

qualifying counter-arguments to this statement, I find the simple truth it presents with one broad stroke very stimulating. Pigeot's work is full of such moments.

Finally, the fact that two of the six books presented here are works of reception history is significant. Although both Emmerich and Mostow are uncomfortable with the passive connotations of the word "reception," Emmerich preferring "replacement" and Mostow preferring "appropriation," both works still draw their inspiration from viewing a text not as something fixed but as an event that happens in the act of reading and changes over time. Note that this is also the point of departure for Washburn's translation. Given the large number of reception histories that have emanated in particular from Columbia University,⁴ one can say this appears to have become a dominant line of inquiry in premodern Japanese literary studies. While Pigeot's work reminds us of the need to reach general audiences, all these works bear witness to the vital importance of translation for this field and to the contribution literary theory has made in deepening our perception of Heian literature.

SONJA ARNTZEN

University of Toronto
sonja.arntzen@utoronto.ca

Rethinking Japanese Resistance to Global Capitalist Modernity

Recasting Red Culture in Proletarian Japan: Childhood, Korea, and the Historical Avant-Garde. By SAMUEL PERRY. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014. xii, 228 pp. ISBN: 9780824875190 (paper, also available in cloth and as e-book).

Against Harmony: Progressive and Radical Buddhism in Modern Japan. By JAMES MARK SHIELDS. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. x, 404 pp. ISBN: 9780190664008 (cloth, also available as e-book).

The Sublime Perversion of Capital: Marxist Theory and the Politics of History in Modern Japan. By GAVIN WALKER. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016. xvi, 245 pp. ISBN: 9780822361411 (cloth, also available in paper and as e-book). doi:10.1017/S0021911818002784

In recent years, the project of socialism appears to have run out of steam. Since at least the 1990s, with the fall of the socialist bloc and China's turn to marketization, people have been discussing leftist melancholy, but now the situation is more serious.¹

⁴Haruo Shirane and Tomi Suzuki, eds., *Inventing the Classics: Modernity, National Identity, and Japanese Literature* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000); Patrick W. Caddeau, *Appraising Genji: Literary Criticism and Cultural Anxiety in the Age of the Last Samurai* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006); Haruo Shirane, ed., *Envisioning the Tale of Genji: Media, Gender, and Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

¹Enzo Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016). See also Helmut Dubiel, *Ungewißheit und Politik* [Uncertainty and Politics] (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994), chap. 1, where he uses the term "linke Trauerarbeit [leftist mourning]." I discuss Dubiel's use of the term in Viren Murthy, "Leftist Mourning: Civil Society and Political Practice in Hegel and Marx," *Rethinking Marxism* 11, no. 3 (1999): 36–55.

More than two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the socialist project has been so deeply rejected that in the place of leftist melancholy there appears to be nothing left to be melancholy about. The situation resembles the double forgetting that Heidegger discusses in the context of Being. Heidegger laments that we have not only forgotten Being, but have forgotten our act of forgetting, which makes any type of recovery seem impossible. In the context of socialism, forgetting is compounded by a discrediting that makes even attempts to remember resistance to capitalism appear futile. Leftists have often responded to these crises by attempting to recover lost socialist legacies. In Asian studies, one would expect to find such experiments in either Vietnam or more often China, and Japan does not appear to be a likely candidate for socialist legacies that speak to the present.

Specifically, if we look at Japan in the last two decades, it seems an unlikely place to find vestiges of resistance of capitalism. Indeed, from the 1960s until the 1990s, many took Japan to be the major US competitor in the global capitalist market. At most, Japan provided an example of an alternative form of capitalism rather than an alternative to capitalism. Indeed, even earlier, unlike China and Vietnam, Japan had no successful socialist revolution. One could even point to a kind of revolution envy some postwar Japanese leftist intellectuals felt when looking at China.²

