

Narrating Intoxication in Japan in the Wake of the 1960s

by

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Chapter One

Introduction: Reading Intoxication

Once I consumed a small yellow cake labeled “eat me” and was transported to another world. There I could do whatever I wanted without a care. I traveled according to the direction of the wind. I hooked up with anyone who stopped to chat. And I developed a very keen connection to the rhythms of the Earth. People were on the whole not very nice to me, but I could just snap my fingers and they’d be blown to smithereens. I came to like being alone.

Then one day I picked up a bottle of gray fizzy liquid. The cap said, “drink me,” so of course I did. I was zipped off to a coastal town at the base of the mountains, surrounded by people pretending to be related to me. They were poor and always fighting. When I went to the outhouse, however, I suddenly found myself shuttled off to a teeming metropolis. I could drink another bottle of the gray fluid to get back to the small town, but when I pissed it out, I would end up back in the city. Life was pretty miserable in the town, but it also seemed normal, whereas in the city I was constantly harried and paranoid. When I couldn’t handle things, I would pick up another bottle and return to where things at least seemed *real*.

I don’t recall now why I kept trying that drink, but I stopped one day when I came across a syringe. Nothing was written on the syringe, but nearby, sitting in a convertible surrounded by beautiful women, was a pimp. He told me that if I carefully injected the contents of the syringe into my vein, beautiful women would flock to me, and both the syringe and the women would bring me great pleasure. I injected myself right away and, wow, it was better than I could have imagined! Oh, there were so many women and they

all really dug me. Sometimes I had to service the pimp so he would fill up the syringe for me, but it was a small price to pay for the fun times (and I kind of liked it, anyway). Groups of us would shoot up, listen to music, and dance and make love all night long. It was so amazing that I wanted to capture the moment and never forget it. That's why I took a lot of pictures. Then one night, I just left it all behind.

On my way home, I was abducted by a beautiful woman in command of a spaceship. Under her spell I was somehow paralyzed and no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't move. My clothes were also missing. I looked down and realized that — yikes! — I had been castrated. Across the room, ugly little dwarves were serving her and her friends some kind of beverage, and every now and then a woman would come over and urinate in my mouth. Surprisingly not bad at all. Every few hours a dark-skinned doctor would shove some red paste into my mouth. It didn't taste very good, but I couldn't stop counting the seconds until he came back to give me more. That first night, a woman dragged me to her boudoir. She made me use my tongue to perform on the lower half of her body acts that I cannot even begin to describe. If I didn't do as she said, she would beat me mercilessly. After that, I sometimes purposely disobeyed her, and she would throttle me unconscious with her high-heeled leather boot. It has been magical. Every moment I bask in her beauty is pure ecstasy. The crueller she treats me, the more I worship her.

* * * *

Drugs can be found everywhere, and they sometimes inspire the most peculiar fantasies in our imaginations. Above are four scenarios adapted from fictional texts I analyze in the chapters that follow. The subject "I" appears to be the same in each of the scenarios, but it isn't. Or, rather, linguistically the subjects are much the same, but the way each "I" is constituted — how it comes to become that "I" — is very different. I will show by the end of this manuscript that it matters a great deal which "I" performs in

which story.

In the first two scenarios, with the cake and the fizzy drink, the subjects “I” are not particularly happy and suffer their torment with resignation. They each receive pleasure when it comes to them but are also beset by dilemmas that have trapped them in their respective cycles of high and low. In the third scenario, “I” is having a lot of fun, but every pleasurable experience is somehow haunted by the specter of loss. Will the pictures “I” has taken help him relive all the pleasurable experiences? Did “I” actually learn anything about himself that he didn’t already know? The last “I” seems to have discovered how to derive extreme pleasure by giving up control. His castration and subjugation seem only to enhance his passions. But he leaves me wondering about what conditions are necessary for subordination to be so satisfying.

Drugs can be found everywhere. Well... everywhere except “in nature,” Jacques Derrida reminds us.¹ By this he means, “drugs” inhabit overlapping discursive categories that underscore their contingency in linguistic, social, political, and moral terms. Even separating the idea of “drugs” from “food” — or further specifying a distinction between licit and illicit, beneficial and harmful, addictive and non-habit-forming, etc. — highlights a political-linguistic stance that far exceeds the substances in question. Avital Ronell writes that “drugs make us ask what it means to consume anything, anything at all.”² Here I ask what it means for a reader to consume a representation of drug intoxication.

The project at hand undertakes to explore intoxication — drug effects — as a textual strategy in Japanese fiction of the early 1970s. I will look at how intoxication functions as a linguistic practice, as a strategy of signification, but also as a historically situated

¹ Jacques Derrida, “The Rhetoric of Drugs” [1989], trans. by Michael Israel, in Anna Alexander and Mark S. Roberts, eds., *High Culture: Reflections on Addiction and Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York, 2003), p. 20.

² Avital Ronell, *Crack Wars: Literature, Addiction, Mania* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 63.

phenomenon represented in fictional texts. Across the twentieth century, the Japanese government joined other nations and international organizations in criminalizing drugs, and the 1960s saw an increase in restrictions on substances deemed at risk for abuse.³ At the same time, recreational drugs enjoyed sensational media coverage in relation to youth-centered culture and the international marketing of film, literature, music, and art. Even as increasingly prohibitive measures were being taken against consuming substances recreationally, the circulation of drug representation pervaded the market.

Intoxication garners its vitality from the ambiguous collision of its pervasive and prohibitive discourses, from its promise to transcend the boundaries of the real even as it subjects us to real consequences. The texts I analyze portray intoxication in order to foreground a variety of ambiguities arising out of the gaps between representation and experience. A representation may seem to be just a copy, a signifier, of experience, but the very concept of experience is always already prefigured as a representation.

Intoxication offers a site from which to explore the ambiguity of such a distinction — what is real and what is fake? — and then invite (or, alternately, foreclose upon) a multiplicity of interpretations. To understand how fictional texts invoke this ambiguity, I consider how drugs circulate in the stories, both as material substances representing value within a textual economy and as intoxication, the depiction of experiences and sensations that comprise a contested “reality” that must be decoded by the reader.

Purposely writing ambiguity is a gamble that always risks failure in decoding and rejection in the process of reading, whereby the ambiguity comes off as apathy or

³ Caveat: the Imperial Army appears to have profited greatly from the opium trade in China and funded its control of the continent in the 1930s by circumventing the International Opium Convention of 1912. See Frederick T. Merrill, *Japan and the Opium Menace* (New York: International Secretariat Institute of Pacific Relations and the Foreign Policy Association, 1942), Chapter IV “Opium and Narcotic Drugs in China since the Japanese Invasion” and Anthony Smith, “The Japanese Opium Racket in Central China,” p. 158. Nitán’osa Nakaba has also written a study of his father Otozō’s role as “Japan’s opium king.” Otozō produced morphine for domestic use but also helped propagate opium poppies across northeastern Asia. See Nitán’osa Nakaba, *Sensō to nihon ahen-shi: ahen-ō Nitán’osa Otozō no shōgai* (Tokyo: Subaru Shobō, 1977). At the Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting 2008 in Atlanta, Mark Driscoll described Manchukuo under Imperial Army control as “the largest state-sponsored drug dealer in the world.”

disengagement rather than as a critical jumping-off point. I acknowledge, then, that some of my interventions arise out of a privileged position of reading that benefit from distance from the initial production and dissemination of the texts. However, if I can find meaning where others only see nonsense — or vice versa — it is all the more valuable an illustration of my objectives.

Because of the ambiguities produced in representations of drug effects, effectively reading intoxication requires a suspension of one's values for the sake of the fiction. In the texts I analyze — “The Yellow Prostitute” by Mori Makiko, “Gray Coca-Cola” by Nakagami Kenji, *Almost Transparent Blue* by Murakami Ryû, and *Domesticated Yapoo* by Numa Shôzô — drugs consistently represent some type of exchange value predicated on a certain surplus that enables their circulation. In all four texts, sex is connected to the exchange either directly or indirectly. However, the portrayal of intoxicating effects, the manifestation of the drug as a textual phenomenon, frequently undermines the stability of that value by questioning signifying practices through which that value is made legible. Drugs can make language poisonous this way, pushing a fictional diegesis well beyond the familiar or the safe.

The deployment of the trope of intoxication illustrates the passions aroused by the ambiguities it evokes. Modern cultural production demonstrates a sustained fascination with intoxication as a distortion of communal reality, but the value assigned the process is not consistent. Among the polemical aphorisms in his 1882 book *The Gay Science*, Friedrich Nietzsche proclaims, “Who will ever relate the whole history of narcotica? — It is almost the history of ‘culture,’ of our so-called high culture.” Nietzsche criticizes contemporary theater, music, and art, attacking what he perceives as elite art's tendency to lull the audience into prefigured, banal emotion rather than arouse “the strongest ideas and passions.” Intoxication here is characterized by a numbing of the audience's intellect through appeals to unreflective emotions, which “produces an effect without a

sufficient reason.”⁴ Nietzsche’s provocative observation demonstrates how “intoxication” sustains the exclusivity of “high culture” by breaking down relationships of cause and effect and creating ambiguous, unjustifiable affect.

Some eight decades later, Kitazawa Masakuni, a Tokyo music professor who published widely on contemporary Marxist theory, would advocate intoxication as a means to resist conformity to élitist values.

The guardians of the “sacred” offer popular concerts to the masses. Performing “famous songs” that are second- and third-rate even for classical music, conductors and orchestra members play in the manner of “barnstorming” (*dosa-mawari*). Most of these performances are condescending to the masses, and they put clearly on display an élitist sense of entitlement [in the form of] classical music. Rather than go to these hypocritical performances, it might be far healthier to head to the plaza at the west exit of Shinjuku station to hear the Folk Guerillas, or get intoxicated on rhythm-and-blues at a go-go café.⁵

Kitazawa, too, was concerned that the dissemination of contemporary cultural forms could be harmful to the people at whom they were directed. From his engagement with critical theory, Kitazawa saw the mass media and “managed society” (*kanri shakai*) using “élite” culture to assert normative standards that perpetuated distinctions between high and low.⁶

The similarities between the two men’s objects of critique underscore for me the differences in their treatment of “intoxication” as something to be condemned or promoted. In particular, Kitazawa’s thinking was linked to mid-20th-century European cultural theorists and influenced by a mistrust in the hegemonic power of contemporary commercialism. Where Nietzsche purported to value artistic production that stimulated

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* [1882, 1887], trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 141-142.

⁵ Kitazawa Masakuni, “Ongaku taishū-ka no tōsaku: ongaku wa eriito no mono de wa nai” [1968], *Hanbunmei no ronri: kanri shakai to bunka kakumei* (Tokyo: Suzusawa Shoten, 1973), p. 249. Shinjuku is one of the major business and entertainment hubs of Tokyo and its station is a primary transportation hub. The Folk Guerillas were active at the end of the 1960s and allied themselves with protesters of the U.S. war in Vietnam. They often assembled large crowds in an underground plaza of Shinjuku station to sing protest songs until the riot police unleashed tear gas and arrested participants in June 1969. “Go-go café” is a contemporary name for certain discothèques that often hosted live performances.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-19. In his critique of “management society,” Kitazawa proposes that an “advanced welfare state” will “over-manage” people’s lives according to “the technological management of numerical information.” This management will rationalize violence in its attempt to order everything, including culture. A “cultural revolution” is necessary “to awaken the demand for true freedom of the people,” he claims, and not fall into the trap of either capitalism or Stalinist Soviet socialism.

“strong” ideas, Kitazawa, having lived through a period of state ideological control over culture in the 1930s and 1940s, was suspicious of the very strength of those ideas promoted. He instead advocated a turn to “intoxicating” music perceived as low-culture expressly to promote resistance toward the “élite” definition of the culturally “sacred.”

Kitazawa’s use of intoxication as a trope of resistance to the imposition of dominant cultural norms corresponds well to my analysis.⁷ I examine the representation of intoxication in Japanese literature to interrogate how tropes of drug effects are variously used to portray images of contemporary society against which critical positions can be taken. There is little reason to differentiate legal drugs from illegal ones, as the law plays a minor role in the textualization of drug experience (but a major role in overdetermining what counts as a “drug”). Instead, I look at the deployment in fiction of “*kusuri*,” and its Sino-Japanese reading of “*yaku*” in compound words. *Kusuri* can refer, like the Greek *pharmakon*, to either the remedy or the poison. Drug policy specialist Kuma Rakuya comments that

People in the past would say “poison can transform into medicine” (*dokuyaku henjite kusuri to naru*) because medicine and poison are two sides of the same coin.⁸

Any discussion of drugs in Japanese language discourse must account for this inherent linguistic ambiguity, in addition to the somewhat arbitrary categorization of substances as *kusuri*. I also hone in on expressions that indicate an intoxicated state like the 1960s slang verb *rariru*, as well as standard terms like *meitei*, *tôsui*, and *yoi*. What does it mean to make the claim that a character is “intoxicated” within a text, or that a represented substance is “intoxicating,” or that “intoxication” is a result of fictional actions? Are authors using intoxication as metaphor, trying to express something else through a trope, or are they just reporting the “facts” of drug use? Is reporting the “facts”

⁷ Kitazawa approvingly describes how young people variously pursue “ecstasy” (*ekusutashii*) through sex, drugs, and rock music. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-135 and 309-310. In this study, I equate his use of “ecstasy” as a subversive pleasure to the French term *jouissance* below.

⁸ See Jacques Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy” [1972], in *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University Press, 1981), pp. 70-71, and Kuma Rakuya, *Mayaku e no chôsen* (Tokyo: Gendai Shobô, 1966), p. 39.

itself a means of positing a referential meaning, of trying to assert a *significance*, or of trying to indicate a problematic orientation toward a particular fictional scenario? It appears implausible to “theorize” intoxication, in the sense that theory somehow transcends particularity. This project thus targets the representations as they appear in each of the texts, and any general observations I propose try to account for the local concerns and textual issues first and then extrapolate outward to understand how the dots connect.

In the chapters that follow, I observe how intoxication is deployed to reveal and problematize the binary structures that appear to order society. The effects of drug use illustrate how protagonists in each text inhabit and construct a place at society’s margins in order to create a negative reflection of the perceived center. Their intoxication overflows the socially acceptable, invites condemnation as abnormal, and injects the specter of death into surrounding life. The texts depict an intoxicated interior narration to hold up an unflattering reflection of what counts as sobriety, to construct an alternate, personal, subjective, and non-normative realism and dialectically engage and critique an imagined communal reality.

What Derrida refers to as “the pleasure of drug use (*la jouissance toxicomanique*)” underscores the bifurcation of pleasure — which, importantly, always implies its negative term of displeasure — into tentative categories that divide the familiar from the estranging. Roland Barthes proposes, hesitantly, an opposition between *plaisir* and *jouissance* that is useful in considering how representations of intoxication play out with regard to the process of reading:

Text of pleasure [*plaisir*]: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading. Text of bliss [*jouissance*]: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader’s historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language.”⁹

⁹ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* [1973], trans. by Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 14.

Barthes identifies *jouissance* with “discomfort” in reading, with a disruption in received values, and in pursuing this project I will explore how his student Julia Kristeva applies this term similarly to “poetic language.” Few texts lie at either pole of this binary and most engage readers in a blend of *plaisir* and *jouissance*. This distinction lays bare an inherent contingency of readerly positionality. I attempt to take this into account by bouncing my interpretations and interventions off of critics who have published contemporary (or intermediary) commentary on the fiction on one hand, and off of contemporary discourses circulating in Japan that share language with the texts or their critics on the other. I do not conceal my bias, however, in privileging engagement with the texts against the grain of a “comfortable” reading as much as possible.

I generally argue that the intoxication-related fiction taken up in this study engages discourses critical of the power of normativity. One pillar of this critical stance revolves around the authority of voices constructed as “marginal” to participate in value-laden discourses such as “history” or “politics” or “desire.” Although a great deal is made about Nietzsche’s comparison of “narcotica” with “high culture,” I have always been fascinated by the mediating term, “history,” and its potential for continuity with and disruption by the fictional narrative. Nietzsche rhetorically theorized several strands of positivistic history, but French philosopher Paul Valéry’s intervention into the definition highlights the open-endedness of a discourse reliant on language to produce its truths.

History is the most dangerous concoction the chemistry of the mind has produced. Its properties are well known. It sets people dreaming, intoxicates them, engenders false memories, exaggerates their reflexes, keeps old wounds open, torments their leisure, inspires them with megalomania or persecution complex, and makes nations bitter, proud, insufferable, and vain.

History can justify anything you like. It teaches strictly nothing, for it contains and gives examples of everything.¹⁰

Valéry portrays history as a type of artificial narcotic, one that is so overflowing with meaning that it is consequently empty. His assessment of history points to core reasons why it invites contestation: historical discourse both relies on the narrative form to

¹⁰ Paul Valéry, “On History” [1931], quoted in Richard Davenport-Hines, *The Pursuit of Oblivion: A Global History of Narcotics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2002), p. 9.

construct continuity and aims to present truthful interpretations using the unstable material of language. Narrative and language are subject to appropriation and manipulation and thus can be used to “justify anything” according to contingent systems of value. Moreover, language produces meaning out of fundamental acts of exclusion and selective framing that strategically elide or downplay ambiguity. When fictional texts represent social marginality by highlighting the ambiguities of narration and language, I tend to read into them an alternative perspective on historical discourse borne out of the interstices and lacunae of the dominant culture they critique.

