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In Times of Peace. Negotiating the Orient in *Tokyo Year Zero* by David Peace

Abstract I: Conceived as the first novel in a trilogy, *Tokyo Year Zero* (2007) portrays Japan in 1946, defeated by the Allies and invaded by the American occupying forces. The investigation concerning the murders of four prostitutes develops on this backdrop describing a nation that has willingly decided to lose its identity. In this light, my work here revises the notion of empire and the way it has changed in recent years, considering how Said's reflections on the idea of the Orient have developed so far and are remoulded in the narrative of David Peace.

Abstract II: Concepito come il primo romanzo di una trilogia, *Tokyo Year Zero* (2007) è ambientato nel Giappone del 1946, sconfitto dagli alleati e invaso dalle forze di occupazione americane. L'indagine sull'omicidio di quattro prostitute si siviluppa sullo sfondo di una nazione che ha deliberatamente deciso di perdere la sua identità. In questa prospettiva, il mio lavoro riesamina il concetto di impero, considerando il modo in cui le riflessioni di Said sulla nozione di Oriente vengono rimodellate nel romanzo di David Peace.

"Half of it Japanese. Half of it Foreign. All of it Illegal"

> "Partly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiate and unmonolithic" (Said 1994: XXV).

In this 1992 statement, drawn from his Introduction to *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said implies the need of negotiation in the process of making contact with the Other, also reminding us of the loss of purity that this contact unavoidably determines. What we should bear in mind when reflecting on this issue is that in most cases, and certainly for what concerns the notion of the Orient, negotiation has been basically concerned with the struggle towards a mediation between the 'White Man''s previously acquired notion of the Other and the conflicting feelings raised in the 'White Man' while approaching the 'Other'. What the latter really was in her/himself, why she/he was pretending to be or acting as a white man, under which circumstances she/he was proving ready to strike back and for which reasons she/he decided instead to suffer subjection, all of this was never at stake until, basically, the 9/11 terrorist attack. After more or less thirty years, negotiation continues to be the primary grounding of the relationship to what is different, but a much stronger hint at the 'difference of the Other' has recently introduced new variables in the process of shaping one's own identity, wherever one's loyalties are based.

In 1993, Said referred to the American Empire stating that "The United States is no ordinary large country. The United States is the last superpower, an enormously influential, frequently interventionary power nearly everywhere in the world" (Said 1994: 54). In terms of historical development, American policies started being openly imperialist – and need to be defined as such – precisely when they became involved in World War II (Said 1994: 55). As a consequence, from then onwards, the notion of Orient itself has been potently reshaped by America's military as well as cultural power, even when the pressure of this power has not resulted in an overtly imperialistic policy or when the details of specific oppression have not been made public because they belong to the twilight land of international diplomacy. Secrets, mostly in times of war, have bred American supremacy, shelving any idea of a mission aimed at bringing peace and ultimately switching the tools and methods of empire from outright repression to slow and ineluctable disempowering. More recently, this process seems to have developed in such a way as to revise the stereotypical interaction between the victim and the torturer to produce a twin remoulding of the two profiles: a new, highly mobile paradigm of 'Oriental evil' has developed hand in hand with a refurbished version of the American hero. We will reflect on this process considering the way in which it is posited and articulated in David Peace's still unfinished crime trilogy about Tokyo in the aftermath of the atomic bombing.

