

Copycat Poets and Suicides

Nagasawa Nobuko and Haraguchi Tōzō

Haraguchi Tōzō gave his life calling out my very own cry. ... Ever since spring break, this is my conclusion: idealists who go on living are cowards. I have been Haraguchi ever since I was born. And now too, I am Haraguchi. But I will free myself from this two-month long Haraguchi-disease and live on (or at least not die). ... In search of purity, Haraguchi turned toward death. In search of purity in life, I ... turn toward materialist philosophy.

—NAGASAWA NOBUKO AT AGE SIXTEEN, IN A MAY 1949 LETTER TO
A FRIEND

The parallels between Haraguchi Tōzō (1927–46) and Nagasawa Nobuko (1932–49) would be obvious even without her many overt nods to his influence and counterinfluence on her life, writings, and death. Both were youths who chose to die rather than live amid the turbulent conditions of the immediate postwar; Haraguchi died by drowning in Zushi on October 25, 1946, at the age of nineteen, and Nagasawa overdosed with poison in her native hometown of Gunma on June 1, 1949, at the age of sixteen. Both were aspiring poets whose maiden works were published only posthumously thanks to the good grace of friends. Each averred skepticism about the efficacy of written expression, and yet both left behind a substantial collection of writings that speak directly both to their suicidal struggles and to the postwar condition in highly intellectualized terms that draw largely from western poets and philosophers. Stylistically, both favored poems and aphorisms, employing terse fragmentary prose that run from as little as a single phrase or sentence to dozens. And finally, prior to their suicide attempts, each bequeathed multiple volumes of their writings to a close friend who would eventually undertake publication.

Where the two examples depart is in the divergence in the timing and receptions of their work. Haraguchi's major work was published within eight months of his death to great critical acclaim, becoming a postwar best- and long-seller with dozens of print runs for over half a century.¹ *Études à Vingt Ans* is a three-volume collection of his thoughts on everything from French poetry and Nietzschean moral philosophy to the colonial experience.² So pervasive is Haraguchi's influence that some credit him with giving birth to postwar poetry. In contrast, Nagasawa's poems took sixteen years to see print at all, at first in a small privately published edition of just five hundred copies. Although her works eventually achieved something of a long-seller status for a poetry collection (with one hundred thousand copies sold between 1965 and 1983), she remains little known.³

In part, the discrepancy is due to the resources that were available to Haraguchi's friends, who also would go on to become famous poets and critics themselves. These include French literary scholar Hashimoto Ichimei and Kiyōoka Takayuki, who won the Akutagawa Prize in 1969 for his stories set in colonial Dalian (Port Arthur), where both he and Haraguchi were schooled. As fellow students at the prestigious First Higher School in Tokyo, the friends managed to publish both *Études*, which Haraguchi had left behind at the time of his first suicide attempt at Mount Akagi in Gunma, and a companion volume that included his final last writings—his self-scripted death notice ("Shinin oboegaki") and the suicide notes addressed to his elder brother and to Hashimoto—alongside a series of memorial essays by prominent literary critics and philosophers.⁴

What propelled interest in Haraguchi was the fact that like Fujimura Misao almost half a century earlier, he was also a First Higher School student who had committed suicide out of ostensibly philosophical reasons. As his friends put it at the time, his choice was "not out of pessimism or ideological confusion, but instead one of the philosophical 'deaths of a youth' that are reminiscent of *senpai* like Fujimura Misao."⁵ As a *senpai*, or literally "one who comes before," Fujimura offered something of a model for imitation. One classmate recounts friends who tried to dissuade Haraguchi by warning, "If you die, suicide will become a trend at First Higher so you really ought to give up on the idea."⁶ After he died, in a clear echo of Fujimura's "Thoughts on the Precipice," his friends even chose to inscribe a line from *Études* into a birch tree located at the site of Haraguchi's first attempt. The savvy publisher Date Tokuo anticipated that Haraguchi's work would sell well based on the fact that it satisfied "three conditions: First Higher School, suicide, and a posthumous manuscript."⁷

Writing in 1948, literary critic Nakamura Mitsuo aligned Haraguchi with the likes of Fujimura and other "youth sacrifices" that were "sad symbols of Japanese modernity." For Nakamura, the specter of Fujimura remained just as relevant in the politicized context of the immediate postwar, especially for leftist youths experiencing a resurgent class-consciousness; Fujimura was "not merely something belonging to the past"; instead, his "dead spirit haunts the hearts of countless

earnest, sensitive youths all the more today.” In his mind, however, Haraguchi’s poetry did not quite live up to his model. He wrote that “even if this is a record of youth, we would be hard pressed to call it literature of youth. ... Even if the author of *Études* is a martyr to poetry, he is no poet.”⁸ In the Marxist cultural critic Karaki Junzō’s 1950 *Jisatsu ni tsuite* (On suicide), Haraguchi appears as the last in the now familiar long line of literati suicides—after Kitamura Tōkoku, Fujimura Misao, Arishima Takeo, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, and Dazai Osamu—whose “traces enable [him] to consider the special state of contemporary Japan.”⁹