Hamano Yasuhiro, an art and design critic and then-burgeoning entrepreneur, theorized in 1970 that the “subculture” of the coming decade, which would inaugurate “an era of liberation of the self,” was “a culture that expressed itself on the basis of wanting to convert ‘now’ into history.”¹¹ Hamano explicitly constructs “subculture” against the concept of “main culture” and posits as its goal the construction of its own model of “history” out of the local, the immediate, and the “sub.” In so doing, Hamano proposes to re-conceive what qualifies as historical discourse as the foundation of cultural critique. When historical truth can only be ascertained by understanding “now” and evidence is only valid for an instant, the marginal narrative can attain the same authority as any master narrative. Perhaps this insistence on the radical contingency of all “history” provides an opportunity to validate stories that only purport to convey localized and unstable truths, those produced and consumed outside of master narratives and enduring political alliances. The “liberated self” that reads and writes such (hi)stories would forfeit the possibility of *plaisir* in order to ensure that every textual encounter will foreground *jouissance*.

This is a *jouissance* that transcends boundaries, that overrides the articulation of values and identities, and fits neatly into Hamano’s idealistic vision of the “flowing 70s”

¹¹ Hamano Yasuhiro, “Kyôshin o koete: jiga kaihô no jidai” *Bijutsu techô* 325 (March 1970), p. 12.

as the cornerstone of a new “fluid civilization.”¹² The “stagnant” culture of the past would be replaced by the unpredictable vitality of youth-centered culture, in which nothing would remain static long enough to be oppressive. Basic needs were already satisfied, he noted, and so “desire” was the next frontier to explore. The new culture would rely on prolific sex and unrestrained drug use to create liberation by transforming these purported manifestations of desire into art. Art, in turn, would be the foundation for a new politics liberated from erstwhile values and categories. Ôya Sôichi and Kaga Otohiko, essayists engaged with issues of contemporary youth culture and the media, pointed out that urban youth subcultures outside of the universities engaged no revolutionary political ideologies so much as they commercially mimicked American youth as fashion. Their depictions preempted Hamano’s idealized investment in fashion’s fluidity by portraying subcultural movements as media-centered distractions from politics, as hobbies for wealthy kids who came to the city and pretended to be activists.¹³ To Ôya and Kaga, the suggestion that these kids might find *jouissance* was farcical.

Hamano did not hew to the more orthodox view of politics as movement-centered mobilization of the masses but saw the potential for the creative arts to effect epistemological and ontological shifts at the level of interpersonal communication. He validated his vision of the oncoming decade by citing the musical *Hair*, an off-Broadway play in 1967 that was transformed into an international phenomenon by 1970, including a Japanese version with a Japanese cast. Hamano glorified *Hair* as “living theater” that

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹³ Ôya writes: “The Shinjuku *fûten* tribes hang out until brushed away by the police. ... It is like Greenwich Village except they are not from the artistic class but are suburban middle-class kids commuting to the city by train; they aren’t ‘resisting commercialism’ so much as they are jumping on a mass-media bandwagon.” Ôya Sôichi, “Angura wa atarashikunai” quoted in Ôkuma Nobuyuki, “Angura no machi o yuku: ‘saikangura’ jôhō o megutte” *Ushio* 99 (August 1968), pp. 138-148.

Kaga calls the *fûten* “self-conscious fashionistas” who are “performing a role.” He particularly derides the emphasis on spectacle, noting that “were no one there to watch, they wouldn’t do anything at all.” Kaga Otohiko, “Oshare to henshin” [1970], in the anthology *Gendai wakamono kishitsu* (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1974), pp. 17-23.

involved the audience in the performance, rendering artistic expression a dynamically communal experience. To him the play also represented the success of an oppositional art form with a counter-cultural message — promoting “free” sex and rampant drug use, in particular — that questioned the sociopolitical status quo as it moved rapidly from the fringes to global popularity. Kitazawa, whose conception of a “cultural revolution” privileged art and language as political agents, concurred. Kitazawa praised *Hair* as a paradigm of “madness” (*kyôki*), a productive disruption of values that would inevitably replace what he saw as the primary culprits of oppression: “managed society,” “modern logic,” and “logocentrism.”¹⁴ Such positive critical acclaim accepted *Hair* as more than just a revolution in theater, but also as a model for art as full-scale political and social revolution.

The authorities viewed this cultural experiment differently. Three months after *Hair* opened in Tokyo, the police arrested the producer and four young actors for participating in a “marijuana party” at the producer’s home.¹⁵ In the public discourse of government policy and national news at this time, drugs were a matter of criminality. Drug users were portrayed simply as subjects gone astray, who without intervention would turn to crime to satisfy their wrong-headed cravings. The pharmaceutical affairs section of the Kyoto health department claimed, for example, that “regular use of marijuana causes a mixture of spasmodic intoxication and hallucination and carries the grave danger of leading to heinous crimes.”¹⁶ The vigilant enforcement and criminalization of drug use owed much to Kuma Rakuya, who rose in the national Ministry of Welfare

¹⁴ Kitazawa Masakuni, “Jôhō shakai to ningen kaihō to bunka kakumei: mata wa ‘kindai risei’ no haizetsu” *Bessatsu ushio* 16 (Winter 1970), pp. 83-84. Kitazawa puts his terms in quotation brackets to signal that they are contested concepts that form the object of his criticism: “managed society” is “*kanri shakai*,” “modern logic” is “*kindai risei*,” and “logocentrism” is “*risei (rogosu)-chūshin-shugi*” or “*rogosentori-zumu*.”

¹⁵ “Haiyū-ra yonin taiho: ‘geki o kyōretsu ni’ paatii” *Yomiuri shinbun (yūkan)* 26 February 1970, p. 11. Investigations were also made into possible LSD use — the drug was made illegal in January 1970. Members of the *Hair* troupe were arrested again in 1971 and 1972 for repeated violations of the marijuana control laws.

¹⁶ Kyōto-fu eisei-bu yakumu-ka, *Taima ‘fu’ genkakuzai LSD* [internal document], 16 July 1970, p. 7.

Pharmaceutical Affairs Bureau over the decade of the 1960s and authored a series of publications setting out the challenges and objectives of fighting the “drug menace” (*mayaku-ka*). In his first work, *A Tale of Narcotics*, Kuma makes the generalization that illicit users of drugs “all have in common a poor ability to control their impulsive desires.” The stimulation from drugs, he writes, “is a perverted and addictive sensation of pleasure.”¹⁷ In his next book, *The Challenge Toward Drugs*, published in 1966, he constructs a periodization of postwar drug abuse designed to tout the success of his efforts: after overcoming a period of methamphetamine abuse (1946-1954) and another of heroin abuse (1955-1962), from 1963 onward, he claimed, Japan had entered the “period of eliminating the narcotics menace.”¹⁸ Flamboyant drug use would be punished with exaggerated police mobilization.¹⁹ If *Hair* was to represent a new paradigm of art-as-politics, it would have to break through a powerful public health bureaucracy and legions of “narcotics G-men” in order to take hold. And yet the juridical targeting of drug users as pursuing the *wrong* kind of pleasure substantiated the sociopolitical threat drugs posed toward normative values.

Nonetheless, drug intoxication was largely decoupled from the realm of political discourse and the authors of intoxication fiction in this study likewise distance themselves from engaging in “politics” proper. Odagiri Hideo inaugurated the

¹⁷ Kuma Rakuya, *Mayaku monogatari* (Tokyo: Inoue Shobô, 1960), pp. 25-26.

¹⁸ Kuma Rakuya, *Mayaku e no chôsen* (Tokyo: Gendai Shobô, 1966), pp. 218-228. Although Kuma is careful in distinguishing between different classes of drugs, his typology of users and their motivations transcends specific substances. His book lays out statistics to identify “addicts” — there is no explanation of the difference between a user and an addict (*chûdokusha*) — according to gender, age, and nationality, illustrating the diversity of the drug-using population while underscoring the message that no one was exempt from the lure of drugs. Anecdotal narratives about drug-related crimes in Kuma’s texts disproportionately focused on black U.S. soldiers, jazz musicians, Chinese and Korean smugglers, and non-Japanese nude dancers.

¹⁹ A chart of smuggling arrests from the 1949 through the mid-1960s shows that some arrests were based on as little as a single gram of opium. Kuma, *Mayaku e no chôsen*, pp. 232-238. In September 1976, news reports touted the “ambush of a hippie nest.” Fifty members of the narcotics-busting National Police Community Safety second division stormed an apartment in a quiet Tokyo neighborhood, searched sixteen rooms occupied by foreigners, and made three arrests. For all of their efforts, they netted only five grams of marijuana and trace amounts of methamphetamine. “Kagiri naku ranzatsu ni chikai heya: hippii no su kyûshô” *Yomiuri shinbun* (*yûkan*) 28 September 1976, p.10. The newspaper article, sensationally titled “Almost endlessly untidy room” (parodying Murakami’s novella title), does not address this incongruity.

designation “inward-looking generation” (*naikô no sedai*) for a group of writers active in the late 1960s and early 1970s whom he claimed had “escaped into their ‘selves’” and turned their backs on progressive postwar “ideology.”²⁰ Karatani Kôjin responded to claims that literature had “degenerated” because of its apparent disengagement with broader sociopolitical concerns, claiming that writers stopped mixing politics and literature because “politics (*seiji*) had come to be associated narrowly with the Communist Party and revolutionary movements.”²¹ I do not view the interiority in fiction that emerges through the trope of drug intoxication as apolitical or anti-social, but rather as an abstract site that offers rigorous contestation of contemporary values. Writers constructed intoxicated interiority as a polyvalent site on which to play out ambiguities: those of the individual’s place in society, of the center’s hold on the margins, and of the normative circumscription of acceptable pleasure. The politics represented were not the stuff of attention-grabbing headlines. Movement politics, in any case, were in many ways about demanding a greater stake in dominant culture through the recognition, validation, and incorporation of certain disenfranchised groups.²² The fiction I analyze instead encompasses a politics of self-marginalization, of carving out a space that is

²⁰ Odagiri Hideo, “Mada to mô to: manshû jihen kara 40-nen no bungaku no mondai” *Tôkyô shinbun (yûkan)* 23 March 1971, p. 8. Odagiri also cites critic Matsubara Shin’ichi as decrying that “literature of *engagement* was disappearing,” using the French pronunciation (*angaajuman*) to refer to Jean-Paul Sartre’s term for social and political participation. The *naikô no sedai* was associated with fiction writers who were businessmen and academics and who had attended elite universities. For the most part, these authors did not derive their livelihood from fiction writing. Furui Yoshikichi, Gotô Meisei, Kuroi Senji, Takai Yûichi, Sakagami Hiroshi and Ogawa Kunio are commonly cited names. Ôba Minako and Tomioka Taeko are sometimes included among this male-dominated group, and Mori Makiko (see Chapter Two) was sometimes lumped in because of her interiority-centered writing around the same time, but the overwhelming majority of published discussions (*taidan*) about this group in the almost forty years since Odagiri’s statement focus on fiction by men.

²¹ Karatani Kôjin, “Heijô no basho de no bungaku” *Tôkyô shinbun (yûkan)* 17 May 1973, p. 4. Student protests on over a hundred campuses across the country had escalated into violent confrontations with riot police. The failure of protests to substantively bring about education reform, to prevent American nuclear submarines from docking at bases in Japan, or to block renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 1970, a symbol of Japan’s complicity in what was seen as American neo-imperialism, led to increasingly violent left-wing student activism characterized by in-fighting and inter-factional attacks (“*uchi-geba*”). After the Red Army lynching of more than a dozen of its own members and a televised shoot-out with police in 1972, New Left politics in Japan were severely marginalized.

²² These included women’s liberation (*ûman-ribu*) groups, with the first Japanese conference on the subject held in November 1970 in Tokyo; an escalation of the rhetoric of “liberation” for the *buraku* outcasts; and liberation for Okinawans protesting the continued U.S. occupation of the islands (“returned” to Japan in May 1972).

expressly peripheral because of a disillusionment or disaffection not just with the imagined contemporary social order, but with the normative power accorded to any central authority.

The primary points of analysis in my research involve how each of the authors represents drug use to explore the linguistic, social, and cultural foundations of narrating-experiencing subjects and how those subjects are made legible vis-à-vis the social institutions they encounter. Although I position the texts amid the contemporary critical discourses they engage, my analytical focus veers away from the historical positioning and focuses on the deployment of language. That makes this largely a project of *reading*, of seeking to uncover the ways in which writing and reading practices problematize the “I” at the center of these texts. I read for *jouissance* in order to elucidate that which might cause discomfort and spill over in particular linguistic practices that refuse to repress vital ambiguities.

There is a nostalgic sentiment underlying this project, a sense of loss deriving from my desire to recover idealism I cannot find in the present. Conducting research on the turbulent decades after World War II in Japan placed me in confrontation with the sense that, between then and now, words have lost their magical power to inspire political and social change as they once did. I sought out a fantasy narrative of affective *jouissance* in which artistic representation served as a site of empowerment for political resistance in ways no longer (imagined) possible. I attach this nostalgia to literature because my longing is accompanied by a sense that words once had import, had highly charged and thus consequential meaning, and yet no longer do. Susan Stewart theorizes nostalgia as a rehashing of this dilemma, as “the repetition that mourns the inauthenticity of all representation.”²³ As I write, I *perform* my own belief that words can signify, that they

²³ From Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), quoted in John Frow, “Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia” *October* 57 (Summer 1991), p. 136. This nostalgia initially blinded me to a misreading of

can be consequential, and that the careful selection and arrangement (exclusion and manipulation) of them serve as an investment in critical inquiry. *But could my language serve revolution?* My sense of loss arises out of the sheer absurdity of posing such a question in the present. And so my project interrogates intoxication as a potential site of resistance because I believe that such a site is now only available through a reading of prior representations. In looking to the past, I dig into texts that flaunt intoxication as that which destabilizes the real, the true, the sacred, or the comfortably content. I try to recover how these texts engage in signifying practices that can deliver to readers a toxic critique of the values that make language meaningful in the first place.

The literary history of intoxication suggests that words were once assigned greater import. Once it was deemed necessary to prepend drug-related writing with a statement that touted the dangerous potential for representations to adversely affect readers.

Marcus Boon suggests that books dealing with/in drugs often came with a warning to the reader because of the topic's association with social deviance:

The discourse of the obscene lingers around drug books: a discourse of voyeurism, of a pleasure taken in other people's experiences, leading to inevitable moral corruption; of exhibitionism, of narcissistic displays of transgression, flaunted before the general public, so as to exploit its cravings for sensation.²⁴

These warnings sought to enclose the text within a safety net — a hermetic hermeneutic — and help the reader identify right from wrong, to satisfy and sublimate deviant “cravings” by fulfilling them within a moralistic framework. I suspect that such warnings nominally aimed to limit the dangerous effects of certain reading practices —not to protect the reader from harm so much as to protect morals from being questioned. If writing intoxication opens up a space for critique, then entering that space might be fraught with danger. Reading intoxication might threaten to remove us from what we

synchronic discourses as inherently contiguous. Stewart recognizes my iteration of nostalgia as “hostile to history and its invisible origins, and yet longing for an impossibly pure context of lived experience at a place of origin...”

²⁴ Marcus Boon, *The Road of Excess: A History of Writers on Drugs* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 1-2.

know and guide us toward what refuses to make itself known — through repression or censorship. Reading a text for intoxication means overcoming a socialization into language, particularly a socialization that insists on the correspondences between words and things, between language and some sort of reality reflected therein. In such a practice of reading, for *jouissance*, the toxic ambiguity seeps out of the text and into the reading subject, who may very well unravel in the process.

I look to Julia Kristeva and her 1974 doctoral thesis *Revolution in Poetic Language* to help me consider the narrative practices through which texts use the trope of drugs to construct characters as problematic subjects. Kristeva's theory of signifying practice complicates Jacques Lacan's theories of language acquisition which hold the phallus as *ur*-signifier by linking signification to a pre-Oedipal attachment to the body of the mother. By proposing that every utterance harbors traces of repressed drives and pre-subjective rhythms, Kristeva calls attention to the potential to deploy language *in excess* of "socially established signifying practices."²⁵

Kristeva modified Lévi-Strauss's presumption that signification involves a positioning of the subject that requires a "break" between subject and object. In her theorization, the subject is forever fraught by that break and continues to carry kernels of pre-subjective drives that recognize no boundaries and seek only *jouissance*. Kristeva describes the articulation of these drives as the "semiotic" process, a constitutive part of the process of signification that disrupts and transgresses socially legible signs, which occupy what she refers to as the "symbolic." The semiotic appears in indeterminate sounds and energies that must be repressed in order for an infant in the mirror stage to enter the symbolic order as a coherent subject. The semiotic can also be described as a process of "negativity" that inhabits every utterance and keeps it in flux by provisionally destabilizing the links between signifier and signified. In short, semiotic expression calls

²⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* [1974], trans. by Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 16.

attention to the manner in which exclusively symbolic readings of a text repress *jouissance* by seeking out stable meanings circumscribed by normative social values.

Semiotic processes are articulated in the space of the “chora,” a term Kristeva borrowed from Plato to signify an enclosed space such as the womb. The chora is a mysterious designation, where linguistic representations are accountable to an inherent ambiguity in the use of signifiers to construct meaning. The chora designates a space that permits a *tentatively generated* position from which instincts and drives “transgress representation, memory, [and] the sign.”²⁶ It is a paradoxical site for interrogating the instabilities of language, since the critique must be performed and explicated via the same process of representation under critique. Kristeva thus claims it is a contingent space only made manifest in “avant-garde” artistic works.

