

# REVOLUTIONARY SUICIDE

AND OTHER DESPERATE MEASURES



NARRATIVES OF YOUTH AND VIOLENCE

FROM JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES



ADRIENNE CAREY HURLEY

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Adrienne Carey Hurley

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To Jimmy



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All translations in this book are my own unless otherwise indicated. In the pages that follow, Japanese names are written with the surname first except in the case of Japanese Americans and in quotations taken directly from sources in which this convention is not followed.

“Spics” BY ALFREDO HEREDIA

“Spics!” they yelled, and they meant us, although they should’ve said “beaners,” because we were Mexicans—a minor technicality. In fact, Raúl, I later learned, was half Puerto-Rican, which may have made him a Merican. But it didn’t matter then.

We were pissed off at being called out, and Franky, who wasn’t really a beaner, but a Pilipino, a “flip” who grew up with Mexicans, and was now a spic, was the first to throw them the finger, and up it shot as Raúl grabbed his crotch, the three of us shouting, “right here!”

They turned their car around, cut us off before we reached the corner. And without giving it much thought, as though it was always meant to be, part of the universal scheme, the great cosmic design, I kicked the front door back when the driver put his leg out. He howled and Raúl pulled him out and made him howl some more.

Franky planted his coke bottle firmly in someone’s face, and before we could do more damage, blue and red lights flashed, a siren screamed, and the police, who are always there when you don’t need them, had us hugging the ground, cheek to street.

In the courtroom, the judge, like a stoic patriarch, raised his glasses, naked eyes, arctic blue, bearing down on our late adolescent faces. “Young men,” he said, “I am going to be lenient.” That was how the army got us.



Written in the late 1980s, this unpublished poem by Alfredo Heredia dramatizes what might be considered a kind of “turf” war, although not in the usual sense. The dispute is not over a neighborhood, but over who can be violent, how, why, when, and where. The “turf” is violence itself. All of the parties involved are male, and the judge who appears in the final stanza represents the winners, the (white supremacist) state. The speaker and his friends are sentenced to redeem themselves for disallowed expressions of violence as soldiers for that state, which defines the turf and assigns the youth their “appropriate” roles within it. The poem clearly questions what it means to be, and who can be, “American” and the ways in which violence seems overdetermined for youth of color, “as though it was always meant to be.”

As richly layered and provocative as “Spics” is, perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of it relates to why it has never been published. Heredia, in his words, “disavows” this poem. In the most declarative terms, he explained to me that he is now loath to participate in even representational violence: “I wouldn’t write that poem or one like it now. When I was fourteen, I saw a boy my age get killed and later wrote about it in a piece of prose. I described it as a flashback. I don’t think I could even write about that now, and that really happened. I don’t want to romanticize violence. Writing that poem was a kind of showing off, a way of responding to the sense that this is what’s expected of people like myself.”<sup>1</sup> It was only by reassuring him that I would note his renunciation of this poem that he consented to its appearance here.

“Spics” is a fitting introduction to this book not only for the questions about representational violence the poet’s disavowal raises, but also for thematic reasons. *Revolutionary Suicide and Other Desperate Measures* is a study of the stories we tell about youth and violence. Heredia’s poem illustrates the power of stories to give meaning to behavior and events. For example, in the official version of the late adolescents’ story, street violence is criminalized, and military service is a “deal” and, perhaps, even an opportunity. Heredia’s disavowal of “Spics” is one type of response to the uneasiness that accompanies any exploration of the questions this book raises—questions such as: What does it mean for a society to cultivate an appetite for representational violence (often for profit) in its young at the same time that many of its youth experience real violence? Heredia’s answers to such questions have led him to adopt a stance of total non-cooperation and non-participation, of refusing even to write himself into an act of violence.

