

From Withdrawal to Resistance. The Rhetoric of Exit in Yoshimoto Takaaki and Karatani Kojin

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Abstract

This paper traces the emergence and development of the idea of “exit” as a form of resistance or challenge to the system in the writings of Yoshimoto Takaaki and Karatani Kojin. I show that the rhetoric of exit as resistance grows out of the climate of political disillusion in the aftermath of the political activism of the 60s as a strategy for finding a potential for popular resistance. With Karatani’s attempt to create a social movement, NAM (the New Associationist Movement), the rhetoric shifts from emphasizing a defense of withdrawal from the “public” in order to elude control, towards emphasizing exit as an offensive weapon to be used actively by social movements in confronting the system. Today the idea of exit remains an important influence among activists and intellectuals associated with social movements. At the same time, there is a dilemma, which stems from its paradoxical attempt to mobilize political disillusionment and withdrawal from public involvement into a political force.

The term social movements is apt to evoke demonstrations in the street, speeches, petitions or other forms of public manifestation of discontent. Given this common view, it is

intriguing to discover a strand of critical intellectuals who, despite being associated with radical movements, tend to downplay the importance of confronting the authorities, insisting that protest is not the best way to change the system. Karatani Kojin – arguably Japan’s most famous contemporary philosopher and critic – advocates “counter-acts” that rely on “exiting and transcending” (*choshutsuteki na taiko*) the trinity of “capital, nation and state” rather than rebellion or confrontation. Capitalism, in his view, will not be brought down according to the model of the violent uprisings and street fights of the classical bourgeois revolutions, but through the gradual growth of alternative economies comprised of people who have taken leave of the capitalist economy. In 2000 he launched NAM (the New Associationist Movement) to put this strategy into practice. The same year also saw the release of Murakami Ryu’s novel *Kibo no kuni no ekusodasu* (Exodus to the land of hope), which portrays a wave of mass-dropouts of junior high school students who, disillusioned with school as well as Japan as a whole, form a net-based enterprise called ASUNARO and embark on an “exodus” to Hokkaido, where they establish a miniature-state possessing its own jurisdiction and currency. Part of the humiliation they inflict on the adult generation consists in the fact that they have not the slightest interest in rebellion or protest, preferring instead to abandon mainstream society. Neither NAM nor ASUNARO function as vehicles of protest. Instead they are portrayed as the seeds of a possible new society with their own alternative organization and economy.

Karatani and Murakami use what I call the rhetoric of exit. By that I mean a discourse that systematically makes use of terms such as “withdrawal”, “disappearance”, “desertion”, “exodus”, or “flight” to designate a powerful strategy of resistance, capable of changing the system and draining away its strength. The idea, then, is not simply to advocate seclusion or retreat to some sheltered enclave in the face of the evils of the worlds, but to challenge and bring about changes in the system.

My focus here will be primarily on Karatani’s use of this rhetoric. I try to show three things. Firstly, that the roots of the rhetoric are deeply entwined with the setbacks, frustrations and defeats suffered by the protest movements in the 60s. I will do this by tracing the emergence and development of this rhetoric in an earlier thinker, Yoshimoto Takaaki. In Yoshimoto’s writings we see the formation of an influential ideology that forms the background to Karatani’s version of the rhetoric of exit. This is an ideology emphasizing respect for privatization – for the turning away from political involvement to the pursuit of private concerns – and a rejection of many of the forms of struggle and organization associated with the student sects and civic movements of the 60’s,

Secondly, I will show that the rhetoric is far from “apolitical” or escapist in the usual sense of the term. In both thinkers, the rhetoric has functioned as a way to demonstrate continued resistance or opposition against the system in a situation in which confrontations and protests have widely been felt to be futile or discredited. While the rhetoric may have sprung from the sense of disillusionment and political apathy following the defeat of radical protest, from the very start it attempted to overcome this defeat by redefining withdrawal into a form of resistance. This explains why the rhetoric is adopted by some social movements today. By presenting withdrawal from the public as a continuation of the political struggle, the

rhetoric enables movements to reach out to groups who are disillusioned with public involvement or who feel excluded from participation in the mainstream public. Such groups emerged not only in the wake of the perceived failure of the protest movements of the 60’s. The problem is perhaps especially pertinent in Japan today, where the changes brought about by globalization in the 90s have resulted in relatively few acts of public protest, much of the discontent and frustration instead taking the form of an “exit” from the mainstream social order of groups such as homeless, school-dropouts, social withdrawers (*hikikomori*) and NEETs. [1] We shall see that both Yoshimoto and Karatani explicitly address the problems of such groups in their writings.

The third thing I want to show is that, while the rhetoric of exit can be found in other thinkers engaged in today’s alter-globalization movement, Karatani gives it a highly original form. [2] The specificity of his version of the rhetoric can be seen in his attempt to solve a peculiar difficulty that accompanies it. If the rhetoric is coupled to the advocacy of social movement activism, then it needs to show convincingly, not only why exit constitutes a serious challenge to the arenas of society from which the exits take place. It also needs to show how such exits can be organized or consciously used as a strategy by social movements. To use the terms of Albert O. Hirschman, social movements are commonly thought to express their discontent with society in terms of “voice” rather than “exit”, i.e. through protest rather than leaving. [3] How, then, can a social movement for exiters be conceived? NAM can be seen as Karatani’s attempt to answer that question.

Yoshimoto Takaaki and the celebration of privatization

Yoshimoto Takaaki (1924-), a maverick philosopher, poet and literary critic, is considered by many to be the perhaps most

original and influential thinker of the “New Left” in Japan. However, despite his association with the New Left, he is often harshly critical of the student activism and citizen protest movement of the 60s. This stance is grounded in his dislike of parties, sects and organizations, an attitude which commentators have pointed out reflects his experience as an adolescent of the war and war-time totalitarian mobilization, when what he calls the “communal fantasy” (*kyodo genso*) swept away virtually the entire population in a wave of war frenzy (Murakami 2005:116f).