Where Kristeva pursues a form of linguistic practice that may evoke “revolution,” my project is more grounded in the textual practices of constructing alternate iterations of literary subjects. My analysis of fictional texts demonstrates that drug intoxication itself does not guarantee an articulation of the repressed semiotic processes in language. However, due to the ambiguities that arise in representing an intoxicated state, tropes of drug use can be deployed instrumentally to invoke the semiotic chora, to direct the narration back onto questions of *what kind of subject* is being narrated. As representation, intoxication can be likened to psychic drives that construct and yet exceed the coherent body in discourse. Kristeva’s theory propounds

that “drives” are always already ambiguous, simultaneously assimilating and destructive; this dualism ... makes the semiotized body a place of permanent scission. ... This is to say that the semiotic *chora* is no more than the place where the subject is both generated and negated, the place where his unity succumbs before the process of charges and stases that produce him.²⁷

Semiotic processes leave the body gaping and ambiguous. Symbolic repression of semiotic drives effaces the pre-subjective disunity of the body and naturalizes the subject

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

as continuous within an *a priori* self-contained mind-body form. The representation of intoxication can loosen the subject's attachment to a discursively coherent body by distorting its relationship to space and time, by multiplying and criss-crossing its sensory receptors, or by re-conceptualizing its awareness of being suspended between life and death. Whether used to escape reality or to create a better version of it, the trope of intoxication highlights the ambiguities and contingencies of any linguistically constructed reality and, furthermore, of the signifiers used to designate the subjects that populate it.

Yet there is still the problem of *reading* intoxication. If ambiguity is not legible, if it suffers from repression, or if no readers feel its pull, then intoxication remains the unknown Other. Where sobriety is the norm, intoxication represents only fakery and fantasy. Alternately, where ambiguity reigns, where relativism and simulation pervade, intoxication may serve to highlight just one of many competing realities. Thus reading a text for intoxication requires a historically specific negotiation between practices of writing and reading. It relies on certain social assumptions about language and meaning that can be perverted strategically. I ask what it means for a reader to consume a representation of drug intoxication. Under some conditions, the reader will suppress the ambiguities and digest the representation with little adverse effect. Under other conditions, however, the semiotic drives will encroach upon the reader and invite her or him to choke on the text. The semiotic calls attention to the way language is encoded and decoded, and when a reader is confronted with a text demonstrating that language cannot just be a transparent vehicle for meaning, the representation of intoxication produces toxic results. For by the time the reader figures out that the irrepressible textual ambiguity is actually symptomatic of a sprawling regime of naturalized linguistic determinism, and that ambiguity imbues our entire culture as a narcotic, the drugs have already taken effect and there is no turning back.

In the analyses that follow, I read fiction as a consumer under the influence. In Chapters Two and Three I engage in close readings of texts that use the trope of intoxication to point to semiotic expression. In these two texts, language is interrogated as a problematic medium for constituting the subject. Drugs ingested by the protagonists foreground their respective positions at the imagined peripheries of a society, from which they stare back critically at an equally imagined center. These positions highlight ambiguity as a toxic site of critique.

The narrations of both texts deploys the trope of drug effects to violently disrupt any sense of continuity or community among people by refusing the conditions of a shared language through which that community is constructed and sustained. However they differ greatly in their depiction of the body. In “The Yellow Prostitute,” the body is a source of conflict between the individual and society but is largely unrepresented in the text. It is the source of ambiguity in that the protagonist acknowledges only its needs and drives, whereas the rest of society reads it as something dangerous in need of control. In “Gray Coca-Cola,” the body is foregrounded as a site upon which signifying processes wreak havoc. Although mapped onto a social geography of center and periphery, the conflict is the protagonist’s own inner turmoil, played out in the cycle of incorporation and expulsion of material and immaterial substances into and out of his inchoate body.

In Chapter Four, I analyze Murakami Ryû’s *Almost Transparent Blue*, in which the narrative focalization is stable and subjects are constructed through essential identities. By constructing other characters as a series of reified Others, the protagonist coheres into a stable self. The text invites an entirely symbolic reading, which helped it to create scandal in the very representation of illicit drug use and polymorphous sexual acts. Its exhibitionism is remorseless and aestheticized, and this posture of honesty and beauty proved appealing. The text was an unmitigated commercial success and propelled the author to lasting celebrity status.

In Chapter Five, I look at Numa Shôzô's *Domesticated Yapoo*, a text that invests heavily in symbolic language but manifests its repression of semiotic drives openly through humor and irony. The primary goal of this text is to convert ambiguous semiotic elements into a meticulous symbolic system, making legible those drives that might otherwise be repressed. The text is generically hybrid and linguistically heteroglossic and well-suited to this inversion of the repressive function of symbolic language. It is my delight, then, to reveal that the coherence of symbolic language in this last text I analyze is predicated on a civilization-wide addiction to various narcotic substances. It goes to show that drugs are everywhere.

Chapter Two

Avoiding the Subject: “The Yellow Prostitute” and Narrating from the Margin

No one could *understand* the point of “The Yellow Prostitute,”²⁸ the fourth of Mori Makiko’s fictional stories to be nominated for an Akutagawa Prize. The narrative was not constructed around an engaging plot, or characters facing conflicts, or the contentious social and political issues of the day. It was, as one critic noted, “a problem of what might be interesting about writing this stuff.”²⁹ In this chapter, I present my own reading of TYP, in part to uncover why the text seemed so promising and nonetheless met with such resistance from critics and senior authors. Clearly the text did not meet the expectations of many who gave up on reading it, but it also proved a daunting challenge to those who tried to figure out what Mori’s story *meant*. I suggest that the text is fundamentally unsettling to anyone who tries to understand it by parsing it as a linear narrative. TYP requires an active reading *against understanding* to uncover the ways in which the reader is positioned by the text.

I am led to this conclusion by the counterintuitive method of Othering in the text. Rather than demonstrate directly how the center constructs the periphery as Other, the narrative focalized through a marginal protagonist instead “others” the normative

²⁸ Mori Makiko, “Kiiroi shôfu” *Bungakukai* 25:6 (June 1971), pp. 10-79 (hereafter “TYP”). References to the text are indicated by page number in parentheses. The story was reprinted with three others in *Kiiroi shôfu* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjû, 1971) and appeared with two dozen other authors in Kôdansha’s anthology of “selected literature” for the year 1972 (Nihon bungei kyôkai, ed. *Bungaku senshû* vol. 37). The Akutagawa Prize, established in 1935 by the magazine *Bungei shunjû*, is awarded semiannually to a medium-length fictional work written by an up-and-coming author. It is considered the most prestigious prize for serious literature in Japan. (Refer to Chapter Four for more on this prize.)

²⁹ Akiyama Shun et al, “Wakaranai shôsetsu” *Waseda bungaku dai-7-ji* 4:1 (January 1972), p. 111.

center. No one else is portrayed as acting like the protagonist, Mako,³⁰ and the text forecloses the possibility of identification with her because she refuses to be identified. Other characters — I refer to them as “the Others” — are much easier to understand, though depicted as monolithically unfriendly and attached to a way of thinking, of performing their own social roles in society, so thoroughly naturalized that they cannot even fathom Mako’s position. As readers, we view the story through the lens of the protagonist, whose values clash with those of a set of punitive, disciplinary institutions run by people who perform their work dutifully. These people do not come off looking particularly good, but there is nothing remarkable about their behavior. They are petty and hostile toward Mako and pass judgment on her that may or may not be deserved. Mako comes off looking even worse; rather than confront these people, she acts as though nothing they say or do has any significance at all. Her behavior does not appear to obey any logic or have any plausible objectives. The only way to “understand” what she does, within the confines of the text, is to take on the position of the Others.

This is exacerbated by the obscure way in which the narrative is focalized. Everything is viewed through Mako, but there is a stark contrast between how the other characters talk about her — we only get their perspective from quoted dialogue — and how the narration explains her behavior. The Others see her as a wayward figure in need of help, as someone who flouts the law and requires the guidance of the social welfare state. She, it seems to them, just wants to continue her life of wandering the city and engaging in unrestrained sex. This appears to be a plausible reading of the story, as well, so long as the reader accepts the Others’ portrayal of Mako. However, scattered throughout the narration are hints that Mako has unique ways of performing her life and forging relationships with the world around her, and there is no way to reconcile her distinctive way of seeing the world with that of the Others. The text thus refuses to be *understood*

³⁰ “Mako” is the reading I have settled on for the *kanji* characters that comprise the protagonist’s name, which could alternately be pronounced Shinko or Makotoko (or something else completely).

within the context of contemporary society but rather must be *actively read against* the various layers of rules and codes that naturalize social norms.

I identify two major discourses across which Mori is writing. The first involves the slogan of “rehabilitating humanity” (*ningen kaifuku*), a pervasive post-high-growth era phrase. This discourse emerges as a form of humanistic self-reflection in the wake of Japan’s rapid economic expansion. Various institutions recognized that the mounting social and environmental tolls of industrialization and urbanization had negative ramifications for individual citizens and took up the cause of mending these problems. The many factors that contributed to lifestyle changes, it was generally theorized, had led to an “alienation” (*sogai*) of people from common goals. The task for the government, for schools, and for labor organizations was thus to help people balance their individuality and their solidarity with the communal good. The discourse wavers between a nostalgia for a somehow “lost” humanity and a belief that the same “managed society” that brought about record-breaking economic growth should thereafter turn its attention to constructing the appropriate type of citizen for this new era.³¹

Mori disdains the resulting discourse of “rehabilitation” for taking for granted the codification of norms in the process of (re)constructing “humanity.” Critic Fukagawa Haruko, in a review of TYP, writes that

the author has stripped away from Mako every foundation upon which one can stand as a human being (*ningen*), has liberated her from family and work and those complexities that interweave to form a human society of humanistic relations, and set the conditions beyond subjection to social custom and moral control.³²

Fukagawa points to Mori as the creator of a character who rejects the expectations of membership in contemporary society. Rather than point out the unique type of “human

³¹ For example, a bureaucrat in the Economic Planning Agency summarizes the October 1969 “Survey on Examining the Lives of Citizens” as calling for policies supporting “ideal communities” that can “adapt to various changes that have come with economic growth and development to ensure a sound life for its citizens.” Mitsui Tsutomu, “Comyuniti: seikatsu no ba ni okeru ningensei no kaifuku” *Jichi kenkyû* 46:1 (January 1970), p. 28. “The lives of citizens” (*kokumin seikatsu*) includes consideration of the quality of everyday life but also, tellingly, “consumer affairs.”

³² Fukagawa Haruko, “Mori Makiko ‘Kiroyi shôfu’ no Mako” *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 41:11 (September 1976), p. 148.

being” Mori is portraying, Fukagawa depicts Mako as a character whose social dimensions have been “stripped” away. It is more useful, however, to see Mako as a character whose lack of social relations demonstrates the constructedness of “*ningen*” and its naturalization in social discourses. Mako lives apart from society and the meanings and values it constructs as a “foundation,” so her existence contests the standards by which one is considered “human.” The existentialist ideology behind portraying such a character is evident in Mori’s fictional texts and critical writing, many of which critique state-imposed normativity by portraying it as a means of further marginalizing society’s dissident elements. In TYP, attempts to “rehabilitate” Mako are depicted as disingenuous at best, characterized by institutions that entice the protagonist to be “free” and coerce her to behave “properly” at the same time.

Mori also engages the concept of “liberation” in TYP with a radical critique that contrasts subtly with Hamano Yasuhiro’s manifesto for a new fashion-centered sociopolitical paradigm.³³ Both Mori and Hamano focus on the idea of the “flow” as a destabilizing of fixed meanings and categories, but their objectives are noticeably different. Hamano’s article focuses on the “liberation” of sex and drug use as means of harnessing desire and converting creativity into the ultimate political act, on using the power of the nascent “information society” to overcome entrenched social codes, and on becoming a “transsexual” society in which gender difference loses meaning. Hamano explicitly discusses replacing “old” culture with a new culture based in fashion, in which one must accept the signifiers of meaning as constantly in flux. However, Hamano’s idea ultimately replicates the system of inclusion and exclusion that repels Mori, merely dispersing the production of values onto youth culture instead of maintaining the unspoken status quo.

³³ Hamano Yasuhiro, “Kyôshin o koete: jiga kaihô no jidai” *Bijutsu techô* 325 (March 1970), pp. 10-41.

“The Yellow Prostitute” presents a somewhat different take on human liberation, communal society, and the potentialities of unrestrained sex and drug use. Mori’s text dabbles in existential nihilism when it depicts human existence as little more than a trajectory toward death along an “endless, great flow” (71), denying any essence to humanity or meaning to life. TYP represents all of existence along this “flow,” in a world in which all meanings and values are inherently unstable, and suggests that the surrounding society represses this instability through its normative policies and punitive institutions. In contrast to Hamano’s utopian communalism, TYP emphasizes the commitment to solitude required for absolute liberty. The text eschews all of the manifestations of culture as potentially oppressive and seeks “liberation” in the primacy of individual drives rather than in communal desire, no matter how ad hoc. Sex and drug use become value-free actions rather than creative political statements; to derive meaning from them, as Hamano proposes, would bind Mori’s protagonist to a social world for which she has no need and from which she derives no meaning.

The protagonist’s complete dissociation from society makes TYP a difficult read. Mako follows the cues of an obscure and unclassifiable force called the “*taidô*” (fetal movement), which only she perceives. The *taidô* forces its way into the text’s landscape whenever Mako needs to break her ties with a social context. I link this force to Julia Kristeva’s theory of signification, where the *taidô*, like the semiotic, disrupts accepted linguistic practices and “represents the flow of *jouissance* to language.”³⁴ Kristeva’s theory offers a useful conceptual framework in which to explicate Mori’s textual praxis. Rather than claiming that the theory itself produces meaning in the text, I instead use the theory to highlight the process by which TYP makes some of its own meanings legible and others hidden or ambiguous.

Mako’s impulses direct her toward a *jouissance* that belies, rather than constructs, a

³⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* [1974], trans. by Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 79.

concept of social value. TYP represents liberation as an individual's transcendentally ambiguous performance, whereby a liberated individual is necessarily distanced from cultural currents, whether hegemonic or oppositional. In the text's portrayal of this distancing — this passive, ambivalent negativity with respect to the status quo — the center will always hold strong. The tension in the text thus contrasts between the marginal protagonist's demand for unbounded *jouissance* and the center's need to construct a margin, populated by figures like Mako, to affirm the values that legitimize social control.

READING "THE YELLOW PROSTITUTE"

Though critics understandably declaim it a hard-to-read text, TYP has a very straightforward framework. The text is split into three sections, each section set in a different location. The story is presented in free indirect style, focalized through Mako, and is but a random few days of her peripatetic life. There is no discernable plot, and the narrative advances along its oblique trajectory via a series of interactions between Mako and a wide variety of partially sketched characters.

The story begins in a charity hospital in the Tokyo neighborhood of Shinagawa, where Mako is taken after swallowing a bottle of sleeping medicine. Mako awakes in a pool of sweat in a hospital bed — a simulated rebirth that introduces the protagonist *in medias res*. She is struggling to lift her body from the bed as the sweat prevents her from seeing her environs clearly. She is handed from the medical authorities to the police and then to the social welfare system, but takes off on her own. On the random advice of a taxi driver, Mako hops a train to his birthplace, a resort island in the northeast region of Japan. On the train, Mako sits next to two men who are taking their resistant grandmother to live with them in the north, though the old woman insists that she will

return to her island birthplace to die. Reaching her destination, Mako encounters a variety of characters as well as some suspicion: a single young woman from Tokyo was likely to tempt one of the innocent island men to follow her off of the island never to be seen again. Mako is enlisted to help the islanders watch out for the same old woman she met on the train, who has reportedly fled her grandsons' home and is planning to return to the island to commit suicide. When the old woman appears, Mako instead helps her find rocks to put in her sleeves and watches as the woman disappears into the water. Mako is arrested for assisting in the old woman's suicide and taken to a detention center on the mainland, where the last section takes place. There she is ostracized by her cellmates, hazed by the female wardens, and interrogated futilely by two male officers who cannot figure her out. Then the story just comes to a halt, ending without an ending. No conflicts are resolved and characters don't develop over the course of the text, leaving everything suspended in ambiguity.

Plot is not the primary motivation of the narrative. TYP is, rather, a text that performs its meaning as a narrative operation. This is achieved by presenting a contrastive perspective through the narrated lens of the protagonist, which forces the reader to confront his or her estrangement from the protagonist's worldview. Such estrangement targets the reader's otherwise default alignment with the societal institutions that seek to entrap her. The textual performance underscores how Mako eludes a stable subject position by instinctually ignoring normative social codes. Through Mako, the text refracts the identifications involved in performing life as a normative subject, those performances of identity that are naturalized by an iterative adherence to particular signifying practices, including the law. Previous critics have focused on "understanding" the text, selecting notable passages and parsing them or trying to figure out what they add up to signify. In this analysis, I am more interested in how the text performs, how it produces meaning by positioning the protagonist vis-à-vis the reader,

and how it forges a social critique of the same representational mode it is invested in.

Mori does not write in the broad language of social movements at all, restricting her writing to the highly subjective perceptions of her protagonist. Her writing blurs the visual details of the physical setting of the narrative and instead focuses on an internal landscape projected outward. As a result, Mori's protagonists focus almost entirely on the materiality of their existence rather than its construction within historical and social discourses.