To understand Heredia's position, one must consider the ways in which a late adolescent "boy of color" in the U.S. might see or experience himself as the agent of possible violence and, more critically, how the larger society might see that boy. For example, race and ethnicity are frequently invoked as if they explain flare-ups of so-called gang violence in juvenile halls in the U.S., and the drama of race-based affiliation within prisons and criminalized communities informs a considerable amount of filmic and other popular culture. The enduring familiarity with films such as *Scarface* and *Blood In, Blood Out* even among youth who were not yet born when the movies were released in 1983 and 1993, respectively, is notable. In our discussion regarding this phenomenon, Heredia expressed concern that *Blood In, Blood Out* and, to a lesser extent, Edward James Olmos's *American Me* (1992) allow ample room for youth of color, in his words, "to romanticize violence." Heredia recalled watching fifth-graders reenact violent scenes and dialogue from *American Me* and commented that "the medium is stronger than the message," which in the case of *American Me* can be interpreted as a broad critique of racist violence, both institutional and interpersonal.

Such movies can appeal to and fuel a romanticization of Latino gangs, as is undoubtedly the case for many white viewers. Heredia now feels he was, even if only in part, responding to that white audience's expectations when he wrote "Spics." After the poem was recognized at a Los Angeles poetry festival, Heredia recalls receiving a phone call from a white female filmmaker who was planning a documentary on poetry in the U.S. She told Heredia she was interested in his poem about "gangs in the army" and hoped he would consider reading it for her film. Heredia declined, uncomfortable with the way in which his poem was being received and the role he was being solicited to fulfill. The speaker of "Spics" and his friends are, of course, nowhere identified as gang members, but because they are Latino and Asian and because they fight, they were already coded as such for the filmmaker. She was looking for "gangs in the army" and not the army as the gang (or part of a larger gang).

The association between youth of color and violent "gangs" is so pervasive that the routine use of wrist twisting (or wrist locks) and psychotropic medication (both of which can make the excessive use of force and abuse harder to detect) as means to "control" young prisoners are not as familiar at the level of general public discourse as the notion that "gang tensions" on the outside spill over into juvenile halls. Thus, when many people hear that a young person has been found injured or even dead inside a juvenile hall, they may be more likely to imagine a ritualistic shanking committed by a rival gang member of a different race or ethnicity than a fatal overdose of medication or staff-inflicted

injury.<sup>2</sup> The dramatic shanking fantasy even resonates with some youth who have actually served time in juvenile prisons and suffered the effects of untherapeutic medication or painfully executed “control” measures, which we might see as one example of how successfully we are conditioned to look to identity instead of institutions for the sources of violence—even in cases in which our own identity is suspect. By redirecting our attention to institutions, such as the nuclear family or juvenile “correctional” systems, and the often inadequate or misleading narratives available for understanding and expressing real experience, I seek to counter some of the prevailing myths that obscure the violent conditions many youth face and offer alternative models for reading and interpreting young people’s rage.

I began this project in 1995 with a focus on how childhood experiences of violence are depicted in fiction written in contemporary Japan, but it became increasingly apparent that neither the genre nor the location could adequately contain answers to the most recurrent and urgent questions. The youth whose stories were being told and sold were already accustomed to crossing the line between fact and fiction. They had to in order to survive. Storytelling, as the second and third chapters of this book make clear, is often a critical survival skill for young people living with violence. Likewise, official and other adult responses and “solutions”—not to mention commercially lucrative forms of representational youth violence—do not “respect” geographic borders. Such conditions produce striking similarities in the experiences of and social responses to young people in Japan and the U.S. who are victims of violence despite the differences in how, for example, race and class are configured and understood in the two countries.

The comparisons I make between contemporary Japan and the U.S. in this book suggest that something fundamental links (or is shared by) these two countries. Depending on one’s sensibilities, that core similarity might be described as neoliberalism, late capitalism, democracy, or authoritarianism, for example, and, of course, none of these labels is exclusively applicable to the nation-states of Japan and the United States. As a starting point for thinking about what Japan and the U.S. share, I will begin with the admittedly problematic notion of the “First World” to invoke an understanding of socioeconomic and geopolitical conditions informed by the Third World solidarity movements of the mid-twentieth century. These movements attempted to create channels (sometimes official, as was the case at the Bandung Conference of 1955, but more often not) through which oppressed people could make common cause with one another, resist domination, and assert the right to collective survival.<sup>3</sup>

As such, these movements were often oppositional and insurgent in character and simultaneously nationalist and internationalist. The notion of a First World from which a Third World seeks liberation suggests both a specific political history and a broad, fluid understanding of geopolitical differential power. Because the U.S. and Japan are not the only nations thought of as part of the First World, and each has populations within its respective borders who identify as part of the Third World, the label “First World” itself (like “capitalist” or “authoritarian”) begs questions and comparison with other contexts. Furthermore, the notion of a First World has been defined in relation to (and by) those who have identified as part of the Third World, regardless of geographical location. This last point has particular resonance in the present study and warrants some elaboration.