There have of course been Japanese works on Japanese Marxism and leftist theory, but they did not engage theoretically with the present, an age of crises of socialism. In 1971, F. G. Notehelfer published *Kotoku Shusui: Portrait of a Radical* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), and in 1976, Gail Lee Bernstein published *Japanese Marxist: A Portrait of Kawakami Hajime, 1879–1946* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press). Both of these texts focus primarily on the Japanese context and highlight the tensions between tradition and modernity in these radical intellectuals. Both books are relatively sympathetic to the trajectories of radical thinkers, but they do not see much meaning beyond their immediate historical contexts.³

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, a few books on leftist thought in postwar Japan treated Japanese intellectual history and political theory as part of a larger global trend. One book representative of this trend is J. Victor Koschmann's *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*.⁴ Koschmann dealt with Marxist debates around subjectivity in postwar Japan, and contextualized the various positions in relation to larger theoretical concerns, especially then contemporary poststructuralist/liberal critiques of Marxist theory, such as the work of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau. Like many theorists

I analyze Traverso's work in relation to Dubiel's in Viren Murthy, "Conjuring Hope out of Leftist Melancholy: Thinking through Recent Scholarship on Neoliberalism and the Legacy of Socialism," *Journal of Labor and Society* 21, no. 2 (2018): 231–53.

²The term "revolution envy" was conveyed to me by the late Arif Dirlik, who jokingly used the term to describe leftist Japanese sinologists when I mentioned to him my interest in studying Takeuchi Yoshimi.

³From this perspective, Benjamin Schwartz's *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964) was prescient, since in it, Schwartz argued that Yen Fu's (mis)interpretation of liberalism as being a means to create a strong state revealed an internal contradiction in liberalism. Liberalism stressed the individual, but at the same time presupposed a state, and an intellectual such as Yen Fu experienced this contradiction much more viscerally standing on the periphery of global capitalist imperialism.

⁴J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

in the 1980s and especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Koschmann responded to Marxism by criticizing key Marxist concepts, such as the totality of capital or the idea of radical social transformation. Koschmann contended that Japanese Marxists were not able to grasp the possibilities of subjectivity because they held onto orthodox Marxist conceptions of totality and teleology, promoting the radical transformative agency of the working class over other identities. In this sense, he found the same failure that Laclau and Mouffe discovered in Western Marxism in postwar Japan. This maneuver reflects one form of leftist mourning, where one must let go of the lost object, namely Marxist practice and socialism as the overcoming of capitalism as a totality, and rethink leftist political goals.

However, today, approximately three decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall and China's entry into the global capitalist system of nation-states, capitalism continues to bring with it major crises, and the logic of capital has generally proved more powerful than various attempts at liberal and poststructuralist compromises. In light of such failures, the three books under review here turn to the intellectual history of Japanese leftist and Marxist theory to formulate a different response to leftist melancholy. They read Japanese radical literature and philosophy as containing an unfulfilled promise that could take the Marxist project beyond the legacy of actually existing socialist regimes. The three books discussed in this review each mediate the present with a specific Japanese past when intellectuals of various stripes struggled to find alternatives to capitalism. They treat Japanese history from the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa periods and show how practices at that time remain theoretically relevant to the present. In this way, the books stand out by bringing history and theory into conversation.

The three books are complementary, dealing with different movements but during overlapping periods. Gavin Walker's *The Sublime Perversion of Capital* investigates Japanese Marxist debates about capitalism in the Taisho and Showa periods; James Mark Shields's *Against Harmony* analyzes Buddhist radicals in the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa periods; and Samuel Perry's *Recasting Red Culture in Proletarian Japan* examines proletarian literature during the early Showa period. The three works each approach radical leftist politics in relation to different intellectual milieus and broach issues of philosophy, religion, and literature, while constantly engaging Marxist and poststructuralist theory. Rather than deal with these texts in terms of the chronological order of their objects of study, starting with the Meiji and ending in the Taisho, I will begin with Walker's book, since he deals with Marxist theory most broadly and suggests a framework conducive to understanding the other two works.

Stated simply, Walker's work concerns the incompleteness of subsumption under capitalism or the slippage between capital's own self-representation and its actual workings. As Harry Harootunian and Massimiliano Tomba have each recently posited, it is precisely in capital's incompleteness that we can theorize the possibility of resistance.⁵ Walker, Shields, and Perry underscore this possibility of resistance as they attempt to remember the future in Marxism, by focusing on how Marxists and leftists in Japan theorized the possibilities contained in capital's complex and fractured totality.