Yoshimoto Takaaki

If you ask what sort of logic or thought I was aiming for during the postwar years, my problem consciousness was that it was absolutely necessary to construct a thought of escape, a thought for cowards. The idea of “winning” or

“gladly throwing away one’s life” was thoroughly discredited. (Yoshimoto 1992:204)

Here Yoshimoto speaks of the experience of war and militarism, but the same words also fit his attitude to the radical sects of the student movement, whose idea of fighting was similarly discredited in the course of the 60’s and early 70’s. In a speech in 1970, “The structure of defeat” (*Haiboku no kozo*), he states that three “defeats” had a formative effect on his thought: the defeat in the war, the setbacks of union-activism in his youth, and the defeat in the “Ampo-struggle”, the 1960 mass-demonstrations against the renewal of the US-Japan security treaty (Yoshimoto 1972b). [4] Each defeat was a case of public involvement. It is not farfetched to surmise that they contributed to a sense of disillusionment in such involvement, regardless of whether it was called for in the name of self-sacrifice for the emperor or proletarian mobilization under the leadership of “progressive” intellectuals or parties. In particular, his political involvement in the “Ampo-struggle” led him to an extreme disillusionment with communist and socialist movements and intellectuals, which reinforced and radicalized his rejection of public participation.

Let us look at his famous debate with the political scientist Maruyama Masao about the security treaty crisis. In “8/15 and 5/19” (“8.15 to 5.19”, 1960), Maruyama observes that wartime slogans such as “sacrificing the private, serving the public” (*messhi hoko*) had vanished in the postwar era without being replaced by any genuine democratic ethos from below. Today two tendencies could be seen among the people: one was “privatization”, the pursuit of private interests coupled with political apathy. The other is civic activism, as exemplified by the security treaty demonstrations. Maruyama sees hope in the latter, while criticizing the former apolitical

tendency for being just as convenient for ruling elites as the old indoctrination (Maruyama 2005). [5]



Maruyama Masao

In his angry and elegantly formulated response, “The End of a Fictitious System” (“Gisei no shuen”, 1960), Yoshimoto heaps scorn on the devotion to the public that Maruyama praised, and which he sees as a legacy of the wartime notion of “sacrificing the private”. Instead he defends a retreat or exit from the public. This stance takes the form of a defense of the “masses” (*taishu*) against the criticism of intellectuals, including a positive reevaluation of the “private self-interest” that flourished in “the world of the black market and rubble” that arose from the “confusion of defeat”. [6] The truth is the reverse of what Maruyama claims, he argues. It is precisely this “private sense of interest” that “forms the basis of postwar ‘democracy’” (Yoshimoto 1962, 2005). In 1972 he repeats this idea succinctly in a speech, “The decadence and crisis of postwar thought” (“Sengo shiso no taihai to kiki”).

Whenever we consider the postwar era, a shared presupposition for mutual understanding has been that its foremost task is that the “private” is more important than the “public”, that the individuals making up the mass of the people are more important than the state, or in other words that the question what will become of “me” tomorrow is more important than what will become of the state tomorrow. (Yoshimoto 1976b:405f)

Part of the background of Yoshimoto’s championship of the private is his experience of and resulting allergy to ideologies of totalitarian mobilization. Only a “privatized consciousness” is free from exalting state authority and also from idolizing organization. In particular, Yoshimoto points to the family and the love-relationship (*tsui genso*) as bastions against calls for “serving the public”. [7] Yoshimoto’s affirmative stance to privacy manifests itself in his “dislike” of political parties – especially the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) – and citizen movements (*shimin undo*), which “appear open but are actually closed collectives”. In his view they are emotional and trusting only in their numbers, lacking individuals who think for themselves and all too often just follow directives from “above”, from the party of the movement leaders (Yoshimoto 2002:163).

Yoshimoto is far from disparaging all forms of activism, and a question of some interest is what made him support some forms of activism but not others. He himself promoted unions while working at a small factory in his youth, and even today he usually refers to labor unions in positive terms, describing them as rooted in the everyday concerns of the masses and hence distinct from what he calls “political movements” (Yoshimoto & Takaoka 2005:73). Similarly, he was an enthusiastic supporter of

Zengakuren, the nationwide student body that took the lead in the anti-security treaty demonstrations, and which he saw as driven by a new sensibility that was the product of “a bloated material life”, high standards of living and hostility to organization (Yoshimoto 1992:34). He spoke at Zengakuren meetings in December 1959 and January 1960, and participated in a sit-in at Shinagawa Station on June 4. Famously, he joined the Zengakuren students as they broke inside the National Diet fence on the night of June 15, addressed them there in a speech in the early hours of the 16th, and was arrested in the turmoil that followed and held for two days.



Surrounding the Diet

What, in Yoshimoto’s eyes, made Zengakuren so different from other movements? To begin with we must return to the specific historical situation of the “Ampo”-struggle in 1960. These struggles marked the first appearance on a large scale of the new left in Japan. At the time, the main organization of this new left was The Communist League (Kyosanshugi Domei), also

known as the Bund (Bunto), which in turn controlled Zengakuren. Inspired by the de-Stalinization process in the Soviet Union, the Bund turned aggressively against both the JCP and the older generation of “progressive” intellectuals. Yoshimoto’s preference for Zengakuren and dislike of “civic activists” and “political movements” reflects the battle lines of this conflict (Packard 1966:271ff). In order to understand how he could combine his sympathies for the students with an advocacy of privatization, we must turn to the role played by the experience of defeat. This experience has left a decisive mark on his thought, even to the extent that he uses defeat as a hallmark of authenticity (e.g. Yoshimoto 2006:557). Defeat is also his criterion for affirming popular activism and union-struggles, forms of struggle that he sees as being rooted in the masses and doomed to defeat. [8] “Political” activism, by contrast, floats above the mass of the people and is led by the eternal victors, the elite groups who never need to taste defeat. To Yoshimoto these victors included the JCP and the progressive intellectuals, who - like the ideologists of the emperor system during the war - had used high “ideals” to negate the life of the masses and mobilize them towards war or revolution and who, after the Ampo-struggle, would claim that “democracy” had been saved by their efforts (Oguma 2002:605, 638; Olsen 1992:94f; Yoshimoto 1972a and 1972b). An episode which for Yoshimoto symbolized the JCPs hypocrisy and betrayal of the Zengakuren students was the 15 June 1960 street demonstration in which the latter were beaten bloody by the police:

What I experienced then, and saw with my own eyes, was the figure of the JCP and the progressive movement around it preventing the masses from joining the struggle and insisting on an “orderly” demonstration, even as they watched the struggling and blood-

smeared young people being beaten by the police a mere hundred meters away. (Yoshimoto 1989:676)

methods that already failed once. “Won’t you join us?”, “Forget it, I’m taking my afternoon nap.” (Yoshimoto 1962:67)

