



Article

Itsuki Hiroyuki's *Farewell to Moscow Misfits* and Entertainment Strategies: Middlebrow Novels, Jazz Novels, and Repatriates

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Abstract: This paper addresses writer Itsuki Hiroyuki's 1966 debut novel *Farewell to Moscow Misfits* through the lens of middlebrow novels, jazz novels, and repatriates. This novel draws from Itsuki's personal experience being repatriated from colonial Korea after the war and visiting the Soviet Union in the mid-1960s. *Farewell* was unique for its time in representing jazz, music, and youth "stilyagi" counterculture in the Soviet Union. This counterculture movement was roughly contemporaneous with the student movement of the 1960s in Japan. This period also saw the popularization of the "middlebrow novel"—an ambiguous term that was used to describe literature outside of the established pure/popular dichotomy. These amorphous "middlebrow" works allow us to read some of the cultural dynamics of the 1960s. Itsuki published many of his early works in so-called middlebrow magazines, not "pure" literary journals. Itsuki himself claimed that his works were neither pure literature nor popular literature; they were simply "entertainment". He placed his works in relation to jazz, the circus, and *enka*. His unique views on cultural production and media emerged from his repatriation experiences and his encounter with Russian culture. This paper examines not only genre conventions in literature but also Itsuki's objections to the pure/popular literary structure, as well as his place in cultural representations of the 1960s.

Keywords: Japanese literature; Itsuki Hiroyuki; entertainment; middlebrow novels; jazz; colonizers; repatriates; *déraciné*



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1. Introduction

Modern Japanese literature witnessed the arrival of "mass" or "popular" literature (*taishū bungaku*) in the 1920s. Since that time, Japanese literature has been subject to a kind of map of literary styles that is divided along the borders of "pure" literature (*jun bungaku*) and "popular" literature. When popular literature first appeared, this term typically indicated historical fiction. The term eventually developed to include popular novels or mystery novels (specifically detective fiction). Today, the term is nearly synonymous with what we would call "entertainment novels"—essentially genre fiction—including science fiction. Of course, we might say the same process applies to the term "pure literature" as well. From its emergence in the 1920s opposite popular literature, pure literature has experienced an even greater transformation in its literary form than what might be found in the works referred to broadly as popular literature. In either case, transformations in novelistic content and genres over time reflect shifts within the production side of literature: namely authors and media. These shifts—and their relationship with media—are adjoined to questions of how we might be able to uncover the contemporaneous literary interests of people living in a given era.

This article explores the relationship between media and literary production in the 1960s in Japan through the works of Itsuki Hiroyuki (1932–), particularly early novels such

as his 1966 debut, *Farewell to Moscow Misfits* (*Saraba Mosukuwa gurentai*). Itsuki continues to be known today in Japan as a best-selling author. When he made his literary debut, Japan was in the midst of its postwar period of high economic growth, a time when the term “middlebrow” (*chūkan*) was on everyone’s mind. Cultural critic Katō Hidetoshi released his book *Middlebrow Culture* (*Chūkan bunka*) in 1957. Katō contends that Japanese culture can be broken down into three periods that move progressively from a focus on high culture to popular culture.¹ In his moment, at the end of the 1950s, Katō saw “the contemporary period being one of middlebrow culture,” and that the bearers of this “expansion of a middle culture or society would bring about a new class of citizen” (Katō 1980, pp. 259, 247). The “bearers” in this case are the postwar generation, which would include Katō and Itsuki. The literary atmosphere of the 1960s included renewed attention paid to the literary term “middlebrow novel”, which had originally appeared during the Allied Occupation of Japan in the immediate postwar period. Itsuki published *Farewell* in 1966 in the middlebrow literary magazine *Novels Today* (*Shōsetsu gendai*), which had been established not long before Itsuki’s literary debut. He soon became known as an author who could draw especially well from younger demographics.

The focus of this paper will be on Itsuki’s discourse, the origins of that discourse, and how his thought and style can be read as an entertainment strategy that mediates his jazz novels. There are any number of older studies and critiques that address Itsuki’s early works, Ueda Yasuo’s 1972 *Itsuki Hiroyuki: Traveler Under the Midnight Sun* (*Byakuya no tabibito: Itsuki Hiroyuki*), Komashaku Kimi’s 1977 *A Stranger’s Soul: How to Read Itsuki Hiroyuki* (*Zatsumin no tamashii: Itsuki Hiroyuki wo dō yomu ka*), and Tsukuda Jitsuo’s 1979 *Itsuki Hiroyuki’s Aesthetics* (*Itsuki Hiroyuki no bigaku*), for example. Among these, Komashaku offers a particularly effective study of his term “stranger” (*zatsumin*) and its relation to Itsuki’s thought regarding *déraciné* (*derashine*)—or deracination—and being castaway (*hyōryū*), two ideas that will be explored later in this paper. In the last two decades or so, Shimura Kunihiro edited the volume *Itsuki Hiroyuki: Mania and Déraciné* (*Itsuki Hiroyuki: fūkyō to derashine*) in 2003, which includes a rich bibliography of Itsuki’s own writing as well as secondary research. In 2005, Mike Molasky released *Postwar Japan and Jazz Culture: Film, Literature, Underground* (*Sengo Nihon no jazu bunka: eiga, bungaku, angura*), which offers a riveting theorization of Itsuki’s early jazz novels and the musical details therein. Some academic analyses have appeared more recently that touch on Itsuki’s works, for example Kobayashi Mizuno’s 2015 article “The Postwar Phases of Itsuki Hiroyuki: Colonial Korea, Repatriates, and *Déraciné*” (*Sengo Nihon ni okeru Itsuki Hiroyuki no isō: shokuminchi Chōsen, hikiage, ‘déraciné’*). Despite an abundance of book reviews and summaries, however, there is a relative dearth of serious academic considerations of Itsuki’s prolific body of work.