⁵Harry Harootunian, *Marx After Marx: History and Time in the Expansion of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); Massimiliano Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013).

Walker's *The Sublime Perversion of Capital* makes an important intervention in both Japanese intellectual history and Marxist theory.⁶ He begins the book by engaging with a key issue in Asian studies, namely the status of the West in Marxist theory. Does the West show the way to the rest according to Marx? In response, Walker cites a now well-known passage by Marx:

Events, strikingly analogous but occurring in different historical milieu, led to quite disparate results. By studying each of these evolutions on its own, and then comparing them, one will easily discover the key to the phenomenon, but it will never be arrived at by employing the all-purpose formula of a general historico-philosophical theory whose supreme virtue consists in being supra-historical. (Walker, p. 2, citing Marx's "Letter to Otechestvenniye Zapiski," 1877)

In the past few decades, Marxists have often relied on such passages to counter simple linear analyses of Marxist theory. Marx stresses historical specificity and a comparability that does not imply sameness. Walker uses the above text to underscore a distinction between capital's dream about itself and its perverse reality. In Walker's words: "Marx's point is not that every situation develops in the same way, but that there is a certain contemporaneity—not 'sameness'—that suffuses the world of capital (what I will later describe as capital's 'world of principle' or its own dream about itself)" (Walker, p. 2). Throughout the book, Walker highlights in different ways the distinction between capital's dream and reality, which entails a difference between contemporaneity and sameness. Contemporaneity concerns the problem of time—two events are contemporaneous if they happen at the same time. In this vision, time is purely formal and could contain radically different events. But Walker writes of the "coexistence and contemporaneity of divergent modalities of development *within* the same overall world-trajectory" (Walker, p. 3). Divergent modalities of development entail some type of homology at a higher level of abstraction, since they are all modalities of *development*. But more importantly, they are all parts of the same overall world-trajectory, which implies that time is not merely formal, but develops or unfolds in history. It is from this perspective that Marx says to his German readers, although his work studies the English case, "De te fabula narrator! (It is of you that this story is told.)" In other words, Germany must also be thought of in relation to the same world historical trajectory as England—a different modality of the development of global capitalism.

Walker skillfully outlines the consequences of the above framework for area studies by bringing Japan into the picture. He claims that his own book about Japanese debates about Marxism from the 1920s to the postwar period are not just about Japan, but have global relevance. Walker explains:

I would like to try to approach the "facts" of the debate on Japanese capitalism but in such a way as to emphasize above all else their function as theoretical concepts, as tools and as general problems for us as well, to remind us when we read

⁶From this essay, readers will get a sense that I am generally sympathetic with Walker's project. However, I am not in total agreement with his position. I have voiced some criticisms in a review devoted to his book. See Viren Murthy, review of *The Sublime Perversion of Capital: Marxist Theory and the Politics of History in Modern Japan*, by Gavin Walker, *Monumenta Nipponica* 73, no. 1 (2018): 119–26.

Noro Eitarō, Yamada Moritarō, Uno Kōzō, and others, that as Marx reminds the German reader of *Capital*, the “setting or scenario may be unfamiliar, but “it is of you that the story is told!” (*De te fabula narrator*”). (Walker, p. 16)

The above passage exemplifies a new trend that the three books under review collectively embody: they do not relegate Japanese leftist thought merely to the past or to a particular region, but theorize such thought as global. Walker has inverted Marx’s original formulation, which has the effect of de-provincializing Marxism. Now rather than the advanced country showing the way to the less developed, an Asian country is the example of capitalism, even for Western countries.