Nagasawa Nobuko has occasionally been folded into this lineup as another example of a youth whose struggles were emblematic of the times. As a high school sophomore at the time of Japan’s defeat in the war, the book-loving Nagasawa soon became engaged in philosophy and politics. Her above-noted active turn to materialist philosophy (*yuibutsuron*) as a means of warding off her death wish was also a brief turn to communism, which she renounced just days before her suicide.¹⁰ Many of her poems and prose excerpts chronicle her rapidly shifting thoughts toward contemporary philosophical and political trends, ranging from nihilism, deconstructionism (*hakai-shugi*), the historical necessity of communism, and the limits and possibilities of postwar democracy. After her poetry was belatedly published in the mid-1960s, renewed interest in her works at this juncture was fueled by a sense that it could illuminate the immediate postwar conditions, especially for contemporary students in the aftermath of the failed Anpo mass protests of 1968.

United by their shared engagements with poetry, philosophy, and politics and by their suicides at a young age, Fujimura, Haraguchi, and Nagasawa (and also sometimes Kishigami Daisaku, the subject of chapter 6) are discussed in tandem as examples whose last writings offer a “record of youth,” to borrow the title from a 1968 volume, *Seishun no kiroku*, in politically turbulent times.¹¹ In a 2009 study, her image appears in a place of prominence, as the book cover and her most famous poem as its subtitle.

Even in this volume where Nagasawa appears with a dedicated chapter of her writings after one on Haraguchi, however, she is easily forgotten. This was apparent in the following exchange between the volume editor and writer Endō Shūsaku that appears as a preface:

Ed.: I think that today’s students are really to be pitied. In addition to the new mass production education, there are really no longer any great men [*gurēto • man*], not even a few, whom they might worship or even scorn. This is changing the subject a bit, but in this volume there certainly are a lot of suicides.

Endō: Well, there’s Haraguchi-kun and Fujimura Misao.

Ed.: And also Nagasawa Nobuko who committed suicide at age seventeen. Speaking of suicide, although they didn’t make it into this book, there are also, of course, ones like Dazai and Akutagawa and Arishima who very much influenced youths.¹²

When Nagasawa Nobuko is remembered, her legacy is most often tied to Haraguchi as her most immediate and relevant predecessor and *senpai*. A 2009 article in *Asahi shinbun* touting the belated critical reappraisal of her works sixty years after her suicide encapsulates the most commonly noted features of her biography: “Nagasawa was born to a prominent family of weavers in Kiryū [Gunma] in 1932. She began writing poetry as a first-year student at the local Kiryū Girls’ High School. She was a devoted reader of Haraguchi Tōzō’s *Études à Vingt Ans*. After graduating, she died by suicide from poisoning.”¹³ She dies as an aspiring writer of poetry, but more proximately, as a reader of Haraguchi’s. One critic dubbed her “Japan’s Rimbaud,” while noting that it begs “the question of what it means for a woman to ‘know’ Rimbaud,” and even her friend Takakura Eiko added that Nagasawa only “knew Rimbaud through the author of *Études*, Haraguchi Tōzō.”¹⁴

Female self-writing and self-death is again figured here vis-à-vis more famous male examples. We might recall the Okayama student and avid reader of philosophy who cited Fujimura’s poem in her own note before dying by poison and is known today only by the sobriquet of “the female Fujimura Misao.” Or the aspiring poetess and unrequited love interest of Kishigami Daisaku, who appears under the pseudonym “Yoshiko” in his manuscript where she is figured as a reader to whom he bequeaths all his “pathetic” (*buzama*) writings, rather than as a writer in her own right.¹⁵ Or the assumption that the manga artist Nekojiro was a diehard fan who imitated the suicide of X Japan rocker hide. As Anne Carson suggests about the ancient Greek lyric poet Simonides’s epitaph for a woman named Arche-dike “whose functions are indicated exclusively by her grammatical dependence on the nouns father, husband, brother, children,” there “are a number of (by now familiar) things one could say at this point about masculine discourse and patriarchal codes and the suppression of female voice.”¹⁶