Although this essay builds upon earlier studies, I also feel that there are certain investigations to be made when looking ahead to future studies of Itsuki’s literature and thought: the relationality between Itsuki’s early experience as a repatriate from the postwar Korean peninsula, the influence that experience had on his thought, and the later position he takes to argue in favor of an entertainment-forward strategy for literary production. The 1960s are well known as the era of the 1960 Anpo protests and the late-60s student movement. Yet this period is also one that is overlaid with the development of a new widespread culture embodied by the ambiguous terms “middlebrow culture” and “middlebrow novels”. In this light, there seems to be a close connection between the formal objections being levied by the youth of this period and this amorphous cultural and literary surge. The essential goal here is to reveal the way Itsuki’s novels grasped that cultural swell and answer the question of how it came to be that so many young readers became avid readers of Itsuki’s works. This essay answers these questions by examining Itsuki’s debut jazz novel *Farewell to Moscow Misfits* through the lens of his repatriation experience and his stance on entertainment in relation to the middlebrow novel.

2. A Declaration of Entertainment and Middlebrow Novels

The latter half of the 1960s in Japan was an era defined by the *Zenkyōtō* student movement. The movement expressed students' dissatisfaction with their universities' inability to respond to demands for the popularization of higher education while fighting against bolstered university administration, mass-produced education, and tuition hikes. At its peak, roughly 1968 to 1969, the movement saw struggles stretch to 165 universities nationwide, with 70 being barricaded by students. This period drew influence from the many contemporaneous, student-led, anti-establishment political movements emerging globally, such as France's May 68, Japan's domestic anti-Vietnam war movement, or the Chinese Cultural Revolution. In Japan, this period has been called the "Season of Politics".

This period, however, simultaneously marks Japan's entry into a new phase of mass consumer society within the postwar period of high economic growth. Within the literary domain, so-called "middlebrow novels" (*chūkan shōsetsu*) gained popularity and began to grace the pages of established literary magazines. Broadly defined, these middlebrow novels blended the artistic qualities of "pure" literature with the amusement of popular literature. Although the term "middlebrow" has come into popular usage, its precise meaning remains elusive. In some sense, it is a way of describing those many novels produced in this period that cannot be neatly categorized within the conventional pure/mass dichotomy previously used to describe modern Japanese fiction.

The term "middlebrow novel" itself first appeared in the latter half of the 1940s. Coined by novelist and literary critic Hayashi Fusao; the term emerged because "novelistic novels" failed to appear during the immediate postwar period, a moment when literary works were still divided into "pure literature" and "popular reading" (*taishū yomimono*) (Hayashi 1949, p. 1). Fellow writer and critic Nakamura Mitsuo also described middlebrow works around this time as "interesting novels that have an artistic character and exist between either pure or popular literature" (Nakamura 1949, p. 34). We can find here an origin to the phenomenon in the late 1940s, yet the middlebrow novel will not truly flourish until the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1962, the major publisher Kōdansha discontinued their popular literature-focused magazine *Kōdansha Club* (*Kōdansha kurabu*) and established a new magazine *Novels Today* (*Shōsetsu gendai*). Along with publisher Bungei Shunjū's *All Reading* (*Ōru yomimono*), which began publishing in 1931, and Shinchōsha's *Shinchō Novels* (*Shōsetsu shinchō*), which began publishing in 1947, *Novels Today* became one of the three pillars of middlebrow novels. Similar magazines appeared in rapid succession: *Novel Gems* (*Shōsetsu hōseki*) in 1966, *Issue Novels* (*Mondai shōsetsu*) in 1969, and *Sunday Mainichi Novels* (*Shōsetsu sandē mainichi*) in 1971. These were all seen as fiction-focused literary magazines that catered to the middlebrow novel. Considering these historical conditions, there are some that see the middlebrow novel as a variation on mass literature, whereas others see it as a form characterized by an incomparable ability to whip up reader interest.

Komatsu Shinroku, a scholar of German literature, described this situation in an *Asahi Shimbun* article in 1964:

The postwar "middlebrow novel"—so christened by Hayashi Fusao—was originally conceived of as an ideal form which might search out an amalgamation of popular literature and "pure" literature, which is simply another name for the works produced by the literary establishment. In reality, however, it was precisely the popular "reading material" (*yomimono*) texts produced by the literary establishment that became known as middlebrow novels—what critic Takami Jun described as "works for sale" (*uri-e*) rather than these authors' "pure" works which were intended as texts for "exhibition" (*tenrankai yō*). Yet if this is true, we might say that it is actually popular literature, which has changed little in terms of its entertainment value, that constitutes middlebrow novels. (Komatsu 1964)

Alternatively, writer Nakada Kōji wrote in 1968:

The current middlebrow novel boom could certainly be called the result of a hysteric, mass hedonism. . . . A remarkable trend can be seen in these recent middlebrow novels. We find sexuality as a matter of convention, or rather, an expansion of sexualized phenomena within conventions. (Nakada 1968)

There was a tendency to identify middlebrow novels, which had already become closely associated with terms such as “entertainment,” “mass,” or “popular literature,” as anything other than pure literature. Certain aspects of the above remarks—“entertainment value” or “a hysteric, mass hedonism,” for example—can be read as a contrary transformation of novels and culture. Despite this growing consensus, these novels found a large readership in the late 1960s. They spawned numerous bestsellers and entered mass-production. Itsuki is one author who is representative of this shift.

Itsuki Hiroyuki was awarded the sixth Shōsetsu Gendai Award for Best New Writer in 1966 for his novel *Farewell to Moscow Misfits* (*Saraba Mosukuwa gurentai*). The following year, his novel *Look at the Pale Horse* (*Aozameta uma wo miyo*) was awarded the 56th Naoki Prize, the most prestigious literary award for popular fiction. These two works first appeared in the magazines *Contemporary Novels* (*Gendai shōsetsu*, June 1966) and *The Bungei Shunjū Supplement* (*Bessatsu Bungei Shunjū*, January 1967), respectively. Both magazines were seen as middlebrow, and Itsuki arrived on the scene as a newspaper and magazine media darling, a newcomer saddled with sky high expectations. Itsuki would go on to win numerous literary awards—such as the 10th Yoshikawa Eiji Award in 1976 for his novel *Gate of Youth* (*Seishun no mon*)—and was widely known as an author putting out successive best sellers. According to research by Nagasawa Toshio, Itsuki’s works sold about thirteen million copies in 1971 alone, even though very few young readers at the time were thought to have been reading novels (Nagasawa 1972).

