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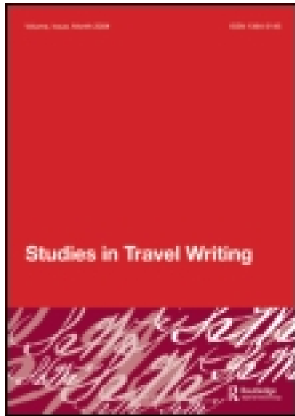

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Ukiya Tôjirô and his motorcycle journey in August 1957: crystallising ambitions and identity

Ryôta Nishino*

One of the formative experiences the motorcar racer Ukiya Tôjirô (1942–1965) had was his first long-distance motorcycle journey. His long-selling travelogue, *Gamushara 1500 kiro* [My frantic 1500-kilometre journey] chronicles his travel and demonstrates his growing awareness as a young member of an elite socio-economic stratum. This article situates his motorcycle journey in Japanese social history. It then analyses his writing from a socio-economic perspective. Of particular importance were the different reactions the sights of the working people triggered in Ukiya. Busy workers embarrassed him and had him reflect on his leisurely status. Episodes at the cinema and films he saw empowered him to arrive at his future ambitions. Yet, idle workers stirred fear in him and left considerations of socio-economic disparity under-explored. The differences in his reflections not only suggest his selective use to elevate and justify his status, but also reveal an attitude he had towards the under-privileged.

Keywords: Ukiya Tôjirô (1942–1965); Japanese society in the 1950s; motorcycle journeys

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Introduction

Many motorsports fans in Japan remember Ukiya Tôjirô as an emerging professional racing driver whose life ended, at the age of only 23, in an accident at the Suzuka circuit in August 1965.[1] His fans gained deeper insight into Ukiya's formative years through a trilogy of his diaries and letters, which were published commercially in the 1970s. This article focuses on the first memoir, *Gamushara 1500 kiro: Waga seishun no kadode* [My frantic 1500-kilometre journey: the beginning of my adolescence] (1972, hereafter *Gamushara*). It features his diary entries and his account of his first solo motorcycle trip in August 1957. *Gamushara* is valuable not only because it is a rare example of motorcycle travel writing by a 'teenager' in Japan and abroad. In today's Japan it would not be legally possible for a 15-year-old to undertake a motorcycle trip; in Ukiya's time motorcyclists over the age of 14 were issued with the licence on application, without written or practical tests, if the engine was smaller than 90cc.[2] Yet, the motorcycle (and automobile) remained beyond the reach of many as they were prohibitively expensive during the 1950s. At the age of 15, Ukiya made a solo 1500-kilometre return trip on a moped between Ichikawa, near Tokyo, and Kobe.[3] *Gamushara* illuminates the process through which Ukiya, after reflecting on his identity and on memorable encounters during his travel, arrives at his ambition to devote himself to creative pursuits.

The motorcycle as a mode of transport adds an extra dimension to travel writing. This confluence seems relevant in 1972, the year in which *Gamushara* was published commercially and became available to the general public. By then both domestic and foreign travel and the

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motorcycle had become more affordable during an economic boom sustained by a competitive education system, which spawned social issues besetting children, parents and teachers. The motorcycle gave an outlet for some youths, some of whom formed *bôsôzoku* – a subculture ‘motorcycle tribe’. This article is particularly concerned about Ukiya’s depictions of and reflections on people from different socio-economic backgrounds and age groups, showing variations in depth and judgement. In some instances, Ukiya sketched the scenes and his responses without reflection. In others, he reflected in depth and used these encounters to develop his resolve and ambitions. The variation suggests the latent assumptions that Ukiya held towards people of other generations and socio-economic backgrounds.

Critics’ reception of *Gamushara*: the intersection of travel writing studies and motorcycle writing

Post-war Japan had its initial burst of travel writing in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, marking a shift in the profile of the travel writers and the writing.[4] Initially the travellers tended to be groups of explorers with governmental or corporate sponsorship; soon, the trend shifted to individuals writing of their own motives and their own journeys.[5] During this period a few motorcycle travelogues were published. In 1960 the novelist Ishihara Shintarô wrote an account of his six-man motorcycle expedition around South America that year.[6] In 1962 the classical music conductor Ozawa Seiji published a memoir of his musical training in Europe. It features a brief account of his motorcycle trip from Marseilles to Paris.[7] *Gamushara*’s publication a decade later came seven years after Ukiya’s death and his legendary reputation had grown amongst motorcycle fans. However, he had written the manuscript in 1958 and his father initially published it as a self-funded work, which was privately distributed to friends.[8] Ishihara travelled in a group. Ozawa and Ishihara’s group rode the moped, the Rabbit, sponsored by the manufacturer Fuji Jyûkô. Ukiya’s travelogue fits in the latter phase as he travelled alone without external sponsorship. Moreover, Ukiya was younger than Ishihara and Ozawa, both of whom had reached the age of majority, a significant milestone in Japanese society. Nevertheless, Ukiya, despite his youth, had gained more motorcycle experience before he embarked on his trip.

Gamushara chronicles his eight-day journey from 31 July to 7 August, including the day before his travel and an epilogue. It also includes his diary entries before and after the journey, thus giving a rounder, more intimate picture of Ukiya’s personal background and real-time record of his personal development. Literary critics and Ukiya’s biographer praise *Gamushara* for its demonstration of the spirit of adolescence as Ukiya indefatigably seeks to pursue selfhood and ambitions. Though never a best seller, it has had 13 print runs since 1972.[9] Its longevity may lie in Ukiya’s unique position as the young author. His straightforward language lends *Gamushara* and the accompanying diaries an immediacy with which many readers, beyond motorcycle fans, can identify.[10] In testifying to the popular readership of *Gamushara*, the commentators note that Ukiya’s messages resonate not only with the young motorcyclists – whose number grew on the back of Japan’s newly found prosperity – but also with the post-1970s’ youths after student protests had been defeated and pragmatism replaced idealism. Pressure on adolescents to attain academic achievement engendered numerous social problems, of which *bôsôzoku* was a part.[11] One literary critic, Sekikawa Natsuo, calls *Gamushara* ‘*bildungs* non-fiction’; it chronicles Ukiya’s growth as an adolescent and his search for his authentic identity.[12] In the biography of Ukiya, the motorsport journalist Iwasaki Kureo surmises that the journey was instrumental in his transition from one kind of freedom to the next – from that which had been given to him by his parents, to that he was to seize later on.[13]