If recovering female voices from oblivion is often fraught, in Nagasawa’s case it is especially so. The connections drawn between Nagasawa and Haraguchi were in large part by her own design. As the passages cited in this chapter’s epigraph attest, in her diaries and letters to friends, she acknowledged her indebtedness to Haraguchi in carving out her own paths of writing, living, and dying. Moreover, as we will see below, her most famous poem begins with a direct citation of Haraguchi’s own poems. Yet it is important to note that she resisted this connection as well. In one of her notebooks that she left behind, Nagasawa pointedly rejected any inevitable comparisons with Haraguchi or Fujimura: “I’m not such a deluded person as to die for the sake of purifying my ego [*junketsu na jiga o eru tame ni toka*] or because of the incomprehensibility of life or anything [*jinsei fukakai toka*]. That’s just too sick. It’s poor form. The last wager: I spun the roulette with a somber face. And when it stopped upon death, for the first time, I was cheered.”¹⁷

In rejecting such explanations for her own suicide, she is resisting what these two men themselves had written about their own deaths beforehand and the conventional interpretations that would be invoked to explain them afterwards. As we saw above, Fujimura Misao had provided an eminently quotable explanation for dying in his “Thoughts at the Precipice,” distilling it to a single word in quotes: “Incomprehensible” (*fukakai*). In *Études*, Haraguchi had celebrated “Purity. – This most brutal egoism.” He often put these buzz words themselves in quotes, for example declaring “my axiom is the single word ‘purity’ [*junketsu*]” or “Pure ‘ego’ [*jiga*]” lacks the stench of life.”

In citing and tweaking the words of her deceased male predecessors, Nagasawa is not only rejecting them, however. This is an act that both disavows and claims. Citation can simultaneously be in the service of shoring up *and* severing connections, of remembering *and* forgetting.

For both Nagasawa and Haraguchi, imagining the gravesite—one’s own or another’s—as a site of memory and oblivion was central. In their writings, graves offered sites for imagining a continued point of contact between the dead and the living. Crucially, this relationship was not just one that was imagined to exist between the dying self and the surviving others whom they would leave behind. It also extended to the many other dead who came and went before them.

In what follows, I examine the writings of both Nagasawa and Haraguchi to consider how they speak both to those they left behind and to one other. I ask, How might Haraguchi and Nagasawa be said to speak for, and to, each other? This would seem to be an odd question; after all, Haraguchi’s suicide preceded Nagasawa’s, which would seem to suggest a one-way street by which “those who come after” (*kōhai*) can only speak or act in response to their *senpai*. But Nagasawa suggests the complexity of this call and response when she writes:

Haraguchi Tōzō gave his life calling out my very own cry.

Watashi no sakebi o Haraguchi Tōzō ga seimei kakete sakende kuremashita.¹⁸

Self-diagnosed as suffering from “Haraguchi-disease” (*Haraguchi-byō*), as if he has infected her, Nagasawa suggests here that she has also infected him. As much as she perceived herself to be a copy of Haraguchi, she sensed in him a copy of herself. The echo goes both ways.

Taking my cue from her own writings that skew the chronology, I begin with Nagasawa rather than Haraguchi. Reading in this fashion can help free not only Nagasawa from a place of derivation but also Haraguchi. As we saw above, his poetic abilities were sometimes maligned by critics like Nakamura Mitsuo and also by those like Nosaka Akiyuki, who imagined a mortified Haraguchi himself “turning over in his grave today.”¹⁹ By recovering Nagasawa’s writings to consider how she figured her own self-death and its mourning, we can hopefully recover Haraguchi as well. Like Simonides’s epitaphic rhetoric that treated “time

as a two-way corridor” and thus managed “to pull open the door at this end and reverse the natural direction of mortal traffic,” it is my hope that in so doing, we too might productively open up a dialogue among the dead.²⁰

NAGASAWA NOBUKO:
H-BYŌ AND FORGET-ME-(NOTS)

What Nagasawa’s case demonstrates is that even a so-called copycat suicide is not so simple as following any preordained script. Even when she directly cites Haraguchi in her poems and writings, she significantly alters the script by willing the living to forget *and* remember the dead.

Nagasawa’s most famous poem written in July 1948 at age sixteen is titled “Betsuri” (Parting). It opens with an epigraph, a citation from the closing lines of Haraguchi’s suicide note to his friend, which serves as the preface to his *Études*:

<p>“The time to part truly has come When the morning comes, my friends, you’ll depart having forgotten my name.”</p>	<p>“Betsuri no toki to wa makoto ni aru <i>Asa ga kitara tomo yo</i> <i>kimira wa boku no na o wasurete tachisaru</i> <i>darō.</i>”²¹</p>
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—Haraguchi Tōzō—

Taking up Haraguchi’s call to his friends here, in the remainder of the poem, Nagasawa repeatedly bids her friends to forget and remember, and finally to forget her again.