Walker’s book is animated by Uno Kōzō’s claim that it is impossible to commodify labor power. The historical setting for Uno’s proclamation is set by the debate around the origins of Japanese capitalism during the 1920s and 1930s, featuring the Japanese Marxists of the Lecture Faction (*kōza ha*) and the Labor-Farmer Faction (*rōnō ha*). The debate concerned whether Japan had transitioned to capitalism after the Meiji Restoration. Put simply, the theorists from the Labor-Farmer Faction argued that such a transition had taken place, while those from the Lecture Faction contended that Japan had not yet overcome its feudal remnants, and consequently its transition to capitalism remained incomplete. At first glance, this debate might appear to be geographically specific, but one could point to numerous similar debates in India and China, and of course the famous Dobbs-Sweezy debate of the 1940s and the Brenner debate of the 1970s. These debates concerning transition suggest that theorists in capitalist societies are constantly concerned with how their own societies came into being.

On Walker’s reading, capital can never completely come to be and is always a process. Uno grasped this problem of completion and outlined a theory of capitalism that showed that capital could never subsume its outside without a remainder. He argues that it is impossible (*muri* 無理) for capital to commodify labor, and yet, in capitalist society, capital repeatedly passes through this impossibility (Walker, p. 116). In other words, capital commodifies labor but this commodification cannot be complete because, unlike other commodities, capital cannot produce labor-power. Nonetheless, capital needs labor to produce the other commodities. In this critical juncture, capital needs supplements such as nation-states and other so-called extra-economic apparatuses, which might be confused with non-capitalist remnants.

Walker’s reading of Uno has political consequences that are relevant to Shields’s and Perry’s works. Specifically, he shows how Uno overturns the previous stage-based politics of the Lecture Faction and the Labor-Farmer Faction. In their view, the debate about the transition to capitalism during the Meiji Restoration concerned whether Japan needed one or two revolutions to achieve socialism. The Lecture Faction argued that because the Meiji Restoration left feudal remnants, Japan needed to undergo two revolutions: a bourgeois revolution to complete the task of the Meiji Restoration, and then a socialist revolution to overcome capitalism. The Labor-Farmer Faction and Uno’s development of some of its ideas led to a political project beyond stage theory. Walker’s reading of Uno suggests a politics of the impossible, namely mobilizing against capitalism those elements of society that capital cannot completely subsume. From this perspective, we can rethink the nature of class struggle in relation to both capitalism and the logic of the nation-state as a supplement of capital. Capital uses the nation-state to aid in commodifying and disciplining labor, but because such processes are incomplete, they may harbor sites of resistance and new communal imaginaries that point beyond capitalism.

Walker's reading of Marx and Uno is clearly influenced by major European philosophers, such as Jacques Derrida, as evidenced by terms such as the "supplement." Capital appears as a totality that must be deconstructed to understand a world beyond such a totality. In Walker's view, Uno's work points the way to such a deconstruction because he shows that capital's totality is based on a dream of commodifying labor. Consequently, emancipation from capitalism implies first breaking free from the illusory world of capital, so that we can dream differently from it. At this point, Walker's discourse appears to overlap with Buddhist critiques of reification, which allows us to transition to Shields's impressive work, *Against Harmony: Progressive and Radical Buddhism in Modern Japan*.

At first sight, it might appear strange to discuss Buddhism in an essay on Marxism, and Shields's book tackles this problem directly right from the start. He begins by citing Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*, where Lévi-Strauss explicitly compares Buddhism and Marxism: "Between Marxist criticism which sets Man free from his first chains and Buddhist criticism, which completes that liberation, there is neither opposition nor contradiction. Marxism and Buddhism are doing the same thing, but at different levels" (Shields, p. 2). Shields explains that in Lévi-Strauss's view Buddhism connects individual contentment and social justice or subjectivity and social transformation.

Shields's book carefully outlines a history of Buddhists from Meiji to early Showa Japan who engaged with radical politics or Marxism. In this sense, Shields's work helps us to understand why later Japanese Marxists, such as Umemoto Katsumi, were interested in Buddhism as a way of combining subjectivity and Marxist analysis of social structures.⁷ However, by opening with Lévi-Strauss's text, Shields makes a gesture similar to Walker's, namely to show that Japanese Buddhist-inspired radicals should not be of mere historical interest; rather such radicals are our contemporaries.

