, even in a constitutional monarchy like Japan at the time, it cannot be diluted without endangering the already precarious stability of the entire political structure. Kazuko’s argument is particularly interesting because her peculiar subject position as a Nisei induces her to answer Toru’s challenge by selectively applying the two principles by which citizenship is determined: by place of birth (*ius soli*) and by descent (*ius sanguinis*). She can thus argue that she retains a vital political connection with Japan by right of blood and claim, at the same time, Manchurian citizenship by right of birth. Both options appear entirely natural to her, even though they point to different geopolitical referents.

- 29 At this point in her life, Kazuko is still able to resolve Toru's hypothetical because, for the time being, the hold of Japanese state power irons out all inconsistencies. After the Japanese defeat, however, as Kazuko and her family hear the Emperor announce the unconditional surrender, the same problem will reappear with the seriousness of a life-and-death predicament. Trapped in the provincial town of Furanten, and fearful of the advance of the Soviet Army from the north, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Army from the south-east, and of the activities of the Communist guerrillas, the Japanese colonists decide to take refuge in Dairen. When they arrive, they find the city transformed and Kazuko realizes quickly that the privileges she had taken for granted, starting with segregated public transportation, had vanished. It appeared that her birthright, her blood connection with Japan, was now worthless, and she had to start building a new identity. With everything at stake this time, she attempts to reinvent herself as a native Dairenian, as if the loss of Japanese imperial protection had lifted an artificial identity to reveal the natural self underneath. However, in the logic of national identification *ius soli* lacks the authenticity of blood, and therefore constitutes a weaker claim to citizenship. To bolster her standing, Kuramoto's autobiographical persona attempts to establish a more meaningful connection with the native Chinese on the cultural level, by studying the local language. On the symbolic level, the autobiographical text then tries to bridge the bio-political gap between self and nation by prefacing her resolution to become "naturalized" with the childhood memory of an anonymous Chinese man saving her from drowning (Kuramoto 70–71). It is a second gift of life which, Kuramoto hopes, may represent a viable surrogate of the missing blood connection with Manchuria.
- 30 If her plea were successful, she may not be forced to leave her native city for a distant place to which she felt bound by nothing more than borrowed ideological ties. Affectively, repatriation seems tantamount to deportation, and she wishes to resist it. But in the "nationality game" it would be unwise to risk remaining unattached and stateless because of misplaced sentimentality. Thus, she and her family join the Japanese refugees who flock to Dairen from all over Manchuria and fill the city's every nook with their politically uncomfortable presence: "They were the forgotten people in the middle of the crowd, a silent discordance in the maddening crescendo" (Kuramoto 101–102). Discord and madness symbolize the indeterminacy of their status as politically relevant human beings. It is an exclusion that threatens to reduce them to creatures of subsistence, naked life waiting to be ransomed back into political existence by a state willing to call them citizens again.
- 31 After having lost all hope of maintaining a meaningful connection with Dairen, Kazuko remembers that her father had set up a lifeline with the old country. As soon as the children were able to write, she tells us, he had forced them to memorize the family's legal address in Japan (Kuramoto 108). Once again, the political asserts itself as the primary ontological category in the individual's construction of her identity. To better understand this claim it is necessary to step back to the moment when Kazuko and her family hear the Emperor announce the surrender in a radio broadcast. Their first reaction is one of desperate confusion, consistent with the manufactured feelings of nationalist doctrine which prompt Kuramoto to describe the idea of a Japanese surrender as unthinkable. What is truly unthinkable, however, is not the surrender itself but the consequent prospect of life under a non-national government.