I refer to Third World solidarity movements not to suggest that the U.S. and Japan are representative of a totalizing and geopolitically empirical or stable “First World” (after all, many of my examples come from movements within the U.S. and Japan that have identified as “Third World”) but, rather, to shed light on how access to political theorization affects social and political movements. Throughout this book, I hope to show how the absence of opportunities for youth to develop political analyses to explain their anger or rage is a genuine problem. Third World and other solidarity movements have faced similar problems, which I draw on to shed new light on youth violence in Japan and the United States. Furthermore, several of the writers whose works I discuss connect youth violence in Japan and the U.S. to sociopolitical violence in the Third World. The Third World as a critical construct continues to be vigorously theorized and reworked in many ways at a number of levels. For example, the idea of Third World solidarity retains powerful resonance for some as a means to articulate identities (sometimes as a euphemism for people of color, but not always, as examples in Ireland and Quebec illustrate), agendas, and visions. Whether in the rhetoric of Hugo Chavez or Mahmoud Ahmadinejad railing against U.S. imperialism, the emergence of an “alter-globalist” political party in Quebec (Québec Solidaire) or in the street-level discourse of antiauthoritarian and anarchist people of color organizing in North America, the idea of Third World solidarity remains important today.

To better understand the enduring meanings of Third World solidarity, it is helpful to consider how even in its earliest history, the numbered designation of “worlds” did not denote fixed geographical locations. Instead, it served as shorthand for specific and contingent constructions produced through social movements and political struggles to address fundamental disparities. As Vijay

Prashad succinctly explains in the opening of *The Darker Nations*, “The Third World was not a place. It was a project.”<sup>4</sup> The historical political project to which he refers began in the 1950s and was predicated on yearnings for national liberation, self-determination, and freedom from ongoing oppression. If, as Prashad argues, “The world was bettered by the attempt to articulate a Third World agenda,” we might consider that the world was worsened by articulations of a First World agenda that lays waste to the moral and political rights of the oppressed, including those who live and/or identify as members of the Third World within the borders of First World nation-states.<sup>5</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, this was certainly the belief of groups such as the Black Panther Party and the San’ya Liberation League, for whom the U.S. and Japan were exploiters and oppressors of the Third World writ large, both abroad and at home.<sup>6</sup>

Despite differences in the ways in which discrimination (based on race or class, for example) is expressed in Japan and the U.S., people whose concerns have coincided with those of Third World solidarity movements have understood the net effects of their experiences of oppression as relatable. Thus, the struggles of migrant workers in the U.S. were immediately recognizable to the Japanese *burakumin* writer Nakagami Kenji when he visited a migrant workers’ camp in rural Iowa in the early 1980s. In his essay “America, America,” Nakagami writes, “I asked José, a Mexican, about the lives of immigrant workers and the immigration process. Their lives and migration patterns were very similar to those of mountain workers in places like Kishu [Nakagami’s home region in Japan].” He further recounts, “My consciousness of the beauty of Iowa, named after an Indian word for beautiful land, was raised when I saw the makeshift shack where the migrant workers stayed. I don’t want to criticize Iowa. I enjoyed the tender kindness of Iowans and yet felt I had just glimpsed another version of the hardworking Midwest deep in the heart of the heartland.”<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, when Roberta Alexander and Elbert “Big Man” Howard traveled to Japan in 1969 as representatives of the Black Panther Party, they felt a much stronger connection to day laborers in the San’ya district of Tokyo and *zainichi* Koreans than to the (middle-class) student revolutionaries who had sponsored their visit. As Howard said at a press conference in Tokyo, “We, members of the Black Panther Party, recognize the exploitation, segregation, and social degradation of the workers of [San’ya] and the citizens of Korean background to be one and the same as to what we are subjected to in America.”<sup>8</sup> “At the same time,” as William Tucker explains, “the organizers of the San’ya Liberation League expressed solidarity and strong connections to the Panthers.” Tucker,