Openly enough, Peace intends to focus on what he considers as a key-event in the growth of American imperial power in a phase when the switch from the methods of military invasion to the smoother and more effective tools of economic hegemony was starting to become apparent. He also seems interested in highlighting a relatively unreported though crucial aspect of the historical process following Hirohito's defeat soon after Hiroshima and Nagasaki's bombing. What is not always made clear when reflecting on this specific contingency is a very simple and often forgotten awareness: after August 15, 1946, we witness the dramatic consequences of the clash between two empires, one of them – the Western – winning, while the other – standing for the Orient – tries to cope with the most radical, absolute and unexpected defeat that can be imagined. Coherently with his usual method, Peace gathers plenty of documentation before starting to write: as ever, his work is deeply rooted in real events, relentlessly studied and profoundly understood before being retold in fiction. In *Tokyo Year Zero*, as happened in *The Red Riding Quartet,* the plot relies on a real event: a criminal case of murdered prostitutes that Peace, apparently, happened to read in an old newspaper article (Adams 2007). This minor criminal investigation proved strong enough to be developed as the guideline for a most effective historical reconstruction. Documents, interviews, texts and materials allow Peace to pinpoint the facts of the American occupation of defeated Japan. These facts are soon made into the fiction of Detective Minami, who has lost his name, his identity, his family and, soon enough, himself, too.

What is particular about fiction writing, and what sets it apart from essay writing, is that it openly selects a specific point of view, which, in Peace's *Tokyo Trilogy*, takes us back to what may be defined as a dual belonging. Though English born, David Peace (born 1967) has been living in Japan for almost twenty years now. In 2011, when participating as a guest writer at the Belfast Book Fair and after coming back to Yorkshire with his family and spending a few years writing and teaching there, he revealed that he had decided to go back to Japan, in the aftermath of the tsunami: whatever the reasons for this reverse homecoming, they probably say something about how and where Peace's loyalties lie, even admitting that we may still speak of such a thing as national belonging today. In any case and on account of his choices about where to live and work, David Peace must be familiar with the feeling of in-betweenness that Homi Bhabha defines as the "complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (Bhabha 1994: 2). The dynamic re-articulation of identity that is very much the essence of human existence today – that same nomadic process that Braidotti acknowledges, in her latest essay, as the only possible way to belonging (Braidotti 2006: 8-9) – requires the endless negotiation of one's own tradition and inheritance and of course challenges the primary grounding of Western epistemology, revising the once sharply posited dichotomy between the pretended universality of the ethical dimension and the all-too-human need for a highly localized (national, ethic, familiar) belonging. Moving between the "old Europe" and his newly acquired eastern loyalties, sort of suspended between two cultures and two worlds, David Peace is himself a sort of postcolonial subject, sited and re-sited in space and time (Dirlik 1994: 336) and therefore sporting a brand-new gaze that is probably one of the most interesting features of his narrative.

Though also apparent in his crime series set in Yorkshire as well as in his ‘football stories’ (1), the feeling of being half of something only comes to the foreground in the Tokyo novels. The first of them, *Tokyo Year Zero,* is in fact introduced by a quotation from *A Fool's Life*, by Akutagawa Yunosuke (1927). The few lines titled “Defeat”, which serve as an epigraph, mention a character who “lived in this half-light” (Peace 2007: 0). This reference to the grey area that marks personal and collective uncertainty in times of hardship effectively combines, to their mutual advantage, the Western and Eastern notions of suspension and in-betweenness that are the main concern of Peace’s *Weltanschauung,* freeing them from their national and, so to speak, geographic determinations and making them into universal feelings, to be located in time (i.e. our contemporary condition) rather than in space (i.e. one’s positioning as a colonial power or as a colonized people).

At the same time, Peace’s concern lies in a highly specific and intensely historicized condition, namely that of Japan under the American occupation. On this issue and in trying to develop his own representation of this contingency, Peace seems to keep a full, unrelenting awareness that Said’s “dynamic exchange” – the process aimed at leading individual authors to recolonize the intellectual and imaginary territory previously shaped by three great empires (Said 1978: 14-15) – is still at work today. In *Tokyo Year Zero* as well as in its sequel *Occupied City,* Japan is seen while redefining its own new identity and facing – or better, ‘suffering’ the oppression of – one of those empires, and not enjoying it. In Peace’s representation, the occupation affects the Japanese community at several levels. It globally results in a shared condition of passivity and in an equally strong feeling of anxiety, the two of them combined with the inability to cope with a kind of subalternity never experienced before and with the related need to reposition oneself in a space that has suddenly become unfamiliar.