- 32 Unconditional surrender implies the dissolution of the sovereign power which establishes the boundaries separating a civilized inside from a hostile and barbaric outside. In consequence of this collapse, the people of Japan, and Kuramoto with them, fear being exposed to a violence unrestricted by the habitual bonds of mutual obligation that bind sovereign and subject. Without an autonomous state to give shape to the corporate body of the nation, each individual faces the terrifying prospect of having to stand alone before a supreme force that is in no way limited by the formal constraints of law or the moral strictures of justice. Refugees, stateless persons, the conquered, and the interned exist in a condition of anomie in which they may suffer violence without recourse. For these reasons, while contemplating the possibility of defeat, Kazuko's father is certain that the only options are resistance to the bitter end or government-sanctioned collective suicide (Kuramoto 40).
- 33 In Kuramoto's description of the tension that follows the broadcast, confusion rapidly gives way to anger and to a sense of betrayal because the nation-state, once thought invincible, has allowed the veil of ontological security to be torn in this manner. Kazuko felt "betrayed by Japan, the God-chosen country with a noble mission, the country that could do no wrong" (Kuramoto 42). Clearly, right and wrong are understood as a function of national sovereignty. For as long as Japan remained independent, it preserved the capacity to determine, by sovereign decision, the difference between the proper and the improper, the lawful and the illicit, down to the basic moral concepts of right and wrong. This is not the foundation of new ethical systems but the much more modest assertion, in politics, of a moral relativism whose only guiding principle is the interest of the state and of the nation, made indistinguishable. In the name of this supreme good, the sovereign can condone and forgive any action or omission. Conversely, when the sovereign loses its prerogatives, all acts priorly undertaken in the name of the nation are potentially subject to criminal prosecution or outright revenge.
- 34 Kazuko is thus intuitively correct in her opinion that "the loser becomes the criminal and everyone throws rocks at you" (Kuramoto 78). Furthermore, this is directly relevant to herself since, as a former member of the Japanese Red Cross, she believes she harbors the secret of a war crime of her own. Everyone, in post-war Japan, is implicated, but powerful ideological mechanisms are at work to shift the blame for the war onto a fanatical minority, the militaristic elite, and to explain popular support and participation as an effect of indoctrination (Kuramoto 128). The fiction of the wartime unity of the Japanese people is substituted with the equally fictive assumption of the essential blamelessness of the general population, so that a new, peace-loving, democratic Japan could be legitimately constructed under US supervision. Once again, Rousseau is proven correct: the nation is never wrong. At the very least, we need it not to be, to bestow legitimacy on a political order of which the nation-state (not the nation) is the true constitutive element.
- 35 As John Breuilly notes, "someone unfortunate enough to be excluded from the rule of a state, a stateless person, becomes both in theory and in practice a sort of non-person" (Breuilly 369). Faced with the problem of statelessness in a world of nation states, Kuramoto, as a Manchurian Japanese, clearly fears having become that someone. Once the initial shock of the surrender subsides, the Japanese colonists in Manchuria realize that the loss of sovereign protection had placed them in immediate physical danger, not from the advancing Russian and Nationalist Chinese armies, which may abide by

agreements between states (improperly called “international”) on the treatment of prisoners of war, but from local mobs. Suddenly, there are no laws, neither domestic nor colonial, to protect them from former neighbors who feel authorized to exact direct retribution for their prior subordination. In the middle of the night, Kazuko and her family flee to the woods to hide under cover of darkness; in the woods, their former, markedly ideological reaction to the Emperor’s announcement begins to appear remote and feeble. Compared to the potent rush caused by fear of immediate harm of a distinctly physical nature, the ideological angst generated by the manufactured feelings of national identification, which prompted them to wish for death, appears thoroughly unconvincing. At this point, the emotional expenditure is enormous and Kazuko succumbs to an absolute fatigue: “Suddenly, I was tired. So tired that I didn’t care what had happened to what was going to happen” (Kuramoto 53).

- 36 From this moment onward, the narrative presents the loss of status suffered by the Japanese as a progressive descent into the survivors’ biological nature. Still, their dehumanization is never complete because their complete objectification is hindered (in the last instance and in Agambenian fashion) by the presence of a witness, the reader, who is forced to correlate even the most degrading experience suffered by the autobiographical self to their own humanity. The victim of a radical exclusion is thus reclaimed at the last moment, making the representation of complete dehumanization impossible to realize discursively. Still, Kuramoto’s narrative contains, in Mr. Kawano, a clear instance of pure violence of the kind identified by Agamben, which kills the human being without destroying the biological life that sustains it. Mr. Kawano, a family friend and former chief of police, had survived a severe beating from resentful Chinese, but remained brain-damaged. When Kuramoto notices him in a crowd of refugees, she initially fails to recognize him. In this passage, the deliberately slow pace of the description matches the absolute care and attentiveness the man puts into the simple task of peeling and eating a boiled potato. Mr. Kawano performs this task with “vacant intensity” amidst the general apathy of bystanders (Kuramoto 102). Kazuko is horrified by the transfiguration of this formerly vital personality into a creature of necessity entirely absorbed with its own sustenance and yet barely able to procure it.
- 37 Reduced to almost a bundle of physiological functions, Mr. Kawano functions as the literal and narrative embodiment of a horrific destiny that remains open for all human beings caught in the anomie of statelessness. However, as Agamben argues, all refugees remain in constant relation with the political, not in spite of having been pushed to the threshold of irrelevance, but because of it. This is because the threat of radical exclusion that is a constant prerogative of sovereign power enmeshes biological existence and political life not only in the victim, but also in the perpetrators and the witnesses, and, in doing so, traces the limits of the existing order across the bodies that it excludes (Agamben, *Homo* 28–29). For Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, “Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss” (Nietzsche 14). Pity that modernity has tied the political end of the rope, where our humanity is defined in relation to the humanity of others, to the state, and the biological end, where all social and political obligations should mercifully cease, to the nation.
- 38 This intimacy between life and nationhood also structures the biopolitical intuitions of *Manchurian Legacy* which are voiced most forcefully when a frightened man speaks out in the Furanten auditorium where the Japanese colonists consider whether to undertake the perilous voyage to Dairen:

'We should all have died the day Japan surrendered,' the man says. 'Japan is crushed and has given up Manchuria. We are abandoned. We are on our own in the middle of the enemies. We are trapped in a no-man's land! What's the use of running? Let's finish ourselves here and now! You can get us enough arms to kill ourselves, can't you?' (Kuramoto 54)

- 39 Abandonment by one's national community is described as a condition not unlike death. Unattached and forsaken, the colonists struggle to find value in a life trapped in the "no-man's land" between national identities; this sentiment is confirmed when Kazuko's father, a former public official, manages to infuse a measure of optimism in the dejected crowd by offering his compatriots the task of rebuilding Japan from its ashes, not for themselves, but for the sake of the children. The unity of biology and nation is thus reestablished, if not as a promise, at least as a possibility. Clearly, mere survival does not suffice.
- 40 For Kazuko, however, Japan offers little comfort. Harsh post-war conditions and the hostility with which she and the other refugees are received enfeeble the already tenuous connection. If the nationality game she plays with Kunio, early in the memoir, intimates that her patriotic sentiments are purely ideological and lack a concrete referent, her reaction to occupied Japan, a country she finds alien and hostile, supports this reading. Upon arrival, the Manchurian refugees are greeted with unpleasant sanitary procedures established by the occupation forces, which confirm their apprehensions for the absence of a sympathetic sovereign. Thus, upon being doused with DDT powder, Kuramoto expresses her resentment to the reader with a note of bitter and distinctly unpatriotic sarcasm: "Welcome home, you miserable maggots! Welcome home to the land of the Rising Sun!" (Kuramoto 114). The fault, she seems to imply, lies with the defeated nation-state.
- 41 In Kazuko's eyes, post-war Japan is "a world with no order, no future," a world in disarray where nightclubs, bars, dance halls, and prostitutes cater to the desires of outsiders, and the absence of an autonomous political order makes the very concept of the future meaningless (Kuramoto 146). By contrast, the future figures prominently in the fictitious life of the nation-state as modern ideological construct: the future of technological progress, the future of national reform, reconstitution, and aggrandizement, or the messianic future of emancipation. Without the sovereign's representation of an order in which such a desirable future might occur, all that is left is an eternal present, dominated by necessity, with no purpose beyond simple being. In order to break out of this eternal present, in the Furanten auditorium, Kazuko's father appealed to his compatriots' national pride to create the illusion of a future for which it might be worthwhile to survive and sacrifice. Ironically, back in Japan, his own daughter is unable to embrace that fiction and her unorthodox behavior leads to her further marginalization. Her relationship with an American civilian in particular is construed as a betrayal of her obligations towards family and nation, leading her mother to regard her as a war casualty. By contrast, her decision to join the Red Cross without consulting her parents did not elicit a reaction so extreme.
- 42 Each stage of Kazuko's metaphoric descent from full humanity towards mere biological life is marked by the loss of a particular ordering principle of social life. The first structure to fail her is the nation, whose military defeat and occupation signaled the inability of the sovereign to guarantee the political space in which qualified existence is possible. As a result of this failure, during Kuramoto's time as a refugee in Dairen, the family had to step in and shoulder the entire burden of structuring group identification

for its members. The family thus regressed beyond both its modern function and its traditional, pre-modern function, to its primeval role of coordinating a barely (though sufficiently) productive division of labor, and providing its members with a reasonably effective mutual support system. It did not, however, revert to the level of Durkheimian mechanical solidarity; the chronic uncertainty of necessity-driven post-war living conditions ensured that role assignment within the group remain relatively loose rather than rigid.