Though the critics’ affirmative assessments are warranted, their comments tend to mythologise Ukiya’s life as they overlook wider socio-economic influences, which accorded him a

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rather unique status. Considering those influences is vital for social historians examining travel writing as a genre that reproduces or subverts the hegemonic mindset.[14] Travel writing is regarded as a medium that reflects the values of the time and that contributes to the metropolitan imagination and the exercise of power relationships in colonialism and imperialism. Travellers have a degree of liberty to choose and look at the scenes and people encountered, and this allows them to exercise their imagination on the page.[15] In her analysis of contemporary English-language travel writing, Debbie Lisle contends that travel writing is a site where the cultural politics of representation are prevalent. One of her findings is that the authors rarely question the residual power dynamic in the post-colonial world. She charges that a lack of self-reflection amongst writers on the ethical dimensions of representing the other and themselves would be tantamount to missing the opportunity to redress the asymmetry of global power.[16] These are useful comments in permitting a critical analysis of *Gamushara* from socio-economic angles that the critics have not hitherto engaged with. This approach necessitates our placing Ukiya's journey and values in the historical and socio-economic context of 1950s Japan during its post-war reconstruction. It then helps us to highlight how Ukiya negotiates his status on and off the motorcycle and the extent to which his writing recreates or even challenges 'the asymmetry of power' in post-war Japan.

In appraising the motorcycle, both Japanese- and English-speaking writers extol speed and freedom as enduring, albeit romanticised, symbols of the vehicle. They pursue philosophical approaches to the motorcycle as the vehicle of meditation and reflection. As Steven Alford and Suzanne Ferriss acknowledge, this is the contribution made by Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* (1974).[17] In this vein, Melissa Holbrook Pierson contends that the motorcycle is 'a way in to yourself, and a way out […] provid[ing] a simulacrum of life itself'.[18] Likewise, the Japanese motorcycle writer Saitô Jun proposes that self-reflection is the ultimate stage of the rider experience. The rider achieves a unity with the motorcycle and enters a meditative zone. In this zone the rider reflects upon his or her self to the extent of developing new thoughts and achieving liberation from the existing ego.[19] It seems that motorcycle travel writing might address the dearth of reflection that Lisle points out. It has to be asked if *Gamushara* discloses Ukiya's reflections from the journey and how he derives meaning from his negotiations with his identity as a 15-year-old from a wealthy family.

Although Ukiya's travel was domestic, Japan in the 1950s displayed pronounced regional and rural–urban disparities. His writing illuminates a particular pattern of viewing and reflecting on the Japan of the 1950s where socio-economic disparity was larger and more noticeable than in the following decades.[20] This article attempts to demonstrate how Ukiya negotiates his identity and arrives at his resolution. In doing so, it is necessary to examine his background to gain a deeper insight into his decision to undertake an unusual challenge. An analysis of his awareness of class distinctions and of generation gaps follows. It will be argued that while his journey helped shape his future ambition, his reflections on the differences varied in depth. The disparity between the in-depth and under-explored reflections reveals Ukiya's use of differences to justify his dawning youthful ambitions.

Japan in the 1950s: contexts of Ukiya's travel

If we recognise the roles of writing on travel and the motorcycle as posing and addressing questions of mobility and social relations, it will be necessary to understand Ukiya's background and the sociocultural context of his travel. Ukiya Tôjirô was born on 29 July 1942 in a well-established land-owning family in Ichikawa, near Tokyo. His father, Kôjirô, ran a motorcar dealership and a driving school on his home premises. He was a motorcar fan and was once the vice chairperson of the Japan Porsche Association. Ukiya's mother, Kazue, was a dedicated

mother and wife. She was a hairdresser and ran her own hair salon, thus enjoying a degree of autonomy not many of her contemporaries did.[21]

Ukiya's diary entries that accompany *Gamushara* are kept almost daily and are detailed, providing an insight into his cultural tastes and inclinations. He grew up in an upper class world and in a loving family. He attended a private primary and middle school. He excelled academically and spent afternoons on physical training and cultural pursuits. He recorded his responses to western novels translated into Japanese and to foreign films. From his diaries we know that he went to Western classical music concerts with his elder sister, Asae, and her friends. Ukiya did not pay attention to mainstream Japanese popular culture of the era, such as sumo, professional wrestling or baseball. He writes little about Japanese films and comic books – even though they featured heroes on motorcycles defeating foes.[22] This does not mean that he disliked Japanese culture and worshipped western culture indiscriminately. For instance, his diary records his judo practice. Judo was part of his resolve to exercise discipline in his studies and physical training, with the view 'to train to become the man amongst men'.[23] Furthermore, in an essay he wrote in 1956, he questioned the morality of parents who equated success for their children with becoming an ordinary employee in a prestigious firm (40–1). Absent in his diary was his admiration of or identification with such rebels or heroes on motorised vehicles as Johnny Strabler in *The Wild One* (1954, performed by Marlon Brando). Rather, after seeing the film *War and Peace* (1957), he decided Audrey Hepburn was his 'ideal woman' (25). Asae suggested that he become like Gregory Peck (31), alluding to his role in *Roman Holiday* liberating Princess Ann (Hepburn) on a ride to enjoy freedom from her courtly life.[24]