Indeed, Walker's critique of stage theory opens a space to rethink the contributions of many of the Buddhist radicals on whom Shields focuses. The six chapter titles in Shields's book give a good sense of the overall scope of the book. They are: "The Many Faces of Meiji Buddhist Enlightenment," "Unification and Spiritual Activism: Murakami and Manshi," "Warp and Woof: The New Buddhist Discovery of Society," "Zen and the Art of Treason: Renegade Priests of Late Meiji," "Anarcho-Buddhist Utopia: Taishō Tolstoyans," and "Extremes Meet: Radical Buddhists in Early Shōwa." As the titles suggest, the various chapters focus on numerous figures in the intellectual history of Japanese Buddhism, including key figures of the Meiji such as Kiyozawa Manshi (1863–1903), Inoue Enryō (1858–1919), and Murakami Senshō (1851–1929). However, I will focus on Shields's treatment of the Taisho and Showa periods, since it is in these cases that we see Japanese thinkers connecting Buddhism explicitly to socialism and Marxism in ways relevant to the critique of stages and teleology.

In the introduction to his book, Shields observes that he outlines a history of modernist Buddhism, which generally was critical of capitalist modernity. Invoking the art historian T. J. Clark, Shields contends that modernists harbored an "undecidable double-ness" towards modernity. In line with the sociologist Imamura Hitoshi, Shields defines modernity as entailing the following:

⁷See Viren Murthy, "Umemoto Katsumi, Subjective Nothingness and the Critique of Civil Society," in *Confronting Capital and Empire: Rethinking Kyoto School Philosophy*, eds. Viren Murthy, Fabian Schäfer, and Max Ward (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 263–88. For a more general discussion of Umemoto and the debates around subjectivity, see J. Victor Koschmann, "Philosophy and the Lacuna in Marxism," in *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 88–149.

1. A mechanistic view of the world; 2. an emphasis on rational systemic methods of production and construction, and on the supposed autonomy of individuals; 3. An emphasis on systemized, citizen-based societies and governments; 4. The reduction of all human activities to 'labor'; 5. A homogenous and linear progressive sense of time. (Shields, p. 8)

The final point in the above list shows how modernity's dream of itself was partially written by modernization theorists, who historically legitimated its advent.

Walker's book shows how Uno read Marx against the Lecture Faction's reading, which anticipated modernization theory, implying that Japan had to transition from feudalism to capitalism before attaining socialism. However, once we have broken that teleological view, it opens a space to make positive use of so-called remnants from the past and specifically, agricultural forms of community. In chapter 5, entitled "Anarcho-Buddhist Utopia," Shields points out how Japanese Buddhists during the late Meiji and early Taisho periods drew on Tolstoy and the Russian populists to develop agrarian visions of the future. He focuses on figures such as Eto Tekirei (1880–1944) and the more famous Miyazawa Kenji (1896–1933).

The agrarian visions of such thinkers could be read in light of Marx's exchange with the Russian populist Vera Zasulich, who asked Marx whether Russia must pass through capitalism before struggling for socialism. Marx drafted numerous responses, and in one draft he argued that Russia could draw on the Russian *mir* or agricultural communes to develop a vision of socialism. This letter dislocates the non-capitalist remnant from a linear vision of history and endows it with the potential to point to a future beyond capitalism. In this way, Marx allows an uncanny connection between the pre and the post of capitalism, a nonlinear link between past and future in which the key catalyst is practice.

Perhaps the most famous realization of such an agricultural vision was Mao Zedong's (1893–1976), but Shields points out that about fifty years before the Chinese revolution of 1949, Uchiyama Gudō "saw redemption for Japan in the fields rather than the cities" (Shields, p. 171). Eto and Miyazawa each developed such ideas further in interesting ways. Shields reproduces Eto's diagram detailing how various aspects of agricultural life would come together to overcome the boundaries between labor, philosophy, art, religion, society, and politics (Shields, p. 186). This again has echoes of Mao's famous attempt to undermine the distinction between mental and manual labor.