She begins half of the poem’s stanzas with this insistent, and even imperious, phrase, *Tomo yo* (My friends!).

My friends!
When I die, do not come visiting my grave or anything.
Do not disturb my slumber by offering flowers or shedding tears.

Place my unadorned grave atop a hill.
At the most, I’d ask for the purifying breeze.
On top of a tall, tall mountain
where traveler’s visits are few and far between.

My lone grave standing
surrounded by obscure alpine flowers
and only in winters on the rare occasion
of a deep snowfall shall I open my eyes.

My roused spirit wandering the high plains
called forth by the slapping winds
that rage as if they will break.

My friends!
 When I die,
 sorrow and pity are useless.
 If you were to favor me by enwrapping me
 in something that resembles friendship in the slightest,
 it would be only to forget me and take your leave.

For me, who has said my goodbyes to this world,
 I cannot stand the thought of remaining even as an image
 among the living.

Might one hear cries of joy
 from my grave,
 after the passing of so very many autumns and springs,
 finally
 forgotten?

My friends!
 It will be then that my spirit is filled with joy.
 It will be only then that I die.
 My spirit awakening in spring inside my grave
 to say once more goodbye
 to the grave.

My friends!
 It will be then, in that oblivion,
 that you should wave
 a giant flag in the sky.
 Wave it with all your might
 turning toward me.

My friends!
 The time to part truly has come.
 When the morning comes,
 you'll depart having forgotten my name.²²

Her poem evinces a simultaneous sense of dread and desire to be remembered. The majority of the lines ask her friends to abandon her to her “lone grave standing / surrounded by obscure alpine flowers” with the peaceful, and sometimes unruly, natural elements (the purifying breezes and slapping winds) as her only companion. She wills her self-erasure from the world of fellow humans, reluctant to be memorialized even in the form of an “image” (*eizō*). Being forgotten will enable her awakening as she “opens [her] eyes,” her “spirit awakening” (*me ga sameru, tamashii mezameru*). At that point, she too will then part, not from her friends, but from the grave itself: “To say once more goodbye / to the grave.”

And yet enlightenment does not mean her erasure from the world of the living. Instead, in this moment of awakening, she initiates yet another dialogue with her surviving friends whom she bids to “wave / a giant flag in the sky. / Wave it with all your might / turning toward me.” If in death she has turned away from them and turned them away, she now demands to be seen and acknowledged once more. She even imagines someone present at her graveside who might hear her cries of joy at having been forgotten. It is only “when the morning comes” that, borrowing again from Haraguchi’s note that opens and closes her own, “the time to part truly has come.” Death binds her friends to her even as it frees them.

For the repeating line “When I die,” Nagasawa uses a grammatical construction that implies that her friends will think (or speak) back after her death. A more literal translation would read, “My friends! Thinking because I have died, you ... (*Tomo yo / Watashi ga shinda kara tote* ...)” Her death will be the impetus for their thoughts, words, and actions, whether they forget or remember her. Although she titled the poem “Betsuri” (Parting) in a clear echo of Haraguchi’s phrasing, this original title, too, has been largely forgotten in favor of this more catchy refrain by which her poetry and she herself is most remembered: *Tomo yo watashi ga shinda kara tote*.²³

If in this poem Nagasawa declares an ambivalent relationship to the friends she imagines will survive her, what kind of relationship is she constructing between herself, as a living poet, and the dead poet Haraguchi? By bookending the piece with citations of his last writings, she too is remembering *and* forgetting the dead.

In the poem, she begins by setting off Haraguchi’s lines, conspicuously using quotes in the English-language style and crediting them to him by name:

<p>“The time to part truly has come When the morning comes, my friends, you’ll depart having forgotten my name.”</p>	<p>“Betsuri no toki to wa makoto ni aru Asa ga kitara tomo yo kimira wa boku no na o wasurete tachisaru darō.”</p>
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—Haraguchi Tōzō—

This citation appears to defy his very request “to depart having forgotten my name (*boku no na*).” By Nagasawa’s final stanza, however, his name *is* forgotten:

<p>My friends! The time to part truly has come. When the morning comes— you’ll depart having forgotten my name.</p>	<p><i>Tomo yo Betsuri no toki to wa makoto ni aru Asa ga kitara— kimira wa watashi no na o wasurete tachisaru darō</i></p>
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In one sense, this act of forgetting is equally an act of remembrance since it accords with his stated wishes. But no attribution to Haraguchi appears this time around. Instead, she merges their two voices by not setting them off as the words of another in any way. In her closing, Haraguchi’s parting words to his friends

remain, repeated almost verbatim, but with two strategic adjustments: first, her creative rearrangement so that her own repeated refrain—*Tomo yo*—heads this final stanza, and second, her substitution of the masculine pronoun for “my” name (*boku no na*) from the opening stanza here replaced with the gender neutral *watashi*. In this final line, when she reiterates the opening that bids friends to forget the dead once more, this time she allows for the possibility of a female subject as the one whose name is to be forgotten.