Yoshimoto’s defence of the defeated “masses” did not necessarily imply support for the cause for which they fought. Certainly, he had himself been an enthusiastic participant in the struggle against the Security Treaty, just as, he tells us, he had been an ardent supporter of the war in his childhood. In retrospect, however, he tends to depoliticize his support for these struggles. It is not because of their stated goals that he approves of them, but because in his view the participants were representatives of the defeated “masses”. To defend a “cause” would for him have been equal to joining in with the choir of the bureaucrats and intellectuals who were for ever leading the masses into new struggles in which they were bound to be sacrificed. To resist, it was vital for the masses not to be misled again and to abandon the high public ideals preached to them. That would be the first step towards what he called “autonomy” (*jiritsu*). In 1961, the year after the Ampo-struggle, he explains why he rejected a certain invitation to a political meeting:

Those who think they won the Ampo-struggle will certainly also “win” the struggle about the proposed law for preventing acts of political violence and whatever struggles the future will offer. Nothing will come out of that but thoroughgoing lack of autonomy, the fetishism of the organization, self-deceit and bureaucratic phantoms. There are certainly times when one has to fight even while knowing defeat. That’s simply a problem of determination. But no one can be forgiven for being defeated a second time using

For Yoshimoto, privatization is a justifiable, even commendable, reaction to political defeat. The flipside of his criticism of the hypocrisy of intellectuals is his insistence that the masses should be respected when they pull out of politics to lick their wounds and throw themselves into private pursuits.

What emerges during the 60’s is a picture of Yoshimoto’s increasing resignation and withdrawal from an initial stance of intense commitment (the war and early postwar struggles) towards a defense of the apolitical masses. His skepticism towards the student movement of the late 60’s is hardly surprising considering that this movement had itself become increasingly isolated from the masses – while the Zengakuren students of the “Ampo”-struggle had solidarized themselves with the general public and gained wide support in return, the student sects protesting against the Vietnam war often viewed the general populace as being in “collusion” with imperialism and with the war in Vietnam (Kosaka 2006:65). Instead of defining radicalism in terms of revolt, as he had done in his early texts (e.g. Yoshimoto 1990), Yoshimoto now redefines it as championing the “autonomy” of the “masses”, meaning their ability to lead a life without interference or directives from elitist intellectuals or other authorities. In fact, his defense of the “masses” is also explicitly a defense of the right to live an apolitical life. To “live and die indifferently to whatever ruling power”, he asserts, is of more weight than any politician and “the basis for the thought of ‘autonomy’” (Yoshimoto 1989:678).

In the 70’s this “radicalism” is developed into what to many was a provocative nod of approval to post-industrial consumer society,

which he argued reflected a new stage in the development of capitalism, “super-capitalism” (*cho-shihonshugi*), which Marxism had failed to anticipate. [9] From the point of view of “the economic and intellectual liberation of the masses”, he now argues, capitalism is “the greatest work unconsciously produced in the history of mankind” and since nothing surpassing it has yet appeared, it must be affirmed for the time being (*ibid* 1992:122f). In his view, the criticism of consumer society by many intellectuals is still another instance of their grudging and disparaging view of the masses who have now finally achieved a level of living where they can afford a materially affluent life. Another reason for Yoshimoto’s defense of super-capitalism is its corrosive effects on his old *bêtes noires*, the state and its “public sphere” or civil society. As capital undermines the idea of a homogeneous society, individuals and families are liberated from the grip of communal fantasy. Rather than placing hope in “socialism” – which in Yoshimoto’s view has always easily reverted to Stalinism or (through *tenko*) fascism – he hopes that the hierarchies and the exploitation characteristic of the earlier stage of capitalism diagnosed by Marx will be undermined by the movement of capital itself through development towards an affluent middle-class society (Yoshimoto 2002b:5, 21ff). During the 70’s and 80’s, he also continued his aggressive campaign against the hypocrisy of “civic” movements – the target now shifting towards the movement against nuclear energy and other new social movements.

Predictably, this stance has been criticized by other radicals as a shift to conservatism – some even accusing him of having himself committed a political conversion (*tenko*). On the other hand, it’s possible to point to the continuities in Yoshimoto’s thought. His criticism has always tended to be directed less towards capitalism than towards the “state” and the idea of self-sacrifice for the “public good” advocated by the postwar Japanese intelligentsia. For instance,

Yoshimoto today repeats exactly the same argument in regard to the debate about social withdrawal (*hikikomori*) which he once used to defend the apolitical “masses” in the 60s against Maruyama. In *Withdraw!* (*Hikikomore*, 2002) he states unambiguously: “I cannot by any means give my assent to ideas that ‘social withdrawal is bad and that people who withdraw should be dragged back to society’” (*ibid* 2002a:19). In his opposition to the media’s portrayal of social withdrawal as a “problem”, we sense his irritation at how intellectuals disparagingly label the lifestyles of common people as a “problem” and his concern for each individual’s right to privacy. Most vehemently he turns against the value judgment that being together in society is better than keeping to oneself (*ibid* 30).



Hikikomori

Behind his defense of the privatized “masses” and social withdrawal is an idea that runs through his entire thinking from the 60’s till today: a critique of intellectuals as separated from the reality of the daily lives of the people. This is not the usual ethnocentric or populist idolization of the people as a homogeneous “nation”. Instead, his concern is for the “masses” of present-day mass culture – the myriad individuals pursuing their various daily private concerns – and the possible future that may be taking form in these masses and which can never be adequately represented by a pre-established system of thought. The nationalist

idolization of the “people” is itself nothing but an abstract ideology separated from this living reality.

In the discourse of the Left in Japan, Yoshimoto’s writings have had an impact which is hard to overestimate. Nevertheless, they also point to an impasse. While clearly being concerned with how to overcome the present stage of “super capitalism”, he is unable to suggest a strategy for how this is to be achieved. Rejecting the old-fashioned ideas of “socialism” and “revolution”, he is unable to recommend anything but looking to the future which is taking form through the privatizing tendencies of the masses (Yoshimoto & Takaoka 2005:200ff). But why would such privatization constitute any resistance, beyond safeguarding the integrity of the individual or the family against the wider collective? Will the future he hopes for ever be born if the masses remain wholly private? Worse: is not the pursuit of private interest equivalent to going along meekly with the system of “super capitalism” – and was this not exactly what Maruyama feared? These questions point to a dilemma in redefining the withdrawal from political involvement as resistance. How can just letting the system run its course constitute resistance?