whose research on this subject is unparalleled, notes that of all of the places in Japan Alexander and Howard visited, “San’ya received the most attention” in the Black Panther Party newspaper. Tucker attributes this to a feeling of identification, a sense of “the movement of workers in San’ya as parallel to the [Black Panther Party] and urban Black movements in the U.S.”<sup>9</sup>

The Third World thus was never geographically fixed in the Third World project, and the status of a nation-state was not conflated or commensurate with the status of everyone who might reside in it. The Third World might then be understood as a position—that of the “exploited, segregated, and socially degraded” to borrow Howard’s words. While Japan and the U.S. might be widely regarded as First World nations, Alexander and Howard lived in the U.S. and saw both themselves and the “workers of [San’ya] and the citizens of Korean background” who lived in Japan as “exploited, segregated, and socially degraded.” Third World solidarity movements emerged in this manner as a pattern of identification and affiliation based on relatable experiences of oppression. Students of color in the San Francisco Bay Area could see themselves as connected to anticolonial movements abroad and organized the Third World Liberation Front in 1969 because the Third World “project” included them. They, too, had cause to resist capitalism, white supremacy, and imperialism, and they, too, were “exploited, segregated, and socially degraded.” The project was named according to historical and ongoing oppression and differential power relations associated with imperialism (i.e. “the Third World” oppressed by “the First World”), but the project’s outcome would be the abolition of those expressions of oppression and differential power relations (and, according to some expressions of the project, all forms of oppression and differential power).

For more than half a century, those who have identified with a Third World project to liberate oppressed people have seen parallels in one another’s situations that have fueled mutual recognition and solidarity. I wish to invoke their expression of mutual recognition and solidarity (and not any specific label such as “First” or “Third”) at the outset, because, as the following chapters will make clear, the opportunities for and obstacles to mutual recognition and solidarity available to youth who experience violence in the U.S. and Japan are often strikingly similar and highly influential. The stories of youth addressed in this book emerge out of different contexts that are nonetheless clearly relatable and would likely lead many imprisoned youth in Japan and the U.S., for example, to see something immediately recognizable in their counterparts’ lives, experiences, and feelings (were they able to meet one another). I understand

the similarities in their situations as inextricably linked to economic, political, and social dynamics one finds in both Japan and the U.S. However, this is not to suggest that the relationship between Japan and the U.S. is unmarked by differential power.

It is impossible to write about contemporary Japan without considering the U.S. and the effects of its government, military, and media. There are roughly ninety U.S. military installations in Japan, approximately 75 percent of which are located in Okinawa, which shoulders this disproportionate burden for reasons inextricably linked to ongoing structures of domestic discrimination and the history of colonial oppression in Japan, even as U.S. military operational headquarters in Japan have shifted to the Yokota Air Base west of Tokyo, on the main island of Honshū. Currently, roughly 47,000 U.S. military personnel and more than 5,000 civilian Department of Defense employees are stationed in Japan at any given time.<sup>10</sup> Successive Japanese administrations' fervent support of this sizable U.S. military presence and recent political haggling over the proposed move of a single base (Marine Corps Air Station Futenma) do not, according to James Fujii, change the fact that Japan remains, more than sixty years after the end of the Pacific War, under U.S. military occupation.<sup>11</sup> For those living near U.S. bases, the complexities of what it means for the second-largest holder of U.S. national debt to be militarily occupied by that debtor nation do not mitigate the material concerns related to sexual assault, noise pollution, and incidents such as the crash of a U.S. military helicopter (which may have been transporting depleted uranium munitions) into a building on the campus of Okinawa International University near the Futenma base in 2004. Indeed, some Okinawans may find more room for mutual recognition with Chamorros in Guam than with people in Japan who live far away from U.S. military bases and personnel.<sup>12</sup>