The issue of collective oppression is then replicated in the psychology of the protagonist, Detective Minami, a man of uncertain identity and even more uncertain loyalties, whose life is haunted by the feeling that “No one is who they seem" (Peace 2007: 185-186). Even the investigation seems to get to no result, and the person who is held responsible is probably not guilty, but unable to free himself from his charges (2). Eventually, though some young prostitutes are cruelly murdered, there seems to be no way to do justice to them.

This very rough outline of *Tokyo Year Zero* hardly gives reasons for the radical in-betweenness portrayed in the 'half light' of the story. We will try to show how the main interest of Peace's work resides in the way it explores several levels of thematic transitionality (historical, psychological, identitarian, investigative and legal), not only providing a clear-cut if sorrowful portrait of meaningless violence but also shaping this portrait through stylistic tools and devices that are far from familiar in crime fiction and that reproduce that same in-betweenness and obsessive search for identity that mark the thematic level of his novels. The homogeneous surface of style appears disrupted and fragmented, so as to effectively respond to a setting – fictional as well as historical – crowded with slippery characters, revealing unexpected complexities and marking themselves as performative entities involved in the process that we call history. A very definite, and quite challenging, choice of style reinforces Peace's thematic options: what we may call the rhythm of words represents the site where diverging voices interlace, an in-between space where many differences combine in a concerto. The way in which they outline a new notion of "the fact of empire" (Said 1978: 14) is my focus here.

Level 1: History and the Fact of Empire

Collective history is in fact the first level of my analysis. The US occupation – symbolically marked as the moment when the familiar rules do not work any longer and the new ones are not yet operational – smoothly relates to the twin notions of in-betweennnes and half-light. In this respect, the first interesting aspect of Peace's novel is the double-reading of what Said defines "the fact of empire". In Peace, the notion of imperial power becomes, so to speak, plural, and is inflected as both Western and Eastern. While trying to provide a reliable representation of the American occupation after the Japanese defeat, *Tokyo Year Zero* also articulates the portrayal of an Eastern empire crumbling while struggling to survive a clash that is at the same time military and cultural. It is actually impossible to state whom Peace loyalties lie with, maybe because the novelist is not interested in taking sides. More importantly, his narrative, here as everywhere else, mostly deals with the working of power, rendered in the foucaultian shape of a chain: rather than developing, so to speak, in a line from the torturer to the victim, it circulates, switching from occupiers to occupied and back, and provoking an abrupt revision of the symbolic universe the Japanese society used to be based on (Foucault 1982: 419).

The orderly though slow process through which modern Japan is created, out of the ashes of the defeated empire, is narrated by Peace – a Westerner performing as a Japanese – through a story of murdered prostitutes and starting from the day when the empire is forced to surrender. The official rite marking the beginning of a new political phase may in fact be identified in the radio broadcast of Hirohito's surrender speech in the wake of the latest provisions of peace. Making his decision, and communicating it to his subjects, is the act that actually puts an end to the history of the Japanese empire:

> After pondering deeply the general trends of the world and the actual conditions in our Empire today, We have decided to effect a settlement of the present situation by resorting to an extraordinary measure… We have ordered Our government to communicate to the governments of the United States, Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union that Our Empire accepts the provisions of their Joint Declaration… (Peace 2007: 21).

While acknowledging Japan's defeat and clearly naming the victorious powers, Hirohito still adopts the forms and modalities of the imperial rhetoric, implicitly suggesting that the maintenance of elaborate everyday formalities and ceremonies may be an effective survival strategy (Sorrentino 2007). Quite openly, the provisional shelter provided by a set of tested social formulas may reduce the impact of an event suddenly perceived as equivalent to the end of the world. Voicing an intense sense of loss, the excerpts from Hirohito's speech, in the first pages of the novel, create the atmosphere of something ineluctable that simply has to be accepted:

> Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in the ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization. Such being the case, how are We to save the millions of Our subjects, or to atone Ourselves before the hallowed spirits of Our Imperial Ancestors? (Peace 2007: 22).