- 43 Paradoxically, with everyone taking multiple roles as need dictates, it is as if the refugees had attained a higher level of individual indifferentiation within the new group-category created by the emergency; higher, that is, than was allowed in a traditional family, under normal circumstances. A clear indication of relaxed role-assigning is the sudden inclusion of Kazuko in conversations on unseemly subjects like rape, prostitution, and abortion from which, in different circumstances, she would have been excluded (Kuramoto 90). This indicates that the boundary between maiden and woman is no longer patrolled by family enforcers of social convention, because it is no longer relevant. The family still provides some degree of differentiation, but the inherent social, economic, and existential instability of the refugee's *Umwelt* (environment, or subjective world) prevents it from becoming the authoritative structure that determines the boundaries within which the individual must construct their sense of self against the push and pull of individualization (autonomy) and indifferentiation (conformity).
- 44 In post-war Japan, however, this autonomy dissipates and, in the general anomie, parents relinquish their authority over their children as if parental qualifications were conditional on the success or failure of the nation. Only later in the process of national reconstruction the family reasserts itself, not like in Dairen, as a site of security and freedom (limited only by necessity), but as the enforcer of collective values. When Kazuko chooses to associate with an American, she undermines the slow and painstaking reestablishment of a clear distinction between inside and outside, between what is Japan and what is foreign. Military occupation has broken the unity of people and territory on which depends the legitimacy of the modern nation-state, and has muddled the friend-enemy distinction that is, for Schmitt, the essence of the political (Schmitt). In these conditions, a viable discourse of national sovereignty must perforce stress social separation to compensate for the temporary impossibility of true political autonomy. Kazuko's violation is therefore unforgivable, and it warrants her social death. Banished from her native Manchuria and, now, rejected by her family for failing to conform, Kazuko's isolation and dejection deepen until the human is pushed to the margins of the narrative and almost erased. In the narrative, this effect can only be achieved obliquely. Any attempt to engage the reader directly would nullify the erasure by drawing attention to the protagonist's jeopardized humanity and thus produce pathos. Instead, Kuramoto is able to displace, for a moment, the presence of the narrator's consciousness with the image of the cicada call: "There is no music in the call of the cicada. No joy, no life. It is a gloomy and irritating noise, made by the scraping of their membranes, amplified by the hollow space in the insect's abdomen. They live only long enough to mate and lay eggs" (Kuramoto 147).
- 45 Hollowness, sound without structure, life without qualification (without joy) all hint at the gradual impoverishment of Kazuko's perceptive horizon as a sign of her progressive desubjectification. It lasts only a moment (rhetorically), but the

experience is comparable to the extreme processes of subjectification/desubjectification Agamben describes in *Remnants of Auschwitz*. Agamben starts from the premise that subjectivity is a defining characteristic of “man,” though not an essential characteristic of the human animal. In other words, the structure of subjectivity is neither primary nor necessary for the functioning of the organism. Subjectivity is, rather, what is at stake in the modalities of our relation with the objects and conditions that fall within our subjective universe, our *Umwelt*.ⁱⁱ The more restrictive our conditions of existence, the more our subjectivity diminishes in depth and range. Nowhere has this phenomenon been more visible than in Auschwitz, a location devoted to the desubjectification of the individual and, to put it bluntly, the industrial production of corpses. Primo Levi and other witnesses of the Shoah provide Agamben with the measure of the success of this program in the tragic figure of the *Muselmann*, Levi's “total witness” in whom the person is transformed into a non-person while the body still lives (Levi 91–92).