Among her fictional works, *TYP* is the only one that uses the trope of drugs to isolate this perceptual solitude and carve out a space of contrastive difference, a marginal space that is antipathetic to society's layers of codes. The protagonist constructs her life on a day-to-day basis within this space, though we as readers only witness a few days of it. Drugs are deployed not for revolutionary ends but to call attention to the protagonist's marginality. Mako receives some sleeping medicine and consumes it continuously until she loses consciousness. The drug serves as an isolated irruption into her repetitive life but lingers on in the records of the police and social welfare authorities. After the toxicity of the overdose wears off, its impact persists in the focalization; the drug-effect lingers in the hallucinatory sensations of the protagonist, whose world is ordered by an abstract space only she can perceive. Mako's excessive ingestion of a drug is the precipitating event leading to the text's representation of this excerpt of her life at the margins, where banishing normative values from her consciousness permits her to find harmony with her own existence.

I will trace how Mori constructs the protagonist in *TYP* out of an ideal of liberation that leaves no space for political solidarity or coherent identification. Mako is a character completely devoid of origins or attachments and thus resists subjection to any communal regime. She has a unique self-consciousness that registers her life as merely a series of ad hoc performances that ultimately amount to nothing. Once the elements of the

performance disperse, the very “stage” upon which they were performed self-destructs.

Mako’s narrated thoughts signal this the morning after the opening scene:

I just have to leave, she thought. The previous night’s stage had completely collapsed and no longer remained in the room in which it had ended. (24)

That is, Mako’s life, composed of these iterated performances on ever-changing “stages,” does not accumulate into what would otherwise result in “identity.”³⁵ Her relationship to the world negates the features of identity that society has thoroughly naturalized. Her cyclical existence does not revolve around family, regional, or national identification, and neither does she participate in the burgeoning consumerism of the contemporary “information society” (*jôhô shakai*) touted by Hamano as the future wellspring of the revolutionary “new culture.”³⁶ Without permanent links to the public-private spheres of home and work, she transcends the boundaries that constrain — even if unconsciously — the masses of people among whom she walks. As readers, we are never permitted to identify with her because she doesn’t identify herself as more than a disconnected “self” (*jibun*), a gendered body that resists signification as it flows inexorably toward death. Her ability to avoid any lasting connection that might ensnare her in communal values and categories allows her to represent a radical individualism free from all social conflict.

Mako’s passive resistance to identifying with the features of the society that surrounds her produces ambiguity in any attempts to define her. For example, when she visits an inn, she is required to provide information about herself on the registration form. The innkeeper patiently presses Mako for information that the state demands he collect about his guests:

³⁵ I use “identity” in the sense that Judith Butler critiques the presumption of a binary gender identity: “Identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results.” *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* [1990] (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 25.

³⁶ Hamano is entirely savvy about the pervasiveness of consumer culture and the potential power in harnessing an information revolution. His “revolutionary” argument is focused on changing the material bases within a fashion-oriented capitalist society to counter the prohibitive nature of social mores. Mori implicitly rejects this model of social revolution by directing her text to undermine the very structure of a language that enables oppression. See Chapter 2 in Hamano Yasuhiro, “Fasshon-ka jidai: kotei gainen no shûen” *Fasshon-ka shakai* (Tokyo: Bijinesu-sha, 1970), pp. 27-34.

“By the way, what’s your job?”

“.....”

“This is all that’s left for you to fill in. What might your occupation be?”

“Please decide for me.”

“We have no idea. This is about you, right?”

Up to this point, whenever she was asked for her occupation, Mako had the person asking decide for her. That was the easiest method of getting them to accept her. “Please decide for me.” (40)

Mako’s reticence makes little sense to the innkeeper, who eventually writes down the generic job title “office worker” on the form. Mako courts this ambiguity with her reticence. Does she remain silent because she does not really have an occupation, because she “just exists — that’s all” (15)? Is it because one does not speak of the term “prostitute” (*shôfu*) as an “occupation” (*shokugyô*)? In spite of the title, Mako performs the role of “prostitute” ambiguously. The term reflects the surrounding society’s values rather than explaining the unique logic driving Mako’s actions. This ambiguity surrounding Mako inundates the text, extending as well to any critical attempts to make sense of the story.

In place of any direct identification of or with the protagonist, I find it useful to explore the critical operations of the text through its repeated deployment of ambiguity and contrast. Because the focalization through Mako is so unreliable, information about her must be gleaned from a triangulated construction. The reader’s understanding of events is triangulated between Mako’s perceptions and the conversations, as she filters them, of other characters. This ambiguity arises because readers are left to parse between the sparse accounts in the narration and the unsympathetic dialogue. For example, when it comes to light that Mako has falsified a form for the guarantor for her apartment — providing an address that, the police officer suggests, would place the home of the person vouching for her in Tokyo Bay — there are two explanations. One explanation emerges in the quoted dialogue. Her lie confirms her marginality to the police officer and social worker, who are trying to find someone who will take custody of Mako. “‘This kind of woman exists, I guess.’ The officer’s laughing voice passed by her ear” (20-21). Mako is portrayed by the officer as a “type” of woman, one whose behavior

is outside of normal expectations. The other is offered by the narrator: that Mako simply filled in false information as a means to an end because she does not believe in the lasting significance, the authority, of written words. (This seems specious at first but turns out to be a crucial ideological stand for the protagonist.) By suggesting oppressive elements in the signifying practices of written representation, the ambiguity created in the gap between these two explanations, rehashed in numerous permutations, critiques the methods that contemporary society uses to establish and enforce its rules.

Instead, Mako abides by her own signifying practices, which lead her into repeated conflicts with characters in the text (no less than with readers of the text). One might think that Mako is perpetually hallucinating; her perceptions often are not tied to anything experienced by the people around her. At other times, Mako internalizes minute details emerging out of the mundane sounds of the city – raindrops on the pavement, the zoom of traffic, people’s footsteps – as forces that envelop her reality. These are often superimposed upon a mobile, abstract space that rises from a distance and violently and noisily flushes away all details, leaving only the forms of things in its wake. This space, which also constructs a kind of subjective perceptual force, is referred to using the term “*taidô*” (fetal movement), but has no clear relationship to fetuses or their movements. The *taidô*, untranslatable and unparsable in the text, appears over fifty times and divides the narrative between the familiar and the estranging.

To illustrate the mysterious role of the *taidô*, I cite an example from the first section of the text, when Mako decides to take off from the hospital and set out on her own again.

Coming upon a mark that indicated an “exit” and its direction, Mako turned a corner in the hallway. She felt as though she were swimming in the middle of a *taidô* that sounded like the rumbling of the earth.

When she got to the lobby, the door heading out into the town opened on its own. Pushed out along with the roaring sound, Mako exited to the street. The same roaring noise was flowing out there, as well. (24-25)

The *taidô* produces a sound that is palpable to Mako but not to other characters.

Whether the sensory cognitions linked to the *taidô* are the result of Mako's drug use or are just effectively hallucinatory in quality — subjective sensations that do not have any connection to external stimuli — the persistently subjective focalization prevents any differentiation between exogenous perception and endogenous hallucination. In the final section of this chapter, I will demonstrate how the *taidô* is deployed in the text to mark Mako's primary mode of signification in opposition to the Others' model of representation.

TYP thus offers a dialectical approach to storytelling that intersperses the semiotic and the symbolic. The inscrutable semiotic elements that transgress straightforward symbolic signification form the basis for a critique of modern society and the layers of customs and codes that alienate people from their basic drives. The text presents two perspectives on each situation and forces the reader to evaluate the conflict with a limited amount of information. From one perspective — what I characterize as “symbolic” or socially legible — Mako's behavior requires censure. Sleeping with men makes her a “prostitute.” The overdose makes her an object of the welfare state. Showing up alone and without luggage in a tourist resort in the off-season makes her a suspicious character to the locals. Measured by conversations with those she encounters, Mako's actions are incomprehensible. From Mako's point of view, however, actions do not retain any value or significance once they have happened. I characterize this transgression of meaning as part of the story belonging to the “semiotic.” Mako's perceptions appear as an undulating cycle of day and night; relationships are forged and broken; her surroundings stabilize and then quickly unravel. Her life does not accumulate meaning over time, and thus her capricious behavior is impossible for others to understand. This unintelligibility comes to a head when she is confronted by the police, the guardians of the symbolic order. The police represent the interests of state and society and in that role seek to tether Mako to laws and norms. In so doing, they seek to make Mako a legible

subject, constructing her — as a marginal yet coherent citizen — according to a logocentric system she cannot avow.

The result is an unsettling story that demands reading as what Roland Barthes terms the “text of *jouissance*,” a reading that refuses to privilege or reproduce normative discourses.³⁷ Because it is narrated entirely through the perspective of a character who refuses objective reality, TYP leaves the reader with at best an ambiguous orientation toward Mako: Do I acknowledge her freedom from the bonds of communal identity and state subjectivity, her pursuit of unbounded *jouissance*, her liberty from all of those things that separate us from some essential “humanity”? Or do I support society’s need to care for and watch over this woman who fails to respect the customs and laws that order modern civilization? My goal in analyzing the text is to read into the ambiguity that drives the narrative and to view the text’s dialectical construction as a critical point of entry.

THE AUTHOR AND THE CRITICAL MILIEU

Mori Makiko was known for creating a series of narratives that highlight female protagonists living in a hostile world. These include her debut fictional story, “The Loner” (*Tandokusha*, 1965) as well as other noted stories such as, “Secret Arrangement” (*Mitsuyaku*, 1969), “Departure” (*Tabi-dachi*, 1972), and “The Scarlet Path” (*Ake no michi*, 1976). Mori’s female protagonists inhabit a space from which the author’s critiques of society come into view. The contrast between her protagonists and the unsympathetic Others is drawn starkly. As such, Mori’s characters are socially marginalized, but they also remain free of any longing for the center. These women no longer want to be a part of the society that so castigates them. She uses the term “*ba*” (place) in her critical writing to refer to a special site of writing that is, if not comfortable,

³⁷ Please refer to the introductory chapter for more on Barthes’s depiction of this in *The Pleasure of the Text*.

at least familiar, and her characters tend to devote their energies to cultivating unique *ba* rather than developing across the narratives.³⁸ They find their (similar but respective) places outside of the hierarchies, codes, and restrictions of communal society. Though these characters seem alienated from society, they find a measure of comfort and vitality in their stripped-down perceptual microcosms, an immunity to those problems that only arise when one *cares*.

Broadly speaking, Mori's narratives eschew details that provide a nuanced social context or insight into any of the characters' psychologies or identities. Identities in Mori's texts are either austere constructed or made into a problematic by their notable omission. The protagonists have no identities in a social sense — they exist, they have Being, and they are female.³⁹ The owners of these female bodies recognize their existence outside of the symbolic. In the case of TYP, the protagonist's social identity is temporarily constructed entirely from *without*, that is, by the Others. Social identity is portrayed as a web of connections that regulate people according to the laws of the symbolic; Mako does not create enduring connections and remains apart from this.

Mori (1934-1992), born Matsuura Eiko, grew up in the city of Sakata, a mid-sized port town in northern Japan, as the youngest of three in a landowning household that managed to escape the widespread destruction wrought by the Second World War. However, her father died when she was young and her mother died when Eiko was in her late teens. The parents' deaths precipitated the family's downfall; the assets were

³⁸ Mori writes about this "*ba*" as connected to one's heart/spirit (*kokoro*) but not necessarily a part of "what is normally called 'reality'" ("Zakkan" *Waseda bungaku dai-7-ji* 5:11 (November 1973), pp. 48-51). Elsewhere, she depicts writing as a process that fosters "a place the self can return home to" (*jibun ga kaette ikeru basho*), "a secret place" of strength and solitude (Yoshiyuki Jun'nosuke and Mori Makiko, "Sakka no tatsu basho — 'kaku' to wa donna koto ka" *Bungakukai* 24:9 (September 1970), pp. 190-191). While I do not argue that Mori creates protagonists out of images of herself, I propose that the *ba* constructed in the text stems from Mori's own complicated relationship to signifying practices.

³⁹ The sex-gender essentialism in TYP naturalizes a heterosexual normativity and takes genital sex as pre-symbolic. Kristeva allows that the *chora* may be "ordered" according to "natural or socio-historical constraints such as the biological difference between the sexes or family structure" (*Revolution in Poetic Language*, pp. 26-27), deploying binary sex categories strategically if not universally. As a result, TYP forecloses the possibility of examining the construction of the sex-gender system that gives rise to certain oppressions in favor of deconstructing the entire regime of signifying practice.

dissolved and the siblings dispersed. By age 19, Eiko had made her way elsewhere in Japan but found herself completely alone in the world. The “excruciating pain of nearly a decade of illness” permitted her to “revisit existence in its denuded form.”⁴⁰ She moved to Tokyo and began writing, publishing her first story at age thirty and reinventing herself as Mori Makiko. She describes her own life rather opaquely as an accumulation of experiences that taught her that people in general were disinterested in and disconnected from one another. Disconnection, not surprisingly, serves as a topic for almost all of Mori’s abstract works.

Still, Mori found that she thrived in the vitality and anonymity of the urban center, and her writing represents a measure of strength found only in adamant solitude. Her protagonists survive without social ties and thus experience no pain or shame or displeasure. Mori shields them from having to undergo the pain of the experiences that appear to have led to her own understanding of the world. She accomplishes this by endowing them with an inner life that, however bleakly depicted, immunizes them against the disappointment and rejection that are, she would have us believe, routine aspects of society faced by outsiders. Mori considers as fundamental that “people are on their own” (*ningen wa hitori de aru*), and she repeats this explicitly in essays and thematically in her fiction writing.⁴¹ Mori’s fiction centers on female protagonists whose isolation from the larger world creates a fortress-like space that, no matter how dystopian it looks from the communal, allows them to live, alone, true to their “humanity.”

Mori’s protagonists, Mako among them, present a radical counterargument to the competing theories of *ningen kaifuku* that presume that modern society — urban,

⁴⁰ Mori Makiko, “Tokai no naka no umi-nari” [1973] in *Kaze no fuku machi* (Tokyo: Shûeisha, 1977), pp. 41-42.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41. Similar expressions are found in Mori, “Zakkan,” p. 49 and in Mori Makiko, “Yuki-onna ni natte iku shôjo” *Nami* 14:4 (April 1980), p. 53. The theme also runs throughout Mori’s first published story, “Tandokusha” (The Loner, *Bungakukai*, May 1965). In an interview with mentor Yoshiyuki Jun’nosuke, she mentions that she would like to be more “alone,” amending her use of the word “*sabishii*” (lonely, desolate) to “*hitori*” (Yoshiyuki and Mori, p. 199).

industrial, fragmented, disconnected — can benefit from forging connections between its citizens. Where the discourse of *ningen kaifuku* posits an originary humanity that, corrupted by contemporary society, calls for a restoration of community-based interpersonal relations, TYP constructs a different kind of self, one that, marginalized in a communal context, only achieves completeness by affirming a fundamental solitude. TYP fights against the *ningen kaifuku* proposals that seek to imbricate the individual in some centralized notion of interrelation and mutual dependence. The text portrays the center's efforts to define Mako's self as inherently marginalizing. Mori's mantra that "people are on their own" in the world emerges clearly in Mako's slippery elusion of the burdens of this externally defined self.

Rather than viewing contemporary Tokyo as somehow deficient in opportunities for "human relations," Mori finds in the anonymous urban landscape a license to enjoy her solitude luxuriously.

When the blizzards and the pain ended, I had no place to return to. This relates to not having anything around me that could be revived. But it didn't turn into a sense of solitude or some nostalgia for a place to return home to, nor did it transform into an effort to make those around me direct their attention toward me. Rather, I felt that I had found a place where I could achieve a measure of repose in the countenance of the city. I believe this is because the city — which is generally the object of criticism for its lack of human relations or sense of solidarity in people's daily lives, what with individualism and indifference and so on — matched well with my own internal landscape.⁴²

Precisely those aspects of contemporary life that are "often the object of criticism" she finds compelling. Being alone, she further notes, offers her "the ultimate happiness." She concludes her essay tellingly, noting that if she were to choose to re-engage in social relations, she would have to go against her instincts and *pretend* to accept "the rehabilitation of human relations and community." In her short story "Carcass of a town" (*Zangai no machi*), characters meet in a boardinghouse in a marginal Tokyo neighborhood after a stint at the "human relations rehabilitation center." This "center" is depicted as a jail-like institution situated at a remove from the metropolis, where life is

⁴² Mori Makiko, "Tokai no naka no umi-nari" pp. 42-43.

like “the illusion of being in the middle of an unknown work of art.”⁴³ The “rehabilitation” should ostensibly lead its residents to happiness, but it is poignantly portrayed as an institutional rubric for constructing marginality.⁴⁴ Better to turn one’s back on these human relations, Mori suggests, than to undergo the futile process of this euphemistic “rehabilitation.” The bifurcated subject in TYP echoes this sentiment, distancing the marginal self created by society from the tentatively constituted self that directs the narrative.

Despite its focus on a marginal, indifferent protagonist, TYP did not lack for critical attention. “The Yellow Prostitute” would go on to be a candidate for the semi-annual Akutagawa Prize for the second half of 1971. TYP was the most promising of Mori’s stories nominated to the short list, but no winner was declared the year it was nominated. Mori’s text would be labeled “*kasaku*,” effectively giving it second place with no one in first, and Mori would later receive other literary prizes but never a star-making Akutagawa award. To win, a majority of votes is necessary for a work to receive the Akutagawa Prize, and across the postwar period there are many instances in which no work received the top prize. More than half of the ten-man committee had nothing substantive to utter in response to TYP, and Mori only garnered four votes in the end. Niwa Fumio perhaps best represents the committee’s dilemma when faced with this text: “Whether new or old, a good work is one that can be understood by its readers.”⁴⁵ Even Mori’s supporters on the committee were perplexed by the work and identified aspects that they liked but, faced with “rather strong objections,” could not explicate the work enough to garner it an award. Nakamura Mitsuo described TYP as “the text I had the least resistance toward reading,” but evidently felt that “winning the prize would be

⁴³ Mori Makiko, “Zangai no machi” *Bungakukai* 24:3 (March 1970), p. 221.