This situation has inspired critiques of U.S. imperialism on the political left and right in Japan. For example, a shared opposition to U.S. political, military, economic, and cultural influence brought together an unlikely pair in 1998: Amamiya Karin, who at that time was an ultra-right-wing and nationalist punk rock singer in her twenties, and Shiomi Takaya, a middle-aged revolutionary leftist who had served time in prison for his involvement in planning the Yodo hijacking of 1970. As fundamentally different as their attitudes toward, for example, the Japanese emperor system may have been, they were united in their belief that the deleterious influence of the U.S. should be resisted. Amamiya and Shiomi shared their ideas on a trip to North Korea that is documented in Tsuchiya Yutaka's film *Atarashii kamisama* (The New God).<sup>13</sup>

Concern over U.S. influence also has loomed large in the political thought of a more “moderate” figure, the Nobel laureate Ōe Kenzaburō. In the late 1980s, during the so-called bubble economy years in Japan, Ōe rejected the characterization of Japan as a First World nation due to the relationship of enforced dependence on the U.S. In his essay “Japan’s Dual Identity: A Writer’s Dilemma,” Ōe contends that, despite its status as an “economic giant,” Japan is not an independent nation but, rather, a Third World nation dependent on the U.S. (for imports, food, “security,” etc.) even while it acts like a First World nation and exploits other Third World societies.<sup>14</sup> For Ōe, Japan’s dependence on the U.S. does not absolve the country of its aggression toward Korea, the Philippines, and China, the examples he cites. He explains, “Japan and the Japanese betray democratic aspirants in Third World countries” and “are often aggressors toward nations of the Third World, of which we ourselves are in fact a member.”<sup>15</sup>

Any attempt to posit an illusion of sameness or “reciprocity” of influence would surely deflect attention away from the material effects of the dependence to which Ōe aptly refers, but this is not to say that Japan does not exert influence within the borders of the U.S. For many in the U.S., Japan or things Japanese play a significant role in everyday life—from what some call the “soft power” of cultural production and exports to the diffuse experiential realities of multi-generational Japanese America. Notable for the purposes of this book, which focuses on youth, is the widespread popularity of Japanese anime and videogames among youth in the U.S. For some youth, anime informs their fantasy lives, structures their peer interactions, and motivates them to study the Japanese language. In 1991, when I first taught a university Japanese class, the majority of my students expressed interest in business-related pursuits. The study of Japanese, to them, constituted a step toward career and economic advancement. More recently, I have found that, regardless of the university or its particular demographics, anime and videogames are often the interests my students cite as their gateway reasons for studying Japanese.<sup>16</sup>

Concurrent with my academic engagement with the relationship between Japan and the U.S. were my experiences working directly with youth in Japan and the U.S. over the course of two decades—for example, as a volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) with abused youth in the Orange County, California, dependency system and as founder and director of the University of Iowa Youth Empowerment Academy (YEA!).<sup>17</sup> One of my former “CASA kids,” now a young adult, has experienced and embodied many of the connections that generated this book. He was twelve when I first met him, and our first

conversation was almost entirely about anime. At the end of that conversation, he showed me a folder filled with drawings, poems, and magazine clippings. Aside from a few pictures that displayed understandable rage, the material in the notebook, particularly the poems, which spoke to feelings of loneliness and alienation, revealed a vulnerable and very open youth who was yearning to attach. The trauma and abuse he suffered (both in the home and in institutions such as hospitals, juvenile halls, and group homes), the racism with which he has had to contend, his creativity, his contradictory yet sincere love of films such as *Blood In, Blood Out* and *Scarface*, and his often surprising sense of humor in even the toughest situations have had a profound impact on this book (and my life). Although neither he nor the other youth, including my brother, who inspired this project are named or “studied,” their presence is felt throughout. Admittedly, I was motivated to explore oppositional readings of high-profile “juvenile crimes” in part 2 because these young people I love have been so violated, so abandoned, and so reviled. Nonetheless, as I will explain in the chapters that follow, the misleading nature of conventional attitudes regarding youth and violence necessitates this shift toward that which is rarely seen, acknowledged, or addressed—the brutalized and vulnerable body of the youth we are coached to fear.