Yoshimoto can easily be criticized for erecting a too watertight distinction between masses and intellectuals. There are surely tendencies to “intellectualize” and formulate ideals for the public good in any group in society. The distinction also raises questions about his own relation to the “masses” and it is certainly ironic that his major works are written in a dense style and in a jargon which appears to target primarily intellectuals. It is also easy to criticize him for summarily conflating the public sphere with state power, and civic activism with state subservience. Maruyama’s lifelong quest was to foster the growth of a public sphere that would not be under the sway of the state: only through the “political

concerns of non-political citizens”, he argued, would democracy ever take root in Japan (Maruyama 1961:172f). Arguably, Yoshimoto’s neglect of the possibilities of such a public, that could serve as an arena for challenging and confronting the state, goes hand in hand with an overestimation of the benefits of the private realm and the family.

Important continuities exist between Yoshimoto and younger thinkers like Asada Akira, who follows Yoshimoto in arguing that freedom or autonomy is more effectively pursued by going along with the “schizoid” tendencies in post-industrial consumer capitalism itself, especially what he (following Deleuze and Guattari) calls the culture of “flight”, than through moralistic criticism or political confrontations. The paradox which I pointed to in Yoshimoto – how can going along with the system count as resistance? – reappears in Asada, who has admitted that he is unable of coming up with a solution (Asada 1984:80f). Furthermore, he recognizes that the possibility of “flight” is constrained by the imperatives of making a profit inherent in capitalist production. A full liberation of the powers of flight would require a break with such production, but Asada fails to take this decisive step in his work. This idea will be developed further by Karatani, in whose writings we see the idea of flight as a break with the capitalist economy, and in which a firm link is established between the rhetoric of exit and social movement activism.



Karatani Kojin and the shift to activism in the 90's

Karatani Kojin's (1941-) recent thought offers a novel way of grappling or dealing with the dilemma which we pointed to in Yoshimoto and Asada, namely how the aspiration to work for societal change could be combined with an affirmation of the masses' withdrawal from public involvement. The question is particularly timely since the 90's has been a decade in which much discontent with the system has taken the form of exit - from school, marriage, the labor market or (in the case of the social withdrawal) from social life tout court. Can such discontent be turned into effective forms of resistance? Can it be channeled in ways that could further social change? Today questions such as these have gained renewed importance.

The thought of Karatani follows a trajectory that can be described as almost the reverse of Yoshimoto's, with Karatani growing increasingly critical of capitalism and

affirmative of social movement activism. [10] In early texts, from the 70's and 80's, his point of departure is a search for "exteriority" in the "intercrossing" spaces outside or between discursive systems, states or communities. The market provided a model for such a space. The global market, in his view, was a liberating and deconstructive tool that undermined the autonomy and closure of national and local communities. In opposition to communal space where rules were shared, it was a space existing in-between communities where participants confronted each other as strangers without presupposing common norms. It therefore offered liberating possibilities of otherness (Karatani 1995a:182; 1995b:143ff).

In this celebratory stance to the market and critical stance to the state or nation, there is a similarity to Yoshimoto and Asada. During the 80's, however, Karatani was hardly comfortable with the status quo. He repeatedly warned that Japan was trapped in a complacent discursive space that lacked exteriority (ibid 1989a:272). His main concern was with the closed, amorphous system of Japanese power to which he believed that the market could offer an antidote. Japan's plunge into a prolonged recession following the burst of the 'bubble-economy in the early 90's was therefore a breath of fresh air. Looking back in 1997, he writes that he had "felt almost suffocated in Japan during the 1980s", when people were euphoric and Japanese capitalism seemed triumphant. With the onslaught of global capitalism in the 90's, the "self-sustained and self-complacent space of Japan" was gradually collapsing (ibid 1997).

With the victory of the market, however, Karatani adopted a more critical stance towards it. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the Gulf War were pivotal events in this shift. Deconstruction, he writes, "could have critical impact only while Marxism actually ruled the people of many nation-states. In the 1990s, this tendency lost its impact, having become for the most part a mere agent of the real

deconstructive movement of capitalism". Instead of going along with the "deconstructive" movement of capitalism in order to undermine the closure imposed by states, he now felt that contributing something constructive, not in order to support mainstream society but in order to provide new alternatives, was the urgent task (ibid 2003:ixf).

He sketched his new "constructive" endeavour in his 2001 work *Toransukuritiku* (published in English as *Transcritique* in 2003), a work on Marx and Kant which has already gained considerable international attention (Cf. Zizek 2004, 2006). In this work he advocates the idea of "transcritical space" serving as a crossroad in which relations with others are possible without the risk of totalitarian closure. To Karatani, this is a model of critical thinking that escapes the closure of system thinking as well as a model for possible social networking and activism in the form of "associations" that escape the centralizing tendencies of traditional hierarchical organizations and movements. The model is now no longer provided by the capitalist market. Even though associations are just as open to strangers and to heterogeneity as such markets, they are entered into by a wish for mutual help, not for making profit. They also lack the coercive mechanism of "plunder and redistribution" typical of states and the narrow-minded intolerance and exclusion typical of the nation or community. They therefore offer means of "counter-acting" what Karatani calls the entire "unholy trinity of capital, nation and state" (Karatani 2003).

Karatani's new activist stance is manifested in the founding of the New Associationist Movement (NAM) in Osaka in June 2000, whose goal was to resist this "unholy trinity". NAM numbered close to 600 members a year after its inauguration, but it was soon beset by various problems - a small number of members, increasing bureaucratization and personal

tensions - and the organization was dissolved in 2003. [11]

Despite its failure, a study of the ideas that led Karatani to conceive of it is instructive. What I find especially interesting is the extent to which he conceived of NAM in terms of exit. The turn to movement activism and the establishment of NAM in no sense signifies an abandonment of Karatani's championship of people's right to turn their back on public involvement, and is better understood, I suggest, as his answer to how social movements can be organized in an age when many have chosen to do exactly that. Significantly, a strong emphasis on the individual's right to withdrawal, privacy and anonymity is retained in his thought even after his turn to movement activism. Although not a follower of Yoshimoto - they have criticized each other on a number of occasions [12] - Karatani carries on the legacy of the latter thinker in an important sense, namely in pointing to the emancipatory aspects of withdrawal and in the resistance to the totalitarian collective, the state or the unitary system of thought. Unlike both Yoshimoto and Asada, however, Karatani insists on the need to exit not only the state and the mainstream public sphere, but also the capitalist market. Unlike them, he tries to affirm privatization and flight in a way that makes it possible to utilize the rhetoric of exit for the purpose of social movement activism. On both these points, Karatani's thinking marks a new departure in the development of the rhetoric of exit in Japan.