Pragmatically and symbolically, the Emperor gives in, withdrawing his protection by the mere admission that the empire does not exist any longer. The community appears scattered and dazed by the lack of directions; everybody is living in fear of punishment and purges, and reacts by removing any sense of belonging, and also abandoning individual as well as collective identity.

> The Japanese nation is under siege both from the 'victors' and from Formosans, Koreans and Chinese seeking retribution. The American occupying forces are conducting purges to root out war criminals. In the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, everyone has changed identity to avoid recrimination. The slogans on the Tokyo station walls, parroted by senior officers – 'Now is not a time to forget our obligations, they are who we are' (Peace 2007: 87).

The empty formality of the official rites is echoed in an urban landscape of destruction and desolation. Nothing works. Nobody is clear about what he or she should do to escape the purges. In a dilapidated site of ruins, the lurking fear of infection is everywhere and expands from the sharply physical and ever-present struggle against parasites (lice are impossible to eradicate) to the symbolic viral spread of American power and rules. The repeated mantra that "it is time to reveal the true essence of the nation" (Peace 2007: 245) does not seem to produce any rebirth. On the contrary, it removes the hope of going back to imperial power, defied and erased by the new hierarchy of power: "The Capital City of Showa Dead, the Losers on their hands and knees, the Victors in their trucks and jeeps" (Peace 2007: 30).

The previously mentioned "True essence" is therefore to be intended as an empty phrase, marking the end of a better and more balanced condition, where the members of the community were cradled and protected by safe and shared rules. Tokyo is made into the icon of a definite moment in time: "The fifteenth day of the eighth month of the twentieth year of Shōwa" (August 15, 1946) becomes, in fact, Tokyo Year 0. The widely circulated sense of apocalypse is intensely refracted from the oppressed community into the architecture of space (and vice versa) producing the image of a *polis* that appears architecturally as well as socially destroyed:

> The sirens and the warnings all through the night; Tokyo hot and dark; hidden and cowed; night and day, rumors of new weapons, fears of new bombs; first Hiroshima, then Nagasaki, next is Tokyo… Bombs that mean the end of Japan, the end of the world… (Peace 2007: 3-4)

A key-issue here is the emblematic relevance given to an urban landscape that translates the meaning of defeat into a topography of desperation and hopelessness. The effective representation of dilapidated urban sites, which in itself is not unusual in Peace, reaches its climax in the Tokyo novels, in an epic narration following the tormented path along which both the individuals and the community are led to devise new forms of identity. Again, we are brought back to Said and to one of his statements on contemporary fiction, where "the novel form and the new historical narrative become pre-eminent, and in which the importance of subjectivity to historical time takes firm hold" (Said 1994: 58). However, Peace adds something more. He does not simply frame the subject within a highly specific historical time, but goes a way beyond combining different kinds of subjects, and matching high and low, male and female, rich and poor, Japanese and American in unusual patterns that dissolve the Western habit of dichotomic thinking. What is emphasized instead is a strong feeling of transitionality producing both a physical/urban uncertainty and a symbolic instability. The potentially black-and-white opposition of good and evil fades to a grey area, a borderland, where the characters move, hopelessly trying to resist their fate, which amounts to nothing more than endless physical and/or psychological violation. While investigating what Stallybrass defines as "the division of the social into high and low, the polite and the vulgar" (Stallybrass & White 1986: 191), he also tries to map out the gradual passing from the previous 'social purity' (when the Japanese empire was still in place) and the impending 'hybridization' brought about by its defeat. Meaningfully enough, this grey area is crowded with grotesque bodies replacing the 'civilized' ones, impacting on identity and determining a redefinition of the laws and rules that were previously internalized as the guarantee of social living (Stallybrass & White 1986: 191).