- 46 For Agamben, human subjectivity is given at the point of intersection of four ontological operators, or currents: “possibility” and “contingency” as the operators of subjectification, and “impossibility” and “necessity” as the operators of desubjectification (Agamben, *Remnants* 148). Subjectivity appears between power and impotence, as the possibility (not the choice) of an autonomous self in relation to a contingency. When the contingent is eclipsed by the necessary, Agamben argues, the self can no longer (or less and less) position itself as *subject*, but it does not, for this reason, cease to exist. On the contrary, even in the extreme conditions that produced the liminal figure of the *Muselmann*, the non-human survives the human as a continuation of naked life. This sea-change from person to object is never complete or irreversible since, for Agamben, there is no human essence to be destroyed or saved. There is only a fracture between life and *logos*, an ontological gap in which the human being appears as the threshold across which flow the currents of subjectification and desubjectification (Agamben, *Remnants* 134–135). For this reason, no matter how radical the process of desubjectification, it can never result in the complete reduction of the subject to an object, or in the perfect identity between the human and the non-human (cf. Bataille 221; Scheler 208)
- 47 The closest analogy to the *Muselmann* in *Manchurian Legacy* is (not without irony due to his role in Japanese repressive state apparatus) the already mentioned police chief Mr. Kawano whose embarrassing resuscitation as a creature of necessity is witnessed by Kazuko. The witness, however, is herself caught in the downward spiral of necessity. Indeed, she reaches the most complete form of desubjectification after her repatriation to Japan, at the moment when, excluded from her family, she loses this last structure of identification. When, in this condition, the naked sound of the cicada catches her attention, the perceiving “I” is reduced, by juxtaposition, to mere biological datum, to existing “only long enough to mate and lay eggs,” in a damning, living indictment of the failure of nation and family to open possibilities for the autonomous self rather than foreclose them in the interest of nondifferentiation (Kuramoto 147). Could she, then, follow a friend's advice, and live life as she sees fit? Unfortunately, freedom of this kind is not available to her. Only John, her American partner, seems to be able to exist outside the constraints of civilization, perhaps only because Japan is, to him, a foreign world of temporary residence. When Kazuko realizes that he, too, has betrayed her, she attempts suicide, but not for John's sake. The desire to cease to exist, as she

frames it, is linked to feelings of intense homesickness for Dairen that have perdured ever since her repatriation, four years earlier.

- 48 Kazuko tries to end her life by ingesting an excessive dose of the sleeping pills she was taking to control her insomnia, the physical symptom of an existential distress. Unable to sleep, she spends her nights watching war movies and war-related newsreels. Her fascination with this material clearly indicates that it bears some relevance to her personal situation, although, for the moment, the link remains obscure. After her failed suicide, and after she is pronounced lucky to have survived, we learn, from a flashback to a conversation among “colonial-born repatriates,” that the mesmerizing war scenes on TV seemed to represent a preemptive solution to their predicament of biopolitical indeterminacy. It is clear to them that no positive value can be attached to mere survival and that a qualified death, the death of a national hero, might be preferable: “*Then a mournful groan came out from the darkness, ‘Lucky were those who have died in glory.’ ‘Yeah, had they believed in it,’ quickly responded a cynic. ‘They did! I know they did!’ an angry voice hissed at the cynic*” (Kuramoto 164; emphasis in original). The cynic must be silenced to maintain the illusion that a certain kind of death can provide the meaning that escapes a certain kind of life.
- 49 If Kazuko’s attempted suicide marks the lowest point of her descent towards biological life devoid of political relevance, the next chapter, the last in the memoir (except for the short epilogue), signifies her acquisition of a new, politically viable identity. This ascent from the merely biological to the political, however, cannot be accomplished outside the established category of national identification. Since she has lost all connections with Manchuria, and since her inability to conform prevents her from establishing new links with Japan, she must find a third alternative. This opportunity comes through her marriage with an American, John, which gives her access to US citizenship. It allows her to do what colonialism and war denied her in Dairen: to make a conscious commitment of allegiance to a single country of her choice — a commitment that she seals by renouncing her Japanese citizenship immediately after becoming a naturalized American. From experience, she has clearly learnt that, in time of conflict, only unambiguous affiliation to a single nation-state can offer a limited guarantee of (physical and ontological) security, especially to those who straddle borders that the nation-state system, in its logic, understands as absolute biopolitical divides. Still, that protection remains conditional. One’s presence may not constitute a disturbance to the perceived internal homogeneity (nondifferentiation) of the national population, whether measured with an ethnic, racial, or cultural yardstick. At the same time, the subject must never represent a threat to the claimed homogeneity of the nation-state by confusing (culturally, racially, or ethnically) the inside with the outside, the friend with the enemy. Confusion of this kind played an important part in the internment of Japanese Americans during the war.
- 50 Participation in a corporate body is always a matter of affiliation, from Latin *affiliare* (to adopt). Birth might enter an individual into an assortment of rights and obligations towards a larger community, but it does not guarantee that membership will never be revoked. This possibility gives substance to social pressures to conform in order to demonstrate that one is deserving of being part of the group. A sufficiently grave violation of group values or interests may warrant expulsion or, to use Agamben’s terminology, banishment. The subject of the ban is then no longer protected by the laws and customs of the collectivity and is deprived of the possibility of recourse and

redress. The law itself withdraws from the banished, leaving them completely vulnerable before their former community, before the world, and before nature (Agamben, *Homo* 17–18; 28–29).