The rhetoric of exit in NAM

In what sense did Karatani concretely present NAM as using a vehicle for "exit"? I will focus on four instances - the rejection of confrontation in favour of "exscendent" counter-acts, the ideal of impersonality, the advocacy of lottery, and Karatani's concept of the "public" - taking his works during recent years, NAM's program, pamphlets, interviews

and other texts concerning the movement as my material.

(1) To overcome the limitations of previous protest movements, Karatani proposes a combination of strategies that are “immanent” (*naizaiteki*) and “exscendent” (*choshutsuteki*) in relation to the capitalist economic system (or a combination of voice and exit to use Hirschman’s terms). The term “exscendent” is a neologism explained to mean “exiting and transcendent” (Karatani 2003:308 n14).

The immanent counteracts would include consumer boycotts and labor strikes, i.e. direct confrontations waged by consumers and workers participating in the capitalist system. However, NAM itself never engaged in such immanent counter-acts, instead devoting almost all its efforts to the exscendent or external counter-acts. By this Karatani means activities outside the capitalist system. From the outset NAM was launched as the germ of a future society that would gradually replace the existing capitalist society, even if it required “several centuries”. In particular he places his hope in the non-violent growth of alternative non-capitalist economies that could also function as safety nets for activists and groups disadvantaged within the capitalist system (Karatani 2000, 2002:208f, 2003:24f, 300ff). NAM’s exscendent activities included the establishment of an alternative school in Osaka for school-dropouts. Its aim was not to help dropouts back to school but to redirect their “exits” towards non-capitalist forms of schooling and was explicitly modeled on Murakami Ryu’s novel *Kibo no kuni no ekusodasu* (Yamazumi 2001:254). This emphasis on exscendent counter-acts meant that NAM was never intended to function as a protest movement, but rather was a form of social experiment, functioning as a forum for studies and discussions and focusing on cultivating long-term utopian projects.

The avoidance of violent confrontation is an

attempt by Karatani to overcome the historical legacy of “defeat” among anti-systemic movements. Thus he criticizes traditional Marxism for remaining stuck with an old-fashioned idea of revolution based on the violent street riots of the bourgeois revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries. The “counter-action” or “counter-acts” (*taiko*) of NAM cannot be modelled on traditional violent revolutions.

Since the Puritan Revolution, bourgeois revolutions have always involved violent acts. Even some socialist revolutions have been violent. However, that is only because they occurred in countries where the bourgeois revolutions (read sweeping of feudal remnants) or the formation of the nation-state had not yet been completed. Still there are many regions on earth where violent revolution is necessary. It is unjust and pointless for bourgeois ideologues to criticize this type of revolution. They are oblivious to their own pasts. But the point I want to make is that what abolishes - not just regulates - the bourgeois state (capital / state amalgamation) is no longer the violent revolution. I would call this other movement a counteraction rather than a revolution (Karatani 2003:344)

Karatani’s rejection of street uprisings and demonstrations also implies a rejection of the tactics used by the protest movements of the 60’s (ibid 2003:285). His relationship to those movements, in which he himself took part as a student, is complex. He is critical of those intellectuals who call for a repetition of “1968” today and instead stresses the need to break out of the “sterile cycle” of failed protest which

he sees in Japanese history. Here he implicitly draws on Freud's idea that a traumatized patient who fails to verbalize the loss will instead be forced to act it out symptomatically and "repeat" it. By rejecting romantic protest, Karatani appears to call for a proper "working through" of the trauma of defeat in order to bring about a genuine recovery (ibid 2005).

Like Yoshimoto, then, Karatani stresses the need to recognize the experiences of the 60s as a "defeat". To him, however, that does not mean that efficacious social movement activism cannot be pursued. It is not political activism as such that has been discredited, only the tactics of public confrontation.

(2) The central project among NAM's exscendent activities was the so-called Q-project, the establishment of LETS (Local Economic Trading System) that would bypass the official monetary system of Japan using an Internet-based electronic currency called Q. The idea of LETS was initiated by Michael Linton in Canada in 1982 and gained popularity in Japan in the late 90's. LETS resembles a system of reciprocal gifts, since the currency is freely issued by the purchaser at the time of buying. As soon as a transaction is made, the amount is subtracted from the account of the seller and added to the account of the buyer. The seller thus immediately gets his or her money, while the "minus" post of the buyer represents his or her "debt" or commitment to the LETS-community.

The Q-project - which was based on the theories of Nishibe Makoto, an economist from Hokkaido University - started trading in 2001 and today survives under the name [LETS-Q](#). It stands out from most other LETS through its use of an Internet-based currency and its clear aim to create an alternative to capitalist society. One advantage of Q over the official national currency, Nishibe points out, is that it is not issued by the central bank, but by the "workers-as-consumers" themselves. It

therefore works as a countermeasure against social exclusion and helps local initiatives in times of scarce capital. Moreover, since there is little point in accumulating Q for its own sake, Nishibe hopes that it will create a new form of market in which money won't become a "fetish" or turn into what Marx called "capital", a means of generating surplus value. Finally, since it allows a mixed use with the national currency, Nishibe believes that it will be able to grow gradually, without needing to replace the capitalist market at once with a full-scale non-capitalist economy (Nishibe 2001).

Karatani's endorsement of the Q-project reflects his wish to revive exchange mechanisms that resemble the gift economy of small-scale communities, but without their parochialism. Since electronic currencies can extend over large areas, the transactions would - he hopes - eventually become just as impersonal as in a capitalist market. "The death of the capitalistic market economy", he stresses "is not the death of the market economy" (Karatani 2004:456).

To Karatani, the potential "market-like" impersonality of Q was one of its chief advantages. To understand why, we should recall that he has long criticized older Leftist movements for hewing to the idea of a community to which even critics must belong and to which they must address their criticism. "Even those who criticize [...] class-society imagine a beautiful community in which people are mutually dependent and help each other" (ibid 1989b:235). For NAM to break the hold of this idea, it was important to grope for some more impersonal form of association. As mentioned, already in the 80's Karatani started to conceive of the market as an "intercrossing" space existing in-between communities and constituted by the interaction between "strangers". Such impersonality now became the ideal of Q, and even of NAM as such. Associations, he states, are based on contracts between mutual strangers, just like

transactions in the capitalist market (Karatani & Sakabe 2001). Through such “market-like” traits, associations like NAM would be able to outgrow capitalism by utilizing tendencies within capitalism itself.

