Kojima Nobuo's *The American School* and Postwar Education

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論文要旨

1954 年に出版された小島信夫の短編小説『アメリカン・スクール』によれば、軍国主義者や右翼の官僚たちが GHQ によって公職・教職などから追放されたはずなのに、「逆コース」によって彼らは自らのアイデンティティーを隠しながら働き続けていたことがわかる。それだけではない。小島の作品によれば、昨日までアメリカを敵国として見ていた日本の軍国主義者や右翼の官僚たちが米軍と協力し、占領がよりスムーズに行われるように動力している。『アメリカン・スクール』によれば、アメリカの植民地主義的権力を象徴する「英語教育」に抵抗するのは「国を愛する」右翼ではない。そして、日本の戦中派の軍国主義者や右翼の官僚たちがアメリカ政府と協力し、新しい教育改革を行えば、戦後社会における教育は果たしてどこまで「民主主義的」だと言えるのであろう。

本論文の目的は、安倍内閣の与党が単独で 2006 年に「教育基本法」の改正案採決を強行した後の時空において、小島信夫の『アメリカン・スクール』を再読し、氏が描く英語教育に関わる日米問題に注目することである。小島の短編を読むことによって、道徳教育と愛国心を強調する安倍内閣が目指す憲法改正の歴史的背景がわかるかもしれない。そして、『アメリカン・スクール』を読み直すことによって、読者は無意識に抑圧されたにもかかわらず、未だに潜在的に潜んでいる日本のアイデンティティー危機にもう一度目を向けることができる。

Introduction

The Allied occupation of Japan, from 1945 until its official end in 1952, continues to be a controversial period of historical interest. Heated debates between Japanese right wing nationalists and progressives who resist historical revisionism have flared up in the last decade. Although the LDP has introduced numerous controversial laws, such as the State Secrecy Law（特定秘密の保護に関する法律）in 2013, the main battle seems to be over education policies, in particular, the government's revision of the education law in 2006. According to Prime Minister Abe the revision is one step in a greater plan to overhaul the "1955 system", which was ushered in by his grandfather Kishi Nobusuke, the same year the LDP was formed (with the tacit assistance and assurance of the United States). As Richard J. Samuels points out, "(t)he announcement in 1947 of the Truman Doctrine marked the turning point when the United States no longer cared as much about democratizing Japan as about anti-communism. Yoshida gave it his enthusiastic support, but Kishi would carry it even further, pressing for changes in education, police administration, and, above all, the Constitution."[1] The new democratic education policy promulgated on March 31st, 1947, became the target of militarists and ultra nationalists. "Once the LDP was returned to power in the June 1958 election, the Kishi government moved vigorously to amend laws related to national defense—including the basic laws that established the Self-Defense Forces and the Defense Agency—with the result that the number of Japanese uniformed soldiers increased by 10,000 men. Concerned that the teachers were too sympathetic to communism, the Kishi government also introduced legislation to force public schools to provide moral education and to implement a system to evaluate

1 Richard J. Samuels, 'Kishi and Corruption: An Anatomy of the 1955 System' in *Japan Policy Research Institute*, Working Paper No. 83, December 2001 (http://www.jpri.org/publications/workingpapers/wp83.html) Retrieved November, 28, 2019.

the teachers."[2] Although Kishi was successful in pushing through the widely criticized US/Japan Security Treaty in 1960, he was unable to implement other unpopular policies, such as Constitutional and Police reforms. These, he said, would be left up to later generations.

Indeed, half a century later, Kishi's grandson Abe has made it his obligation to carry through his grandfather's plan. Abe's explicit objective is to introduce a thoroughly new Constitution, which rejects the war renouncing Article 9. To do this it will require a referendum. But first the government must educate Japanese youth about the intricacies of voting "correctly" in such a referendum. To help the unwary voter, education policies that promote an historical amnesia or myopia towards past atrocities, such as those peddled by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform（歴史教科書を作る会）and Japan Conference（日本会議）, are necessary. Of course, none of this is new. Reaction to the rollback of democratic reforms in education and censorship of historical memory predate the most recent outcry by over half a century. To understand how we got here we need to go back to the beginning, contextualize the historical setting, and reconsider the meaning of events that have been either ignored or simply forgotten. It will involve a strenuous imagination greatly aided by early postwar Japanese "occupation literature".