This book is divided into two parts, the first of which focuses on the moment of violation in early life and how it is rendered into memory and words. The second part focuses on adults’ fears of angry youth, as well as the means of expression available to enraged youth in contemporary Japan and the United States. I hope to show that it is precisely our adult imaginations and the extent to which we idealize, vilify, or render unrecognizable childhood and adolescence that engender the violence we purport to loathe. Put in the simplest terms, if there are teenage “monsters” next door, they are very much monsters of our own creation. This is not to say that there is something uniquely pathological about the “adulthood” of Japanese and U.S. adult societies but, rather, that the very processes of socialization to which we are all subjected often compel us to drive our children crazy. With the repeated caveat that the same may be said of other places (for similar or different reasons), one of the defining features of contemporary Japanese and the U.S. societies in the analyses that follow is their crazy-making propensity, which I see as pronounced in a common adjective used to avoid discussions of why some young people turn to violence.

Youth violence today is often described as “inexplicable” in both Japan and the United States. This book challenges the complacent and formulaic invoca-

tion of the “inexplicable” as a means of forestalling understanding and intervention and, instead, brings various traumatic origins of youth violence (whether directed at the self or at others) to the foreground. Each child’s actions have meaning, and there are always explanations, but we are often coached not to see or to distort them (at all levels—from the individual or interpersonal to broadcast media). Our systematic and relentless betrayals of youth often begin with the denial of their experience, yet we continue to adopt an “adult” optic that puzzles over the way youth betray us. We sell their bodies while simultaneously treating them as markets and then excoriate and blame them for acting out precisely what we demand of them. Using fiction, journalism, film, writings by youth, and case studies as my texts, I chart a culture of child abuse that extends from the most private of spaces, the home, into the classroom, the marketplace, and the streets.

If in general we understand a culture to be the customs, patterns of relation, and belief systems through which a people perceive themselves to be affiliated and according to which they engage with others, then child abuse in Japan or the U.S., rather than a “cultural” problem, is in fact a culture itself. That is to say, child rearing, education, and socialization practices, and our very ways of seeing children in relation to ourselves as adults, may reflect and overlap with other expressions of cultural identity, but the abuse of children is no more or no less comprehensive as an identifiable culture than “Japanese” or “American”—even though we are more accustomed to seeing it as a function of culture (usually someone else’s culture) or as pathological. As is the case with cultures in general, what we take to be “natural” or, at least, “neutral” must be continually learned and reinforced. (Cultures, after all, are “inherited” only insofar as they are taught and learned.) In Japan and the U.S., we invest considerable effort and massive resources (through advertising and the juvenile “corrections” system, for example) in cultivating in youth appetites for that which we routinely deny or punish them. These contradictory “lessons” we pass along to the next generation are often quite literally crazy making.

Youth in Japan and the U.S. learn to desire consumer goods, such as designer sneakers or handbags, and come to gauge their self-worth in relation to their acquisitions. When youth cannot afford to purchase what they are taught to want, they sometimes resort to extreme measures. We are familiar with this phenomenon through news reports of young people committing armed robbery or even murder to procure a desired good, or of Japanese girls engaged in *enjo kōsai* (compensated dating) with older men. Young people who can afford plenty are virtually guaranteed fame in this context in which the “right” to

consume is held sacrosanct and the public display of consumption encouraged. The Hilton sisters are known in Japan and elsewhere precisely because they flaunt their excess and their consumption. Paris Hilton was arguably the least likely to suffer the worst effects of imprisonment, yet more media attention was devoted to her brief jail sentence in the summer of 2007 than to that of perhaps any other young person in a U.S. prison, including Omar Khadr.<sup>18</sup> The fact that so many of the goods youth in Japan and the U.S. learn to desire are produced by youth elsewhere working in abysmal conditions underscores the far-reaching effects of the disregard and responsibility for global childhood suffering characteristic of the prevailing neoliberal economic policies pursued by the governments of Japan and the United States.