Modeling associations on the market economy, Karatani can be said to mimic the tendency to privatization typical of capitalist markets. [13] Already in Yoshimoto, we saw a defense of the masses’ right to indulge in private pursuits. What is new in Karatani is the attempt to incorporate this pursuit into the modus operandi of a social movement. The counter-acts against capitalism become possible not by denying privatization and resurrecting the sense of community and solidarity, but by harnessing privatization to the goal of fostering a new economy. The “solidarity” and “common aim” so often stressed as defining features of social movements (e.g. Melucci 1996) are downplayed in favor of a respect for the participants’ privacy. An illustration of this is Karatani’s statement that the motive for joining Q is irrelevant – “it’s fine if people join for personal gain”. What is important is not the moral or idealistic reasons that drive people to participate, but the growth of alternative systems as such (Karatani 2002:207, Karatani & Suga 2005:209). [14]

(3) In NAM, lottery was introduced in the final stage of elections to the central board. Lottery, Karatani argues, helps prevent organizations from constricting individual freedom (Karatani 2003:306). To explain, we need to turn to some of his older writings. In these he sometimes discusses the difference between liberalism and democracy, which reflects his reading of Carl Schmitt. It is well known that Schmitt criticizes liberalism – a basic tenet of which is the establishment of a system of rights and “checks and balances” to prevent the centralization of power – in favor of democracy, which he defines as rule based on the identity between the ruler and the people. Karatani turns the tables on Schmitt, arguing that what is needed

is precisely liberalism. For instance, what protects discriminated minorities is the liberal defense of decentralization, division of powers and human rights, rather than the idea of democracy stressing uniformity and the rule of majorities. Democracy, he claims, easily lends itself to justifying the centralization of power and even the “sacrifice of the foreigner”. The counterpart of the democratic idea of a government “representing” the will of people is the idea of a public sphere in which citizens express their views and become political “subjects”. Just like thinkers such as Yoshimoto, Karatani is suspicious of the latent totalitarianism inherent in such calls for participation, to which he opposes the freedom to withdraw and not to be a “subject”. The freedom to keep silent, he argues, may be more important than the freedom of expression (ibid 1999:128f).

As an example, he mentions Athenian democracy, which he believes was made possible not only by the freedom of speech but also by voter anonymity, which protected the weak from having to confront the powerful. Equally crucial in preventing the emergence of dictators was lottery. With a few exceptions such as military commanders, magistrates and jurors in Athens were not elected but appointed by lottery. Lottery, however, is an element missing in contemporary democracies, which in Karatani’s view still leans towards the Schmittian idea of democracy as an organic totality joining leader and people through the fiction of “representation”. Lottery helps deconstruct this fiction by introducing contingency in the election process. To avoid the fixation of power, Karatani therefore advocates the use of lottery not only in NAM, but also in the state and in companies, parties, unions and other organizations (ibid 2002:118; Karatani & Suga 2005:191).

Here we can observe two things. Firstly, in designing the organizational structure of NAM, Karatani puts priority on the freedom to

withdraw and keeping ones anonymity rather than creating a sense of community or togetherness by participating in the public. Secondly, we can see that his proposed system of lottery bypasses “communicative action”. Contingency, or chance, is introduced in a way that replaces the public debate that is usually thought to be the lifeblood of the public sphere. In both of these respects, NAM takes leave of the strategy of “voice”.

(4) We have seen that Karatani in various ways champions the right to withdraw from participation in various arenas of mainstream society. The “exits” that NAM aimed at did not, however, imply a return to private space. Neither did NAM seek to participate in the public sphere in the conventional sense. To what, then, did NAM try to exit?

Karatani’s answer to this question can be found in *Transcritique*, where he uses Kant to change the meaning of “public”. The “public” should not be understood as linked to existing communities, but as a space where we encounter others who follow a different set of rules. In *What Is Enlightenment?* Kant defines the public use of reason as the use anyone can “make of it as a man of learning addressing the entire reading public”, while the private use of reason is more narrowly restricted to the use “a person may make of it in a particular civil post or office”. As Karatani remarks, this definition inverts the usual meaning of “public” and “private”: “In common usage, ‘public’, as opposed to ‘private’, is uttered at the level of community or nation, but Kant considered the public in this sense to be the private domain” (Karatani 2003:101). From a Kantian viewpoint, then, the “public” cannot be equated to the existing mainstream “public sphere” of national communities like Japan. It is not immanent to any “system”, but always transcends borders – or as Kant puts it: the public use of reason is that made by a person who considers himself a member of a *Weltbürgerschaft*, as a world citizen.

What NAM aimed at was to venture out into a “public” in the Kantian sense. In Karatani’s usage this is the equivalent of transcritical space: a space located in-between communities and, like the market, functioning as a place of intercourse for strangers. Since this is a place where no common rules or norms can be presupposed, it is better thought of as an indefinite space to which one exits than as an existing arena which one joins or to which one belongs. “Being public” is not about participating in institutionalized forms of interaction but about exiting to a space where the “singularity” of the individual is not constricted by the community. “In a community, being individual is deemed being private [...]. For Kant, however, being individual is equivalent to being public – in the cosmopolitan sense” (ibid 101).

As we saw in Yoshimoto and Maruyama, the “private masses” are often set up in opposition to politically or publicly engaged “citizens”. Karatani’s concept of the public avoids both of these categories. It has less to do with voice – free and open discussions among politically engaged “citizens” – than with exit, but this exit differs from that of the politically disillusioned “masses” in being a political counter-act intended to help break open the “trinity of capital, nation and state”. As Hirschman (1970) points out, voice is often a collective activity that tends to be preferred in the sphere of politics, whereas exit is typically a private and silent option employed in the market. By portraying exit as a political and “public” manifestation, Karatani calls the usefulness of the common separation between political voice and apolitical exit into question.

Is a social movement for exiters possible?

The picture emerging of NAM is of an organization aspiring to exit on two levels. On the one hand, we find passages evoking a collective exodus from mainstream Japan. On the other hand, in the downplaying of inner

solidarity and commitment, the stress is on individual exit. Although NAM as a whole aimed at an exit from capitalism, it also promoted a prior, partial disengagement of individual members from the very idea of togetherness. Even within NAM the ties between members seem to have been weak and impersonal, “like in a market” to quote Karatani. [15] In both of these respects, NAM can be said to represent an attempt to establish a social movement that would be attractive to those disillusioned with “participation” in the mainstream public as well as with the “inner solidarity” stressed in many earlier movements. It was Karatani’s answer to how a movement could satisfy the need of withdrawal and nevertheless have corroding and subversive effects on contemporary systems of control.