One of the first writers to deal with education reform in early postwar Japan, from a literary perspective, was Kojima Nobuo. Two years after the official end of the occupation, and one year before the LDP was created, Kojima Nobuo published his first acclaimed novella『アメリカン・スクール』(hereafter *The American School*).[3] In this story the author locates the main ground of contention not simply in "what" is remembered

2 Ibid

3 All quotations, unless specified, come from William F. Sibley's 1977 translation, found in Howard Hibbett, ed., *Contemporary Japanese Literature*, 124.

or forgotten, but in "how" the past, as a lived reality, is historicized as memory, and how this then becomes part of an imagined national identity.

It seems clear that *The American School* represents Kojima's response to the allied occupation of Japan and to the reverse course: those policies that rolled back democratic education reform initially introduced during the occupation. To repeat, what is of interest is the way Kojima does this. That is to say, in *The American School* Kojima confronts the trauma of occupation much the same way as other postcolonial writers do; he uses tropes and literary devices which resist notions of race and language hierarchy based on binary opposition of "civilized/barbarian" or "animal/human". Kojima's treatment of how Japanese dealt with occupation from a language perspective not surprisingly has many similarities with concerns expressed by colonized peoples around the world. That the language of the occupier is English, and not Russian, Chinese, or Korean holds an important meaning in this story. As will become clearer, Kojima associates not only a cultural identity, but also an historical context to language, war, and Empire. Importantly, Kojima does not simply portray Japan as a U.S. colony or client state; neither does he replace one half of the binary with another. In *The American School* bifurcations of occupier/occupied, or victimizer/victimized must make way for a more fully dialectic relationship, reminding the reader that Japan was itself an occupying and victimizing empire. Defeat can be embraced only when the memory of being an occupier can be paired with a new identity as "occupied."

Kojima Nobuo and *The American School*

Kojima Nobuo was born in Inaba County of Gifu Prefecture in 1915. After graduating from the English Department of Tokyo Imperial University in 1941 with a dissertation on humor in the works of William

Makepeace Thackeray he was dispatched to North Eastern China where he trained to intercept and decipher the enemy's messages. His experience in China as a soldier and code breaker would have a lasting influence on his life as a writer. Kojima seems to suggest this when he says: "don't write fiction to decode, write to encode." As suggested later, on close inspection the reader of *The American School* realizes that the number '3' has a symbolic meaning in the story. Kojima spent the end of the war in Shanghai and returned to Japan in 1946, where he began working as a High School teacher. In 1954, while teaching English at Meiji University, he published *The American School*, which earned him the prestigious Akutagawa prize.

Set in 1948, one year after the enactment of the Fundamental Law of Education (旧教育基本法), which replaced the Imperial Rescript on Education (教育勅語), and the first General Election under the new Constitution, *The American School* depicts a satirical account of an excursion by thirty Japanese "English teachers" to a school on a military base. Ostensibly, the purpose is to observe how democratic values are imparted to American school children, but the Japanese teachers are soon overcome with a mixture of shame, anger and jealousy at the contradictions between having to maintain their Japanese identity and the seemingly impossible task of adopting the American role model. It becomes clear that the adoption of English entails more than speaking a foreign language.

The main Japanese characters consist of Shibamoto, the local prefectural official and the highest authority within the Japanese group, Yamada, an obnoxious self-serving "ex" militarist who uses his poor command of English with the aim of leaving Japan and going to America, Michiko, a war widow who excels in English to the ire of Yamada, and Isa, the anti-hero English teacher who hates speaking English. "Still only about thirty years old, Isa had never

had a single conversation in English; occasional attempts at practical application of the language in the classroom had left him tingling with embarrassment; and when word came that the Americans would soon be visiting his school he had feigned illness, lying in bed for several days with an icebag pressed against his forehead, where there was not the slightest trace of fever. Only fear of unknown reprisals at the hands of the Occupation officials had deterred him from a similar stratagem at the time of the elections." According to Isa: "There was no dignity in talking just like a foreigner….That was not for him. He would sooner make himself over into a whole new man." In this respect, Isa resists both the expectation from his Japanese superiors to follow orders, and the temptation to discard his Japanese identity by mimicking the Americans. He prefers to take a third option: to "make himself over into a whole new man."