The Japan of the 1950s in which Ukiya grew into adolescence was in the midst of economic and social transformation. The spread of motorcycling in Japan fits with the assessment of Alford and Ferriss that it is a phenomenon that occurred across the industrialising and industrialised world. One of the corollaries of the diffusion of the motorcycle is the emergence of bikers amongst young affluent men as a mode of youth subculture – whose status lay outside the hegemonic social circles. As in the USA and Britain, in the mid- to late 1950s Japan saw the emergence of biker groups, *kaminari-zoku* and *ma'ha-zoku*. These bikers were relatively affluent youths in their late teens to early 20s – slightly but significantly older than Ukiya's age; they competed in spontaneous races and performed stunts in public spaces on modified motorcycles.[25]

Ukiya's background makes it seem more likely that he was an early beneficiary of the motorcycle in Japan. What made him different from his elite peers was his early exposure to motorcars and motorcycles. From an early age he kept practising riding the motorcycle and driving small cars on the grounds inside the family's property. On his 14th birthday his father gave him a German moped, the Kreidler 50cc.[26] What distinguishes him from other motorcyclists is that he grew up with the motorcycle, rather than acquiring the taste for it much later in life. This birthday also marked the debut of his motorcycle riding on public roads. Ukiya's diary entries of 1956 and 1957 do not point to his motorcycle riding fitting the patterns of the contemporary biker groups. Rather, he spent his weekend trips with his father in his Morris Garages (MG) sports car or on solo day trips on his Kreidler. In addition, Ukiya had the motorcycle that was becoming associated, if not completely, with mobility. His moped was foreign-made, which added an extra air of prestige. He further benefited from his permissive parents, who let him travel on his motorcycle. Surveying his descriptions and style of motorcycle riding before his journey, it seems that Ukiya does not fit the image of the followers of motorcycle groups of the time. His writing indicates his exuberance, but lacks indications of any open rebellion against authority and adults, becoming a delinquent and opting out of his elite stratum. Nor did he cultivate the outlaw personalities exemplified by Brando. Ukiya had a strong will to be himself; he was too young to be part of the subculture movements of the time.

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Motivation for travel

Motorcycle writing typically begins with a discussion of the traveller's motivation to travel and of why the author chose the motorcycle. Ukiya's writing follows this pattern. *Gamushara* and his diary entries tell us much about his motivation for travelling. He was in his final year of middle school and was to sit high school entrance examinations in the forthcoming winter. This is a rite of passage for adolescents as success in the examinations influences the subsequent life course of youths. In 1950s Japan, only about half of middle school students progressed to high school and only 10% of senior high school graduates were admitted to universities.[27] Ukiya's diary tells us that his father hoped that his son would become a solicitor and expected him to progress to Tokyo University, the most prestigious university in Japan. It would have meant that Ukiya needed to win a place in a high school that helped him prepare for university entrance examinations. The 15-year-old himself had reservations about his father's wishes and entertained hopes of a career as an essayist or a writer (31).

Ukiya knew he had no way of avoiding the examinations and he had to devote his summer holiday and the rest of the academic year to his preparation. This reality did not stamp out his urge to pursue a different kind of challenge. His initial plan was to travel near Mount Fuji with his friends. He could not find anyone suitable (71). To many middle-school students, Ukiya's proposal would have appeared detrimental to his prospects in the high school entrance examinations. He then thought of hitch-hiking across Japan, but abandoned the idea. He claims that he had more 'above-average knowledge and [was more] street-savvy than my peers, but lacked what it took to achieve it – even if I had thick skin and strong mind. Somehow I was not confident' (72). His next plan was to tour around the Japanese Alps. He did not think that his motorcycle, the Kreidler, had enough engine power to handle the precipitous roads (72).

Ukiya then learnt that his maternal grandfather, who lived in Fukuoka, was visiting Osaka in August 1957.[28] It occurred to him that despite the longer distance, the occasion would give him better grounds for the undertaking than his previous plans. He seemed to have been conscious that he needed to gain his parents' approval. Ukiya judged the road between Tokyo and Osaka to be the safest route in Japan. It is not mountainous. Historically, the route is known as the major trunk route with towns all along the way. Furthermore, having members of his family at both ends gave him vital reassurance (73). However, he still would have had to muster his courage. This was his first overnight and solo motorcycle trip. He had not previously visited Osaka. Moreover, most of the road, as Ukiya later discovered, was dusty and unpaved. In 1957 only 21.9% of highways in Japan were paved.[29] Ukiya's challenge was daring but not foolhardy. He calculated the capacity of the motorcycle and the level of his confidence. That said, his reasons for travel strike a resemblance to Carl Thompson's suggestion that travel often fulfils the purpose of accumulating what the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu calls social capital and of enhancing the traveller's authority and social status.[30] Ukiya was in no doubt that he was destined to be part of the elite, but felt he needed to travel to prove his potential to be first amongst his peers.

A vital boon to Ukiya's motivation came from his father. On the night before the trip, Ukiya requested ¥8500 from his father as an estimated budget. He recalls the words his father gave him as he received a generous sum of ¥10,000, instructing him to 'observe human life, not to treat the trip as a mere picnic' (78). The amount Ukiya requested and received was considerable. On available data, the median average monthly income in Japan in 1958 – irrespective of gender, age and education – was ¥19,649.[31] His background and upbringing were nothing short of privileged in Japan. What distinguished him from the majority was that he had benefited from his permissive family.