However, there is a tension between the two levels. NAM was supposed to function both as a movement and as a shelter or sanctuary from mainstream society where members could feel secure in their privacy and no one demanded that they identify with the movement. To be convincing, the rhetoric would need to portray a strategy of resistance that could be realistically employed even by those who have given up participation in the mainstream public sphere, the traditional arena of social struggles. Simply withdrawing from political participation in order to go along with private pursuits may be the first step to “autonomy” for Yoshimoto, but from Karatani’s perspective it is not enough since it fails to break out of the “trinity of capital, nation and state”. What is needed is to provide an alternative arena to which exit can be redirected. To Karatani, this arena was economically modeled on the idea of LETS and politically on the idea of an alternative, Kantian “public”.

The tension in Karatani’s rhetoric stems from the fact that it is far from clear how such redirection would occur. Those who withdraw from the mainstream social order in search of a shelter are not necessarily those who engage in

a movement for constructing alternative arenas – the former may well view participation in movements as well as futile. The tension in NAM’s rhetoric points to a deeper difficulty or dilemma in the rhetoric, which seems to revolve around the question whether movements relying on exit rather than voice are really viable.

Karatani is not the only proponent of the rhetoric of exit who is struggling with this problem. From a different angle it also appears in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, two prominent advocates of exit in today’s alter-globalization movement. Before returning to Karatani, it will be instructive to look at their attempts at a solution. Their version of the rhetoric centres on the claim that “desertion” and “exodus” are the most effective ways to offer resistance to the newly emerging system of global governance which they call “Empire” (Hardt & Negri 2000:212). By these terms they understand an evacuation of the sites of power, which is non-recuperable from the standpoint of capital or power. But what do the terms mean concretely? In *Empire* (2000) the main examples of desertion and exodus are refugees, migrant labour, escaped slaves, and the mass-emigrations that triggered the fall of the Berlin Wall. Resting on a myriad of individual decisions – a “diffusion of singularities” – rather than organized movement, the effect of these desertions is said to be to silently weaken the system of power, undermining it rather than fighting it. This is an idea that Virno has put succinctly: “The State will crumble, then, not by a massive blow to its head, but through a mass withdrawal from its base, evacuating its means of support” (Virno & Hardt 1996:261f).

As critics have pointed out, however, the question of whether migrants and refugees qualify as an effective countermovement against Empire is left unexplored. [16] In *Multitude* (2004) and other recent texts the concept of exodus tends to be broadened into a metaphor of resistance as such, including voice

and public confrontation. [17] Simultaneously, the central image illustrating the concept shifts to the mass-demonstrations of the alter-globalization movement in Seattle and Genoa. [18] The result of these changes is that the concept becomes more confrontational - what is needed is not simply to abandon or “undermine” power by depriving it of participation and support but actively to turn against it and topple it, through “a blow to its head” to use Virno’s words. This vacillation indicates a basic unresolved dilemma. The more they stress the undermining effects of the withdrawal of various subaltern groups from imperial control, the thinner the link to organized resistance becomes. Conversely, the more they connect their theory to the present surge in anti-corporate and anti-war activism, the more its empirical content tends to merge with the traditional movement repertoire of voice and public confrontation.

In comparison with Hardt & Negri, Karatani’s concept of exit is less mixed with elements of voice. As in their writings, the act of exit and the construction of a new society are conceived of as one and the same process. To Karatani, however, the idea of “exscendent counter-acts” is more than a “diffusion of singularities” and it is never used as a mere metaphor. The “trinity of capital, nation and state” must be undermined by the construction and gradual growth of alternative economic systems and the increasing flow of “exiters” to these alternatives. Karatani is therefore never tempted to portray exit, or “exscendent” counter-acts, in a way that makes them resemble the use of voice or public confrontations typical of classical social movements. Cultivating the project of an alternative economy is more important than rebelling or confronting mainstream society. The way he combines the rhetoric of exit with movement activism is therefore entirely different from what we see in Hardt & Negri. Instead of transforming the content of exit into that of voice, he attempts to conceive of a

social movement that is capable of being efficacious without operating with voice. [19]

Karatani’s solution is not free from difficulties. He appears to imply that people simply pursuing their private concerns within a frame like NAM will give rise to a self-organizing process which will erode capitalism. “When bright minds start pouring into non-capitalist modes of production, capital is in for trouble” (Karatani & Murakami 2001:77). Here Karatani appears to view the exiters as acting from a position of strength. There is no need to directly confront capitalism, since exit alone will result in a devastating “brain-drain” which will sap its strength. This may appear overly optimistic in retrospect. Apart from the fact that such movements have so far met with very limited success in Japan, they are also weakened by the fact that they lack part of the attraction of traditional movements. [20] For example, against Karatani’s criticism of the street-fighting of the 60’s, the literary critic Suga Hidemi defends them for the “fun” and the human contact they brought:

I wonder if movements really can continue if such pleasure and fun is lacking. Of course, I believe you are correct when you say that a genuine revolution is when seemingly insignificant changes happen without people noticing and the effect is only retrospectively recognized. But how about the fun of crashing into and shouting at people around you in the process of reaching that goal? (Karatani & Suga 2005:204f)

The price for Karatani’s solution is a diluted concept of social movement. As we have seen, NAM lacked many of the features normally associated with social movements - internal solidarity, confrontations with adversaries, and

an overall sense of solidarity with the surrounding society. While NAM proved the possibility of movements using the strategy of exit, the question of the viability of such movements remains in doubt.

Why did Karatani advocate exit as a strategy for movements despite these difficulties? In order to understand this, it is important to pay attention to the continuity relating Yoshimoto and Karatani. This continuity is the legacy of the “failure” of the 60’s. Thanks to this legacy the following dilemma appeared: how could one affirm the right of people to withdraw from politics and yet keep up appearances that one is somehow confronting or resisting power? Being designed as a movement suitable for those disillusioned with politics, commitment and solidarity, NAM can be seen as an attempt to answer that question.

NAM’s legacy and the recovery of voice

In the aftermath of political defeat in the 1960 Ampo struggle, Yoshimoto developed the idea that the exit of “privatized” masses from public involvement did not mean the death of the radical project but represented a new form of challenge to the system. A second watershed in the rhetoric’s development occurred with the renewed upsurge of protest in the late 90’s, when Karatani advocated exit as a strategy for social movements. Despite the differences between the two thinkers – to Karatani it is not the privatized masses as such that threaten the system, but rather movements like NAM that help redirect withdrawals to a Kantian “public” or transcritical space – both see exit as a form of resistance.