⁴⁴ This marginality is marked, to give one example, by a narrative aside stating that most of the residents of the boardinghouse are not even registered at the local ward office, making them invisible non-citizens. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁴⁵ “Akutagawa-shô senpyô” *Bungei shunjû* 49:9 (September 1971), pp.304-305.

impossible for this work.”⁴⁶

Many critics tried to crack TYP in the year following its publication, with a few published articles reaching into the mid-1970s and even the mid-1980s. However, though these studies of the text sought to interpret the mysterious and opaque elements of the story, none could ever satisfactorily conclude *how* the text functions, much less *why*. Critics were frustrated at a female protagonist who did not seem to *be* anyone or *do* anything. Most analyses take for granted each and every aspect I point to as highlighting ambiguity in the text, accepting what I designate as the symbolic as the only “reality” of the text. Most critical writing (disgustedly) fixates on the existentialist influences and nihilistic elements that underscore TYP’s gloom. These critics focus on hermeneutic issues and seek to explicate events in the text within the very social context from which its protagonist is marginalized.

Much of the hand-wringing over TYP seems to lie in a horizon of expectations that implicitly guides criticism. Furuya Kenzô notes that the critics of writers of the so-called “inward-looking generation” (*naikô no sedai*) saw as their task the explanation of difficult works, a process of making intelligible the linguistically and structurally dense writing of their peers.⁴⁷ TYP actively resists this feedback loop. The critical dilemma is most apparent in a three-man review entitled, “Incomprehensible fiction,” in which noted critics take apart the text and argue its merits and limitations in a transcribed dialogue. These critics recognize that the text is “peeling away society” in order to uncover “the essence of life,” however they identify the central flaw as the focus on “a meaningless woman stumbling about.”⁴⁸ In their discussion, they take up many of the remarkable features of TYP — the representation of experience at the level of sensation,

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

⁴⁷ Furuya identifies critics Kawamura Jirô, Akiyama Shun, Irie Takanori, Aeba Takao, Morikawa Tatsuya, and Karatani Kôjin among the critics who explicated the difficult writing of their contemporaries. Furuya Kenzô, “*Naikô no sedai ron*” (Tokyo: Keiô Gijuku Daigaku Shuppankai, 1998), p. 9.

⁴⁸ Akiyama Shun et al, “Wakaranai shôsetsu” *Waseda bungaku dai-7-ji* 4:1 (January 1972), p. 111. The critics take on the aliases “guide,” “realist,” and “fictionalist” instead of using their names.

the disconcerting use of language, the influence of European existentialist writers, and the expected reception of the work — attempting to distill a meaning that never satisfactorily emerges. They even question whether “incomprehensible” (*wakaranai*) is the proper description of a text that seems to “deconstruct” and, furthermore, that takes on a topic which, compared to most contemporary works, produces “incongruity.”⁴⁹ Ultimately, however, the critics’ inability to “understand” the text or figure out “why an author would write such a text” leaves TYP suspended in limbo as “an experimental work” that, though potentially a “*tour de force*” (*rikisaku*), remains “troubling.”⁵⁰

I am attempting to characterize TYP not as a text that carries a meaning for the reader to lift off the page, but as one that stretches language beyond the notion that a certain series of signs must produce a certain intelligible meaning. TYP disrupts the concept that meaning is an equivalence by deploying signs that resist interpretation. In so doing, the text is able to demonstrate that the very language of social relations excludes and condemns those who do not subscribe to its codes. It is lost on the critics I have cited that subscribing to these codes is largely taken for granted, in the world they inhabit as well as in the uncaring society portrayed in the text. To construct a protagonist resisting these codes, Mori has her instead follow the opaque rhythms of the *taidô*, a term deployed throughout the text to underscore a negativity toward signifying practices that bind the protagonist to social norms. Rather than seek to define the *taidô*, as many critics have, I propose to trace the text’s use of this term as a dynamic performance of *jouissance* that permits the protagonist to overcome the moral and legal restrictions naturalized by the contemporary social contract.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 111 and 114.

DRUGS AND AMBIGUITY

Mako's marginal status is first introduced by a drug overdose that lands her in the hospital, the site of the first scene of the text. The drug is the only noteworthy material signifier in *TYP*, the seemingly random object that sets an even more random chain of events into motion. An analeptic passage later reveals that Mako received bottles of medicine from a man with whom she has spent the night and subsequently ingested every last bit of it; this eventually leads to her collapse on a platform at a train station and admission to a charity hospital. In a narrative in which almost every concrete object loses its specificity, the drug lingers in the protagonist's body until its distortional effects are co-opted by her perceptions. The way Mako structures her world, whether according to subjective perceptions or dissociative hallucinations, remains ambiguous. Drugs infiltrate the narrative structure via analeptic passages that interrupt the chronological flow with interjections of Mako's inscrutable system of abstract associations. The initial use of drugs sustains the ambiguity across the entire story, providing a frame for Mako's individual manner of organizing space-time and memory.

Most significantly, Mako's drug use is the initial marker of her disavowal of the significance of causation. The questionable interpretation of Mako's overdose becomes the first of many attempts by figures of authority to overdetermine the meaning of Mako's actions. These meanings are written down and filed and then later presented to Mako as evidence of her character. Mako's resistance to this evidence is constructed to highlight the bureaucratic imperative of social structures to control meaning and flatten out ambiguity. The ambiguity presented by the introduction of the drug thus opens up a reading of the remainder of the text to traces of that ambiguity that underscore the contrast between Mako's world view and the values of the society that surrounds her. As a result, the depiction of Mako's marginality is counterbalanced by a critique of the

symbolic system that inscribes her at the margins by repeatedly fixating on its own inscriptions of meaning.

I would like to introduce two sections of the text that link Mako's drug use to the kinds of ambiguity that undermine the fixed meanings attached to Mako's actions. The name given to the drug (*kusuri*) itself is even a problem. Mako treats it as she would food: to satisfy a basic drive by alleviating her hunger. Below I will show that Mako focuses on the "form" of the object, something to ingest, rather than anything specific about its prescribed uses. In the setting of the hospital, the drug is referred to as "sleeping medicine" (*suimin'yaku*), denoting a specific purpose outside of which use becomes abuse. Mako's failure to comply with the acceptable use of the drug becomes evidence of her intention to commit suicide, though she is never asked why she ingested so much of the substance. An analeptic passage eventually reveals to the reader that the ascribed intentionality does not accord with Mako's own memory of taking the drug. The (over)determination that she sought to commit suicide arises out of the incongruity of using sleeping medicine in a public place. The overdose is considered intentional because the site, a train station platform, is viewed as a non-normative place for someone to be taking a substance simply for the purpose of going to sleep.

Mako does not organize her spatial world into spheres of public and private. Her indifference to where she falls asleep — on a train, on a station bench — extends to the place she awakes. TYP highlights how language is overdetermined by social expectations in a conversation about where Mako usually wakes up. Below I will illustrate how Mako's ambiguous use of language allows her to negotiate with authority figures who have internalized social codes and do not recognize the ambiguity in Mako's words. Indeed, the ambiguities over the drug I introduce in this section — its name, its uses, and its relation to suicide — already serve to divide the significance of Mako's behavior into competing interpretations: one that obeys only bodily drives and another that

naturalizes and internalizes social norms. When Mako is asked to differentiate a hospital room from her home, her answer is necessarily ambiguous.

WHERE ONE WAKES UP> Although she has a slippery relationship to language, Mako still engages in dialogue. She can speak, but the text frequently highlights how the significance of her words gets challenged by other characters. The overdose that puts her into the hospital not only marks her as marginal to the Others, it also divests her utterances of meaning. When Mako awakes in the charity hospital, a police officer and a nurse are talking at some distance about whether Mako even realizes where she is. Mako blankly replies that she does, but her response is quickly denied by the nurse, who claims,

“It doesn’t matter what she says when she’s like that. She just says what she wants unintelligibly in order to cover for herself. You can watch the sweat pour out of them and you’ll see that every patient is like that.” (12)

To the nurse, the drugs have reduced Mako’s utterances to signifiers disconnected from reality. The nurse uses her authority to deny Mako the position of a speaking subject, effectively equating drug use to unreliability in the linguistic field. Dialogue in TYP foregrounds the ambiguity of language by displaying the unbridgeable gap in signifying practices between Mako and most other characters. The narrator, who focalizes the narrative through Mako in the third person, connects Mako’s utterances to her oppositional standpoint. The utterances of characters like the nurse, by contrast, represent an acceptable mode of signification; the words call attention to their investment in — or in Mako’s case, her avoidance of — the entire symbolic system at the center of social order.

Despite the nurse’s strong claims, the police officer decides to ask Mako directly about herself.

The policeman came to her side and shook Mako by the shoulders.
“It must seem different from your own house (*ie*), where you always wake up.” With each shake the surroundings wobbled.

“I’m asking you whether this place where you’ve woken up is different from always.” His voice signaled annoyance.

“It’s different. That is, always,” Mako answered. (12)

Mako’s answer does not form a syntactically clear response: “*Chigaimasu. Sore wa, itsu mo.*” On the surface, it appears to answer the police officer’s question as asked: Mako realizes that she is somewhere “different”; she repeats his use of “always” as though to signal accordance with his statement. However the subsequent narration elucidates Mako’s response in its divergence from the officer’s intent:

Waking in the morning, the features of the room enclosing her are always different. She stared at the two, about to say that. But in the end, perhaps they weren’t different. (12)

The re-deployment of the terms “different” and “always” underscore a significance that peels away the normative social codes behind the officer’s question. His presumption is based on the expectations that people have a fixed place to spend every night and that a public institution like a hospital is necessarily differentiated from the private home. The officer’s interpellation of Mako as a subject relies on a subtle, perhaps unconscious, choice of words. To him, Mako’s response confirms not only that she is aware of being somewhere “different,” but also that she shares his presumptions, a differentiation between usual and unusual places to wake up. The narrator intervenes in this dialogue to clarify for the reader the gap between Mako’s response and the intent of the officer’s question.

Yet the narrated explanation goes much further than a disambiguation of the dialogue. It introduces Mako’s reduction of all material experience to forms, a radical disavowal of all difference that is key to her own *indifference*.

As for the men she’d met for the first time the night before, she grew accustomed to their features the instant she met them, and by morning those men lying next to her, they have all simply become the form of man. The look of a new room, the more she looked at it, also quickly lost its distinctiveness. In the end, all of it just returned to the same form, of wood and nails.

When Mako got up in the morning to leave, she always listened to the same sound in the background, the noisy sound made when the surroundings shook off all of their attachments and returned to their initial appearance. (12)

Mako’s world is structured around ambiguous identification. Meaning remains ambiguous, while form is continuous from one day to the next. In response to a

seemingly simple question, the narration disrupts the unfolding of the story to direct our attention to the terms via which Mako operates vis-à-vis the society around her. The text represents “where one wakes up” to suggest that the very process of waking up, for Mako, transgresses the concept of meaning.

In the above short exchange at the beginning of the text, Mako garbles the cop’s meaning and then the narrator suggests that his question is irrelevant, because everything is, at root, an iteration of the same form. The nurse denies Mako’s utterance because, at root, every patient behaves the same way. Mako’s ambiguous response emerges out of her indifference to the normativity implied by the public/private divide, the suggestion that one is identified with the place one wakes up. (Although this appears to be a seemingly benign distinction, the contrastive use of homophones for “home” (*hōmu*) discussed in the last section of this chapter will bear out this subtlety.) As a result, the interplay between narration and dialogue situates Mako’s ambiguous language in opposition not only to the Others’ presumption of stability in words’ meanings, but also in opposition to the institutions through which society orders its subjects.

SUICIDE OR ACCIDENT?> The hospital, the police, and the social welfare authorities represent institutions that interpellate Mako according to norms and their accompanying signifying practices. Mako’s status in the hospital thus takes on multiple significance as the ambiguity that haunts the drug as a signifier spills over to the meaning attributed to her overdose. The police officer refers to Mako’s case as “attempted suicide by drugs” (16), explaining this as the reason she needs a claimant (*hikitorinin*) to be released. The symbolic codes of society demand order and impose maximum value on life, whereby suicide is a rejection of this value. Attempted suicide becomes a sociopathic action, calling for the communal society to preserve life, to rescue

the subject from her own transgressive drives. The imposition of meaning upon Mako's actions conflicts with her marked lack of interest in the juridical characterization of her behavior, particularly the method of creating categorical meaning out of an isolated incident. While for Mako this overdose is a performance leading to a chain of events with implications that will dissolve as soon as her connections to them are severed, the meaning ascribed to her actions has been indelibly recorded by the authorities. To complicate the conclusions drawn about her, the depiction of Mako as suicidal gradually morphs into a skewed interpretation of the value a marginalized woman places on life.

When Mako's overdose is labeled an "attempted suicide" at the hospital, various structural mechanisms go into action. She must be watched by a police officer; she must be interviewed by a social worker; and she can only be released either to someone who will take responsibility for her or as a ward of the state. Although the social worker generously allows for the off-chance that the overdose was an "accident" (19), the suicide diagnosis is recorded in her file. This is not the only account of events, however.

Focalized through Mako, the reader learns that no such intentionality can be ascribed to her overdose. She simply consumed the medicine in place of food, because it was there:

"Because if I take it, I can go without eating." When her stomach felt empty, she put the medicine in her mouth. The foreign object spread from her chest to her stomach, and her hunger disappeared as though a lie. (17)

For Mako, the substances that alleviate her hunger are continuous in form. Mako uses the drug to satisfy one of her basic drives. She is never concerned by what she will eat, only with the staving off of hunger. For the man who provides the bottles of medicine, the drug ties him to the urban center and mysteriously affects his ability to decide whether or not to go home (*"kesshin ga guratsuite kuru"*). In choosing to return to the provinces (*"kuni ni kaeru"*) to work, the man is making a decision to leave behind the anonymous metropolis and reconnect with his origins. The drugs he relies upon to structure his urban life have no place in the context of his hometown, where the

community vigilantly secures stability. The man — only referred to in passing as “last night’s man” (*yûbe no otoko*) — also recognizes that the medicine represents a floating exchange value. He concludes that Mako will accept the drug in lieu of a payment she hasn’t demanded, and expediently leaves both Mako and the drug behind. Alone and unconscious, Mako is taken to a hospital where her overdose takes on meanings that exceed the circumstances leading up to it.

Mako’s drives center around hunger and sleep and stand in stark opposition to what is valued by the rest of society. The drug serves as a bridge between Mako’s drives and those elements of society that repress drives. Wandering along the Tokyo-Saitama border far from the charity hospital she left behind, Mako stumbles as though intoxicated (*fura fura*) in the road, causing a taxi driver to stop and suggest that *she* might like to travel somewhere by train.

She was only seeking a place to sleep. In one corner of her body, the turbidity (*nigori*) of yesterday’s medicine still remained. Perhaps it was due to that. Her throat was terribly dry. (32)

As I will detail later in this chapter, the space that orders Mako’s drives annihilates or assimilates all of those elements that retain value in society. The drug here, which lingers as a cloudiness in her body and influences her desire for sleep, is an exception. This turbidity resurfaces toward the end of the text with regard to the flow that orders Mako’s existence. In this passage, “turbidity” points to the signifiers Mako has not yet shaken off at the end of the day; even after the symptoms of the overdose have passed, the drug remains in Mako’s body as a signifier of “attempted suicide.” The drug transcends the binary opposition between repression and *jouissance* as an ambiguous signifier, one that is continuously transgressing the meanings assigned it.

Though in aggregate we can see that TYP depicts normative judgments as overdetermined by a value system to which the protagonist does not subscribe, a great deal of the work of fleshing this out is left to the readers. Among the critical reviews of TYP, only Takai Yûichi suggests that Mako does not have the “will” (*ishi*) to commit

suicide.⁵¹ He is confounded by a paratextual element to the story in a collection issued in September 1971, dated three months after the first appearance in *Bungakukai*. The *obi* — a band of paper enclosing the lower part of a book, often with reviews or other descriptive information — of *The Yellow Prostitute* describes the anthology's eponymous story as though the attempted suicide were established fact:

It depicts a certain prostitute who takes too many of the sleeping pills she had received from a passing customer and attempts suicide.⁵²

Takai, in an otherwise hostile review, recognizes the gap between what is claimed for Mako by others and the ambiguity of Mako's own actions. His frustration with the text highlights the need to identify how the text produces meaning and the reader's role in piecing together the (anti-)logic of the narrative.

Takai's suspicions about Mako's suicide are confirmed by the exposition of events. Mako wakes up in a hospital in police custody. The officer mentions the sleeping medicine in an offhand question. First, Mako and the police officer hear another patient screaming, and the officer tells Mako she was even worse. Then he then poses a question designed to depict Mako's refusal of agency:

“When you are about to wake from the sleeping medicine, do you unconsciously get violent like that? Or is it conscious, you get violent on purpose because it's embarrassing? Which do you think?”

It felt like it could be both. (14)

The question elicits a response that underscores Mako's consistently ambiguous stance toward meaning and her lack of interest in socially constituted subjecthood. In an official accounting, however, Mako's intentions have already been fixed. The officer remarks to Mako that she cannot be released on her own because she had “attempted suicide using drugs” (*kusuri no jisatsu misue*). This diagnosis causes Mako to be confined at the hospital under surveillance, marked as a stray subject in need of rehabilitation.