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Ukiya's encounters with differences

A band of children

In *Gamushara* Ukiya's descriptions of meeting other people begin to feature towards the end of the first day. During much of the day he does not interact with others, but struggles with the unforgiving conditions: the heat from the sun, the motorcycle and his leather attire; the dust; vibration from the motorcycle; and minor mechanical faults. At the end of the first day, after over 12 hours on the road, he reaches Nagoya, 380 kilometres from home. He tries to find a cheap inn to spend the night. After speaking with a middle-aged man in Nagoya, he meets some of the local children:

> As usual, children came towards me, looking afraid and amazed. They looked up at me as if I were a beggar. I would be annoyed under normal circumstances. But on this occasion, they looked adorable and I felt like patting one of them on the head. (94)

Ukiya candidly describes what and whom he saw and what he tells us indicates how he imagines the children see and think of him. The scene gives little hint whether they had any verbal interaction. The children are reduced into silent spectators who seem anxious but curious about him. Ukiya's depiction of the children is an instance in which the traveller assumes the mastery to gaze upon sights and people and to describe and define their status.[32] Throughout the encounter, Ukiya calls them 'children', which seems to express his confidence in assuming his superiority. He projects his difference from the children by height. Ukiya comments that the children 'looked up' at him, as if they had sensed an air of his superiority being imposed upon them by his age, presence and the motorcycle. Starting his sighting with 'as usual', Ukiya suggests he had grown blasé about being a target of the public gaze. This would have 'annoyed him under normal circumstances'. On this occasion he relaxes his intolerance to such an extent that he decides the children are 'adorable'. Furthermore, he assumes the children thought of him as a beggar, putting himself beneath them. This deliberate self-deprecation conveys what seems to be his assumption that the children were so ignorant that they could not differentiate between a beggar and a dust-covered motorcyclist on a journey towards becoming 'a man amongst men'.

Later at night, Ukiya was relaxing in an upstairs room in an inn. He found the room so hot that he wanted to cool himself:

> I popped my head out of the window. My eyes met with one of the urchins I had seen earlier. It would not have mattered much. Perhaps it was so hot, and I must have got annoyed at him, so I put my head in. And, knowing he won't see me, I scowled at him. (96)

His attitude towards 'the urchins' shows that he is trying to be a young person feeling more adult than he actually is. He did not scowl directly, but in private behind the closed window. Ukiya's descriptions lack interactions with any of the children and give a sketchy recollection of his sighting. His emotional and social distance from the boy is sustained as on the previous occasion. Without reflection on the gaps between himself and the children, Ukiya's descriptions would have readers think Ukiya projects his recognition of his superiority onto the children.

The watermelon vendor

His sighting of those children is not the only instance *Gamushara* records. On the second day, Ukiya leaves Nagoya early in the morning. He takes a short break and has a late breakfast of three boiled eggs and ample ice cream (102). Shortly after he resumes riding, he sees a group of roadworkers ahead. Beside them is a girl sitting on a straw mat selling watermelons:

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> This was a beautiful scene. I saw innocence in this girl and felt a kind of sorrow. I was thinking, 'I am having a good time. But that girl is selling watermelons.' I felt ashamed of myself. Had there been no roadworkers, I would have stopped by, bought many watermelons and eaten them up with the girl. I slowed down. But I could not muster enough courage to do what I wanted to do. The road, the sun, the roadworkers, and the watermelon girl. I would not forget about them. I got an opportunity to reflect upon myself. (102)

Contrasting descriptions of the watermelon vendor and other children can tell us about Ukiya's varying attitude and his gaze. His reaction to the girl selling watermelons is benign and even sympathetic. He turns the whole scene into an object of beauty that glorifies labour. Although his written words do not fully articulate this, the scene engenders a wish in Ukiya's mind to use his wealth to relieve the girl of the burden of work. He frankly admits his lack of courage to act on his wishes. He does not know exactly what stopped him from reaching out to rescue her, while it is plausible that he might have felt inhibited about risking adverse reactions from her and about attracting attention from the road workers for appearing to exploit his masculinity and privilege to patronise the girl.

Ukiya and the watermelon vendor occupied two different worlds whose gap seemed too large to bridge. The gap represents loci of power: gender, class and the rural–urban divide. Ukiya was from a wealthy family from Tokyo who benefited from the trappings of metropolitan cultural offering. His parents gave him the freedom to enjoy the summer holiday that he planned for himself. Ukiya's suffering from heat, dust and vibration was a voluntary rite of passage. As he felt 'a kind of sorrow', Ukiya imagines the girl's suffering was most likely to be a consequence of family pressure. She needs to assist her family in making ends meet by selling their produce. To the reader, the vendor's background and circumstances remain matters of speculation. As with Ukiya's sighting of the children, we do not know much about the vendor. He did not stop to converse with her. This raises a question of what inhibited him from acting on his strong wish to stop, buy and eat the watermelons. Yet it seems that the sight left such a strong imprint on him that he was rendered powerless. He was unable to muster his courage to bridge the socio-economic gap between himself and the vendor. He would have needed to relinquish his pride as a male adolescent from an elite family or perhaps he wanted to avoid appearing as committing a self-righteous and gratuitous act in the eyes of the vendor and the roadworkers nearby.

Later that day, he arrived in Osaka and walked around the centre of the city. Its lively streets did not stop him pondering on the image of the vendor:

> It probably would feel great to have fun just wasting money away. […] But I do not want to do it if it's money received from others and parents. It's the lowest of the low. If I am going to spend money, it has to be my own. But what about me now? I do not have a penny that I earned by myself. For this trip, too, I am doing everything from my parents' money. The motorcycle is my parents' [a gift from his father]. I do not own anything. […] In the near future I am going to travel freely using my own money. (118–19)

His reflection is replete with anger at himself and, crucially, is a key turning point in his thinking. He poses an ethical question and examines the privileged status he had hitherto enjoyed uncritically, implicitly contrasting himself and the vendor. He becomes aware that he was able to enjoy his freedom to travel and the motorcycle because it was freedom his parents gave him. He then denounces his travel as that of 'the lowest of the low'. His self-castigation seems to highlight two contrasting sets of imagery. By this contrast Ukiya seems to suggest that he lacks the virtue of work, especially under trying conditions, especially physical labour. While it is admirable for Ukiya, at his remarkably young age, to put himself under self-scrutiny, his reasoning seems to