I have argued that neither thinker is entirely successful. Yoshimoto’s “masses” do not appear to threaten the present system of “super capitalism” and the possibility of exiting the “trinity of capital, nation and state” through a movement like NAM appears doubtful. Hardt & Negri’s alternative attempt to combine the

rhetoric with movement activism by letting terms like exodus include voice and confrontation likewise fails to address those who are disillusioned with such strategies.

With the anti-war movement in 2003 and today’s movement against “precarity”, voice in the form of street demonstrations and street parties has made a recovery among young people in Japan. “Precarity” is a term used to refer to the insecure employment conditions of irregular workers, such as “freeters”, part-timers, dispatch workers or day-laborers. Originating in Italy, it was introduced in Japan in 2005 through the activities of the NPO Remo in Osaka (Sakurada 2006) and popularized by the writer Amamiya Karin (2007) and the General Union for Freeters (Furita Zenpan Rodo Kumiai). The rhetoric of exit may appear to play no role in these movements, but they do share Yoshimoto’s and Karatani’s rejection of tightly knit and hierarchical organizations, their respect for privacy and heterogeneity, and – in the case of the “precarity” movement – their attempt to reach out to marginalized groups such as homeless people, NEETs and social withdrawers. [21] It is interesting to note that several prominent activists and writers in the “precarity” movement – such as Asato Ken, Sugita Shunsuke, Settsu Tadashi, and Yuasa Makoto – are former members of or cooperated with NAM. [22] Despite its own intentions, NAM may have contributed to the blossoming out of today’s voice movements, if not through its rhetoric then because it provided a place for ideas to be exchanged and contacts to be made. In that sense, even if the exits it promoted never constituted effective resistance, they were at least a prelude to resistance.

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Notes

[1] The term NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) was introduced in Japan in 2004. By official definition it includes people in the age 15-34 years (although in reality many are older) who have withdrawn from the labor market, many because they have given up hope of employment (see for instance Genda 2005).

[2] Examples of the rhetoric today include the advocacy of “desertion” or “exodus” among thinkers in the Autonomia tradition (Paulo Virno, Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri), of “disappearance” (Hakim Bey, Jean Baudrillard), or of “flight” (Asada Akira, Sakai Takashi). The notion of flight is derived from Deleuze & Guattari.

[3] Although protest is not necessarily the main activity of social movements, definitions of the term social movement in social theory regularly include public confrontation or contention (see for instance della Porta & Diani 1999:14ff, McAdam et al 2001:5, Melucci 1996:28, Touraine 2001:49). Hirschman himself has never applied the concept of exit to social movements, although he admits the possibility of collective exits with resemblances to movements, as in the case of the mass-migrations that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall (Hirschman 1995).

[4] See also Yoshimoto’s personal recollections in Yoshimoto & Takaoka (2005:68-70, 138-40).

[5] This argument is further developed in Maruyama (1965).

[6] For Yoshimoto’s criticism of progressive intellectuals in general, see for instance (Yoshimoto 1966b:101f; 1989; 1990). The criticism of Maruyama is further developed in Yoshimoto (2001).

[7] For tsui-genso, see Yoshimoto (1982). For his defense of the family, see e.g. Yoshimoto (1966b:157f; 1976b:404).

[8] To Yoshimoto, defeat has been a defining

feature of the “masses” since the establishment of the state and recognizing this defeat is a precondition for autonomy (Yoshimoto 1972a:399, 1972b).

[9] “Super capitalism” is defined as the next stage after “capitalism” and characterized by the fact that more than half of average income is used for consumption and that freely optional consumption exceeds the consumption of necessities. Japan began to shift towards this stage around 1973 (Yoshimoto 1992:9, 14; 2000:133f).

[10] For the political radicalization of Karatani’s thinking during the 90’s, cf Cassegard (2007).

[11] Prominent members included Asada Akira, the economist Nishibe Makoto, the lawyer Kuchiki Sui, the artist Okazaki Kanjiro, the musician Sakamoto Ryuichi, and critics and academics such as Komori Yoichi, Suga Hidemi, Kamata Tetsuya, Oji Kenta and Yamazumi Katsuhiko. Membership information is based on the self-reporting of NAM and its successor FA (2004-03-14).

[12] See their mutual criticism in Yoshimoto & Takaoka (2005:204f) and Karatani (1999:148-87).

[13] Critics have blamed Q for building on a vision in which local currencies function as a substitute for communication (Kayama 2002:118f).

[14] It is interesting to note that there have been attempts to use the “non-social” character of LETS networks to provide a space for interaction and possible empowerment for social withdrawers, as in the case of Kyoto LETS, a group that collaborates with LETS-Q as well as with New Start Kansai, an organization supporting social withdrawers (see Ueyama Kazuki 2000, 2001:111-114).

[15] Much of the interaction within NAM took place via the Internet. Karatani himself confesses that he mainly interacted with the movement “on-line” (Karatani & Murakami 2001:70).

[16] Boron, for instance, criticizes the “illusory” equation “between migration/nomadism and

liberation/revolution”, the “alchemy” that converts “emigration to revolution” (Boron 2005:18, 91, 97). Other critics point to Hardt & Negri’s failure to differentiate properly between the conditions of self-chosen and forced migration (Raunig 2002).

[17] See for example the highly metaphorical use of the term “exodus” in Alliez & Negri (2003:114f).

[18] See for example Negri (2004:77).

[19] Karatani’s relation to Hardt & Negri is ambivalent. While referring approvingly to Negri’s “refusal to work” in *Transcritique*, in more recent works he criticizes Hardt & Negri for relying too much on “movements from below” and for neglecting the perspective of a Kantian “world-republic” (Karatani 2006).

[20] For the problems facing many of the LETS groups founded in Japan, see Hamanishi (2005).

[21] For discussions of the anti-war movement in Japan and how it differs from older Leftist movements, see Mori (2005), Hayashi & McKnight (2005), Cassegard (2008).

[22] Asato Ken (aka Tokuda Miguel) is a poet who founded the network PAFF (Part-time Arbeiter Freeter Foreign Worker) and the General Union for Freeters in 2004. Sugita Shunsuke is well-known for his writings on the situation of freeters and publishes the journal *Freeter’s Free*. Settsu Tadashi is former vice president of the General Union for Freeters. Yuasa Makoto - who was not a member but participated in some of NAM’s activities - heads the office of the NPO Moyai which functions as a “support center for autonomous life” for homeless and other poor people.

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