Among the American characters in the story are Miss Emily, a Marilyn Monroe-esque teacher in the American School who creates tension between the Japanese male teachers and Michiko (the only female Japanese), and Mr. Williams, the school Principal who treats the Japanese teachers as twelve year old children. Mr. Williams expresses a condescending attitude towards the Japanese teachers at the end of the story, essentially ordering them around and embarrassing them. But one of the more interesting American characters is a "Negro" (*sic*) soldier. His function in the story is to complicate the relationship between the Japanese and the white teachers in the American School. By forming a complex bond with our anti-hero Isa, the black soldier exposes racial tension between the Japanese and Americans, and in turn, elevates the colonial-like power relationship during the occupation. During the first postwar election held in occupied Japan, the black soldier is tasked with informing villagers in more remote parts of the country. As he cannot speak or comprehend Japanese, Isa is "pressed into service" by offering to interpret for the Occupation

inspection team:

"The moment (Isa) was packed into the jeep with a Negro soldier, he had turned to the fellow and said, in English: "I am truly very sorry to have kept you waiting." This was met with silence, and when he repeated the words three times over, the soldier only stared at him coldly and uncomprehendingly. The phrase he had prepared several days ago and practiced constantly since was clearly too formal and correct. From then on he limited himself to two words, "stop" and "go.""

Isa is reduced to an animal that responds only to simple orders. Essentially ignoring the soldier for five hours, once arriving at the first polling place Isa flees the scene into the surrounding mountains. Not unlike a guerilla taking aim at the occupying soldier from his concealed spot in the wooded mountains Isa lets loose with a barrage of Japanese:

"You'll have to speak our language. Speak Japanese or else! What would you do if someone really said that to you?" When the face of the soldier came closer to Isa's location "a neatly trimmed beard, features strained in an effort to make out the indistinct words, it gave a feeling of loneliness. The beard contributed an incongruously civilized air, and as the face moved still closer it seemed almost to show some understanding of the stream of Japanese that issued forth from behind the trees."

Kojima locates the space of conflict between the occupier and the occupied first and foremost within the power dynamics of language and language acquisition. He relativizes the racial tension between the Japanese and white Americans by inserting the black GI, whom Isa ends up meeting a total of three times. The number "three" continues to appear in the story simply as a number, but also as a triangular relationship between Japanese, white and black GIs. While Kojima

does not overtly call it, he may be asking the reader to question ideas of essentialism by eliciting in the readers' imagination images of「混血児」or "children of mixed blood/parentage". This is hinted at more than once, particularly with Kojima's portrayal of Michiko and the US soldiers. In *The American School* the political is intricately tied up with the sexual, racial, and cultural dynamics of the occupation. Much of this is reliant on the occupier not being able to, or not willing to understand the occupied. Be that as it may, ideas of "purity" of race or language based on binary oppositions are relativized by a third position in this story.

No doubt as a result of being shamed by the black soldier, who was unable to understand his overly polite English, Isa refuses to speak his language:

"It is foolish for Japanese to speak this language like foreigners. If they do, it makes them foreigners, too. And that is a real disgrace. He pictured clearly to himself the outlandish gestures that Yamada affected when he spoke English. There was no dignity in talking just like a foreigner. But it was equally demeaning to speak a foreign tongue like a Japanese. This was the fate that awaited him today, he knew, if he were called upon to talk at the school. The few times that he had begun his class with a halting goodo-moaning-ebury- body he had afterward flushed crimson and felt himself at the bottom of some dark ravine. No! That was not for him. He would sooner make himself over into a whole new man."