Is appropriating Haraguchi’s lines here an act of reclamation or disavowal? Homage or critique?

It is tempting to interpret her final twist as a pointed gender critique. Such a critique would seem to anticipate and resist any imposition of the label “the female Haraguchi Tōzō” or “Japan’s Rimbaud” insofar as Rimbaud was filtered through her readings of Haraguchi. One critic, Kurihara Sai, argues that Nagasawa cites Haraguchi only “to turn his words on their head.” In her interpretation, parting is no longer a goodbye to one’s friends, but instead the birth of a new female subjectivity. This reading enables her to construct an alternative genealogy for female poets that links Nagasawa to “the foremother of modern Japanese female poets” Yosano Akiko and that decouples her from Haraguchi.²⁴

But is this a rejection of Haraguchi? What is being turned on its head here? There is no denying that Nagasawa *was* situating her suicide and her writings vis-à-vis Haraguchi’s. She deliberately parrots him back with difference. By expanding the pronoun so it encompasses them both, there is less disavowal than claiming, a merge that acknowledges the coexistence of the two without erasing difference. What Nagasawa’s poem seems to stress is the interchangeability of self and other, the ways that one might substitute for the other without completely swallowing each other up. Or, as she put it, the ways one might give one’s own life calling out another’s cry.

Nagasawa memorializes Haraguchi here, and herself. Her creative citational strategy is crucial to navigating the many dangers associated with speaking in the wake of another’s death or, I would add, in the face of one’s own. As Jacques Derrida points out in his reflections about how to speak and write ethically after the death of his friends, one is faced with “two infidelities, an impossible choice:”

Out of zealous devotion or gratitude, out of approbation as well, to be content with just quoting, with just accompanying ..., to let him speak, to efface oneself ... and to follow his speech. ... But this excess of fidelity would end up saying and exchanging nothing. It returns to death. It points to death, sending death back to death. On the other hand, by avoiding all quotation, all identification, all rapprochement even, so that what is addressed to or spoken of ... truly comes from the other, from the living friend, one risks making him disappear again. ... We are left then having to do and not do both at once, with having to correct one infidelity by the other.²⁵

If not quoting at all risks making the dead disappear entirely, “just quoting” enshrines them in a tomb of their own making, one with their words carved

upon it for eternity. Since Derrida here writes about his closest friends who also happen to be key intellectuals of the twentieth century—Roland Barthes in the above passage, and about Foucault, Deleuze, Levinas, and so on in the thirteen other eulogies and memorial essays included in this volume—the latter is surely the greater risk.

In Nagasawa's case, it is by quoting and incorporating the final lines from Haraguchi's suicide note into her own poetry two times over that she too manages "to correct one infidelity by the other." If she begins with a citation of his words verbatim, she closes by creatively adapting them into her own. She both fixes and unfixes his words. This is an act of homage as much as any subversion, for in so doing, she mirrors Haraguchi's own preferred forms of writing, as we will see more of below. She speaks for him, to him, and with him simultaneously.

In one of her final notes addressed to her friends, Nagasawa envisions a simpler act of substitution, whereby her suicide will forestall theirs. (Elsewhere, she notes that four of her closest friends have attempted suicide already.) She bids them to "live on in good health," "to live on stalwartly," and "to allow me to shoulder the entire burden of everyone's unhealthy aspects. It is more than enough for me alone to stake a grave marked by defeat and separation [*Haiboku to danzetsu no bohyō o uchikomū mono wa watashi hitori de takusan desu.*]"²⁶

In the end, Nagasawa was buried in two separate plots, her ashes divided between the grave of her biological mother, who died when she was four years old, and that of her adoptive family.²⁷ In one of her earliest extant notebooks, Nagasawa acknowledged her own lasting hopes for her grave site:

My poetry collections are a history of chaos, defeat, war wounds. That restless grave marker.

Watashi no shishū wa konran to haiboku to senshō. Zawameku sono bohyō da.²⁸

For Nagasawa, too, her self-eulogizing poems and aphoristic prose were to serve as an epitaph for both herself and for Haraguchi, but a restless one at that.