Despite the possible marriage between Marxism and Buddhism, Shields is aware of the problems facing such a project. Marx identified the specter of a postcapitalist world or communism haunting the world in the nineteenth century, but by the late twentieth century, we could add that two specters constantly haunt radical politics, namely liberalism and fascism. Anti-capitalist politics constantly risks either dwindling into recreating the status quo, with mild adjustments—liberalism—or promoting extreme forms of nationalism and a state that forcibly suppresses opposition—fascism. Shields notes that both problems occurred in Japan and clearly many Japanese fascists, like their German counterparts, were enamored by the rural communes. The question that Shields poses at the end of his book concerns how Marxism could incorporate the Buddhist emphasis on subjectivity, while avoiding the pitfalls of acquiescing to the status quo or promoting authoritarian forms of community. He underscores the primacy of transforming material structures as part of what Marx calls human emancipation (Shields, pp. 255–56), but we could supplement this point with an emphasis on the role of the proletariat and labor, which postwar Japanese Marxists stressed. The problem of course concerns whether an emphasis on class would make us return to a teleological version of Marxism.

Walker's answer is already in the negative, and so is that of the next author I will consider, Perry and his *Recasting Red Culture in Proletarian Japan: Childhood, Korea, and the Historical Avant-Garde*.

Following from my discussion of Walker's and Shields's respective works, I have underscored the problems of remnants, unevenness, and subjectivity in capitalist modernity in Japan. Perry's work on proletarian culture in modern Japan continues many of these themes. The three main chapters of the book show how Marxists experimented with literary forms to deal with subjectivity and unevenness as they are embedded in issues of childhood, gender, and colonialism. In what follows, I will focus on a specific theme, namely, in the past few decades, there has been what Ellen Wood calls a "retreat from class" in leftist theory, and we see this to a large extent within radical and Marxist theory itself.⁸ Perry addresses this problem in the preface of his book, where he notes the recent popularity of proletarian writer Kobayashi Takiji. He opines:

To some, the term "proletarian" might speak to a time and place out of tune with the post-glasnost consumer society in which much of the world lives today now that the great proletarian revolutions of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China have collapsed into the vulgar excesses of the neoliberal marketplace. *Recasting Red Culture* is written with the conviction that important connections can still be made between Takiji's moment and that of our own, and that something meaningful remains to be gained from looking back at Japan's long-forgotten revolutionary traditions. (Perry, p. x)

Perry's gesture meshes with Walker's citing of Marx's "the story is told of you"; however, Perry highlights the term "proletarian," which directly implies class struggle. The authors of proletarian literature were contemporaneous with the Marxist theorists that Walker discusses in his book and also some of the Buddhists mentioned in Shields's work. Moreover, they resist the Lecture Faction's idea that Japan needed two revolutions. During the first decade of the Showa period (1926–89), the proletarian writers promoted class consciousness to create socialist revolution. Perry's book examines this political project by focusing on types of literature that have not been adequately discussed, including children's literature, fairy tales, wall literature, and colonial literature.

An excellent example of how proletarian writers staged class in children's stories emerges in the beginning of chapter 2, where Perry discusses Arai Mitsuko's story "Shōkichi's Tears." The story was published in 1932, in *Hataraku Fujin*, a key proletarian journal published by the underground Communist Party and in violation of Special Higher Police prohibitions on proletarian journals for children (Perry, p. 13). The story concerns grade-school children playing a game in which some act as striking workers and others as the police. Shōkichi, a working-class boy, ends up playing a striking worker who is captured by the police and is asked to divulge the hideout of his fellow strikers. Despite eventually being beaten and bullied, he refuses to divulge his fellow strikers' secret hideout.

The story clearly bleeds various levels of fictional and real narratives into one another. On the one hand, to readers of the time, the whole story might echo the manner in which the police forcefully shut down the publication of proletarian fiction for children. Then within the fictional narrative, there is a theatrical structure of a game, in which the

⁸Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat from Class: A New "True" Socialism* (London: Verso, 1999).

students play roles that require them to hold their real lives in abeyance. However, as the game progresses, the class identity of the students bleeds into the game and, consequently, it turns violent. Shōkichi's refusing to yield under power becomes a heroic expression of class consciousness, which symbolizes working-class morality in real life. Perry reflects on Arai's story by making the following perspicacious remark: "Arai's child figure reflects both a widespread idealization of childhood in general and a simultaneous, class-consciousness awareness that poor children, whether consciously or not, were active participants in a broader class struggle" (Perry, p. 14).