As a consequence, the sense of in-betweenness is overwhelming everywhere in the novel and acquires both a symbolic and physical connotation: "Half of it Japanese. Half of it foreign. All of it illegal. But there are no police here. No Victors. No Occupiers" (Peace 2007: 42). The pervasive sense of the spreading of an infection results in the weakening of the social organism and the destruction of any form of civilized interaction. The inability to distinguish the winners from the victims mostly resides in their sharing the same dilapidated space, eating the same food, suffering the same weather and feeling the same nostalgia for a homeland which is either too far away or no longer existing. A new and newly cohesive Japanese identity is obviously still in the making, but the path is traced and it has to go through the land of political and cultural anarchy: “Here there is only one law; buy or be bought. Sell or be sold; this is where the cannibals come” (Peace 2007: 42). And when they come, they find Inspector Minami waiting for them.

Level 2: Postimperial Identity as a Process

The first pages of *Tokyo Year Zero* are constructed as a sort of double beginning. Challenging his reader in his usual way, Peace opens his novel by introducing two narrative threads at once – one on the left page and one on the right – that appear both stylistically and visually diversified. Fonts and formats as well as line-spacing are different. The left page articulates a sort of hypnotic stream of consciousness (Adams 2007), with sections emphasized through the use of bold and italics; there is no narration, but simply a flow of unhindered feelings and thoughts. An unknown I-narrator introduces himself right at the beginning of the page (“I lie among the corpses”) and takes his leave at the end (“I lie among corpses and I listen”), closing the passage full circle. The right page, instead, develops the action in the shape of a traditional story. Fragments of italicized interpolations suggest something of a haunted, self-lacerating interior monologue; nevertheless the reader is given a place, a time, and a protagonist. Minami, whose name has recently been changed to hide his previous history and reshuffle the pattern of his identity, is shown as an example of the *anomia* imposed by the condition of being a defeated and occupied country. His condition is by no means unusual. Quite the opposite.

> The young man stares at the doughnut and nods his head.
> ‘Got a wife waiting for you?’ she asks. ‘Your mother?’
> The young man looks up from the plate now and says, ‘They think I died honourably in battle three years ago. They received a citation from the Mayor of Tokyo which said Private Noma would forever be remembered

> and may his soul rest in peace. They were given a small white casket in which the ashes of my body had been brought back to Japan. They deposited the casket in our local temple. They placed a framed picture of me in my uniform on the family *butsudan*. They lit incense for me, offered white rice and sake …
> *I don't want to remember. I don't want to remember …*
> 'They wouldn't look at my face. They said Noma is dead …'
> *But here in the half-light, I can't forget …*
> 'They wouldn't look at my feet …'
> *They are punishing us all …*
> 'They said I am a ghost …'
> *Warning us all …*
> *No one is who they seem* (Peace 2007: 185-186).

And this is the high point in the building of the main character, that is in fact the voice narrating the story: Detective Minami of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police has been driven crazy by nothing being as it seems (Adams 2007). His private and public life is haunted by a set of meaningless oppositions, whose meaning has got lost together with the imperial identity:

> Democracy is good. Democracy is bad. *My mouth is dry*. The aggressor is the victim. The victim is the aggressor. *My stomach aches*. The winners are the losers. The losers are the winners... (Peace 2007: 368).

Being a detective, Minami is described while involved in an investigation. The day Japan accepts the imposed conditions of defeat is also the day when the body of a young geisha is found in Shiba Park. The case is a real one (Adams 2007), but Peace rewrites its contingencies, making them symbolic of the crumbling of the whole imperial universe. So, on August 15, 1946, the protagonist is summoned to an air raid shelter where the woman's body has been discovered. Apparently, the body is found on naval property and therefore the case should be dealt with by the military police. When a scapegoat is easily found – an elderly Korean who is not plausible as a killer but very convenient as a solution for the killing – the case should be closed (Sorrentino 2007). Refusing to close it is the *act/fact* determining Minami's slow descent into the hell of global uncertainty, both personal and professional.