HARAGUCHI TŌZŌ: MOURNING IN MEMORIAL STONES, MEMORANDUMS, AND MUSIC

When Haraguchi's friends were burying him, they followed his suggestion for his own epitaph from early on in *Études*:

A suggestion for my gravestone.

"Here / sleeps a simple, pure youth / who departed this world praying for the happiness of the untroubled maidens."

Bohimeī no ikkōan.

"Koko ni / nayami naki otome-ra no saiwai o inoritsutsu yo o sarishi / sobokunaru wakamono nemuru."

This is the line that his friends inscribed into a birch tree that they fashioned into Haraguchi's grave marker and placed in the northern foothills of Mount Akagi in Gunma. This site was both a favorite beautiful natural refuge for Haraguchi during his lifetime and the site of his first suicide attempt when he left behind *Études* and the suicide notes to friends that would serve as its preface.²⁹ The choice of this location for his memorial led one scholar to posit, without any apparent irony, that the young Nagasawa, a Gunma native herself, may have been one of these "untroubled maidens" who was "deeply susceptible to the spirit of this epitaph."³⁰

In retrospect, Haraguchi's friend, the later poet and critic Nakamura Minoru, expressed his regret about their choice, wondering if they should have let *Études* stand as his memorial marker instead: "When we chose that one line from the first volume of his *Études* as an epitaph, I shuddered with a vague premonition. Weren't the three volumes of *Études* the grave of Haraguchi Tōzō? Was not this the intention of the dead?"³¹ Conversely, his brother expressed regret that Haraguchi had left *Études* behind at all. Citing a Confucian proverb, his brother scorned the act of writing for being an attempt to be understood by others and lamented the fact that this "man who knew that men among men were to depart in silence bearing their loneliness" had instead chosen "to dump works bathed in his blood."³²

The question of what traces were to remain and stand in for the dead after they are gone was one that preoccupied Haraguchi as much as those he left behind. At the time of his first suicide attempt at Mount Akagi, he had willfully destroyed all his other poetic writings besides *Études*, leaving only those three volumes behind. At both this first attempt and his second, fatal one later that month at Zushi, he left behind crisply titled "memoranda of the dead" (titled "Shisha oboegaki" and "Shinin oboegaki"), containing only factual identificatory information including his family's address, his own name, birthdate, residence, and school affiliation. Bundled in a *furoshiki* cloth and left alongside his First Higher School cap on the seashore, his second death notice consisted of a single line: "On the eve of October 25, Shōwa 21 [1946], drowned at Zushi beach."³³ This, too, offered a representation of the dead self, something to substitute for the disappeared physical form, albeit a vast departure from the poetry and verbosity of *Études*.

In his prefatory letter to his friend, Haraguchi apologizes for the manuscript's unpolished quality, having written the entire work feverishly in less than eight days.³⁴ Although he denigrates *Études* as the "ramblings of an old, senile fool" (despite being only nineteen years old at the time of its writing), he also clearly willed it for posterity. In another letter, in anticipation of its publication and at least some commercial success, he asks for a piano to be purchased for a good friend's sister with the proceeds.³⁵

Haraguchi is highly self-conscious about participating in his own memorialization through these act of writing. In one of the rare tragicomic excerpts of *Études*,

he anticipates and preempts all the competing explanations and critiques that will be lodged after his death (elision and emphases in original):

My guess as to what other people will think when they find out about my death:

1. Stupid folks, especially the aspiring cynics among them, will say: “Haraguchi died, ya’ say? Seems like he musta got tired of living, ay?”
2. Solemn faced know-it-alls will say: “This is truly the defeat of human existence.”
3. Biologists who speak mechanistically (*this is really a rather good one*):
 “People possess many means to die, but occasionally among them one can discover an odd way. Out of excessive hunger, they gobble down cyanide; in a fit of motor control loss, they point the sharp end of a knife at their own heart; or in a strange attack of lovesick weeping, they leap into a river. ... To phrase it differently, death is based on the ceasing of the movement of brain cells and ...”
4. “He just couldn’t find any peace in life, huh?”
 “Nah, it’s more like he couldn’t find peace in peace because it’s so very flawed.”
 “Hunh – What an extreme contrarian!”
5. Poets will say: “From the start, Haraguchi was a man born broken-hearted by life.”

Even here when reconstructing this imaginary posthumous reckoning, Haraguchi offers a series of monologic pronouncements. Tellingly, it is the poet Haraguchi who gets the last word here.