Isa's reaction not only to English, but also to his own language, especially that spoken by either the military (Yamada) or high officials (Shibamoto) isolates him from the group. According to Mike Molasky "(i)n colonial discourse theory, this rejection of the foreign dominator's language is known as "abrogation" and is considered by some to be a key

step in moving beyond a "colonized consciousness." But in works such as "The American School," abrogation often relies on an essentialist and mystical conception of language in which agency is attributed to language, allowing it to empower and thereby transform the speaker."[4] We should recall, also, that the new postwar Japanese Constitution and the Education policies were written in both English and Japanese. The US sees the English version as being closest to the core meaning and values while the Japanese see theirs as the original; the Japanese government continues to use these and other reasons for rewriting the Constitution—to give clarity to ambiguous interpretations that oscillate between the two languages. Forced to walk four miles on the freshly sealed road to the American School, the Japanese teachers experience what it is like to be (in Yamada's words) a "defeated people". Yamada sees English simply as a way to leverage his options; he boasts of his ability, but Kojima constantly makes fun of his poor skills. Secretly Yamada looks down on the Americans as inferior, but he must play up to them to achieve his self-serving objectives. It is on this concrete and metaphorical road to the *American School* that Kojima introduces us to the central themes of the story.

Training the pet animals

If we take Molasky's cue and situate *The American School* within a colonial, or even "post-colonial" space, several other images in this story begin to elicit a particular resonance. Of interest to the reader is the way in which Kojima uses animal imagery to depict what Karatani Kojin calls "types": certain traits or characteristics normally associated with a particular animal to allegorically define attitudes or imagery typical to a group of people. There are several episodes in the story where Kojima clearly portrays Isa as a stray dog. Following Yamada's

4 Michael S. Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory*, Routledge Studies in Asia, New York, 1999 p.34

orders to "dress your best", Isa borrows a pair of leather shoes to wear on his long march to the American School. But not long after departing, he realizes to his dismay that the shoes are one size too small; they begin to rub and irritate his feet. After deliberating, he decides to go barefoot. This Isa feels is far more suitable to wearing shoes: like a stray dog his bare "feet" were made for the road. In one scene Isa relieves himself by the side of the road, also like a stray dog. At the moment, the black soldier appears and questions Michiko why Isa was without shoes. Isa sees the black GI, and remembering his previous encounter, decides to escape into the rice field. "Here (Isa) was far less protected than he had been on that wooded slope. The soldier was beckoning to him with a miniature package of cigarettes." The imagery here is of someone tempting a wild animal with a treat. Finally the soldier manages to get Isa into the jeep and they speed off to the school. At that moment "crows flocked and veered off to one side as if to clear a path for the car passing far below. Or perhaps they were preparing to scavenge around the American school." Juxtaposed with the black crows "scavenging around the American school" are the Japanese teachers, their shoddy, poor appearance bringing a sense of shame in front of the Americans whose "features (…) spoke of an ample diet, material well-being, and pride of race."

When he gets to the school, Isa, "still barefoot, ran toward the fence enclosing the school playground. After a few moments' rest he put on his shoes and crouched down to look around." His actions are animal like, and being encircled by a fence gives the impression of being trapped. Once more Isa spies the black soldier, this time talking to the American teacher Miss Emily. He directs her attention to Isa and explains about the condition of his feet. After she approaches him and offers to help, Isa "wanted to say thank you—that much he could manage. But once he had opened his mouth she would expect him to keep up a steady conversation. He had better just play dumb and follow

her like a dog." She takes him to the school dispensary to attend to his feet, and then, locking the door, went out into the corridor. According to Isa "(s)he was (…) worried about his wandering around the school on the loose, or still worse, escaping again, like a wounded animal that runs away when one is only trying to help it." In *The American School* the Japanese teachers must remain silent and simply observe. That is to say, their ability for language and communication is restricted in front of their occupiers, reducing them to animals without language capabilities. Either as crows or stray dogs, the "animal other" Japanese is juxtaposed with the black soldier, someone who is, under Jim "Crow" laws in the US, *also* treated as dispensable livestock.