And yet, Itsuki himself, a writer who debuted in the pages of these middlebrow literary magazines and won awards for what were seen as middlebrow works, chose not to use the term middlebrow to describe his novels. Rather, he saw them as “entertainment”. He describes his thinking in the afterword to *Farewell*:

I, of course, did not write these works with any intention of creating literature. The dream I had was to express the personal sense of resistance I had to that peculiar era we called the 1960s and to then release those thoughts as entertainment—as commercial journalism. I hoped to give a reality that had so often gone unobserved and “discriminated” against a legitimate right to exist. Things symbolized by jazz in Russia, or pop songs in Japan. So I thought to myself, “Borrow from the entertainment form, lay out my complaints about the situation that surrounds me”. There is not a single thing in my novels that points to the extravagant, to some eternal subject. My subject was all of those things that were clinging to the *epidermis* of the 60s era, all of those things that should have vanished with the passage of time. (Itsuki 1974a, p. 253, emphasis in original)

This “Declaration of Entertainment” was a deliberate, conscious proclamation against literature. Itsuki’s appeal to “jazz in Russia” referred to the theme of his novel *Farewell*, whereas “pop songs in Japan” referred to the subject of his 1966 story “Enka” (*Enka*). This was not the jazz of America but of Soviet Russia; “pop” was not the guitar hits of the 60s but Japan’s crooning, traditional folk pop that found its genesis in the Meiji period. That is, the focus rests on music as popular art. This was not the refined literary activity we associate with high art but rather positively evaluating mass art through the media form of commercial journalism. In this way, Itsuki expressed his dissatisfaction with the 1960s era. But why turn to entertainment?

Although Itsuki became widely known as a writer after making his literary debut, he was also an active participant in the media world for nearly a decade after dropping out of his undergraduate studies at Waseda University. The *Dictionary of Modern Japanese Literature* (*Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten*) describes Itsuki, who was intimately familiar with the media and commercial journalism of his day, as a kind of answer to contemporary media prayers:

A winner of numerous literary and media prizes, Itsuki pioneered work in the field of mass communication. He was editor-in-chief of commercial and trade journals, radio producer for advertising agencies, editor of PR magazines, founder of a design firm, commercial song lyricist, and script author, among other duties. Itsuki authored reportage articles for the general interest magazine *Chijō*—edited by the *Ie no Hikari* group—worked as an in-house lyricist for Crown Records, and wrote musicals on contract for the Osaka Labor Music Council (*Osaka rōon*). (Ozaki 1977, p. 129)

What were Itsuki's thoughts on middlebrow novels? He saw the "middle" of middlebrow novels or middlebrow literary magazines as similar to the "middle" of the middle class or middle culture. "The 'middle' in these cases are not in fact fixed points," he wrote, "but amplitudes". He continued, "If we put this in terms of music, it is like the feeling of swing one gets from jazz" (Itsuki and Sakaki 1977, pp. 41–42). The term "middle culture," incidentally, has similar origins; it emerged in the mid-1950s to describe those aspects of mass culture that did not align with either high- or low-class culture.

Itsuki's Declaration of Entertainment was unique in that it actively rewrote the traditional structure of modern Japanese literature—which at the time was aiming to interpose "middlebrow" between the pure/popular dichotomy to establish a tripart pure/middle/popular literature—creating instead a pure/entertainment system. Unlike today, the very term "entertainment" was seen at the time as a vulgar description of a literary work. Itsuki goes on to write in his *Farewell* afterword:

... I don't see my works as either *middle* works or popular *literature*. I have intended to write entertainment novels that correspond to pure literature, or more simply: "reading materials" (*yomimono*). *Rakugo* is a kind of *speaking*, the Bolshoi Circus is a kind of *showing*. Chaplin was a *comedian*, Billie Holiday a *singer*, Thelonious Monk a *jazz man*. And they were nothing else. Literature has literary methods and literary thought. Likewise, "reading materials" have their own methods and ways of thinking. (Itsuki 1967, p. 241, emphasis in original)

This outline of pure literature/entertainment invites a larger structure beyond that which is divided into high literary art versus popular literary art while also resisting the very concept of a so-called "pure" literature. Moreover, it sets out "reading materials" as a kind of entertainment. In the paragraph that precedes the above quotation, Itsuki also writes, "I have tried to employ elements of entertainment such as catharsis and melodramatic structures, narrativized or stereotypical styles, not as the ends but as the means". The etymology of "entertainment" derives from Latin, a meaning that might roughly translate in English as "controlling inside the mind". The Japanese "entertainment" (*entateinmento*) arrived from the English as a loan word, but it has often been translated into the Japanese equivalent *goraku*. *Goraku* was originally a Buddhist term that indicated the peace of mind practitioners received from following Buddhist practices. Can we also say that the loan word "entertainment" describes an experience that imparts on a person some psychological or emotional value?

3. Itsuki's *Farewell to Moscow Misfits: A Jazz Novel Depicting 1960s Moscow*

Itsuki's early works often take music as their theme, with *Farewell*, the 1966 short story "GI Blues" (*GI burūsu*), the 1967 short story "Johnny, Watching the Sea" (*Umi wo mite ita jonii*), and the 1967 novel *The Young Ones Will Aim to Walk in the Wilderness* (*Seinen ha kōya wo mezasu*) being characterized today as "jazz novels". Mike Molasky, historian of Japanese jazz and literature, writes:

Itsuki Hiroyuki's representations of jazz music focused mostly on older styles, such as Dixieland or swing. We can see this clearly through the songs he cites throughout his works—"St. Louis Blues" or "After You've Gone," for example—as well as through the lead jazz instruments that appear in his novels, such as the clarinet. ... He primarily describes what would have been seen as a kind

of “retro” jazz in the 1960s, music that was popular before the war or just after it ended. . . . Although it appears that Itsuki did not have a particularly prolific *knowledge* of jazz, we might say that his novels are unique in their *intuition* of a jazz performance’s “essence”. (Molasky 2005, pp. 92–95, emphasis in original)

Newspaper reporting from this 1960s moment supports Molasky’s interpretation. A 1967 *Yomiuri Shimbun* article states, “Itsuki was in a café in Ginza around the end of the Korean War when he heard Mori Toru and the Six Points Dixie. He was particularly moved by their rendition of ‘St. James Infirmary Blues’” (Yomiuri 1967).