The discrepancy between the institutional accounting of Mako's overdose and the

⁵¹ Takai Yūichi, “Tozasareta sekai: Mori Makiko *Kiironi shōfu*” *Waseda bungaku dai-7-ji* 3:11 (November 1971), p. 86.

⁵² *Ibid.*

explanation put forth in the narration plants the seeds of doubt about the way written files may misrepresent a reality they are ostensibly deployed to capture. Even the social worker admits that he relies on documents to make assessments of Mako, and that there is a possibility that the overdose was not a “suicide”:

“We can consider that today’s incident on the platform might just have been an accident. Even so, if this woman’s present status is exactly as written here, there’s always the possibility that she’ll do the same thing over again.” (19)

The social worker suggests that Mako’s actions demand intervention by claiming the authority of the state even if the specific cause listed in the documents, the one that requires Mako to be remanded to someone who will take responsibility for her, is incorrect. None of the nuance arising from subjective interpretation or the contingencies of Mako’s case make it into the files, however. The documents reappear later in the text, where their contents will be used by the police to build a case against Mako in lieu of any evidence of criminal activity. The files, which the text extrapolates to equate to all symbolic signifiers, are portrayed as oppressive precisely because they repress the multiplicity of interpretations surrounding what has been termed “attempted suicide by drugs.”

The ambiguity of the suicide is further called into question by the introduction of an old woman, who explicitly states her desire to return to the place of her birth and die and then carries out this act. The old woman’s despair, the motivation for her suicide, is unclear. However the old woman’s antipathy is legible in her sons’ treatment of her, particularly in their denial of her linguistic agency.

“Grandma, you immediately forget things that happened yesterday or a week ago. All you talk about is forty years ago on the island, so of course we make fun of you.”

“Listen to this: it was the best time of my life. I used to make a lot of money in just one night. In the summer I made so much it was almost a waste to sleep. The fishermen I met, who had left home to work, filled my pockets with so many coins. If I sang them a little song, they got so happy and gave me more coins. If I’m going to die anyway, it’s not gonna be at *your* place. I’ll die on Kusujima.”

“Go to sleep, already! It’s always the same conversation with you.” (35-36)

After a productive life of self-sufficiency, her dwindling autonomy is channeled into her

singular, final wish: to die on the land where she was born. The old woman's actions, based on her agency, her resistance to the will of others, and an explicit intentionality, serves to foreground the arbitrariness of labeling Mako's overdose a suicide by contrasting their attitudes toward existence at the margins.⁵³

The old woman's suicide is notable in its divergence from Mako's drug overdose. First, the woman, tired of being shuttled unwanted between relatives, claims specifically that she wants to die. Second, she chooses her hometown as the location, the site of her best memories. Third, the old woman's decision to die involves cutting off connections to her family and is met by resistance from a community of people looking out for her; she must sneak back on to the island in order to achieve this goal, despite a cordon of citizens mobilized to prevent her from this. Mako has no such death wish. She ingests drugs simply to alleviate her hunger. Mako passes out on a station platform (*hōmu*) — an alternate “home”⁵⁴ — because she has neither hometown nor immanent memories of her past. Furthermore, Mako has no connections to anyone else, whereas the old woman is circulated via the patriarchal lineage of her family.

The ambiguity over Mako's “attempted suicide” is underscored by the drug's function as a polyvalent signifier. Attitudes toward the *kusuri* that appear in the text are linked to divergent views of life and the value and meaning placed on it. In the text, the drug introduces the contingency of positing intentionality and causation based on normative values. This is achieved in part using analeptic passages that align with Mako's interiority, but also by highlighting the stark contrast in Mako's and the rest of society's designation of the drug's meaning. The ambiguities that emerge from this contrasting

⁵³ There are some uncanny but superficial similarities between the old woman and Mako, from their exchange of sex for money, their geographical motility, and the perception that both are suicidal. Some reviewers suggest that Mako is merely a *Doppelgänger* for the old woman; they fault Mori for not providing a more detailed portrayal of the character and her motivations. (Ueda Miyoji, “Hōnen no seisei” *Bungakukai* 25:11 (November 1971), p. 99, and Sasaki Kiichi et al, “Sōsaku gappyō” *Gunzō* 26:7 (July 1971), p. 298.) However I argue that the differences between the women are more salient and more revealing than any similarities.

⁵⁴ In Japanese, the word for “platform” and the term for an institutional “home” are inadvertent homophones.

attitude toward the drug point directly at the ambiguity of the very practice of signification. In the next section, I will analyze how the text links signification, the process by which a subject is constituted, with oppression toward the marginal protagonist.

NARRATING THE SELF, PROVISIONALLY

In the free indirect discourse of TYP, Mori has constructed a narrative that attempts to negotiate between the “selves” of Mako. On the one hand, there is the “self” (*jibun*) that comprises the focalization of the third-person narrative aligned with the protagonist. On the other hand there is the “self” constructed by the Others that implicates Mako in the communal demands of being a subject. In the previous section, I examined how the drug as signifier promotes the ambiguities that arise when the process of signification is untethered from an acceptance of normative social values. In this section, I will explore how a bivalent portrayal of selfhood serves to further critique the methods by which certain types of signification are experienced as oppression. I trace how TYP positions its protagonist against the background of a dim diegetic world in order to call attention to competing conceptualizations of selfhood. I will argue that the text bifurcates Mako as a subject in order to contrast a tentative self, liberated from the fixed boundaries of the social, with the reified self enmeshed in the categories and labels of a society that has naturalized a particular kind of subjecthood. I will then show how the text makes legible the construction of Mako’s marginalized self through Others’ dialogue, refracted through Mako in the narrative. This will lead to a discussion of negative reactions to Mako’s persistent gaze. I will demonstrate how the designation of Mako’s marginality by the Others is constructed to appear overdetermined, highlighting the manner in which the text unravels this paradigmatic overdetermination into an ambiguity applicable to all forms of signification.

To parse this divided self, I take up Julia Kristeva's work on subject formation and signification. TYP shows how the normative constitution of the self is used to marginalize Mako by positioning the semiotic in confrontation with the symbolic. The text represents using signifiers, of course, but it also highlights those junctures at which representation breaks down. This is partly attributable to Mori's habit of employing verbs in novel and unfamiliar ways.⁵⁵ TYP uses the conventional grammar and syntax of the Japanese language, but it also features many instances in which the symbolic is untenable. These instances are the result of two distinct selves represented in the text, particularly the self that inhabits the narration and takes on a tentative position in the symbolic while marked by semiotic interruptions and indeterminacy. Mako seeks out the space of the Real, of unbounded *jouissance* in a space prior to which symbolic codes reign and oppress. She thus seeks accommodation with the symbolic, a type of co-existence in which she undermines the Law only on those occasions that it seeks to compel her adherence to its codes.

The split self is highlighted throughout the text, particularly in narrated commentary to other characters' dialogue. An example of this appears in the first section of the story, after the police officer and the social worker have discussed how Mako falsified forms in order to get an apartment above a small general-goods store:

Mako gazed at the two men extensively creating her self (*jibun*) out of the traces of that self's life on the second floor of the small shop. She felt a great distance. (20)

The narrator identifies a disjuncture between the *jibun* deployed in the narration to refer to Mako and the *jibun* that is constituted by the authorities based on written forms. The self constructed by the officer and the social worker exists at the margin of society, a putative "prostitute" who attempts suicide and makes false claims on official documents.

⁵⁵ In reference to Mori's story "Tabidachi" (On a trip), Shinoda Hajime complains that he "can't stand her odd usage" of Japanese. He wonders whether "she is consciously destroying the Japanese language or destroying it to create something new," because to him her deployment of unfamiliar language is "nothing but impudence." (Tsuji Kunio and Shinoda Hajime, "Taidan jihyō" *Bungakukai* 26:7 (July 1972), p. 228.) Critics were similarly perplexed by the use of verbs and the mystery of the *taidō* in TYP, but their outrage did not reach the pitch of Shinoda's.

That self is a socialized subject fully responsible for her actions who simply abdicates responsibility out of convenience. The police officer is adamant that this is the case: “Of course she knows what she’s doing. Everything she did was done knowingly” (20). Indeed, the evidence is quite incriminating: Mako not only lied on a form, she filled in extra details as though to make it look convincing. Mako’s attitude toward written records, the “great distance” the narrator comments upon, will merit extensive discussion in the final section of this chapter. Salient here is that the two men’s conclusions about her — their construction of her as a subject — stem largely from a written document that depicts a self completely alien to Mako. This failure of recognition serves Mako’s resistance against the centripetal pull of normativity, depicted here by two men who represent the interests of the state passing judgment on her. Indeed, she merely looks on impassively as these men construct her identity, free of any complicity in their subjectification of her. As the narrative progresses, her resistance to this communally defined “self” expands to encompass all modes of signification that fix her identity in a social context. To accomplish this, however, requires a separate “self” that is somehow, problematically, able to be signified without recourse to the social. To describe this, I turn to the “chora,” a space in which that self can be strategically generated, and subsequently negated, to permit enunciation on the terms of the symbolic without commitment to the subject position imposed by the symbolic.

Kristeva’s theorization of the chora explicitly seeks to forge connections between literary texts and revolutionary politics by expanding the scope of our understanding of “significance.” She cites “fragmentary phenomena” that point to “the limits of socially useful discourse and attest to what it represses: the *process* that exceeds the subject and his communicative structures.”⁵⁶ Much of this “process” may be co-opted by society; however, Kristeva suggests, there are some conditions in which this excess may

⁵⁶Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, p. 16. Among the phenomena Kristeva lists are “magic, shamanism, esoterism, and ‘incomprehensible’ poetry.”

correspond to change or, in the extreme, to revolution. Whether or not Mori thought of her writing as “revolutionary,” her texts do indeed carve out narrative spaces for a marginal pre-subject to transgress normative discourses. Mako’s compulsion to imbibe bottle after bottle of medicine and the ease with which she fabricates information on legal forms serve as examples of her performance in excess of strictly logocentric “communicative structures.” Provoked by this series of excesses, society incarcerates Mako; but as no sense can be made of her actions, the walls that imprison her collapse under the force of the semiotic.

The narrative strategy deployed to achieve the semiotic-symbolic divide is deeply embedded in the focalization of the story. The text forces the reader to flip between the views of Mako as a marginal self from quoted dialogue and the focalization through her as another type of self in the narration. The construction of these competing views affects the reading of the text by placing the reader in an uncomfortable position, estranged from the language and perceptions of the narrator and thus pushed into the viewpoint of the Others, whose attachment to social values render Mako intelligible *as* marginal. Mako’s utterances rarely form syntactically complete thoughts that might clue readers in on how she negotiates the animosity of the Others. Moreover, Mako’s narrated perceptions often slip into analepsis and back without warning, leaving one to guess the relation between the narrative’s space-time and that of its diegetic world. By placing Mako’s narrated self in such an unparsable, alternate “reality,” the text situates the reader in a privileged position of Otherness. Switching between Mako’s two selves underscores the contrast between the values of contemporary society and those of the protagonist, who, according to the narrator, repeatedly senses the destruction of these values in violent, palpable perceptions.

TRIANGULATION> The reader must confront conflicting ways of “reading” Mako, but the

evidence is stacked against her. Very little information that might shed light on Mako's life is provided, forcing us to create an image of Mako using other available information. Most of this legible detail paints her in a negative light. Mako has no friends; some individual characters are accommodating, but most of the Others express a detached hostility directly toward her. Innocuous questions by Mako, for example, are met by sharp, rhetorically negative replies. In the hospital, Mako asks, "Is it okay to just — stay here like this?" The nurse growls back at her, as though any question signals impertinence: "If I said it wasn't what would you do?" (13)

Mostly, however, the text demonstrates how Mako is denied subjecthood by triangulating the dialogue of the Others through her focalization. The conversations of other characters, refracted through Mako as quoted dialogue in the text, indicate their rejection of her as a competent subject. The triangulation of Mako's identity within the symbolic can be found repeatedly when two characters converse cogently with each other about her. Each section of the text depicts numerous triangulated interactions that reveal some of the features of the society against which she resists. When the focalization is through the narrating self, that world takes on only forms and degrees of light and dark, a blurry landscape that refuses to signify anything. There is no way to grasp this self, so the only links between reader and protagonist come in the refracted construction of her in dialogue.

The story begins without any information about Mako, so the significance of the Others' utterances about her take on outsize significance. The first section depicts Mako interacting first with a nurse and a cop, and then the same cop and a social worker. These interactions fill in the story of Mako's overdose and recovery in the charity hospital, but they also spell out the nature of institutions and their attitude toward the marginal female protagonist. Mako's admission to the charity hospital signals a marginal position in society, and this is reinforced by those watching over her. For example, when

the social worker (also known as “the old man” (*rôjin*)) arrives at the hospital to deal with Mako, he and the police officer establish their own “normality” by joking about her.

Mako sat formally on her knees (*seiza*) on the bed.

“There’s no reason for you to be nervous. It’s okay to relax.” The old man looked at Mako as he spread out the documents he brought with him.

“She’s not the type to get nervous, this woman.”

“That’s what I was thinking, too.”

The figures of the laughing pair of men reflected in the glass window to the corridor. The old man spread out the documents in front of the police officer. (19)

This short exchange initiates Mako’s objectification by these two men. To the social worker and the officer, Mako has become a “case” (*ken*) to be negotiated between two branches of government. Mako has also been reduced to a type, a socially marginal woman whose sexual availability is apparent in her appearance and situation. She does not “get nervous,” the men imply, because she is a prostitute. Uninvolved in this conversation, Mako impassively watches the men’s reflections, confronting their derisive laughter indirectly as they “create her self” as marginal. In the first section of the text, only this externally constructed self has been given shape; the text only begins to hint at the nature of the narrating self long after the marginal self has been thoroughly detailed.

Throughout the text, similarly triangulated interactions emphasize again and again how hostile the world is toward Mako. In the second section, Mako interacts with an innkeeper and his wife, whose initial welcome rapidly shifts to distrust. The wife sees Mako as a dangerous, unattached woman, and the innkeeper, upon discovering that Mako has very little cash, yells to his wife, “Watch out for this woman!” (45) In the final section, Mako is questioned by a police interrogator and his stenographer, whose banter exposes an institutional mean-spiritedness without uncovering much information on Mako’s alleged crimes. These men have no evidence of wrongdoing by Mako and, despite claiming that “it’s not like we want to make you out as a criminal” (66), seek out methods to maximize her punishment. “We would have tracked you down for doing something in any case,” the interrogator tells her (76). The stenographer concurs: “That’s right. One way or another we were going to end up seeing this woman’s face in here.” The police

consider Mako constitutionally marginal — always already a criminal — and they reveal this by talking about her as though from a distance.

The text measures this distance by contrasting the narrating self with the symbolic construction of Mako's marginality in this triangulated dialogue, but also in various random encounters in which her sexuality marks her difference. In both the first and second sections of the text, Mako engages in oblique conversation with groups of young men. In the first section, three men follow Mako from the urban center to the Saitama border out of boredom. In response to her ambiguous and oblique remarks — “Where are you going?” / “Anywhere's fine with me.” (26) — they joke that she is soliciting them. These men leave her with some construction workers standing around a fire; the friendly men do not know what to make of Mako but are relieved when she ambiguously suggests that she lives nearby: “At first, we were pretty sure that you were a dubious woman (*ikagawashii onna*),” one man tells her (30). Here, Mako's apparent aimlessness as a lone female indicates to the men that she is trying to sell her body. Their disgust at her perceived sexual advances lifts when they believe she lives nearby, that this single young woman has a reason, other than solicitation, to be there. Other groups of people are not inclined to dismiss Mako's sexual potential. On the island, a group of fishermen hanging up their nets engage Mako by continuously asking what “business” she has with them. When she asks them when they finish work, they respond with suspicion: “Why are you asking?” / “Is it 'cause when we're finished you've got something good for us?” (46) The men lead Mako along, convinced that she is soliciting them for sex, and then spurn her once they have confirmed their presumptions. Her presence, alone on the island in the off-season as well as everywhere else, marks her as out of place, and this spatial fluidity implies to the Others a sexual fluidity that must be spurned.

The result of all of this quoted dialogue is that the reader garners a great deal of information about how Mako is situated, as a marginal, sexual subject, within symbolic

codes. On her part, there is only ambiguity. The reader is set up with the perspectives of both sides, but as Mako's unique perspective only gradually becomes legible across the narrative, it must compete with a naturalized, normative perspective that, though grossly overdetermined, is only subtly revealed to be so. As a result, an explanation of Mako's ambivalence toward society and its values coheres only at the end of the text, after a refracted portrait of her social marginality has been firmly established.

THE GAZE> Nowhere is this marginality more evident than in the case of Mako's gaze, which provokes overwhelmingly negative reactions in the Others. The logic of this gaze is revealed at the end of the text and, whether or not we choose to accept it, underscores the gap between the Others' views of Mako and the purported intentions behind her actions. Mako's persistent gaze is a repeatedly remarked upon signifier of her abnormality. Mako is always looking at something or someone, whether it is the lights of the city, the waves in the ocean, men passing her in the streets, or even her interlocutor. As a lone woman, her gaze is, to those she encounters, often suggestive of sexual availability. The gaze is interpreted by these characters to be that of an agentive subject firmly rooted in symbolic signifying practices; its directness is read as a reflection of her shamelessness and a manifestation of sexual desire. It is, in parallel with a presumption of the sexual availability of a lone female, thoroughly overdetermined by the Others, who treat it as a provocation endowed with inherent meaning. The Others interpret Mako's gaze as an implicit expression of power and as a challenge to their social authority. Their responses seek to put her in her place, to reinforce her marginality by denying her the very power they have interpreted in the gaze.