Near the end of the story, the Japanese teachers view an art class where young American boys and girls are busy drawing. In his usual brash tone Yamada remarks to the other Japanese teachers: "Take a good look. With all their money and their fancy buildings, the children can't draw worth a damn." The children had turned Shibamoto into a Sea Devil, Yamada into a shark, Michiko a goldfish, and Isa a flying fish. "In the same fashion the whole party emerges within the next few moments as a school of highly distinctive fish." It becomes apparent why Kojima has the American children draw each teacher as reflecting particular "types" within the Japanese education system. Interestingly, animalization, and nativization are two tropes common among postcolonial writers and are used allegorically to reflect both political and ideological relationships between the colonized and colonizer, or in Japan's case, occupied/occupier. For example, Michiko is drawn as a gold fish, a pet to the American GIs who give her canned cheese and chocolate. When the US soldiers spot Michiko walking along the road they stop to see where she is going. There is an obvious sexual tension here between the soldiers, Michiko, and the Japanese male teachers who can only watch the ritual from a passive distance: "The soldiers exchanged an approving glance as they inspected the proper

Japanese lady from top to bottom. They tore the wrapper from two bars of chocolate and, with a parting nod full of regret, tossed them down to Michiko. She broke one of the bars into pieces and passed them out to a few people around her, this time omitting Isa."

Reminiscent of the *Pan Pan* or street prostitute (notice her name is written literally as みち子 or possibly "Street Girl") Michiko symbolizes emasculated Japan; a feminized Japan which is, in Michiko's words "good at mimicking". Yet Kojima portrays Michiko as being more liberated than the other male teachers. She yearns for male companionship, but no one comes close to her sophistication. Michiko is hardly free from the restraints of patriarchy, she is expected to assume a "role" in front of Yamada, but she is too intelligent to suffer the foolish men around her.

What is interesting is that, according to the Civil Information and Education section of SCAP, militarists and ultranationalists were supposedly purged from office during the occupation, but Kojima clearly depicts the "shark" Yamada hidden in the school of fish/teachers. Yamada, the unrepentant militarist, and Shibamoto, the petty government official, symbolize the contiguity between wartime and postwar Japan. "Shibamoto's activities blur the boundary not only between the war and postwar eras; they abolish any clear-cut distinction between Japan's militarists and America's (military) enforces of democracy."[5] In a conversation where they both trade boasts, Shibamoto explains that he was a fifth-degree black belt in judo: "Contrary to malicious postwar propaganda, devotees of the martial arts were not all war criminals. One had only to consider himself, holder of a prominent post in the administrative section of the prefectural Education Office. Moreover, he taught judo not only to the local police, but to the Occupation personnel themselves, and had in fact got the job through

5 Molasky, p.35

his American supervisor." Eager to establish his own credentials, both as a competent English teacher and would-be war criminal, Yamada informs Shibamoto that: "I might not look it now, but I hold a second-degree black belt in fencing." Yamada continues: "This might not be the time to mention it, but when I was in OTS I got to whet my blade a bit, if you know what I mean." Asked by Shibamoto how many he polished off, Yamada replies, "about twenty, I guess. Half of them must've been POWs." "Any Yanks?" "Naturally" replied Yamada. When Shibamoto tells Yamada that he was lucky "they never caught up with (him)", Yamada replies: "I was only following orders." Although *The American School* shows that not all militarists and ultranationalists were purged and that many entered the public sector as officials and teachers, the more important point to make is the way in which Kojima depicts apparently ultranationalist Yamada being quite willing to cozy up with the Americans. "Insofar as English symbolizes the language of democracy, Yamada's unnatural pronunciation and awkward gestures, combined with his frequent reliance on military terminology, exposes not only his hypocrisy but SCAP's failure to replace Japanese militarism with American democracy."[6] Both Yamada and Shibamoto "disguise themselves as advocates of democracy, and Kojima suggests that these are the characters who benefited from SCAP's reverse course."[7] One can assume that it is these Japanese militarists and lackeys for the US who take advantage of the reverse course to regain political and economic control. Once in power, their intention is to quickly rollback all democratic policies, in particular, those relating to education. Indeed, this rollback of the education system portrayed in *The American School* continues to this day, particularly in the form of "moral" education and "patriotism", which harkens back to a time of militarism and ultra-nationalism.