The first chapter of this book, “Survivor Discourse, the Limits of Objectivity, and Orpha,” establishes my theoretical approach to childhood suffering—how it is understood, manufactured, represented, and simultaneously hidden from view in contemporary Japan and the United States. I also identify the ways in which childhood trauma differs significantly from adult-onset trauma or oppression. Briefly, children, unlike populations of adults who may be subjected to violence, intimidation, and so on, are for a period of time necessarily dependent on adults for survival, a developmental reality that points to the limits of the applicability of adult liberation theories to the problems of institutional, state, and familial child abuse.

Chapter 2, “Shizuko, the Silent Girl,” concerns a controversial autobiographical novel (released in 1993) about childhood sexual abuse by a well-known Japanese *manga* author, Uchida Shungiku. I explore the ways in which this novel functions as oppositional storytelling and, at the same time, feeds into existing markets for sexualized images of children, particularly girls. I introduce this topic by discussing the title itself: *Fazaa Fakkaa* (Father Fucker). Central to my analysis is the question of how the rhetoric of consent invoked by the title relates to experiences of torture and dissociation as they are depicted in the novel and in real life. I also look at the ways in which creative storytelling is connected to the young protagonist Shizuko’s survival and how this echoes what the author elsewhere describes as her own “figuring out” process that culminated in the novel.

*Bastard out of Carolina*, an autobiographical novel by Dorothy Allison, was also published in 1993 and, like *Father Fucker*, tells the story of a girl who was sexually abused by her stepfather and who belongs to a community perceived as more likely to produce abusive homes. In the case of *Father Fucker*, the girl grows

up in a “broken home,” and her mother works in the sex entertainment industry (as a hostess and dancer). In *Bastard out of Carolina*, the girl grows up in a poor white family in South Carolina. This novel is the subject of the third chapter. Like Shizuko, Bone, the protagonist of *Bastard out of Carolina*, relies on creative storytelling and childhood play to manage the daily terror with which she lives, but her experience as a young storyteller is radically different from Shizuko’s due to the presence of some caring and involved adults. In this chapter, I also discuss how the identification of a “bad self” (congruent with the tendency toward self-blame) shapes the melodramatic stories Bone tells as a girl and how the adult narrator remembers and reinterprets these childhood stories.

The second half of the book deals with youth as imagined and real agents of violence and explores how the incapacitation of many of today’s youngest generations serves certain state and corporate interests. Even the most casual observer of juvenile halls in Japan and the U.S. is immediately struck by the disproportionate presence of youth perceived as ethnically, culturally, or racially “different” from the dominant population. Rather than understanding this as simply a side effect of racism or prejudice, I analyze the epidemic incarceration of oppressed youth as a constitutive element of “Japanese” and “American” societies. Clearly, the widespread use of psychiatric medication and violence in juvenile “correctional” institutions assists in the incapacitation of youth who might otherwise pose a threat, not in the misleading sense echoed throughout much of the mass media (which, after all, routinely fuels exaggerated fears of the teenage menace), but as an oppressed population large enough to constitute an opposition of consequence. In other words, “Get ’em while they’re young,” and they will not be able to organize and resist later.

Chapter 4, “Engendering First World Fears,” explores images of children as either threats or threatened in the 1990s and early twenty-first century, as well as how fear and rage have been maintained in recent years as the dominant national feeling states in the U.S. and Japan. Each of the cases and stories I analyze in this chapter reveal something about how adult society in both countries is understood and defined in relation to youth and how those very understandings are reinforced and amended to exact social and political compliance. I also highlight the escalating criminalization and abuse (institutionally and otherwise) of youth as a phenomenon that serves both state and corporate interests. I end the chapter by exploring how one contemporary Japanese writer addresses these questions in a work of fiction. Hoshino Tomoyuki’s novella *Uragiri Nikki*

(The Treason Diaries) draws together two of the most feared figures in Japan and the U.S. from recent years—the “teenage super-predator” and the “terrorist”—and in effect places them in the same army.