From the earliest scene in the text, Mako's gaze gets her in trouble. As with the triangulated dialogues mentioned above, the Others' opinions are often literally reflected off of a surface and focalized through Mako in the third-person narration. In the first few

scenes of the story, the nurse and the police officer are discussing Mako's status as she listens.

"How creepy! How long is she going to stare at us? She's glowering at us, you know."
"At us?"
"Yeah, at the reflection of us in the glass door." (12)

The nurse reacts negatively to Mako's gaze, inferring meaning — some kind of resistance or opposition on Mako's part — from the look. Mako's gaze is mediated by the glass, a reflection that represents an essence without substance, an object without materiality. The nurse treats Mako's gaze as though it were direct and directed, as a sort of provocation, but the narrator indicates that the nurse's vexation is unfounded.

Lifting her head, the figures of the two just appeared in the middle of the rectangular surface of the glass door before her eyes. As long as her body was reclined and her face was lifted, she would just continue to see the reflected figures of the two people. (12)

That is, Mako is passively viewing the cop and the nurse, her eyes undirected, their image simply remaining static in her field of vision. Mako's gaze is here *misdiagnosed* as confrontational by the nurse; the narration instead reveals it to be circumstantial. This brief interaction introduces the gaze as a symbolically overdetermined portrayal of intentionality. It again highlights the gap between the Others' perceptions and Mako's, demonstrating that the Others are prone to ascribe meaning where none may exist.

It is no surprise that those critical of Mako's gaze believe that a look is not simply a look. Laura Mulvey links the gaze to gendered power differences, although her use of psychoanalytic theory focuses on the male gaze. Mulvey has theorized that the gaze in classical Hollywood cinema is deployed to reproduce patriarchal structures in a (male) film spectator's identification with on-screen characters.

As the spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look onto that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence.⁵⁷

Visual representation in this mode is orchestrated to eroticize the female body and

⁵⁷ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" [1975] in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 20.

designate her a passive object-to-be-viewed while simultaneously confirming the male viewer's power. The right to gaze itself depends on a certain subject position and implies an assertion of power. Furthermore, the gaze reflects a subject's intentionality, a desire for the object that is captured and possessed by that gaze. Mako's gaze provokes scorn in the Others because it is presumed to exceed the power inherent to a female subject and coincide with an eroticism considered unacceptable given her marginal position. In projecting a gaze that transgresses gender norms, Mako's look is felt to represent a disdain for the implicit boundaries that structure all social codes. The text highlights how social norms have imbued the gaze with meaning, signifying desire and power as the mysterious effects of subjecthood.

The rural island setting of the second section of the text, outside of the bustling anonymous city, calls particular attention to Mako's flouting of the normative. The island of Kusujima represents a tight-knit community where everyone seems to know everyone else's business. Mako arrives at a little inn (*minshuku*) on the island and is greeted by an innkeeper and his wife. These two islanders are wary of Mako's off-season excursion to their island and further puzzled by her unwillingness to give them the information required on their government-mandated registration form. This initial encounter is awkwardly overcome and the conversation turns to Mako's gaze out the window. Looking out at the reefs, Mako sees various women going back and forth between the incoming ships and the shore. Her curiosity about these women, though, ends up confirming the suspicions of her hosts.

Because the distance between the boulders was hard to determine, from afar it looked as though the women were lined up in a straight line facing the shore. "Are they standing on the beach there waiting for the sailors?"

"Waiting for the sailors, you say? They have no business with men. You're a lascivious one, you!" The innkeeper's wife violently shook her head.

"It's the old woman, the old woman." The innkeeper stated, disgustedly. An old woman who had left the island forty years earlier had, the previous day, left her sons' home in Aomori saying she was going off to die. (40-41)

Mako's simple question about the women in the distance takes on significance beyond

the question itself. To the innkeeper couple, who are already suspicious of this aimless young woman, the question represents a dangerous wantonness. Mako's suggestion that the women might be connected to sailors — a tidbit she hears from the old woman on the train — confirms to the couple that Mako is a hazard. Indeed, she reminds the wife of another Tokyo woman who had come to the island without any luggage whatsoever:

“Within the week she was holding hands with a young island man and ended up leading him away. To be lured away by a woman, well, that's men for you. But enticing a country bumpkin and leading him away, that's what a woman does. I doubt much has become of him since they left. We haven't heard a word from them in three years.” (43)

Mako is reduced to the stereotype of the temptress from Tokyo who comes to the island only to take advantage of its trove of naïve, available men. Mako's unbound sexuality is disruptive to society, which views the lone female's sexual availability as a problem of supply rather than of demand. The innkeeper's wife's hostility is a communal defense mechanism on the lookout for encroaching trouble. While the urban center permits Mako to wander among the crowds anonymously, her dangerous marginality masked by the crush of pedestrians moving in every direction, she is immediately identified as a threat in a rural community that relies on its normative stability for continued survival.

The juridical and social welfare institutions that construct the margins in the urban center are not found on the island (the closest police station is on the mainland). To compensate for this absence, the islanders must police their own community, and the innkeeper's wife takes on this role unabashedly. The following morning, she greets Mako with her conclusions:

“That look, that's the look of a cat in heat.” The next morning, out of the blue, when Mako descended to the dining area, the innkeeper's wife pointed her duster at Mako's eyes. “The only thing is to grow older. That's the only medicine for that look.”

“Judging from her age, it'll take a good ten years,” the innkeeper commented as he cleared away the table.

Standing at the entrance to the dining area, Mako gazed at the couple. (44)

The couple serve an analogous role on the island to that of the police officer and the social worker in the urban center. They evaluate Mako based on communal values and conceive of the “medicine” — a metaphorical supplement that engenders normativity —

that will pull her in from the margins.

It is not until the final section that the narrator reveals that all of the different meanings ascribed to Mako's gaze in the first two sections are overdetermined. Mako is in a detention facility on the mainland, in the town of Aki, facing questions posed by a police interrogator. Mako's answers are vague and unhelpful, so the interrogator diverges from a direct line of questioning. Sensing that Mako's repeated glances out the window of the room might shed some light on her condition, he asks her about it.

"Since you arrived here you've been watching the town out there. Is there something interesting about it?"

Whether or not it was interesting is something she hadn't even considered. She just sat or walked and, when she looked ahead, there was the town, just there. (65)

Again Mako's gaze is remarked upon and again the narrator intercedes to clarify that it is a passive look, one that simply receives the images before it. This echoes the narrator's explanation in the first section, when the nurse comments about Mako's gaze. Rather than attributing some kind of meaning to the gaze, the interrogator asks an open-ended question. The ambivalent response, however, cuts off further questioning about her look.

A brief narrative aside reveals the existential import of the gaze shortly thereafter. Further questioning by the interrogator yields little information, and he and the stenographer try to kill time until they can assemble the documents that will form a case against Mako. Then, without any particular context, the narrator explains why Mako is always looking at people in a certain way:

If they didn't maintain their mutual gaze, their words and bodies would be swept off by the *taidô* of the town that shook with the roar of the sea. (66)

This gaze that has been interpreted as "creepy" or sexually inviting has an unrelated significance for Mako: it keeps her in the present, stabilizing her life. The *taidô*, which I will discuss shortly, is a space in which the fragments of Mako's past experiences are violently dragged off into oblivion. So long as her surroundings have been constructed, the "stage" set, and the characters introduced, the narrated Mako feels she must maintain eye contact to keep it all from slipping away. The tentative self represented by

the narration reveals the gaze to be little more than a visual confirmation of her relationship to a temporary context. As textual practice, the gaze serves as a nonverbal semiotic element that disrupts the symbolic by demonstrating that its meanings may be overdetermined and, furthermore, rely on a system of equivalences — woman gazing equals prostitute — subject to breakdown.

The protagonist rejects society's imperative to "rehabilitate" marginal figures as a sham. The text splits Mako into two different "selves" to demonstrate how social codes construct the margins and fix the center as normative. The splitting of the self is used to differentiate the tentative self of the chora, which obeys only semiotic drives, from the socially constructed self. This construction of Mako by the Others is represented in the many conclusions drawn from her actions, reported as dialogue in the text, congealing in the various interpretations of Mako's mysterious gaze. Mako's gaze reinforces her marginality to the Others. It is interpreted both as an expression of unrestrained female desire and as an assertion of a subject position. Mako is constructed as marginal as a means of containing and banishing her desire and suppressing her agency. The self that belongs to the narrative focalization, however, debunks these conclusions in favor of an existential explanation for Mako's behavior. This narrated self disrupts the Others' construction of Mako as consisting of temporary labels, instead embracing the margins in opposition to order and identity and boundaries. Only by denying all significance to the center can Mako be "free" to pursue *jouissance* beyond the restrictions and repressions of society.

HIGH TAIDÔ

I have described how "The Yellow Prostitute" directs its narrative focalization through a tentatively constructed "self" representing the semiotic elements of the text. This semiotic self is articulated in the space of what Kristeva calls the "chora."

Neither model nor copy, the *chora* precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm. ... The theory of the subject proposed by the theory of the unconscious will allow us to read in this rhythmic space, which has no thesis and no position, the process by which significance is constituted.⁵⁸

A space analogous to this semiotic chora is created in TYP by the *taidô*, the underlying basis for Mako's subjective process of signification in stark contrast to the overdetermined world rooted in the symbolic. The *taidô* represents a space in which only the semiotic is given expression, while the symbolic is fragmented and dispersed. In the space of the *taidô*, there is no stable meaning; instinct-oriented drives trump subjective agency. When the focalization through Mako appears as a hallucination, an interaction with perceptions that have no basis in communal reality, the narrator evokes this *taidô*. The term refers to "the movement of a fetus," particularly the "fetal kick" detectable in the second trimester of pregnancy. Dictionaries also suggest an abstract usage of the term to refer to "a sign" or "an indication of something new about to happen."⁵⁹ In TYP, the *taidô* is abstracted anew to represent pre-social perceptions, an id unconstrained by ego or superego, constructing a space for the protagonist in which everything threatening is subject to dissolution.

The *taidô* appears as a kind of force that disorders the meanings and values that constrain Mako. It is a central trope in the construction of the text's portrayal of the normative center because it eviscerates all that signifies to and for that center. The *taidô*'s function is obscure in the text — most critics confessed to an inability to comprehend what it *means* — but appears to negotiate between Mako's perceptions and the physical and social world in which she exists. The *taidô* operates on socially constructed meaning by flattening out everything belonging to the symbolic. It effectively reverses the semiotic-symbolic relationship depicted in Kristeva's theory of signifying practice, in which semiotic elements are repressed in favor of the subject-forming

⁵⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, p. 26

⁵⁹ Shôgakukan jiten henshûbu, ed., *Gendai kokugo reikai jiten* (Tokyo: Shôgakukan, 1997), p. 764.

symbolic, to privilege *jouissance* and tread over society's boundaries. To counter the symbolic repression of this *jouissance*, Mako's self is constituted by semiotic drives that keep the symbolic at bay and prevent it — in the form of norms, institutions, and the law — from subjecting her. In invoking the deconstructive space of the chora in TYP, the *taidô* is not accessible to the Others, who repress these drives or recognize them as threats; nor can it be extrapolated to an ideal signified. The *taidô* belongs to the semiotic: irreducible itself, it fragments the symbolic into phenomenological chunks and then removes them, creating “distance” from Mako's experience.

The *taidô* appears ubiquitously in the text without any indication of its function. Its first occurrence coincides with the revelation that Mako's hospital stay is related to an overdose, forging an association between the *taidô* and Mako's hallucination-like perceptions that colors the term's usage for the remainder of the text. Mako had been looking past the police officer out the window, at the city growing gradually dark; for the first time since blacking out, she regains her strength and gets out of bed to look outside.

A faint darkness gradually settled in the gaps between the shuttered buildings. As the flocks of people flowing along the pavement reached this point, their forms melted into the darkness and only the sound of their footsteps rose up.

Mako rose from the bed and stood barefoot on the floor, gazing at the town.

The indigo had lost its luster and in the town everything began to dwindle. Walking through the town as night fell each evening, her body was devoured by the darkness, as though it would turn into a part of that darkness. Releasing her tension, closing her eyes, Mako walked.

She went back and forth, back and forth in the middle of the *taidô* that shot up from the surface of the earth, until in a complete reversal her surroundings became a sea of light. Mako walked.

One step after the next, she felt the chill of the floor.

“Where are you going?” The policeman reached out his arm and grabbed the hem of her robe. Perhaps because she had been standing barefoot for some time, her body was so cold it almost hurt.

“Where were you trying to go? I'll be damned if you're going to leave this room. I've been made to watch you like this for four hours just to make sure you don't escape.”

“I'm just gazing outside.” Mako leaned against the window. (15)

The *taidô* bursts violently onto the scene just as Mako projects herself out of her body and into the scene unfolding beneath her on the street. The narrative makes a gradual shift from “reporting” visual and aural phenomena toward an experience within a very different kind of space. Mako's eyes are closed and yet she sees. She's standing at the window one moment and then walking through the *taidô* the next. Her internal

perceptions are inscribed onto an exterior elsewhere, triggered by a visual connection. Mako's memory settles only on her activities within the *taidô*, emptied of any specificity or frame of reference. The *taidô* references a reality that obeys no physical laws and yet retains some essential connection to sensations and stimuli from the external world. This hallucinatory quality, ultimately given primacy in the text's construction of experienced reality, results from incursions of semiotic expression into a narrative otherwise rooted in linear time and stable signification.

The space of the *taidô* is entirely Mako's, a semiotic space that encloses her sites of interaction in the symbolic and subjugates it to *jouissance*-seeking drives. The *taidô* restores the boundary-less state analogous to that of an infant still attached to its mother. Mako's use of drugs, in particular, underscores that she does not recognize a public/private divide. Her treatment of the station platform as a place to sleep after swallowing bottles of medicine reveals her complete lack of recognition of boundaries; this boundary problem makes her into a juridical "case" of public concern, by which her drug use becomes interpreted according to normative codes as an "attempted suicide." (Other indications that she is a marginal character, hinted at by the title term "prostitute," also contribute to this interpretation).

The *taidô* also highlights in the text an awareness of a fundamental ambiguity of language. The text critiques the reliance on a language whose fixity is treated as the basis for social order. It achieves this by constructing an alternate mode of experiential existence out of the anti-signifying functions of the *taidô*. The *taidô* in TYP references only itself, deconstructing the world according to a desire that stems from — and turns inward and focuses on — itself. Mako performs her daily life repeatedly according to the space created by the *taidô*, guided by its meaning-shattering anti-logic. Mako's reliance on the *taidô* to negotiate her environment compels her to avoid all that is surplus in order to maintain what she deems essential.

As deployed in TYP, the *taidô* is more than just a representation of the space of the *chora*, a realm prior to the symbolic in which to pursue unbounded *jouissance*. In the remainder of this chapter, I will show how the *taidô*, by dispersing all meaning, demonstrates how the symbolic serves as an instrument of oppression. Just as the drug lingers in the body, floating signifiers that may reattach to earlier referents circulate in Mako's consciousness, always a potential threat. Helpless, Mako awaits the re-emergence of the *taidô* to either assimilate or purge these symbolic elements.

This comes into conflict with society's construction of boundaries to constrain Mako's exercise of freedom. Mako's aversion to events in the past come into direct conflict with the state's need to link her actions into narratives of rehabilitation and criminal deviance. In a twisted echo of the social worker's claim that Mako will be sent to an institution that will permit her to be "free," in the third section of TYP the interrogator suggests that Mako's attempts at "freedom" are precisely what have led to her punishment. "The more you think of that nice freedom from before, the more you'll be caught up in the sturdy, painful web," he tells her (76). The stenographer adds to the threat, describing how Mako would be "bound tightly" and forced to obey "the commands of the bell, under complete surveillance" with no hope for release.

Mako's drives resist repression and seek complete liberation from the boundaries deemed essential to the functioning of society. This is best exemplified by the ambiguous role drugs play in society. The "medicine" that satisfies Mako's hunger exceeds symbolic meanings and functions merely to fulfill a drive. By way of contrast, "last night's man" uses the *kusuri* to sustain his urban life — he has presumably come alone from the provinces to work in the thriving metropolis — and this use is unproblematic so long as he is productive and obeys social obligations. (This also points to the paradox that casually sleeping with women never makes *men* dangerously anti-social.) Mako's use of the drug unmasks the symbolic boundaries that contrast with her unbounded *jouissance*,

which takes place along the ineluctable and irreversible and universal “flow.” This “flow” is linear and existential, leading from life to death along an eternal continuum. As Mako situates herself along this flow, she pursues a “freedom” unburdened by societal boundaries. Her physical and psychical transgression of those boundaries contrasts with the binary spaces of “public” and “private” or “work” and “home.” TYP portrays this bimodal commute, which confines subjects within the symbolic, as constructing a euphemistic “freedom” that obscures the repressed *jouissance*. Detached from adherence to these arbitrary boundaries, Mako’s pursuit of *jouissance* bumps up against the quintessential measures of space and time that constitute and naturalize contemporary (capitalist, information) society.

The *taidô* furthermore attacks the process of signification by treating all signs as ephemeral and ambiguous. In Mako’s consciousness, the “attempted suicide” label is stripped of significance as soon as the stage upon which it appeared has broken down. The ambiguity over calling Mako’s drug overdose “attempted suicide by drugs” points to a repressed instability in the symbolic. TYP portrays written records as the cornerstone of society’s signifying practice, whereby polysemic elements are flattened into monotonous and permanent meanings despite their inherent ambiguity. Indeed, without any disruption of this categorization of the overdose, the symbolic endows that interpretation with authoritative truth-value. Only in the space of the *taidô* is the appropriate ambiguity restored.