Here, we might examine *Farewell to Moscow Misfits* in particular. The novel takes as its main character and first-person narrator the once renowned blues pianist Kitami. The novel opens with Kitami, now an arts promoter, arriving in Moscow on the invitation of his friend from university, Morishima, who is on the board of directors of the Japan–Soviet Arts Association. Morishima has invited Kitami to work on an overseas performance of a Japanese jazz band in the Soviet Union. Kitami agrees to the job and joins Shirase, a secretary from the Japanese Embassy, in a meeting with Danchenko, the Associate Director of the Soviet Foreign Culture Association. The participants of the meeting discuss what “jazz” is exactly. Kitami also encounters a young man beside the Bolshoi Theater, Misha, who is described as a “stilyaga”—a term I will return to later. He also meets a young woman from a respectable family, Elsa (and some black marketeers) at the live music venue Red Bird. At the novel’s climax, Kitami gathers at Red Bird with the others and gives an enraptured jazz performance alongside Shirase, Misha, and an American student named Bill. Not long after, however, Kitami receives word from Shirase that the famous politician who had been backing Japanese–Soviet relations had suddenly died and the Soviet–Japan Arts Association had been dissolved. The Japanese jazz band’s Soviet performance has been cancelled. Kitami prepares to return home and goes to meet Misha, only to find out that he has been arrested for stabbing a black marketeer who had been chasing after Elsa, Misha’s lover. Misha, Kitami discovers, has been sent to a juvenile labor prison.

In June of 1965, about one year before *Farewell*’s publication, Itsuki had in fact resigned from his media jobs, boarded the Soviet vessel Baikal in Yokohama, and set out for Nakhodka. He spent three months traversing the USSR and Eastern Europe via the Trans-Siberian Railway. This was only one year after travel relations with Japan had been normalized. While staying in Moscow, Itsuki met a boy named Misha in Pushkin Square. Three days later, while Itsuki and Misha were meeting again, several government men suddenly appeared to take the boy away. This event left such a strong impression on Itsuki that he began writing what would become *Farewell* soon after he arrived home in Kanazawa (Sakamoto 1977).

Itsuki’s real-life “Misha” was a “stilyaga” (in Russian, *стиляга*), which Itsuki represented in his title with the term “*gurentai*” (translated here as “misfit”). Kamioka Rieko, scholar of Russian literature and culture, has written about the “stilyaga” phenomenon in Japanese. Quoting from an essay by Georgy Litvinov, Kamioka describes the “stilyagi”—the plural form of the singular “stilyaga”—in the following way:

Near the end of the 1940s, one could find young people wrapped up in long jackets and dressed in slim cut pants throughout the major cities of the USSR, especially Moscow and Leningrad. These youths enjoyed the western films that had been taken as the spoils of war and danced in their own “stylish” way while listening to jazz music. These were not “anti-Soviet” acts, yet these young people were despised by those in power and derided in newspapers and magazines by the contemptuous term “stilyagi”. They faced rebukes in Communist Youth League meetings. Even still, the fad spread steadily across cities in the USSR in the early 1950s. In this way, the “stilyagi” became the first Soviet youth subculture group. (Kamioka 2010, p. 87)

Kamioka goes on to explain that the reference here to “their own ‘stylish’” way of dancing meant these young people “imitated the movements they saw in the western films they were watching to produce their own original dances that went along to music”. In

Farewell, these “stilyagi” are described as “what we might call the ‘Miyuki Tribe’ (*miyukizoku*) in Japan—or to borrow a slightly older term, ‘*Taiyōzoku*.’ . . . In Russian, the name comes from ‘stil,’ or ‘style.’ What started as a way to describe those young people obsessed with fashion eventually became a way to label the group as delinquents”. The *Farewell* character Shirase adds, “They are the bastard children of the [Khrushchev] Thaw. All wild fashion, jazz, the jitterbug and the twist, smoking and drinking, rebelling against adults. You know, kids like that” (Itsuki 1972a, p. 35). By comparison, the Miyuki Tribe gained its name from street culture based around Miyuki Drive in downtown Tokyo’s Ginza neighborhood around 1964, whereas the term *taiyōzoku* derived from Ishihara Shintarō’s famous 1955 novel *Season of Violence* (*Taiyōzoku*, literally *Season of the Sun*). In either case, the terms referred to groups of young people who chose to turn against established order and values.

So how exactly is jazz depicted in *Farewell*? Let us look closer at the conversation between Kitami, the arts promoter, and Danchenko, the Soviet cultural bureaucrat. To a Soviet government official, jazz is no more than one form of entertainment. This sets off an argument with Kitami, himself a former blues pianist, over what exactly jazz is. Kitami offers a counterargument to Danchenko, saying “In the Soviet Union, isn’t it true that circus performers and vaudeville acts are called the people’s artists?” This is then followed with the following exchange:

“Exactly so,” Danchenko said, “These performers entertain the people and give them motivation for tomorrow’s work. Yet this is no different from entertainment. We call this ‘Estrada Arts.’ There are performances at the Estrada Theater and we hold the All-USSR Estrada Arts Competition. But they exist in a world apart from the Symphony Orchestra or the National Ballet. Jazz is entertainment music, something different altogether from artistic music. Could you possibly imagine jazz on the stage of the Bolshoi Theater?”