Perry speaks here of a class-consciousness awareness of schoolchildren, who themselves may not be aware or conscious of their role in class struggle. This perspective brings out the complexities of the concept of class as both subjective (for itself) and objective (in itself). The story shows a child in the process of becoming conscious of class through the practice of acting a role that involves resistance. The game frames questions concerning class solidarity, law, and institutions, which Shōkichi resists through evoking a different standard that could point the way to new institutions.

Perry returns to the problems of class, consciousness, and the general structure of society in the third chapter, where he echoes the point he makes in the preface, but this time complicating the picture. In this final chapter, he cogently responds to recent postcolonial critics of Japanese proletarian literature who claim that such authors, and the famous writer Nakano Shigeharu, focused on class to the detriment of other identities, such as national identity. For example, recent authors have claimed that Nakano could not understand the importance of Korean identity for the Korean workers in Japan. Perry begins by asserting that such a claim is anachronistic because it forces Nakano to respond to concerns about identity that became dominant only after the 1980s (Perry, pp. 140–41). However, he does not stop at this classic historical gesture, which could hermetically seal Nakano from our times, making him interesting but irrelevant because class struggle has already been superseded. On the contrary, Perry brings Nakano in dialogue with modern discussions of class by reading Nakano's essays written in the late 1920s and early 1931. Nakano's words are ambiguous and worth following carefully:

The specific mission of workers' unions and the specific mission of student groups cannot be different *essentially speaking*. Even if there are differences in their missions, this is not a matter of essence, but rather of particularity. It is a matter of the particularities of both the working class and the student positions on the lines of the class struggle. (cited in Perry, p. 144, emphasis Perry)

At first glance, readers could jump to the conclusion that Nakano did not see an essence to the various groups, since he appears to equate the student groups' mission with that of the working class, even though student groups at any given moment might have goals that differ from those of the working class. However, Perry shows that Nakano makes a theoretical point about the nature of capitalist society, which entails that movements interact dialectically. This is clearly explained in a citation by Barbara Foley that Perry includes in a footnote:

To posit the centrality of class struggle in effecting fundamental social transformation is not tantamount to saying that all social processes are effluxes of the class contradiction and can be unproblematically collapsed into it. To be sure, social reality is comprised of multiple contradictions that are not all mediations

of one grand contradiction. But to concede this point is not to conclude that there is only contingency (a favored neo-Marxist analytical term) overdetermination. To posit the centrality of class struggle is to assert that—as long as we inhabit class society—class struggle is essence (yes *essence*—) determining for the social formation as a whole, and that the form taken by other contradictions is shaped and delimited by the configuration of the dominant class contradiction. (cited in Perry, p. 196n58)

Foley provides a theoretical ground to read Nakano as arguing that student movements and workers' movements are not essentially different because, at the level of totality, working-class struggle is the essence for both, and the student movement must understand its relation to the workings of capital. The key point is that as long as a society is capitalist, there are certain constraints placed on all institutions and movements. Indeed, if "the form taken by other contradictions is shaped" by the dominant class contradiction, then this dominant contradiction or the form of capitalist society mediates all other institutions and contradictions. It is in this context that we can understand the manner in which universities have recently faced radical budget cuts in areas that do not appear to profit capital.

There are of course different types of student movements, and a discussion of the specific nature of the student movements to which Nakano referred goes beyond Perry's work, but such movements would need to connect their key concepts—be they freedom (academic or otherwise), equity, or other ideals—to the dynamics of capital. Nakano aimed to create a unified vision that allowed for division without being divisive.