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illuminate what Lisle argues travel writing lacks: socio-economic redress. His reflections on the reasons for failing to act on his wish – stopping to buy watermelons and wanting to eat them with her to relieve her pressure – remains unexplored. Ukiya creates a contrast of two imageries. On the one hand, the vendor and the workers are diligent yet exploited workers, leading him to characterise it sympathetically as ‘a beautiful scene’ and on the other, his image is useful as it gives weight to his portrayal of himself as a wastrel. Ukiya seems to deploy the ‘beautiful scene’ to motivate his justification for enjoying his freedom to travel. He saw beauty in his own interpretation of the scene. His speculation transmutes the vendor into the symbol of innocence and sorrow. This seems to transform her into a submissive female and Ukiya himself into a sympathetic anti-hero with a modicum of conscience. As Thompson points out, disclaiming a heroic status enables the travel writer to evade the questions of moral responsibilities and the writer’s own role in the imbalance of power.[33] Ukiya’s reflection is confined to the personal realm. He does not go as far as analysing what socio-economic structures in 1950s Japan enabled him to realise his desire to travel and what ethical ramifications his travel would have on the society if he were to redeem himself.

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Grandfather

On the following morning, Ukiya rather reluctantly accompanied his grandfather to see two films. His feedback on them illuminates his expression of emerging identity. The first film was *Meiji tennô to nichiro daisensô* [Emperor Meiji and the Russo-Japanese war] (1957). The grandson was impressed with the commitment the Japanese military officers exhibited in their duties. For the rest of the film, he had this to say:

> The film was so one-sided. It portrayed the Emperor [Meiji] like God and told us that his reign was good for the people of Japan. This is ridiculous. There is no way absolutism will be good because [the Meiji Constitution] had all three branches of the government under the Emperor’s power. What’s more, the Meiji Constitution opens with ‘The Emperor is sacred and inviolable.’ The Constitution patently shows the Meiji government was not at all democratic. Even if it is to make money, making such a lousy film is outrageous. It’s crazy to make a film that misleads us to believe that the Russo-Japanese War was a morally right war; Emperor Meiji did the right thing. Japan now has one of the greatest constitutions in the world. Japan is a peace-loving country that renounces war. The film does no good for the Japanese and the nation.
>
> Even after the film I was so angry, so angry that I needed to say something to the producers or someone to calm myself down. But my grandfather was so happy. He even said ‘The more I see, the better this film gets!’ I asked him how many times he had seen the film. He said, ‘I saw it many times’. I was appalled. (121)

Amongst his published writing, this passage is one rare expression of Ukiya’s political opinions and his assessment of the senior generation. Ukiya’s emotive words and animated tone register his dissent against the nostalgia the senior generation has towards Meiji Japan (1868–1912) and against the film industry that capitalises on it. Ukiya’s interpretations of the Meiji and the post-war Constitutions mirror the *zeitgeist* of the early post-war schooling. Teachers renounced their complicity in aiding and abetting wartime militarism in the minds of their students. The teachers now invested their energy to right the wrong and educate a new generation to build a peaceful nation. Cultivating pride in the new constitution, which denounces war and promotes democracy, became an integral part of post-war education.[34] After the screening he saw several old men in the foyer. Ukiya reports they were impassioned and animated while talking to their grandchildren about the military glory of Meiji Japan. Then, he thinks of this sight:

> It sounds rude. But the sight looked cute to me. I suppose the elderly became like children. At least, those grandfathers at the cinema were excited like primary school kids. I wonder what made them so happy. (122)

Ukiya's response to the film and the elderly audience reaffirms his youth and reinforces his belief in the new constitution. Ukiya's phrase 'it sounds rude' conveys his diffidence in asserting himself and his concern not to appear too blunt, but accentuates his tongue-in-cheek irony. Ukiya regards himself as a new breed of Japanese who identify with the ideals of the new constitution. In Ukiya's eyes, the retreat of the elderly generation into nostalgia is 'cute' and child-like for their obliviousness to the transformation in post-war Japan and imperviousness to the lessons of the defeat. His claim not to comprehend their childish reaction bolsters his position as part of the new generation – responsible and mature and adult. In exploring and articulating identity, it is worth asking how Ukiya attempts to relate his awareness of his generation and that of differences from other children. In *Gamushara*, Ukiya has not thought of how joining the two realms of awareness in his reflection would help the reader to appreciate his thought process in forming his identity and crystallising ambitions.

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Inspiration from a voyage to Antarctica

While the first film had Ukiya rendering the elderly as an undesirable other, the second film helps him crystallise the impressions he had gathered during his travel. The second film was a documentary, *Nankyoku tairiku* [Antarctica] (1957), which recorded the struggle a group of scientists endured in their voyage to Antarctica, on a ship that could barely cope with the demands of the voyage. The film spurred Ukiya to engage in reflections on the challenges he gave himself:

> If I were one of the explorers, then [the vessel] *Sôya* is my 50cc moped Kreidler. We both were faced with a tall order. But *Sôya* had its own obligations, mission and purpose. And their voyage is on a different scale [from mine]. And *Sôya* has the expectation of the entire nation. But wait. I am making this journey with the whole of my family watching it […] when I saw the film I thought to myself 'We have different aims. But I feel like I was their comrade. Go on, my comrades in Antarctica!' I felt strong encouragement from them, as if they were telling me 'Yes, you go on too!' (122)

Up to this point, we know that Ukiya positioned himself as a special youth vis-à-vis his peers, the children he met and the elderly. He was becoming aware of his differences from children from less privileged backgrounds. However, his reflections in *Gamushara* are still incipient and seemingly wanting of greater hindsight. The political persuasion of the elder generation made him angry and he refused to identify with them. We can detect his aspiration to become a spokesperson for the new generation through his ambition in creative work. By such positioning he turned himself into a lone traveller. In a self-deprecating manner, he sees himself as a minor, facing adverse conditions, on a supposedly powerless moped. It seems that the explorers on the *Sôya* helped him to draw inspiration and strength to continue his travel against all odds. However, he soon dismisses his enthusiastic response as overstretched fantasy, but back in his hotel room he begins to search for overlaps between himself and the *Sôya* crew:

> The ship crew must have learnt a lot on the voyage. They did it slowly and steadily. But what about me? I have done nothing. I decided to ride to Osaka spontaneously. I only came here, spent money and troubled people – is this it? I have not gained anything. I just consume. Am I not creating anything? If I am to create something, what can I do? I feel pathetic. Anyone could go on a long ride if they had a vehicle and time. And I am bragging about my trip using my parents' money. (123)

His internal dialogue revolves around his comparison with the *Sôya* crew despite his dismissal of the comparison. As with the occasion when he reflected on the watermelon vendor, he continues to see himself as a profligate son. He judges his travel as a meaningless pursuit of consumption and grows dissatisfied with it. He now thinks of himself as 'pathetic' for he 'has done nothing' and 'not gained anything'. He then continues:

> I do not want to keep thinking to myself 'I have no ability to produce'. I am thinking 'what can I produce after this trip?' […] There is only one thing I can produce. Travelogue. It does not matter one bit if it's good or bad. If I do my best and finish it, then that's decent enough production. I can produce. Let me do it. Then I will come as close as possible to [the success of] the *Sôya*. I am not going to take this lying down. (123–4)

Before the journey he wrote in his diary that he wanted to be a writer. Now, during his travel, his resolve to become a 'producer' could not be clearer here. His commitment is noticeable as he repeats 'produce', rather than 'write', 'author' or 'create' to stress his point. On one level, Ukiya contrasts 'production' to 'consumption' and he clearly identifies with the former. On another, his adherence to 'production' likens his philosophy of writing to physical labour. He regards writing as no frivolous exercise but a productive one that demands the rigorous application of his intellect. This contrasts but does not necessarily negate the work manual labourers perform, which makes physical demands. Ukiya seems to think that his journey has been physically demanding and that producing his writing is mental labour.

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Dockyard workers

The decision he made on the fourth day to become a producer arose from his observation of working people and reflections on his status. It is anticipated that he would reflect more on the working people than before. Next day, the fifth day, Ukiya finds himself riding through the warehouses at the port of Kobe. He then sees a group of dockyard workers:

> Many workers were sitting down and mumbling. Their faces were unshaved, they were glaring at me. For some reason, this scene scared me. I felt as if the workers were about to start a quarrel with me. No one was watching us: just me and them. [If they attacked me,] my resistance would be mere tickling to them. Suddenly I felt as if the Kreidler's small engine would stop working, and then five or six workers would come to me slowly and surround me. I opened the accelerator to the full, and fled the dockyard workers. (132)

Ukiya describes the dockyard workers at greater length than the roadworkers he had sighted earlier. He finds the scene eerie and discomfiting. He feels enfeebled by the men, who could overpower his motorcycle. This contrasts to his previous reactions with others. He was contemptuous of the children's gazing at him but 'scared' by the dockyard workers' stare. The sight of the roadworkers and the watermelon vendor had him slow down although he did not stop. At the port, Ukiya dashed away in fear. He begins by comparing the port of Kobe with Yokohama near Tokyo, which he had presumably visited before:

> Kobe seemed to have a stronger international air than Yokohama. Kobe looked like it had everything that a major trading port would: *yakuza*, gang headquarters, seedy streets, and the whole lot. The port of Kobe was an eerie, macho and scary place. 'Since I was born to be a man, maybe I want to be the boss in a gang and command this dark underworld as I wish.' After passing through the dockyard workers I thought to myself more strongly than before. This was the only time I felt 'scared' during my trip. (132)

Ukiya expresses his unease, describing the port as 'eerie' and 'scary'. Ukiya does not elaborate why he felt intimidated. It seems likely that the gazes of the dockyard workers confronted him and stimulated him to imagine they represented an adult and masculine underworld. His imagination may be superficial and melodramatic but his jocular tone reveals his assumption of the dockyard workers as pseudo-gangsters, which in itself constitutes a social comment. Even though Ukiya felt uneasy about the dockyard workers, he appropriates the episode to strengthen his resolve. As if to stress his fledgling masculinity as 'a man amongst men', he tries to overcome his vulnerability in his seemingly frivolous wish of controlling those men. His statement reflects his additional desire to lead, an attribute of a member of the male elite, rather than to follow or to be given commands. Ukiya reflects on another source of unease, the roadworkers and the watermelon vendor. In his epilogue he reflects on the gap in socio-economic status between them:

> I could not help feeling embarrassed. There was the small girl selling watermelons, and me who was acting big and having a carefree journey. And there were farmers and roadworkers working under the blazing sun. (182–3)

Following the socio-economic critique of travel writing discussed above, Ukiya's writing can be regarded as an expression of his understanding and perception of and attitude towards socio-economic structures and more specifically working-class people. What strikes one most clearly is his praise of people occupied with work, which contrasts strongly with his unease with the idle workers. He imagines and records the dockyard workers as being idle and staring at him with a sentiment akin to contempt for exhibiting his leisurely and privileged status and further imagines that they would rise up and rob him of the trappings of his privilege. Ukiya's sentiment evokes what modernist intellectuals and power elites express as the fear of the masses. As John Carey's study argues, this discourse is found in disparate disciplines in which the intelligentsia expressed contempt and fear of the masses and sought to justify the subordination of them to contain the disruption to the status quo.[35] That he spent no more time thinking of the unoccupied workers tells us he was unwilling or unable to process the socio-economic aspects of the dockyard workers' gaze. At the end of *Gamushara*, Ukiya draws on the imagery of the working people to arrive at his rationale for writing his travelogue:

> I must pay my debt to society because I am in a better position than many. The life of consumption is not the purpose of a human-being. Devotion to creation is the most valuable lifestyle. Working hard is the most valuable aspect of human life. I felt this very strongly. (183)

Desire for philanthropy may seem ordinary if it comes from an adult who has amassed considerable wealth. However, these are the words of a 15-year-old. In extolling the virtue of work, Ukiya seems to regard manual labour as being as respectable as his 'production' of *Gamushara*. Even given his youth, his rationale reveals the logic he employed to reconcile his privileged status and justify his rationale for writing the travelogue. He was moved by the hard-working manual labourers, but could not empathise with them enough to stop his moped, which triggered his reflections on his status. Later, he came into contact with the dockyard workers and sped away from them. He was haunted by the sight of the dockyard workers but did not reflect on his fleeing, enabled by the motorcycle, and his socio-economic status. Although he was able to articulate his thoughts and to engage with identity at his young age, his reasoning and reflections were lopsided. In the process of finding his ambitions, however, he spared questioning how his position relates to that of the working-class people and what responsibility the privileged people have towards them. He found what he could do *with* his status, though he had not yet begun thinking of what he could do *about* it.