“I can,” I replied. I suddenly felt a dark melancholy fill my heart, as if ink had been poured into a glass of water. I looked Director Danchenko square in the face and asked, “What exactly did you mean when you said ‘artistic music?’ If you don’t mind, I would very much like to hear your thoughts”. (Itsuki 1972a, p. 23)

Estrada Arts has been translated into terms such as “light theater” and could be considered a kind of Russian vaudeville. When Danchenko declares jazz an “entertainment music,” he is laying out the official position of the Soviet cultural bureaucracy. From this position, it is unimaginable that jazz might take the Bolshoi stage, where the established high arts such as classical music, opera, and ballet are performed. The argument over whether jazz can be considered artistic music or entertainment music can be interpreted as a reflection of the opposition between high arts and popular arts. After this scene, Danchenko plays Chopin on the piano for Kitami, saying “This is true music. This is art”. Of course, Itsuki as author has already made his declaration in favor of writing “reading materials” as literature and is drawing from predecessors such as *rakugo*, the Bolshoi Circus, Charlie Chaplin, Billie Holiday, and Thelonious Monk. Stated differently, the discussion that occurs here is not merely about the opposition between classical music and jazz but addresses the very premise that allows this discussion to unfold.

Let us consider first Kitami’s posture towards jazz. He reminisces about when he first formed his jazz band, The Blue Dukes, and how every member was a destitute no-name. He narrates:

But I think I was a true blues pianist then. Our bodies were full of poverty and an unbearable disgust for other people, like a thick tar. We were never far from unemployment and illness. And we had this driving desire to be loved and admired. Overflowing passion. That was all that drove our performances. We didn’t take up weapons. We didn’t drink. Or strike. Or pray to the gods. We played the blues. (Itsuki 1972a)

These are Kitami’s personal commentaries on the thick, tar-like, depressing feelings that come alongside poverty and a life lived in the dark. The blues themselves imply the

blue mood—that of sorrow and melancholy. We might call this a personal commentary on the soul that singers and performers put into their music, as opposed to a social commentary on jazz. Regarding the blues in particular, ethnomusicologist Paul Oliver writes:

Seen from any point of view, the blues is both a state of mind and a music which gives voice to it. Blues is the wail of the forsaken, the cry of independence, the passion of the lusty, the anger of the frustrated and the laughter of the fatalist. . . . As such the blues is the personal emotion of the individual finding through music a vehicle for self-expression. But it is also a social music; the blues can be entertainment, it can be the music for dancing and drinking by, the music of a class within the segregated group. (Oliver 1998, p. 3)

And the origin of this music, the blues, was of course the Africans who were forcibly removed to the American South to endure torturous labor. African Americans transformed their feelings about this experience into music. The poverty, thick tar, the dejected artistic feelings, these are Kitami's personal commentary on his blues.

Kitami's band, The Blue Dukes, disbanded at the height of their popularity because Kitami felt he could no longer play a convincing blues sound. Yet while in Moscow, Kitami again finds himself behind a piano. Just after Danchenko plays the Chopin piece on piano, Kitami suddenly stood up and began to play jazz.

What was it that pulled me off of my chair in that moment? Before I realized it, I was sitting in front of the piano, fingering the opening to "Strange Fruit". . . . A black man hangs from a tree on a hill near a prison. His body is silhouetted in the twilight, swaying gently from the neck in the breeze. What a truly pitiful and absurd strange fruit. Just then I recalled the bald, burnt sienna mountains of the Korean peninsula as I watched them flow by from the deck of the repatriation ship I had boarded. I could hear creaking rusted carts on dusty dirt roads. I was again thirteen years old. It is a summer day. . . . Nothing came to me about what section of the song to play, or at what tempo. I wasn't even struggling to find notes. They were coming to me from beyond. I simply ran my fingers along them in trepidation. No doubt, I was playing the blues. (Itsuki 1972a, p. 24)

As Kitami played, Danchenko could not help himself from being overwhelmed by emotion, tears in his eyes. And yet he merely replied, "See, that's entertainment music!" and fled the room. This scene depicts a great empathy for jazz music, as well as the gulf between official positions as an arts promoter from Japan and a Soviet cultural bureaucrat. "Strange Fruit," perhaps the most famous song from Billie Holiday's repertoire, had music set to lyrics by the Jewish American songwriter Abel Meeropol in 1937. Meeropol penned the lyrics after the shock he received from seeing a picture of two African American men who had been hanged from a tree in a lynching in 1930.

Billie Holiday spoke of recording the song in 1939, saying, "It was during my stint at Café Society that a song was born that became my personal protest—'Strange Fruit.' The germ of the song was in a poem written by Lewis Allen [Meeropol's songwriter name]. I first met him at Café Society. When he showed me that poem, I dug it right off. It seemed to spell out all the things that had killed Pop" (Holiday and Dufty 2006, p. 94). In this scene in *Farewell to Moscow Misfits*, Kitami plays "Strange Fruit" and recalls the mountains of Korea as he repatriated from the peninsula after the end of the war. This makes clear Kitami's personal history as a postwar repatriate, a personal history that overlaps with the author Itsuki himself. The question, therefore, is why this memory of repatriation becomes intertwined with Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit".

4. Postwar Repatriates and *Les Déracinés* as Thought

"*Déraciné*" is an indispensable keyword for understanding Itsuki's thought. Itsuki draws this term from Maurice Barrès' 1897 novel *Les Déracinés* and André Gide's subsequent critiques of the work. It seems appropriate to say that Itsuki popularized this French word in Japan. The epigram to Itsuki's 1968 essay addressing France's May 68 revolution states:

“*Déraciné*, from the French. *Adj.* Uprooted; *Noun* A plant without roots; *Noun* A person removed from their country” (Itsuki 1972b). In a conversation with the *zainichi* Korean author Lee Hoesung (who wrote under the Japanese name, Ri Kaisei), Itsuki further explains the meaning of the word:

In my usage of the term, *déraciné* describes those people who were displaced from their homelands through war or politics. Refugees, repatriated peoples, prisoners of war, exiles, war orphans, etc. People who have been plucked from their lands by the hands of giants. It becomes quite a problem when the term loses a critical nuance served up with warped humor and self-mockery. (Itsuki and Lee 1970, p. 215)

Itsuki’s usage of *déraciné* is founded on his experience as a second-generation colonizer living in the Korean peninsula, and the tribulation he experienced when he was repatriated as a young boy.