In Chapter 5, “‘Killer Kids’ and ‘Cutters,’” I introduce the words of actual youth and analyze how they represent their own experiences and problems such as “juvenile crime” in ways that diverge sharply from official and mass-mediated discourse. I discuss a range of interpretations of the defining “incident” that catapulted the problem of the “teenage super-predator” onto the center stage of public discourse in Japan, eclipsing government scandals and many other news stories: the killing of Hase Jun in May 1997. A boy who used the alias “Sakakibara” in letters claiming responsibility for the murder had already attacked two other children, killing one of them (Yamashita Ayaka), when he decapitated Hase Jun and left his head in front of a school gate. I look at the new vocabularies youth in Japan and the U.S. have developed or claimed to identify and communicate their understandings of events such as this one and the Columbine High School shootings. The problem, as it is narrated by youth, points to very different causes than the predictable theses presented on the nightly news (or in state legislatures). In this chapter, I focus on the mangled and thwarted attempts to communicate desperate youth make when denied more direct means of communication.

The last chapter moves beyond the stories of children per se to address violence in the lives of young adults living in Japan and the U.S., particularly those who struggle for an analysis that suits their rage. My discussion focuses on the writing of Hoshino Tomoyuki, who attempts to provide disaffected readers with possibilities for a political analysis through which rage might be understood and perhaps even channeled. Chief among his concerns is the Japanese emperor system, and my discussion of Hoshino’s fiction engages histories of anti-imperialist discourse in Japan and the United States. I look especially to his novel *Ronrii Haatsu Kiraa* (Lonely Hearts Killer; 2004) to explore the question: What happens when young people are denied opportunities to develop a political analysis to explain their rage? Or conversely, how does the presence of such an analysis affect both the meaning and outcome of acts of violence? Hoshino’s work opens up avenues to compare and connect children’s rage to histories of militant and revolutionary resistance ranging from anarchism in the early twentieth century (and today) to the Third World solidarity movements mentioned earlier.

While much of this study concerns fiction’s role in communicating and de-

fining childhood trauma, fiction is also equally capable of engendering trauma. The wildly popular 1970s horror sci-fi manga *Hyōryū Kyōshitsu* (Floating School), by Umezu Kazuo, begins with conflict between a boy and his mother.<sup>19</sup> The boy has a treasured marble, which the mother throws away while cleaning his desk. Upset when he discovers what his mother has done, the boy confronts her while she is chopping vegetables in the kitchen. The mother turns around, brandishing the knife, and the boy asks if she intends to stab him. They argue, and the boy announces, “You’re not my mom anymore. I’m never coming home again.” The mother replies, “Fine, see if I care.” The boy leaves in a huff, walks to school, and then a sudden and inexplicable explosion catapults his school building into a post-apocalyptic future world, a frightening desert landscape populated by mutants and monsters.<sup>20</sup> All that is left behind in the present where the school once was is a giant crater. The message here is clear: If you defy your prescribed role, if you “talk back” to your parents, if you are “bad,” something terrible will happen and you will suffer, a message that is hammered home throughout the series as the boy is reminded constantly of how much he misses and needs his mother. This is much more than a dramatization of separation anxiety. It is an admonition to obey your parents—and, by extension, the rules of society—because if you do not, life as you know it will end.

When we compel our youth to “obey,” telling them not to defy their prescribed roles (whatever those roles may be and regardless of circumstance) or else risk losing that which (or “everything”) they hold dear, we should not be surprised when some young people opt out, resist, or defect altogether. In the case of *Floating School* and other literature that reinforces rigid models of appropriate behavior, there is no room to accommodate youth for whom “good citizenship” or “filial piety” might mean something very painful or risky, such as the demand to endure physical abuse. For the child who literally must resist and fight back to survive, Umezu’s series sends a potentially dangerous message.

Some youth violently reject the admonition to observe the rules of the very social contracts that structure their oppression as a means of survival, and what thus appears to be “criminal” or “disobedient” may be a young person’s only available means for expressing a will to live. If that is the case, then a work of fiction such as Hoshino Tomoyuki’s *Uragiri Nikki* (The Treason Diaries), which brings together “teen killers” and “Third World guerrillas” from the headlines of 1997 and 1998, may have something in common with the manga I just described in that both respond to anxieties and fears of violent youth, fears that the world as we know it will end if kids start to resist. While the manga portrays