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Concluding remarks

This article has attempted to demonstrate that *Gamushara* occupies a unique place in Japan's social and cultural history and in motorcycle travelogues. *Gamushara* relates Ukiya's 'frantic' travel episodes with exuberance and, at times, irreverence. His motorcycle writing shows the depth of reflections the motorcycle journey is known to facilitate. *Gamushara* shows his emerging views on his other children and adults – marked out not only by age differences, but also socio-economic status. He arrives at his resolution to write his travelogue through reflections on the sights and engagements with his own thoughts – which are integral to the genres of travelogue and motorcycle writing.

When reading *Gamushara* from the critical angles of travel writing studies, the travelogue informs us about Ukiya's crystallising awareness of his socio-economic position and how he engages with lasting impressions to reflect on his identity, which enables him to define his future goals. However admirable and daring Ukiya may have been, his reflections on and engagement with socio-economic disparities in Japan seem to justify his own elitist ambitions for production. Whether a 15-year-old adolescent is expected to possess the political acumen of an adult may be a topic for another discussion. Yet, he was a precocious youth who thought of his position to the best of his abilities at the time. Ukiya's depictions of the roadworkers and the watermelon vendor, on the one hand, and the dockyard workers, on the other, seem to represent the implicit values of an affluent youth of his time. Ukiya expresses his praise and respect for the working people for busying themselves in work and not posing a challenge to others. He was sympathetic to the watermelon vendor and the roadworkers as their presence provoked him to question his leisurely existence, though not to the point of questioning the economic and political systems that accorded him the privilege to enjoy it. His meeting with his grandfather and seeing two films gave him further incentive to refine his ambition as an expression of the new generation and to pursue his own path. His reflections on dockyard workers remain un- or under-explored. Instead, he equates them to crime syndicates and the underworld and does not probe why he made this hasty jump of imagination. His assumption underlines his stereotypes towards the working-class people, which is a commentary in itself. The readers will not know what his fear meant to him or how he analysed its origins. His life ended at age 23, without leaving us with his retrospective self-critique of *Gamushara*.

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Notes

1. In this article Japanese names appear in the surname – given name order, following the convention in East Asian societies. However, authors whose works are initially published in English follow the western given name – surname order.
2. Jeffrey W. Alexander, *Japan's Motorcycle Wars: An Industry History* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 88. In 1960 the transport regulations tightened the requirement for the light two-wheel motorised vehicle and remain to this day. The maximum engine size for the category was reduced to 50cc and the minimum age for the licence was raised to 16 years of age. The applicants need to sit and pass a written test.
3. The third of Ukiya's trilogy, *Oresama no hôseki sa*, is an anthology of his diary entries and letters during his days in the USA. In October 1960 he left high school and studied in New York and California. He returned to Japan in June 1963 and began his motorcar racing training. It includes his travelogue of his trip across the country on his newly acquired Honda CB77. Ukiya Tôjirô, *Oresama no hôseki sa: Waga amerika ôdan kikô* [My gems: my American odyssey] [1972] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobô, 1985).
4. The best-known travelogue of this era is Oda Makoto's *Nandemo mite yarô* [I'll give anything a look] (1961). Yamaguchi Makoto shows Oda's style of travel was modelled after Arthur Frommer's popular guidebook. Yamaguchi Makoto, *Nippon on kaigai ryokô: Wakamono to kankô media no 50 nen shi* [Foreign travel in Japan: a 50-year history of youth travel and the travelogues] (Tokyo: Chikuma

Shobô, 2010), 51–2, 57–62. In the English language, see Bruce Suttmeier's critique of Oda's travelogue, 'Ethnography as Consumption: Travel and National Identity in Oda Makoto's, 'Nan de mo mite yarô', *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 35, no. 1 (2009): 61–86.