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6 Ibid, p.36
7 Ibid, p.35

Moreover, the story deals a lot with the shame of defeat, but offers no commentary on the question of guilt or responsibility for the war. Under the occupation and the auspices of SCAP the implementation of the 1947 Constitution and the Fundamental Law of Education severed the state's monopoly over education and helped to democratize Japan. As Yoshiko Nozaki suggests, the 1947 Fundamental Law of Education served "as an educational constitution. As the Ministry of Education put it, the legislation was a "declaration of new educational ideals" in the nature of "an absolute indispensable law with regard to educational matters." Since the law was designed to shape the subsequent course of educational law and policy, it served to replace the Imperial Rescript on Education."[8]

But in contrast, "the School Education law (学校教育法), which dealt with the practical operation of schools (including textbook policy), allowed the state to continue to hold its control over schools."[9] Nozaki goes on to explain that these textbooks "(did not) explore the issue of the responsibility of the Japanese citizens for the war. Instead, they generally represented the Japanese people as having been deceived by propaganda filtered through the military's control of the media, education, and other information outlets."[10] The Fundamental Law of Education empowered and encouraged teachers to deliberate over and develop their own curricula. However, by the time Kojima began to write *The American School*, "as conservatives regained control of the government, the Ministry of Education began to reverse this policy."[11] Judging by the parallels he draws between postwar (English) education and militarism, it should not come as a surprise that Kojima wrote *The*

8 Nozaki, Y. "Educational reform and history textbooks" in *Democracy in Occupied Japan: The U.S. occupation and Japanese politics and society* ed. by Mark E. Caprio and Yoneyuki Sugita Routledge, New York, 2007, p.133
9 Ibid, p.133
10 Ibid, p.140
11 Ibid, p.134

American School as a commentary on this reverse course while teaching in Meiji University.

In *The American School* when Yamada confesses to having beheaded POWs, Shibamoto asks how the "Yanks" compared with the Chinese. Yamada comments: "(w)ell, there's quite a difference in how they take it. When you come right down to it, they show their lack of what you might call Oriental philosophy." Recall that the setting of the story is 1948, the same year that the verdict of the Tokyo war tribunal was handed down. While the Japanese military faced the brunt of the charges, questions of the Showa emperor's war responsibility were strictly silenced. In particular, crimes carried out by the Japanese military in Asia were essentially ignored, and there was no mention of the Japanese citizenry's war culpability. On the contrary, Japanese citizens began to see the war criminals themselves as victims: "More than ten million people supported the 1952 campaign petitioning for the release of war criminals. In the face of this surge of public opinion, the government commented that, "public sentiment in our country is that the war criminals are not criminals. Rather, they gather great sympathy as victims of the war, and the number of people concerned about the war crimes tribunal system itself is steadily increasing." Not only that, but visits to Sugamo to express support for the inmates by entertainers including dancing troupes, rakugo storytellers, and manzai comics, as well as 'Sugamo visitations' (Sugamo mode) by prefectural friendship societies, boomed."[12]

We cannot gauge the reaction of Japanese readers of *The American School* in 1954, but the inclusion of Yamada's candid acknowledgment of crimes against Chinese POWs is a severe indictment against not only

12 Awaya, K. "The Tokyo Tribunal, War Responsibility and the Japanese People" *Japan Focus: The Asia-Pacific Journal* 4.2 (2006) https://apjjf.org/-Awaya-Kentaro/2061/article.html accessed 20 June. 2019

the Tokyo War Tribunal verdict but also history textbooks that glossed over or simply erased any memory of the atrocities against other Asian peoples. Indeed, the wide support among Japanese of war criminals "amounted to forgetting about Article 11 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in which Japan accepted the verdicts of the Tokyo Tribunal and the B and C level tribunals."[13]

In this respect, it could be argued that *The American School* is Kojima's response to the holes in the historical textbooks. Fiction, in this sense, helps to fill in the gaps in the communal historical memory bank. Clearly Yamada is aware of the dangers posed by confessing his actions. Should the occupation forces know he murdered US POWs, it would jeopardize his chances of going to study in the United States. Had he truly believed in the martial spirit, as an ultranationalist, he would have fulfilled his duty of「玉砕」(or fight to the death). By revealing Yamada's self-centered conniving duplicity, Kojima paints him as someone akin to a comprador, a native agent in the employment of a foreign occupying power. Ironically, Yamada's concern with concealing the war crimes he carried out may not be founded. That is to say, militarists and ultranationalists initially purged by SCAP were, by 1948, returning to aid the US in suffocating the spread of Communism throughout Japan.