In Japanese, the term *gaichi* (literally “the outer lands”) refers to the colonized and semi-colonized lands under Imperial Japanese control before the country’s defeat in the Second World War. Itsuki was born in the western Japanese prefecture of Fukuoka in 1932, but soon after moved to the Korean peninsula with his family. His father was a teacher in colonial Korea and his family moved around the peninsula throughout his childhood. When the war ended on 15 August 1945, the family was living in Pyongyang. Itsuki recalled his experience in a 2022 newspaper article entitled “That Summer, *Déraciné*”:

At the end of the war, my family was living in Pyongyang in what is now North Korea. Soviet combat troops entered the city to begin the Occupation as we stood there dumbfounded. Many things happened. Mother died. But for whatever reason our repatriation from North Korea never occurred. . . . Typhus broke out, killing many, leaving many babies to be handed over to local people. . . . I guess you could say that the true war began for me that summer. I wasn’t a refugee, I was one of those people discarded in a foreign land. (Itsuki 2022)

After that first postwar summer, Itsuki escaped from Pyongyang, which was under martial law at the time, and attempted to cross the 38th Parallel three different times but was turned back. On his fourth attempt, he was able to cross into South Korea and was sent to an American-run Japanese evacuation camp just over the border from Kaesong. He spent two years in the camp until he was repatriated to Japan from Incheon in 1947 aboard the USS Liberty. Itsuki writes about his return to Japan in his 1968 best-selling long-form essay *Blowin’ in the Wind* (*Kaze ni fukarete*):

Having spent my youth as an outsider in the Korean peninsula, I returned to Japan only to arrive in Kyūshū as dead weight. In Japan at that time, repatriates were just bodies brought in from *gaichi*. We were nothing other than a burden. My homeland felt no different to me than a foreign country. Or rather, the mountains and rivers of the *gaichi* where I had been exiled aroused more nostalgia in me. (Itsuki 1973, p. 194)

Itsuki’s wartime experience, which he describes as beginning in earnest in August of 1945, is a colonial, repatriate experience. His experience being “discarded” became the foundation of his theory of *déraciné*. From his childhood to his youth, he was the colonizer. And while he holds on to some inexpressible nostalgia for these *gaichi*—particularly Korea—he also repudiates this very stance in many ways. Itsuki is not the only writer to take this position. Many writers appeared during the 1960s and 1970s who set down their personal experiences in the old Japanese colonies by penning novels, poetry, and essays. This marked a period when writers gathered under the *gaichi* and repatriate banner based on their personal experiences and produced collaborative works—which Itsuki also contributed to—such as the 1969 volume *The Gaichi/Repatriate School*, the 1971 collection *First Generation Showa Period Gaichi Writers*, or 1979’s *Repatriate School Writers*. Even restricting this list of writers to only those who were born or raised in Korea, we discover quite a list: Furuyama Komao, Muramatsu Takeshi, Morisaki Kazue, Kobayashi Masaru, Hino Keizō, Kajiyama Toshiyuki, and Gotō Meisei, among others.

Itsuki once relayed an encounter he had with the hardboiled fiction writer Ikushima Jirō, a fellow Kanazawa resident who had been repatriated from Shanghai at the end of the war. He described the special character of repatriates as follows:

I think there are a number of shared tendencies amongst those of us who returned to Japan after having once been exiled to the colonies. Firstly, we have a dedicated interest in foreign countries, or rather, ethnic and race relations. Secondly, we have a dedicated interest in opposing those things “Japanese”—that is, of the “mainland”. We also have a tendency towards internationalism and geographical wanderings. And if I might add one more feature: a consciousness of *déraciné*, of having lost a home. (Itsuki 1974b, p. 40)

Here, we must touch on Itsuki’s indescribable experiences of the Russian advance into North Korea. Soon after Japan’s loss in the war in 1945, Russian troops moved to occupy Pyongyang, where Itsuki and his family were living. Itsuki writes, “What they did was no different from what any soldier in a military unit did, regardless of country. What soldiers have always done throughout history. They looted. They assaulted. They raped” (Itsuki 2003, p. 30). Itsuki also encountered another incident in Pyongyang, however. One evening, a group of Soviet soldiers, automatic rifles carelessly slung over their shoulders, suddenly burst out in song. The other soldiers around them joined in to form a chorus.

What a voice they had! I had never heard such a chorus before. There was a low tone that seemed to reverberate from the bottom of my breast. A high, clear voice like brass. No, it surpassed a voice and seemed to resonate deep within my heart.

My body seemed to go numb and I was locked in place. The column of troops gradually receded into the twilight of the city. This was something totally separate from a march. The singing was tortured, dark, and growing ever fainter.

Even after everything around me grew dark, I was still unable to move from where I stood. My mind was wrapped up in a mysterious confusion and doubt. I felt as if I might faint at any moment. I wanted to drop to my knees in prayer. (Itsuki 2003, p. 31)

Itsuki goes on to write that this memory was from more than a half century earlier and that in reality “perhaps I was simply dejected. In reality, my feeling of confusion was wrapped up with the question of how these monsters could sing so beautifully”. This experience, however, allowed him to determine that “songs are best left behind in the domain of the lyrical”. This repatriation memory became Itsuki’s first encounter with Russia, and his first encounter with the choral style of western music. He claimed to have never heard the style before because it was a chorus, rather than a group singing in unison. Music education from the Meiji period had popularized choral singing that incorporated psalms or hymns; there were even choral groups that developed around this style. In the prewar and wartime education that Itsuki experienced, however, almost all singing was performed by multiple people singing exactly the same part.