From the structural point of view, Minami is more than a character. He is also the device collating the narrative and providing a key to it. This function is coherent with the usual role of central characters – namely detectives – in serialized crime fiction, though Peace – as we have said - often diverges from the conventional frame of this subgenre (3). At the same time, Minami is also unique in the way he is articulated. He is not the typical cop; he breaks more rules than he keeps, and his thoughts aren't organized at all. Starving, lice-infested, plagued by the ceaseless heat and dressed in rags, he's troubled by a drug habit, a neglected family, a mistress who obsesses him, an uneasy relationship with the local crime boss, treacherous subordinates, impatient superiors and disturbing memories of wartime atrocities in which he may have participated (Sorrentino 2007). He thinks in dichotomies that appear to him totally devoid of meaning and that soon develop into a sort of quickfire paranoia.

> *I pick up the razor*. Nobody knows my name. Everybody knows my name. *I open up the razor*. Nobody cares. Everybody cares. *I untie the kimono*. The day is night. The night is day. *The yellow and dark-blue striped kimono*. Black is white. White is black. *It falls open*. The men are the women. The women are the men. *The razor in my right hand*. The brave are the frightened. The frightened are the brave. *I lower my right hand*. The strong are the weak. The weak are the strong. *I lower the razor*. The good are the bad. The bad are the good. *The blade touches my skin*. Communists should be set free. Communists should be locked up. *I lift up my cock with my left hand*. Strikes are legal. Strikes are

> illegal. *The blade is cold*. Democracy is good. Democracy is bad. *My mouth is dry*. The aggressor is the victim. The victim is the aggressor. *My stomach aches*. The winners are the losers. The losers are the winners. *My heart aches*. Japan lost the war. Japan won the war. *I start to cut*.
> The living are the dead –
> *I cut and I cut and I cut and I cut and I cut...*
> Until the dead are the living. *I cut... I am one of the survivors!*
> (Peace 2007: 368).

As we know, the first and primary grounding of Western epistemology is the notion of a founding duality, producing an endless set of related dichotomies (Bhabha 1984: 2). The character that Peace is introducing here articulates his own provocative version of the Western duality. Being a Japanese born and bred, Minami does not remove the dichotomies, quite the opposite. He feeds them, at the same time making them totally devoid of meaning. His identity, metonymically erased through the denial of his own name, is what nobody knows but everybody knows, and it makes no difference whether he is good or bad, either as a policeman or as a husband, father and lover.

Peace proves particularly effective in assuming the voice of Detective Minami, at times also using his language and interspersing the narrative with Japanese words. The working of Minami's psychology also reflects a broader aspect of Peace's imagination that tends to build up by fragments, multiplying as the plot goes on. Eventually, they produce the impression of a universe that is at the same time entropic and intensely disseminated. Peace uses truncated subject, verb, object sentences in repetitive rhythms to establish the "claustrophobia of extreme states of mind" (Adams 2007). The "demotic rhythms" (Adams 2007) marking his poetic prose amount to a highly original narrative voice, that is unmistakable, and always there, whether he tells of the Yorkshire Ripper, the Miner's Strike, Manchester United or the end of Japanese empire. From the narrative point of view, the resulting effect owes little to

Raymond Chandler or James Ellroy: Peace's masters are rather F. Dostoyevsky, W. Burroughs and K. Acker, to whom the French practitioners of the *nouveau roman* are to be added, for what concerns the way in which the conventions of American detective fiction are borrowed by experimental narrative so as to draw the reader into the ratiocinative process (Sorrentino 2007).