Throughout *Études*, Haraguchi repeatedly inscribes a definitive word that might mark his own demise. At the head of his prefatory note to his friends, he includes some fragmentary prose offered “In lieu of a farewell memorial address [*Ketsubetsu no ji ni kaete*].” It is an excerpted citation from one of his own elliptical excerpts in *Études*. Another excerpt reads like a eulogy in the third person: “Haraguchi Tōzō. —At the age of twenty lost ambition; at the age of twenty lost youth; at the age of twenty lost powers of memory; at the age of twenty lost every single thing. Finally, at the age of twenty, a man who lost his life.”

Following his cue again, his friends titled this work *Études à Vingt Ans* in reference to his own many references to his tender age and his division of the work into three movements. At his funeral service, Chopin’s *Études* played, enshrining his name and his text alongside those of this Romantic era genius composer-pianist who died young.³⁶

Études is, in fact, filled with citations of famous poets, writers, and thinkers that appear in quotes alongside Haraguchi’s own words. Nietzsche appears over thirty times, while Valéry and Rimbaud each make over twenty appearances. The work begins with an untranslated quote in classical Chinese from Laozi that appears before Haraguchi’s prefatory notes to friends, while *Études I* and *II*

both open with Rimbaud.³⁷ The third movement opens with a citation of one of Haraguchi's own poems that gestures to Nietzsche. His many intertextual citations appear to be a means of inserting himself into this genealogy of famed male writers. But alongside these appear another citational strategy that deflates his own self-inflating rhetoric. Nothing so clearly evinces the depth of his faith *and* his skepticism in the word than his penchant for quotation marks. For Haraguchi, citation takes two forms: verbatim quotations of great writers (himself included) and scare quotes. If the former type strives to enshrine these *bons mots* for eternity, the latter suggests the utter unreliability of all forms of "expression."

As early as the sixth entry, Haraguchi asserts the need to "resist all kinds of expression in order to be absolutely sincere to myself." In number fourteen, he writes, "All I can believe in any longer is the sensation of my own skin." Just five excerpts later, he advocates for "the need to harden ourselves to all expression—that which resides inside us and that which resides outside us—images, words, logic, and mathematics." By excerpt eighty-five, expression is so untrustworthy that the word itself requires scare quotes: "'Expression' is an eternally untrustworthy, whimsical, spiritual lover." At times, his distrust stems from a recognition of its inherently commercial aspects: "Expression is a business, a transaction." The majority of the time, however, his skepticism stems from a recognition that "being faithful to the ego, in the end, is ceasing all expressivity." Despite this definitive statement, expression does not cease here but instead continues on for sixty-plus more excerpts. The word *expression* (*hyōgen*) occurs forty-six times, even if it appears most often in the context of denying its power.

The sheer repetition of this sentiment makes for a frustrating experience for the reader, as does the way Haraguchi revels in forms of expression that undo themselves, or as he put it, "Torture devices for expression—paradox, nonsense, ignorance, deletions. All fine things." What to make of Haraguchi's repeated denials of the powers of self-expression while continuing to express himself nonetheless? How to square those claims with the other moments inside and outside the text when he readily acknowledges the lasting power of his writings?

As with Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, the most common explanation is that in the end, he was defeated by literature. Haraguchi was alternately diagnosed as overly attached to literature or overly skeptical about its powers. Contemporary news reports diagnosed the "likely cause of death as literary passion [*bungaku-teki na jyōnetsu*]" in a brilliant high-ranking First Higher student "absorbed in French literature and with something of the poet in him [*shijin hada no tokoro ga ari*]."³⁸ Literary critic Nakamura Mitsuo diagnosed Haraguchi, along with other like-minded youths of his time, as possessing "a passionate attachment toward literature while also seething with deep skepticism toward contemporary writers and writing. This is their misfortune and the misfortune of Japanese culture today."³⁹

In his own last writings, Haraguchi suggests an alternate explanation that is much less black or white. Instead, until the day of his death, he seemed to be exploring

the potential of a variety of mediums—from fact-filled memorandums, eulogistic pronouncements, and gravestone etchings to elliptical poetry and songs. For each mode of expression, he actively questioned its potential to capture the “self.”

At multiple points in *Études*, Haraguchi pointedly compares self-expression to memorial stones. “The chasm between expression and self. / The moment that expression is birthed, it separates from the self and stands on its own. / ... / ‘Expression’ that has already been birthed is nothing more than a memorial stone of the past.”

In the excerpt that follows, he stresses his disgust for these remnants: “Whether it’s my own or someone else’s, the idea of worshipping a memorial stone sickened me.” This image of a fossilized stone artifact that is fixed and permanent is one he returns to with disdain repeatedly, writing, “Those who look back on the path that they themselves have traveled are deluded. They are already dead. The past they believe themselves to still be living in even now is nothing more than the remains of a faded memorial stone [*iroaseta kinenhi no zangai*]. ... I turn toward memorial stones and bid each one adieu.”