How was it possible that vicious soldiers from the front lines managed to join in a chorus to sing such a beautiful and moving song? This question connects directly to Itsuki’s first encounter with Russian literature. After being repatriated to Fukuoka Prefecture, Itsuki spent his middle school years reading Gogol and Chekhov. In high school, he further expanded his reading to Turgenev and Dostoevsky. When he eventually entered the literature department of Waseda University in Tokyo, Itsuki decided to major in Russian literature. In his conversation with Lee he recalls:

My mother’s death was an enormous hurdle for me. Perhaps this was one of the circumstances that led me to choose Russian literature in university. On the one hand, I had this kind of continental attachment to the Russian people—or something that might be seen as Slavic—at the same time, however, I held an immense hatred for the Russian military and perhaps also the Russian people. (Itsuki and Lee 1970, p. 217)

5. Itsuki's View on Entertainment

There is no question that Itsuki's ideology surrounding *déraciné* and the experiences of *gaichi* repatriates emerges from his own personal experiences. There may be a further connection, however, between Itsuki's personal experience, his system of thought, and the phenomenon of his becoming a best-selling author, particularly an author who happened to begin writing as a novelist in the latter half of the 1960s. Ever since the publication of his jazz novel *Farewell to Moscow Misfits*, Itsuki has drawn from his memories of repatriation from the Korean peninsula, crafting characters and storylines. This has remained constant to the present day, even impacting his essay writing in which he uses a fragmentary narrative style. How do aspects of his position as a repatriate intertwine with his views on entertainment?

When the so-called "Gaichi Repatriate School" of writers first began organizing in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Itsuki sat down for a conversation with novelist Ibuse Masuji. The two listened to a wide variety of tape recordings made by repatriates who had narrated their personal experiences. Itsuki found these anecdotes especially intriguing because "at some point while these speakers are telling their story, they slip into a kind of stereotyped mode of narrating, almost exactly like the *kōdan* style. It's at this point that their stories get really good" (Itsuki and Ibuse 1969, p. 250). The *kōdan* mode of storytelling that Itsuki recognizes here is from a long lineage of popular arts, in this case one of Japan's narrative arts. Traditional Japanese popular arts formed one basis for the development of popular literature in the 1920s—especially when the term was still closely connected with historical fiction. Itsuki discovers that the individual and seemingly concrete experiences that these *gaichi* repatriates are recalling tend to slip into a uniform type of popular storytelling style without the speakers even realizing what is happening.

What we should consider here is the connection between Itsuki's stance towards entertainment and the narrative form that shapes these repatriates' stories. In Itsuki's view, the contents of individual, concrete experiences will naturally slip into a stereotypical narrative mode. Some might interpret these instances of storytelling as speakers distorting actual events. For Itsuki, however, these personal stories have important similarities to popular arts. Indeed, why is it that people find popular art so appealing? What, for example, causes the lyrics and melodies of jazz and pop songs to have such an effect on people? These lyrics and melodies sway people's hearts and minds, but they also give an expressive form to the *concrete feelings* within an individual's experience. For any popular art that comes into vogue, the earnest emotions and desires of innumerable people form the pretext for that popularity.

In this sense, it is particularly interesting that Itsuki would later say, "I believe, contrary to common belief, that fine art is a mode of thought or expression that puts popular culture into practice" (Itsuki and Mori 1975, p. 107). Itsuki cites as an example "The Song of the Birds," the song that famous cellist Pablo Casals would regularly play as an encore to his performances. "The Song of the Birds" was originally a folk song in Casals' native Catalonia. That is to say, a folk song from Catalonia became—by virtue of Pablo Casals' cello—one celebrated aspect of global fine art. A folk song that told of birds celebrating the birth of Christ passed through Casals as medium to give birth to a new aspect of a "pure" or "fine" art.

From this perspective, we can appropriately synthesize Itsuki's entertainment strategy. To return briefly to Itsuki's Declaration of Entertainment in the afterword to *Farewell*: "I have tried to employ elements of entertainment such as catharsis and melodramatic structures, narrativized or stereotypical styles, *not as the ends* but as the means" (emphasis added). This strategy allows Itsuki the *means* through which he might develop an expressive form for his own sense of resistance to his era while simultaneously producing a body of works that also gives expression to the sense of resistance that most strongly resonates with his readers. Itsuki said plainly, "I think first and foremost of the readers. Then I select a theme and method most appropriate for that readership" (Yomiuri 1967).

From the outset, Itsuki did not take the position that younger readers spoke on behalf of all readers. During a radio appearance where Itsuki spoke directly with younger members of the audience, he stated, “I have said before, I would never lie and claim that I understand the younger generation, or that I resonate with you, or that I lead you along by the hand. I have always said that one generation should be oppositional to the other, rather than understanding”. Popular arts are not those things that are created by the so-called “masses,” but rather they are those things that are intended for mass consumption by those people. Authors and media are mediators. Setting aside the question of whether or not these arts can speak for the masses, at the very least they cannot be successful as popular works if they do not resonate with a mass audience. On this point, Itsuki’s entertainment strategy was surely effective. His works certainly reflect an emotional dimension of his readership, or at least a portion of them in his contemporary moment.

How then did Itsuki view the masses? In 1969, he wrote:

There is a terrifying reality behind the phrase “The masses, like sand”. Yet there is a mass of young people that feel very much like these sands amongst the youth of today. They span out across this desolation, I feel, never to see the opportunity to come into the light.

We must focus our attention on the mass of young people who stretch out like massive sands. If the student activists at Tokyo University, the *Zenkyōtō*, have been selected—so to speak—to act as the vanguard, then the sands are the mass of young people who form the backdrop. This is how we might theorize the contemporary youth. (Itsuki 1969, pp. 185–88)

The term that Itsuki cites here—“the masses, like sand”—draws both from Gustave Le Bon’s dual metaphor that “an individual in a crowd is a grain of sand amid other grains of sand,” (Le Bon 1897, p. 13) and also Japanese intellectual Maruyama Masao’s usage of the phrase in his influential 1952 book *The Political World* (*Seiji no sekai*). The writer and critic Hanada Kiyoteru also used the same phrase as the title of his 1957 essay, “The Masses, Like Sand”. As a metaphor, “sand” points towards the growing alienation of the individual with the arrival of mass society. In the quote above, Itsuki’s focus is not on the students active in the *Zenkyōtō* movement’s political vanguard, the most attention-grabbing group of the era, but rather the sand-like masses of young people that exist behind those front lines. Itsuki’s concern here overlaps with his focus on Misha and the “stilyagi” as they are represented in *Farewell to Moscow Misfits*. Youth cultural movements of the era—and this would include not only the Soviet “stilyagi” but also Japan’s “Miyuki Tribe” and “*Taiyōzoku*” as discussed earlier—were often theorized in the latter half of the 1950s in terms of youth or mass culture precisely because they appeared so internally incomprehensible to older generations. By the 1960s, counterculture movements faced further scrutiny because of their unwillingness to conform to mainstream cultural values and norms.