> *Their clothes are almost rags, half of them have no shoes...*
> 'This is a bad place to buy anything, a terrible place...'
> *They are weighted down and they are sweating...*
> 'These farmers have us where they want us...'
> ..*The weight of the bundles on their backs*
> 'They won't take money, only goods...' *Dirty towels tied around their*
> *faces.*
> 'They're getting choosier by the day...'
> *Or old yellowcaps on their heads…*
> 'Used to be just fabrics or cloth...'
> *The weaker ones slowing down...* '
> Now only jewellery will do...'
> *Falling behind the others...*
> 'Kimonos or shoes...'
> *Resting already...*
> 'It'll be much better in autumn,' they convince themselves –
> But it's not autumn yet, the tips of the branches still green –
> The persimmons on the trees still to fatten and brighten –
> *To ripen, to fall and to splatter* (Peace 2007: 305).

The writing does not only exist in terms of the semantics built through words, but also as a shape, a graphic and visual work of art, whose physical consistence has to be exploited.

> *Does he stand behind you in the queue for tickets at Shibuya?*

> ‘No bones missing’, I agree. ‘But where were her clothes?’
> *Does he befriend you with tales of farmers and cheap rice?*
> Her brown *monpe* trousers and her pale yellow blouse –
> *Do you go to Asakusa? Then the train to Kanasaki...?*
> Her sandals, her socks and her underwear, all near –
> *This is the way, he says. This is the way, he says...*
> Here among these trees, among these branches –
> *He walks behind you. He walks behind you…*
> To the neatly chopped logs piled over there –
> *His hair stretched tight against his scalp*
> Through these trees and these branches –
> *But it’s not the way. Never the way...*
> On my hands and on my knees –
> *His skin tight against his skull...*
> I’m lifting up log after log –
> *He looms and he leers...*
> Looking for her clothes –
> *Kodaira, Kodaira...*
> Under log after log –
> *Looms and leers...*
> This one last log –
> *Here, here…* (Peace 2007: 317).

The stylistic approach, in a way, combines with the thematic complexities, reinforcing the sense of a whole epoch ending together with the Japanese empire. In this context, finding out the killer – soon nicknamed the Japanese Ripper, in another example of Western mythical colonization – becomes irrelevant.

While pursuing his theory, Minami gradually discovers that no one is interested in solving the murders (in fact, the case file has gone missing), and he also develops his investigation into a quest made up of equal parts of honor, duty and venality, a quest that affords him a clear and unwanted view deep into the catacombs of police corruption, the shadier side of affairs in the emerging "new Japan" and his own crumbling mental state (Sorrentino 2007).

In the ruins of the nuclear bombing, in the interstices of these torn and wounded *epistemes* where the rules of justice are blurred and betrayed, the notions of right and wrong disappear to be replaced by the elementary law of survival.

If, as Said maintains and drawing towards a conclusion, representations have purposes, what sort of consequence emerges from this representation of a defeated Orient through Western eyes? Without any doubt, this "formed" and "deformed" Orient is quite distinct from the one we are used to. The same goes, however, for the Westerner, who, deterritorialized and destabilized, still tries to position her/himself as our brand-new postcolonial subject. In the same way as the Orient was shaped by Europe out of a more specific sensitivity towards a geographical region called "the East" (Said 1978: 273), the West was silently shaped by many different Eastern gazes out of a geographical region called the West. The Japanese imperial identity was not ready to face the US kind of Occident/West. And Peace shows the process through which they struggle not to be absorbed by something they find they by no means know.

NOTES

1. We are referring to the four novels included in the so called *Red Riding Quartet – 1974* (1999), *1977* (2000), *1980* (2001) and *1983* (2002) – and to the two novels devoted to famous profiles in UK football history: *The Damned United* (2006) and the very recent *Red or Dead* (2013).
2. Kodairo Yoshio, who confessed to killing the four young victims, was executed at the Miyagi Prison on October, 5, 1949.
3. In the above-mentioned *Red Riding Quartet*, the traditional device of the serialized protagonist is discarded in favour of a more risky and less formalized

cohesion among the four novels, built on a shared political and social atmosphere.

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