- 51 As if to underscore this essential yet hidden component of national affiliation, Kuramoto's memoir ends with two adoptions: the first is her acquisition of American citizenship, which naturalizes her elective membership in the nation; the second is her adoption of a child of mixed ancestry, Junko, whose name she changes to June-Marie, and whom she begins to permeate with an American identity:

I took her to the P.X. (post exchange) to buy her a few necessities such as jeans, T-shirts, and sneakers. A transformation, the creation of an 'American' girl. Then I noticed. I noticed that in her old neighborhood Junko had stood out, looking Caucasian, and now in her new neighborhood on the American army post she looked surprisingly Japanese. My friends smiled at her and whispered to me, 'She is beautiful. What nationality is she?' (Kuramoto 168)

- 52 Kuramoto is certainly not naive about the difficulties of integration, especially when one's appearance does not match the current ideal representation of the biological body on which political homogeneity is predicated. Still, she is not discouraged by ethnic or racial barriers and finds comfort in her adoptive daughter's feistiness. She interprets it as an indication that June-Marie will not accept being marginalized. At the same time, she associates the visible expression of national affiliation with a necessity of life, a condition of human happiness. It is as if the family were unable to sustain the happiness of its members without attaching itself to a fully legitimate corporate body: the nation. When that connection is abruptly severed, as was the case with Kazuko in Dairen, the loss of identity can be catastrophic. Paradoxically, the modern ideal of a universal humanity (with all attendant human rights) is recognizable in the individual only in relation to the fictive life of the state, mediated by the concept of citizenship. Thus, any real or perceived threat to the individual's full inclusion, any real or perceived attack on the existing homogeneity, and any attempt to reconfigure it according to different criteria of inclusion, will excite intense defensive reactions. Some social actors will take refuge in nationalism and pledge their unconditional loyalty to the collective entity by parading its symbols (the anthem and the flag), which are inevitably also the symbols of the state; others, like Kazuko Kuramoto, may seek assimilation in a new national community. It bears noting that Kazuko's acquisition of American citizenship and her adoption of Junko are both juridical acts by which the recipients are taken across the threshold that separates what is inside the political order from what lies outside.

- 53 Kazuko Kuramoto's experience between Manchuria, Japan and the United States shows how thoroughly these new forms of national identification envelop the individual, to the point of representing the sole possible foundation of a worthwhile existence. Colonization, war, defeat and military occupation of the home country force *Manchurian Legacy* to deal with the eruption, within the existing order, of anomic spaces where individuals are divested of the prerogatives that come with citizenship. Kuramoto's defense against anomie is to seek new options of national affiliation in the acquisition of American citizenship, which certainly marks a high point in the narrative, alongside the adoption of June-Marie. Ironically, only a few years earlier American citizenship, whether acquired through birth or naturalization, would have offered her no protection in wartime United States; she would have been evacuated to concentration camps with the rest of the West-Coast Issei and Nisei (cf. Commission on

Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians; Weglyn). Clearly, the salvific quality of Kuramoto's new status is specific to her situation and cannot be generalized.