His choice of the word *zangai* (残骸) suggests that the bodily remains of the dead get replaced with a poor substitute: a faded memorial stone. What he seems to resist here is any fixing or calcification of a narrative into stone that purports to offer a fossilized trace of the former self. In the second to last excerpt, he accusingly likens his own poetry to just such a monument.

Oh, life —This lonely poem, this unfathomable memorial stone! On this cold-hearted stone of yours, finished carving twenty years of springs and autumns,
I now take my leave.

Ô, jinsei, —Kono kodoku naru shi, kono shirarezaru kinenhi yo! Omae no hiyayaka
na ishi no ue ni, nijyû no shunjû o kizamioete, boku wa ima, tachisaru no da.

But Haraguchi at times also holds out hope that poetry might offer an alternative to this cold, hard fixity of prose etched onto a memorial stone. He ends *Études I* with an offering: “Fate.—My first youthful poem offered up to the fleeting solar orb, to the end of the sun.” Although his poetry is associated with death (his own fated end and the sun’s), it also soars to meet that sun. In another early section, he imagines a dialogue with an angel who admits that death may entail his bodily destruction but who consoles and reassures him that his presence will endure:

“For me, suicide is a new leaping point.”

When I say this out of a refusal to accept defeat gracefully, my angel consoles me saying, “Even if your figure disappears after death, who is to say that the beating of your wings do not remain in the breeze?”

The fleeting forms of poetry ensure that he might remain in some form. Unlike an earlier failed poetic composition that failed to embody his “figure”

(*sugata*) while “tediously asserting itself [*tsumaranai ware o haru*],” with this last writing, he aims for song. He asks, “What is poetry? —Dreams dissected made into a rhythmic construction. The analysis of ideas turned into a musical composition.”

Titling his piece *Études* is central to his conception of poetry, as is his organization. In this work broken into three movements, Haraguchi offers a series of over four hundred fragmented poems, aphorisms, and excerpts divided by asterisks. They do not cohere into any larger whole but flow past the reader one after the other in rapid succession. It is not just their organization that ensures there is little fixity to the prose or its messaging but also the ways the entries repeatedly double back on themselves.

Nothing more definitively reverses his many definitive proclamations than his closing lines after bidding his final adieu to memorial stones:

I stop this *étude* here and abandon it.
 And then I peel the labels off of others and myself too.
 I will no longer say that I was sincere.
 Before setting off for the land of silence, I should express deep gratitude.
 And say: “Until the end, I remained insincere.”⁴⁰

His final and most famous line undoes everything that has come before it. Rather than revealing that he lost faith in expression in the end (or from the beginning), it points to his own predilection for fixing and unfixing prose.

ELEGIES FOR THE DEAD

When memorializing Haraguchi, his friends followed his dictates to the letter. They enshrined his words for eternity by fashioning a birch tree gravestone with his self-designed epitaphic verse carved into it and placed it at the locale of his first suicide attempt. This act shored up the associations not only between him and his magnum opus *Études* but also between him and his long-gone *senpai* Fujimura Misao. Haraguchi had, in a sense, achieved his stated goal of mourning himself preemptively, enclosing himself in a tomb of his own making. Or, as he declared in his suicide note, “On this night I too buried one of my own” (*Boku mo mata, kono yo, hitori no nakama o hōmutta*).

Conspicuously, it is this one line that Nagasawa elides, even when she twice cites from Haraguchi’s note verbatim in her poem “Parting” at its start and its conclusion. The first time she marks the elision with “.....” while the second time, even the erasure is erased. Here again she quietly merges their voices. She inserts herself into his self-enclosed world, and him into hers, with her creative refashioning of the words from his suicide note in her own poetry. The fixity of his prose is loosed yet again in favor of echoing refrains that bring the living and dead back into dialogue.

Anne Carson describes an ancient Greek memorial carved into stone for an otherwise unknown man named Spinther that uses a syntax suggesting that the dead has conferred a “tomb upon his own dead self.” But, she stresses, it is the epigrapher and poet “Simonides [who] has not just saved Spinther’s life, he has doubled it.” He fulfills the “poet’s task ... to carry the transaction forward, from those who can no longer speak to those who may yet read (and must yet die).”⁴¹

Nagasawa fulfills that role for Haraguchi. Not as a susceptible reader of his epitaph, an “untroubled maiden” for whose happiness he prayed. As a poet in her own right. One who acknowledges that she, too, cannot undertake the work of burying herself any more than he could. As a poet, she doubles Haraguchi’s afterlife, both for him and for those like us, “who may yet read.”