As suggested by Itsuki’s Declaration of Entertainment, the jazz and *enka* allusions present in his novels and essays imply a mechanism of inverting value structures wherein Itsuki could give “a reality that had so often gone unobserved and ‘discriminated’ against a legitimate right to exist”. The background that forms Itsuki’s views on entertainment can also be found in the figure of *Farewell*’s main character, Kitami. Like Itsuki, he is depicted as a second-generation colonizer and repatriate, making clear Itsuki’s own thought on his past experiences and the concept of *déraciné*. And yet, *Farewell* is not an autobiography; Itsuki does not try to novelize his life in a straightforward way. Rather, he uses features of entertainment literature to express the cultural dynamism of 1960s Moscow, from jazz to “stilyagi”. In this, he writes from his position as an experienced observer of *déraciné*.

Finally, it is essential to locate *Farewell to Moscow Misfits*—and by extension, some aspects of postwar Japanese literature—in the global context of Cold War cultural production. The postwar writers of “pure literature” who emerged roughly coeval with Itsuki’s debut, approximately 1965 to 1974, were generally born in the 1930s. These writers are often grouped together under the designation “the introverted generation”. They include Hino

Keizō, Oba Minako, Gotō Meisei, Tomioka Chieko, Furui Yoshikichi, and others of the same period. The term “introverted” here indicates a tendency to distance oneself from political ideologies and instead write from introspection regarding one’s individual existence. Of course, we should be wary of drawing unfair comparisons between writers simply because they appeared on the literary scene at roughly the same time. Having said that, it seems that Itsuki was particularly interested in externalities when viewed in relation to his contemporaries. The origin of this interest was simultaneously the “world” of the Soviet Union (and later, the former Soviet Union) and Eastern Europe, as well as the “world” of jazz music. The symbols of popular cultural that Itsuki offers in *Farewell* blend these worlds. Scenes from the novel depict both the mass culture of Moscow’s “stilyagi”—a phenomenon almost entirely unknown to Japan at the time—as well as the more familiar vision of young people enraptured with jazz. A narrative wherein Kitami, who is simultaneously a repatriate from Korea and a jazz pianist, travels to Moscow and chances to meet Danchenko and Misha can be nothing other than the literary representation of hybridity within Cold War culture. Itsuki appends Japan’s postcolonial existence to the global cultural opposition between the United States and the Soviet Union vis-à-vis one repatriate’s postwar experience.

6. Conclusions

Itsuki Hiroyuki’s Declaration of Entertainment pairs his intention to legitimize the aspects of reality that he feels have been discriminated against with cultural production such as jazz in Russia or popular songs in Japan. He positions the “entertainment” aspects in his own works—what he sees as “reading materials” or *yomimono*—as comparable to popular arts such as the jazz of *enka*. He attempts to grasp the literary genre that had come to be called “middlebrow novels” as a cultural upswell that was based on popular arts, not as the defined intermediary within the established pure/middle/popular structure. The undercurrent within Itsuki’s views on popular arts was his intellectual approach based on the concept *déraciné*—an approach that was informed by his personal experience as a wartime colonizer and postwar repatriate. These experiences vary widely, from hearing Soviet soldiers break into song in occupied Pyongyang in August 1945 to his encounter with Russian literature upon his return to Japan.

Itsuki’s works address the “masses” or “youth” of the 1960s—the symbol of his contemporary culture—as being like grains of sand amidst vast desolation. The “masses” here are a rhetorical device, a group without subjectivity. In this sense, Itsuki’s “masses” simply cannot be the bearers of popular culture. They are merely like the metaphorical “sand,” incapable of existing as a substantial referent. Itsuki extends this metaphor to his literary characters. The counterculture “stilyaga,” Misha, participates in the cathartic jazz session that marks the climax of *Farewell to Moscow Misfits*. Immediately afterward, he is arrested, vanishing suddenly. This marks one defining characteristic of Itsuki’s early works: he attempts to give a singular form to these youthful masses. It goes without saying that these kinds of cultural representations are, from the outset, without any substantial referent. They manifest as subjects that must undergird a wholly new popular culture, like the anecdotes we might find in the recollections of a repatriate, personal stories that take on stereotyped narrative forms.

Perhaps one reason why Itsuki Hiroki found such popularity among young readers as a writer in the late 1960s, and later also in other forms of media, was precisely because he attempted to give form to a culture and subject that lacked substance. That is to say, Itsuki’s narratives offered his readers proxy representations of themselves. It is on these terms that *Farewell to Moscow Misfits* proves particularly interesting. It is a jazz novel and was born of Itsuki’s entertainment strategy. Although Itsuki takes Jazz’s cultural origins and originality seriously, he does not seek to make it the universal as music. Rather, he emphasizes the power of jazz to act as a trigger for entertainment that moves the listeners heart, if even for a moment. Itsuki focuses on popular art and its enthusiastic consumers, giving form to a kind of entertainment that, at the time, had not yet gained the right to exist as such. This was the entertainment strategy that defined Itsuki’s early works, including *Farewell*.

Moving forward, our primary challenge will be accounting for and attentively critiquing the other forms of cultural representation in Itsuki's early works, as well as those found in his contemporaries.

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Note

- ¹ Katō (1980). Katō lists the three stages in his texts specifically in English as a “high-brow dominant” stage, a “low-brow dominant” stage, and a “middle-brow dominant” stage.

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