5. Yamaguchi, *Kaigai ryokô*, 51.
6. Ishihara Shintarô, *Nanbei ôdan ichiman kiro* [Trans-South America 10,000 kilometres] (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1960). Subsequently he pursued a career in politics. Notably, he was the governor of Tokyo from 1999 to 2012. He is now a member of the House of the Representatives of the Diet.
7. Ozawa Seiji, *Boku no ongaku mushashugyô* [My musical 'samurai' training] (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1962).
8. Ukiya distributed the copies of the private publication during his high school years to promote his motorcyclist credentials. This helped him establish a friendship with Honda Toshihiro, the son of Honda founder, Sôichirô. The commercially published edition includes Ukiya's diary entries from 1956 to early 1958 in addition to his travelogue. This article distinguishes the travelogue and the diary, by indicating diary entries and travelogues when necessary. It is likely, although not proved, that his family members exercised editorial decisions.
9. Publication details are provided in the copyright page of the paperback edition published in 1990. Ukiya Tôjirô, *Gamushara 1500-kiro: Waga seishun no kadode* [My frantic 1500-kilometre journey: the beginning of my adolescence] [1972] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobô, 1990), n.p.
10. Sekikawa Natsuo, 'Kaisetsu: Kôjôshin koso chikara de atta jidai' [Commentary: the time aspiration meant exuberance] in Ukiya Tôjirô, *Oresama no hôseki sa: Waga amerika ôdan kikô* [My gems: my American odyssey] [1972] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobô, 1985), 329; Izumi Yûji, 'Kaisetsu: Karekara bokuraga manabukoto' [Commentary: what we learn from Ukiya Tôjirô] in *Gamushara*, 220–28 (227–8).
11. Izumi, 'Kaisetsu', 227–8; and Yoshioka Shinobu, 'Kaisetsu: Hashiri nuketa azayakana sei' [Commentary: a complete run of a colourful life] in Ukiya Tôjirô, *Ôtobai to hatsukoi to: Waga seishun no isan* [My gems: the legacy of my adolescence] [1974] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobô, 1992), 245–9 (247).
12. Sekikawa, 'Kaisetsu', 329.
13. Iwasaki Kureo, *Ukiya Tôjirô: Hayasugita otokono dokyumento* [Ukiya Tôjirô: a chronicle of a man that sped too fast] (Tokyo: Miki Press, 2000), 67–8.
14. Mary Baine Campbell, 'Travel Writing and its Theory', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 261–78 (266).
15. Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 265; Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2000), 204; Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, *Deconstructing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 8. Mary Louise Pratt's work is seminal to these scholars' work in studying the connection between colonialism, imperialism and travel writing, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
16. Lisle, *Travel Writing*, 265, 269.
17. Steven Alford and Suzanne Ferriss, *Motorcycle* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 140.
18. Melissa Holbrook Pierson, *The Perfect Vehicle What it is about Motorcycles* (London: Granta Books, 1997), 226.
19. Saitô Jun, *Ôtobai raifu* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjyû, 1999), 200–204.
20. The historian Andrew Gordon cites statistical figures from a public survey. In 1955, 57.4% of respondents said they were lower class and 42.5%, middle class. In 1965, the figure changed to 43.4% identifying as the lower class and 56.3% as the middle class. By 1972, 21.8% of the respondents said they were in the lower class and 77% in the middle class. He notes some surveys even mark 90% of people as thinking of themselves in the middle class. This rise of middle-class consciousness belies 'the sharp divisions in status, wealth and power'. Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 267–8.
21. Iwasaki, *Hayasugita*, 48, 51, 59.
22. As well as domestic films, *Roman Holiday* and *The Outlaw* (both released in 1954) were very popular in Japanese cinemas. Several films and comics feature main characters on motorcycles. The films were: *Godzilla* (1954) (featuring the motorcycle Cabton), *Jinsei no onimotsu* (1954), *Tokyo no kyûjitsu* (1955), and *Kono sekai no dokokani* (1955). The comics were *Shônen jetto*, *Maboroshi tantei* and *Gekkô kamen*. Shadan hôjin nihon jidôsha kôgyôkai [Japan Automotive Association, Motorcycle

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Info Editorial Committee], *Môtâ saikuru no nihonshi* [A history of the motorcycle in Japan] (Tokyo: Sankaidô, 1955), 127–9.

23. Ukiya, *Gamushara*, 21–2. Further page references will be given parenthetically. Text quoted from Japanese sources is my translation.
24. Alford and Ferriss, *Motorcycle*, 121–2.
25. In Britain there were the groups such as the Teds, the Leatherboys, the Mods and the Rockers in the 1950s. In the USA there were Hells Angels (1960s). The better known 'motorcycle gang' in Japan, *bôsôzoku*, emerged in the 1970s (Alford and Ferriss, *Motorcycle*, 70). On the 1950s Japanese bikers, see Namba Kôji. *Zoku no keifugaku: Yûsu sabukaruchâ no sengoshi* [Archaeology of social groups: a postwar history of youth subcultures] (Tokyo: Seikyûsha, 2007), 195–7.
26. Iwasaki, *Hayasugita*, 48, 51; Katsuragi Yôji, *Asu e no furu surottoru: Ukiya Tôjirô monogatari* [Going at full throttle towards tomorrow: an Ukiya Tôjirô story] (Tokyo: Guranpuri shuppan, 1988), 17–18.
27. By comparison, in the 2005 figure, 96.5% of middle school students progress into high school and 51.5% of high school students gain admission to four-year universities. Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, Statistics Bureau, Director-General for Policy Planning (Statistical Standards) and statistical research and Training Institute, '25-12 Enrolment Rate and Advancement Rate (1948–2005)', www.stat.go.jp/data/chouki/zuhyou/25-12.xls (accessed March 13, 2013).
28. According to Iwasaki, the grandfather, Horikawa Tatsukichiro, was from an elite family and had a rebellious streak. He studied at Gakushuin, an elite school whose students include the members of the imperial family and the former nobility. Later Horikawa was inspired by Sun Yat-sen and embraced a Pan-Asian ideology. He visited China to meet Mao Zedong and Yuan Shi-kai. Iwasaki, *Hayasugita*, 57.
29. Alexander, *Motorcycle Wars*, 89.
30. Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), 118–19.
31. Workers below 17 years of age received ¥5,652 and those between 20 and 24 years of age received ¥12,338. The Bureau of Statistics [Japan], '19–42 Average Monthly Contractual Cash Earnings of General Employees by Academic Career, Age Group and Sex (1954–2006)', http://www.stat.go.jp/data/chouki/19.htm (accessed February 18, 2013).

    In *Gamushara*, Ukiya mentions paying ¥350 for a night's accommodation in a plain inn without meals, ¥1,000 in another inn with two meals and ¥80 for a road map. For expenses related to the motorcycle, he purchased 'meta lube', special oil to enrich the petrol, for ¥350 per 100 millilitre, and bought a cam belt for ¥600 (96, 152, 76, 116).
32. Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 119.
33. Ibid., 128.
34. Among numerous accounts of post-war education in Japan are the following works: Teruhisa Horio, *Educational Thought and Ideology in Modern Japan*, trans. Steven Platzer (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1988); and Robert W. Aspinall, *Teachers' Unions and the Politics of Education in Japan* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001).
35. John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880–1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992).

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