Walker's, Shields's, and Perry's respective books together illuminate the complexities of leftist political culture from Meiji through early Showa Japan and show how the concerns of such theorists and activists are not merely of historical interest, but constitute our present. The key logic that connects the themes of these three texts (e.g., class struggle and creation of a socialist world) is, of course, the logic of capital, which Walker's work analyzes through reading Uno and other Japanese Marxists. Walker's idea of the *muri* or impossibility and necessity of commodifying labor power in capitalist society could be fruitfully combined with Perry's and Shields's respective works. It is indeed this complex dialectic between impossibility and necessity that mediates capitalist society and makes it such that labor and subjectivity cannot be completely subsumed by capital. Perry has adroitly shown how Nakano and other proletarian writers turn literature into a catalyst for workers' subjectivity and class consciousness. Turning to Shields, given that a key concept in Walker's reading of Uno is the idea of impossibility or *muri*, which Walker himself separates into *mu*, negation or nothingness, and *ri*, pattern or rationality, one might ask about the *mu* in *muri* and the concept of *mu* or nothingness in Buddhism. How would the irrational kernel of capitalism that Uno and Walker identify relate to the emptiness that was often used as a heuristic device to overcome all types of reification?⁹ By reading Walker, Shields, and Perry together, one might conjecture that to realize enlightenment in the Buddhist sense, namely attain a world of compassion beyond egoism and in which emptiness implies our interconnectedness (à la Buddhism), we would need to *muri* (reading *mu* as a verb 理を無くす), to negate the logic (*ri*) of

⁹I have made a preliminary attempt to connect Buddhism and Marxism through focusing on nothingness and consciousness in my book on the Chinese revolutionary Zhang Taiyan. See Viren Murthy, *The Political Philosophy of Zhang Taiyan: The Resistance of Consciousness* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), esp. chap. 4.

capitalism, which would in turn require us to revive and rethink proletarian movements of the past. This is an extremely pressing message for our present, where capitalism is simultaneously proving unsustainable and providing the conditions for various right-wing reactions around the globe.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express thanks to the Berggruen Institute of Philosophy and Culture and the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Education, with funding from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, for their generous support during the writing of this essay.

VIREN MURTHY
 University of Wisconsin–Madison
vmurthy2@wisc.edu

Buddhas and Ancestors: Religion and Wealth in Fourteenth-Century Korea. By JUHN Y. AHN. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018. xv, 243 pp. ISBN: 9780295743394 (paper, also available in cloth and as e-book).
 doi:10.1017/S0021911818002796

A change of dynasties often attracts the attention of scholars and historians, who typically generate a plethora of theories and explanations for the change. Because this type of dynastic change was comparatively rare in Korea's history, the fourteenth-century transition from Koryŏ (918–1392) to Chosŏn (1392–1910) truly stands out as a unique moment in the country's history. It was also enormously consequential to the history of Korean Buddhism. Increasingly sharp criticisms were leveled at the Buddhist establishment in the late Koryŏ period, with attacks coming from a small but growing number of scholar-officials who were apparently influenced by the neo-Confucian teachings that had been recently introduced from China. With the inauguration of a new dynasty, and as the ranks of these reformist officials grew and their political power expanded, a process ensued of eradicating state support of Buddhism and curtailing the religion's power and prestige. Especially noteworthy was a gradual shift within elite circles concerning ritual practices to honor their ancestors: traditional Buddhist funerary practices and memorial rites for the ancestors were replaced by the (slightly modified) neo-Confucian rituals as prescribed by Zhu Xi.

Juhn Ahn's *Buddhas and Ancestors* takes aim at the dominant historical narratives regarding the role of Buddhism in the demise of Koryŏ and the birth of Chosŏn. Ahn identifies "three prevailing assumptions" that have characterized previous studies on the subject (p. 10). The first is that the anti-Buddhist movement was motivated by ideology, or what he calls at one point "ideological conversion to Cheng-Zhu learning" (p. 122). This Confucianization argument, he claims, "mistakenly confuses agent with subject" by assuming that the historical actors were driven by ideological commitments in their attempts at social reform (p. 10). The second assumption is that concrete social concerns, rather than ideology, were responsible for the changing attitudes. The more established elite families (*sejok*), according to this theory, sought to distance themselves from the rise of new powerful social elements (*kwŏnmun*) who used Buddhism in their quest to gain