There are two events of historical importance lurking in the background to *The American School*. The first is the release in 1948 (the setting of the story) of several A-class war crime suspects, including Kishi Nobusuke, from Sugamo Prison. Prime minister Abe's grandfather Kishi Nobusuke represents better than anyone the US's reverse course. By now it is well documented, though not widely known, that Kishi was released from prison by the US because of his knowledge of China (he had single handedly controlled Japan's interests in

13 Ibid

Manchuria during the war) and because of his willingness to play ball with the US in solidifying an American military presence in Japan through the US/Japan Security Treaty signed in 1951. The next event of historical importance was the official transformation of the National Police Reserve into the Self Defense Force, which occurred in 1954, the same year *The American School* was published. That the date "1948" within the diegetic space of the story, and 1954, the date the story was published, are linked across space and time may be a coincidence. 1954 marks Japan's official (though controversial) remilitarization, and 1948 the release of Kishi and the beginning of the reverse course. Yet Kojima does not depict the power relationship between the U.S. and Japan as simply colonizer/colonized. The relationship is far more nuanced and complicated. Indeed, by including an African American G.I in the story Kojima puts an interesting spin on both the racial and political narrative. The education model of *The American School* is the democratization and introduction of liberal values. Yet the very same democratic values afforded the Japanese (such as voting rights for women) were being withheld from African Americans. This knowledge upsets the power dynamic in the story between the so-called "victors" and "vanquished". The black soldier fought on the side of the "winners", but what did he get out of it? Later, this question becomes a central issue with Dr. Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movements, particularly during the Vietnam War.

These contradictions between policy and reality, objective and outcome, are elevated by the character of Isa; aptly depicted as a "flying fish". It is Isa who is the main target of the shark Yamada because, as Michael Molasky argues, "Isa not only transgresses social protocol but exposes the unsuitability of prewar Japanese social mores to the demands of the new era."[14] "'*The American School*' often pits Isa against

14 Molasky, p.33

Yamada, presenting Yamada as the dauntless opportunist and Isa as the recalcitrant subversive. Yet both characters are defined in part by their awkward relationship to the English language."[15]

Interestingly, Kojima's military job as a code breaker may provide a key to the story. As mentioned above, in *The American School* he uses the number three, which appears at least six times. By using the number three, Kojima complicates any desire in the reader to simplify and reduce the occupation to comfortable binaries. The number three also signifies a liminal or "third space" between English and Japanese, and between the American School and the prefectural office (where the story begins). This third space between Japanese and English is most clearly depicted in both Isa and Yamada's role as interpreters for the occupation forces; they both fail miserably, but Isa does so out of contempt for the liberating US military. Yamada, on the other hand, a caricature of the quintessential "Japanese soldier" propagated by US war propaganda, is shameless in his poor mimicry. Michiko notices this at once: "Wasn't it curious that he (Yamada) pronounced certain words with a kind of Boston accent, others in a sort of Southern drawl, which was a little like mixing Kyushu speech with the slow country dialect of Aomori?" Yamada fulfills the part of the "useful idiot" ready to do his master's bidding, should it get him an advantage.

Finally, if the road the teachers take to the school metaphorically symbolizes the road to recovery, then the school itself represents the ultimate aim—namely an American style democratic system. This is easier said than done. The teachers are shocked to see young American boys and girls holding hands and petting at school. Moreover, the surprise and contempt at the wealth gap between the teachers' meager existence and the luxury of the school is palpable. Their contempt

15 Ibid, p.32

towards the Americans is compounded when the Principal Mr. Williams explains to them how the school was built and paid for with Japanese taxes, and is, if anything, inadequate for American standards, which are much higher. When the Japanese discover the American teachers receive ten times more salary, they all but abandon their posts. The final image of the teachers comical and yet poignant departure from the American School back along the paved road to the Prefectural Office is a reminder of the very "reverse course" both US and Japanese politicians made. It is that legacy Japan must face today. The Constitution of Japan is up for grabs, and the final outcome will be decided on the battleground of education.

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