- 54 The memoir ends with a somber reference to Japanese orphans who, having been abandoned in Manchuria, were raised, oblivious of their nationality, by local Chinese families. In adulthood, many of these returned to Japan in search of their roots. Kuramoto blames imperialism and war for creating conditions in which individuals cannot be content with familial happiness but must wander the world, seeking a place where the congruity of state and nation would promise them meaning beyond mere existence (Kuramoto 176). The hidden content of this restlessness is the search for a clear sign of unequivocal recognition by a national state in the form of full and undisputed citizenship. From this relation between state and individual, mutual obligations arise that can be mediated very effectively, for both parties, through nationalistic discourse.
- 55 *Manchurian Legacy* shows how identities are constructed in unequal transactions between the individual and a single state entity, often at the expense of intermediate social groups like the family. The nation-state system represents, for individual nation-states, a more general structure which, unlike the abstract yet all-embracing notion of humanity, contains entities that are irreducibly antagonistic to each other because, extending Simmel's heuristic from the social to the political sphere, this antagonism guarantees their external individuality and internal nondifferentiation. Kuramoto's singular life story also suggests that, for the modern individual, the urgency of identification with a national referent is not solely the product of these sets of multiple antagonisms/recognitions between nation-states; it derives, also, from her anxiety over the risk of becoming stateless and of being thus banished to the non-place of modern politics where no transaction involving mutual recognition with a sovereign power is offered to shield the individual from the absolute vulnerability of a bare life devoid of political significance.
- 56 When it comes to our relation with sovereign power and its prerogative to define the boundaries of political relevance and moral action, the question that remains unanswered is, where can the modern individual find the elbow room to preserve the autonomy of the self as an ethical agent in the world? Could this be done in reasonable safety, without resorting to self-denying sacrifice? Kuramoto's memoir can help frame the problem by showing how we become implicated in the biopolitical mechanisms that govern modern politics, and how much is at stake when the ties that bind us to the state in a relation of mutual recognition are, for any reason, rescinded. The loss is complete. Given propitious circumstances, it is possible to find a remedy within the global system itself by shifting affiliation with a juridical act, as does Kuramoto; still, this solution leaves one forever vulnerable to restrictive claims made on nativist grounds. Absence of a political referent shielding the individual from the brutal forces of necessity, be they natural or man-made, abandons the human being in a space where the exercise of power knows no limits, nor does the violence against those who are excluded from a reciprocal relation with the sovereign.
- 57 Although the modern (western or westernized) world belongs, ideologically, to the individual (one thinks of the Cartesian subject), the seemingly infinite possibilities for individualization produced by political, social, and technological modernity are boxed in by the biopolitical boundaries of nondifferentiation at the national level. Individuals who, for any reason, find themselves in the interstitial spaces between state-attached

national identities, uncover, as their defining existential trait, not the unadulterated core of their own humanity, but an emptiness and a solitude that coincides with the unmediated awareness of their naked, biological life. Modernity is not the cause of that emptiness and solitude; but it has generated a set of historical circumstances which forces this awareness on larger and larger numbers who become trapped between an impossible demand of conformity and the terror of complete autonomy.

58 i. Notes

- 59 Kuramoto's experience is far from unique. The refugee problem exploded in Europe after the First World War when displaced populations numbering in the millions were shifted from one nation-state to the next as Europe's political geography was being redrawn to reflect the nationality principle (Kolko). In 1939, Sir John Simpson Hope compiled a report on the refugee problem for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, from the First World War to the Nazi expulsion of German Jews in the mid and late thirties (Simpson). Hannah Arendt relied on this report for her theory of statelessness. Displaced populations, Arendt argues, concluded correctly that loss of national rights implied the loss of human rights since the latter have no juridical platform on which to stand save the state-sanctioned institute of citizenship (Arendt 292).
- 60 ii. Agamben borrows the term *Umwelt* from early nineteenth-century zoologist Jakob von Uexküll who developed a theory of meaning according to which living organisms exist in unique and complete subjective universes that are constructed on the basis of the insight provided by receptor organs and effective organs locked in a functional cycle. It follows that there are as many subjective universes as there are subjects perceiving them, and that they are of greater or lesser complexity depending on the complexity of the organism. Objects populate these universes, richly or sparsely, as meaning carriers (von Uexküll 31).

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ABSTRACTS

This article investigates the significance of Kazuko Kuramoto's *Manchurian Legacy: Memoirs of a Japanese Colonist* (1999) as a life narrative that foregrounds the biopolitical implications of modern subjectivity in the context of the global system of nation states. Using the theoretical insights of, primarily, Giorgio Agamben, Carl Schmitt, and Georg Simmel, I argue that Kuramoto's record of her own experience between Manchuria, Japan, and the United States, showcases the fundamental conflict between the nation and the family as the largest and smallest social circles vying for the individual's allegiance. This discussion will show that the nation-state's claim is preeminent and that the political is fundamental to the construction of a viable subjectivity in the modern world, leaving complete exclusion as the only alternative.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Carl Schmitt, Georg Simmel, Giorgio Agamben, Hannah Arendt, Kazuko Kuramoto

Keywords: autobiography, biopolitics, life narrative, nation-state, nationalism, sovereign power, state of exception

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