BOUNDARIES AND “THE FLOW”> The *taidô* reconfigures space-time to banish lingering or cumulative elements that infiltrate from the symbolic world. Where the normative social codes tell people to structure their life via the break between home/private and work/public, Mako is different. She is bound neither by this dialectic nor by other fixed concepts of space or time. Where others return to their homes, Mako’s “return,”

represented in the verbs “*kaeru*” and “*modoru*,” is directed toward the teeming crowds on the streets.

Within the *taidô*, Mako acts on temporary surfaces or “planes” (*heimen*). These planes represent her identity at any given moment, so they are inherently short-term creations. After Mako arrives on Kusujima and checks into the inn, the innkeeper records various pieces of information about her. These establish the plane upon which she retains this identity — “name: Morita Mako; female office worker; age...” / “In any case, we’ve read about you. Reason for visit: rest and relaxation” (45) — and color the events and connections that follow.

Mako’s daily performances constitute the cyclical pattern of her life, with one day undifferentiated from the next. At the same time, the days pass along the linear path of the “flow” (*nagare*), which represents the vector that all humans follow from life to death and exceeds any individual human life. When the old woman commits suicide, for example, Mako notes that she had simply passed her along the flow and reached death first.

Just like her own flow, extending from under her feet, the flow of others never stops, and Mako just wanted to confirm that they were both inside the unceasing great flow by silently watching the old woman, who accepted the rocks, continue walking. (71)

This flow is devoid of values or signs and only marks the path of life toward death.

Mako’s recognition of this existential truth determines her relationship to the *taidô*.

As darkness fell, she faced the scenery enveloped by the *taidô* that mixed with the violent sound of the sea and came up from the ground. Suddenly she thought about those things therein that appeared before her eyes. She would receive them without limit. In so doing, she would continue living that way. She could also not receive them and silently let them pass. In so doing, she would go on to die that way. (53)

Mako’s path consists only of living and dying. There is no agency involved; she either passively accepts the *taidô* and its fragmentation of all but her semiotic drives or, alternately, fails to receive the *taidô* and dies amid the layers of signifiers that would have been swept away with the rest of the symbolic. The *taidô* creates the possibility for Mako’s continued existence and her behavior relies on its functioning.

Viewed from within the framework of the symbolic, however, the semiotic conditions for Mako's life remain repressed and inaccessible, and this makes her a marginal, even criminal, woman. When Mako is under interrogation in the third section, she is asked about her daily life in the outside world. The police are frustrated by their inability to link Mako concretely to the suicide of the old woman and instead try to establish a pattern of suspicious behavior. The details of the dialogue are elided from the narration, but Mako apparently describes her undifferentiated days, noting that her repetitive activities are subject to the *taidô* that marks the end of the day:

She would return to her sleeping-place and just wait for the collapsing, rumbling sea-like *taidô* that followed her moving self, pushing forth from the end of the darkness, to announce the end of the day. (69)

Mako doesn't concern herself with the specifics of place, such as a home; she seeks out only a "sleeping-place" (*ne-basho*). For Mako, sleep is a drive to be fulfilled, and symbolic boundaries provide no obstacles. Her drug overdose poses a problem by occurring in a public space, highlighting Mako's confusion of a station platform ("*hômu*") with an appropriate place to sleep (the home).

Cultural critic and translator Itô Morio, in a 1970 article on drifter (*fûten*) identity, describes the normativity of the house (*ie*) as "the life goal" of "an overwhelming majority of the people." The drifters who eschew this normative concept do not participate in the "orderly rhythm of daily life" that consists of "traveling from home to work and then work to home."⁶⁰ The link between work and identity becomes part of the case against Mako when she is interrogated about her involvement in the old woman's suicide. The interrogator, frustrated at Mako's ambivalence toward his questions, asks her,

"Have you ever worked a job, properly (*chanto*) leaving the house in the morning, returning in the evening, receiving a paycheck for a month's work? Have you ever lived like that?" (68)

The interrogator mimics Itô Morio's construction of the poles "home" and "work," using

⁶⁰ Itô Morio, "Genkaku no naka no kizoku ishiki: ikigai to shite no fûten-ron" *Bessatsu ushio* 19 (Autumn 1970), pp 232-234.

the word “*chanto*” to emphasize the normative thrust behind the question. Mako claims to have held many jobs, but the narrative describes her attachment to them as tenuous. (For example, if it rains and Mako has no umbrella, she simply stops going to that job and finds piecemeal work elsewhere.) By merely failing to follow an “orderly rhythm” of normativity rather than out of evidence of criminal activity, Mako becomes an object of suspicion to the police.

In the second half of the hospital scene, the police officer meets the social worker (the *seikatsu sôdan-in*, or “consultant on living life”), who takes charge of Mako’s case in lieu of the police. The social worker reveals that Mako indeed has an apartment, that she is renting the second floor of a general store. However this apartment is deemed wrong in every way. Mako has falsified information about a guarantor,⁶¹ a person who might normally vouch for her so that she can be released from the hospital. Moreover, the social worker describes the apartment as though it is a part of Mako, a sign of her relation to her “*seikatsu*”/life:

“I went and looked at the room, but it made me wonder why she even bothers to live. There’s no television or radio, and she’s not even subscribed to a newspaper. The proprietress of the store said that she was always afraid something like this would happen with you.” (21)

The social worker reveals that a life worth living is, at the very least, one connected to the mass media. He tells this to the police officer, but the statement is meant to underscore Mako’s non-normativity. The following sentence is directed right at Mako (as *kimi*, a second-person pronoun directed toward someone younger or lower in status) and only serves to admonish her further.

This agent of the welfare state claims that his role is to provide “guidance on living” (*seikatsu shidô*) to “safely return this type of person back to society,” but first he must establish her otherness. He says to Mako that he will send her “to a ‘home’ (*hômû*) that only admits people just like you” (22). The “home” is in neighboring Chiba, outside of the

⁶¹ This refers to the “*hoshônin*,” someone who signs a pledge that guarantees that the signatory of a rental contract will abide by the terms of the contract.

metropolis, and Mako humbly responds that she will go. Mako's confusion between the platform (*hōmu*) and a proper household-like "home" is to be resolved by placing her in a euphemistic "home" (*hōmu*) that will reform her wayward tendencies. Mako's inability to differentiate one "*hōmu*" from another is confusingly and ironically reiterated by the plan to send her to yet another "*hōmu*," where this ambiguity will be ironed out.

The social worker's pre-mature sense of pride in having solved yet another case — "I've never once failed yet," he claims (23) — also contributes to the irony of the situation. The officer asks the social worker what kind of daily life Mako will have in the home and the response is tellingly blunt:

"It's free."

The old man stood up.

"It's far freer than most people think. They let you do what you want. And then they send you back to society in accordance with your IQ." (23)

The dialogue indicates that the institutional sense of "free" is thoroughly naturalized in the discourse of the welfare state. In the symbolic, "freedom" appears to signify the ability to commute between public and private spaces. The marginal Mako is deemed unable to follow this paradigm — she does not seem to have any sense of "home" — and will be remanded to an institution, one that is purported to be "free," to re-train her on the proper boundaries of space and time. The text uses the social worker to set up a straw man by establishing the institutional meanings of "home" and "freedom" and "life" (*seikatsu*): home is a social welfare facility, life is circumscribed by the mass media, freedom is something one must be institutionalized to enjoy. TYP contrasts Mako's unbounded movement to a concept of "freedom" that is heavily mediated by social norms, hierarchy, and the apparatus of the state.

Mako's marginality is directly linked to those daily performances that transgress the invisible boundaries produced as an effect of the home/work division. The text constructs the normative center by demonstrating that its ideologies create a naturalized language that effaces the artificiality of its deployment. A proper subject travels between

“home” and “work” and is thus able to live a “free” life. Mako must instead be institutionalized in order to learn to perform this freedom; paradoxically, the social worker suggests that she should be ostracized and confined in order to be allowed to “do what [she] wants.” When Mako follows her drives, however, she is led along the “flow” that moves from life toward death. She has no need for the kinds of “freedom” circumscribed by social connections or obligations, which only hamper her daily life along the flow. To achieve this, she relies on the force of the *taidô* to deconstruct anything that prevents her expression of these drives, including the rhetoric of “rehabilitation” by the state. The refusal of these artificial meanings results in social marginalization, but the text suggests that ostracism is for Mako preferable to the symbolic indoctrination she would receive in the institutions that construct and naturalize social boundaries.

SIGNIFICATION> By obeying the dictates of the *taidô*, Mako reduces anything material to forms and dispatches all specificity. Thus when one encounter ends, the signifiers produced within that encounter are subject to a violent dissolution.

Behind the moving men, the middle of the room begins to collapse. As they walk, all of the things they talked about are, presently, dragged off slithering in a straight line, banging against the floor.
(23)

This detritus drifts through the world in fragments, floating signifiers detached from their respective contexts. Mako still has memories, but they are not ordered by chronology or the fixed identity of others. Instead, Mako has flashbacks, hazy recollections of past interactions that are triggered by random associations before vanishing. For example, after Mako leaves the hospital in the first scene, she wanders amid the crowds, not aware of where in Tokyo she might be but “only sure that she’s smack in the middle of the previous night’s *taidô*” (25). Thereafter she hears the voices of the police officer and the nurse “that had already passed,” discussing the fact that Mako has no idea where she is. Mako’s memory deterritorializes the fragmented signifiers from

the past into a hallucination, represented in the narrative through analepsis, and recycles its elements absent any context or subject or reference. The result is a daily life unencumbered by either the boundaries of the present or the weight of the recorded past.

TYP suggests that the underlying premise of symbolic signification, fostering society's attitude toward written records, leads to the oppression of Mako, for whom liberation from the boundaries of meaning and identity maintain her position in the flow of life. The official files on Mako raise immediate red flags to those tasked with enforcing the rules, highlighting the lack of stability in her daily life. Writing, represented this way, fixes meanings that are (we are to believe, inherently) unstable and creates the illusion of some truth that can be circulated widely outside of any context. TYP pushes this supposition by portraying how written documents are the medium through which the state asserts its control, its ideologies couched in language that naturalizes the normative. The documents form the backbone of a "web" of surveillance and punishment that guarantees that "outlaws" (*o-tazune-mono*) like Mako will never completely evade the grip of the normative center. Mako, for her part, resists this web by refusing to accord written records any significance, relegating the construction and codification of meaning to others.

The symbolic is portrayed in the text through the construction of a rigidly logocentric society in which time is a measure of work, where value accumulates in objects, and for which death denies meaning and must be prevented. The society rests on the construction of all value mediated through its signifying structures. To achieve this end, to represent the communal will, the social welfare state has constructed a web of structures responsible for surveillance and discipline. Not surprisingly, these structures reflect and reproduce the ideology of identity mentioned above. The continuity of the society lies in foundational values reliant on an accordance between signifier and

signified. These values pervade the written documents that chart Mako's position in society. However, the reliance on these documents, it seems, supersedes the objects to which they refer. The social worker enters the hospital and has a diagnosis of and prescription for Mako before even talking to her. The interrogator and stenographer at the Aki detention facility continually refer to the documents that will tell them everything they need or want to know — presuming that Mako is willfully withholding information. To Mako, the papers are just another “surface,” something that relates to her as it intersects with her “plane.” They consist of signifiers with little relationship to a signified, such as her falsified form for a guarantor for her apartment.

Where the communal society achieves order through the stability of meaning, the *taidô* unsettles everything. In the first section, after Mako has promised the police officer and social worker that she will go to the institutional “home” the following morning, the two men leave her alone in the hospital for the night.

The present stage that had collapsed at her feet now scatters, and the underground *taidô* pushing up from the end of the night drags it off into the boundless darkness as it fragments further.

The names of the two men are also stripped away, their forms turning into countless shards and just drifting about at her feet. The words they spoke had already dropped their meanings, the words beginning to wilt one at a time.

The yellow rays of headlights pierce their way into the room, each one cutting off its connection to the surroundings, everything becoming mutually disconnected. The forms of life floated upward vibrantly.

Standing barefoot on the floor, Mako watched them for a long time. Encountering this vision of them melting into the *taidô* from the bottom of the earth, and then becoming that very *taidô*, she began to feel that even her own form as a human was now something utterly without meaning. (23)

When the men leave, the context — the “stage” — is demolished by the *taidô*. This includes anything of significance in the symbolic, and the text specifically targets the meanings of words and the identities of the two men. Moreover, the *taidô* fragments everything in front of Mako, without discrimination, and assimilates the pieces in a spectacle for her to witness. Nothing that occurred previously, including the discussion of the “home” in Chiba, carries any meaning for Mako. We understand that she will not relocate to an institution; for her, nothing spoken, no promise made, retains any substance outside of the ephemeral context of its utterance.

Mako does not completely eschew writing, but her *performance* of writing precludes investment in the fundamental presumptions of enduring meaning and value. In the first section, the social worker arrives in the hospital after checking on the address for the guarantor Mako used to get her room above a general store. He finds that she had falsified her form, which reinforces her need for discipline. Mako remembers filling the form in meticulously, but her focus was less on the content of her characters than the thorough completion of the form.

She felt it was best that she didn't leave any blanks. If she were to leave blanks on these documents that bound her to the general store, the insecurity and turbulence from her life over there in the town would shoot up out of those blanks. It was in order to hold it all back that she put so much effort into writing each and every character.

“Yes, but the contents are complete nonsense.” Mako listened to the voices of the two men rising together.

She felt that the characters that she crammed on the page, one by one, are not of the general nature of things that one can detach from the page and individually confirm. (20)

Mako appropriates the legal document not as a holder of meaning or a claim of social interdependence but simply as a means to an end. Writing for her is not a means of representing any kind of truth but a social performance necessary to acquire shelter. To smooth the application for a room, she seems to have carefully filled in every section of the form, with little regard for any external truth. To Mako, the contents of the form are ephemeral and contextual. She accepts only the premise of the document while completely undermining its social purpose. Mako's ambivalence toward stable meaning is narrated in response to the claim that she filled in “nonsense”: words on the page have no external reference.

In the third section, this resistance to stable signification ultimately coheres into a resistance to normative subjugation by the state. Under interrogation for her part in the old woman's suicide, Mako is confronted with the state's extensive documentation of her life. The documents accumulated by the police and presented in front of Mako are, to her, “recycled” fragments of “the collapsed traces of a self that had already become the past” (71). The narration represents this past as a “muddy flow” (*dakuryû*), the flow

adulterated by the detritus of what the *taidô* has processed and discarded. This representation of a muddy flow — more accurately a flow that has been “clouded” or “impure” — accords with the de-signification of the past, a turbulent clouding of all meaning that has been detached from its site of production.

The trauma from the past is represented as “a violent whirlpool” that threatens Mako. The documents transform into a whirlpool, a material hallucination of centripetal force experienced as a pull toward the normative center that will destroy her.

She had the feeling that she saw the muddy flow (*dakuryû*) create a violent whirlpool. Out of that appeared the pile of documents on the desk and the interrogator facing Mako and presenting them to her one page at a time.

Mako just stood there.

Each day became one page of paper, and her immense past was piled high. Facing it, she felt the muddy flow again forming a violent whirlpool before her eyes. (74)

While the interrogator and the stenographer read Mako’s past as a truth recorded on paper, Mako views them as “evidence of her deeds” by which “she is controlled.” The policemen suggests that the documents, which trace a continuity between Mako’s disparate and, to her, disconnected actions and motivations, are at the center of the state’s “web” designed to ensnare people just like her. Because Mako relies on semiotic drives to overcome the restrictions imposed by symbolic norms, she feels constricted by the magnitude of papers that bind her to social meaning. The symbolic creates a kind of violent cloudiness in the flow that prevents Mako from dissociating from her past and moving forward. The stack of papers that purports to signify her identity to the state are experienced as oppressive objects that disrupt her otherwise inscrutable day-to-day existence.

In concluding my discussion of the *taidô*, I would like to note that the threat Mako perceives from her entrapment in the symbolic has an analog in the drug. Just as the stack of documents disrupts the flow, the lingering drug in Mako’s body prevents her from leaving her overdose in the past. After Mako leaves the hospital, she heads far from the city center. She stumbles off the sidewalk and into the street, where a taxi driver

picks her up. Here the narrator notes that “the turbidity (*nigori*) of yesterday’s medicine still remained” (32) in her body. I link this “turbidity” to the “muddy flow”⁶² created out of the files that depict Mako’s criminality, noting that the cloudiness appears to emerge from the threat of signifiers seeking in her their stable signified. The analogy that precipitates out of this connection — the symbolic is to the flow as the drug is to Mako’s body — indicates that Mako is subject to control by meanings until she can expel them; the symbolic is likened to a foreign substance that lingers until rejected by the body. This analogy underscores the *taidô*’s process of expelling the symbolic in order to liberate Mako’s drives from a web of social meanings. Instead of adhering to bounded spaces and fixed timetables, the *taidô* permits Mako to live only according to the dictates of the “flow.” Rather than construct Mako’s identity out of social relations, the *taidô* dissolves meaning and gives priority to the fulfillment of her drives.

LIBERATION

Drugs often serve as boundary-crossing narrative instruments, used to signify material substances while also implicating the narrative in the distorting effects of their use. In TYP the drug signifies ambiguously. It emphasizes the marginality of the protagonist, but it also haunts the productive-worker normativity of the man furnishing it to her.

Although never designated specifically, the drug opens TYP to multiple realities until the hallucinatory *taidô* is established as a narrated reality in its own right. The text uses the drug to highlight overdetermined discourse — though it can do little to stanch overdetermined critical metadiscourse — and reveal the ambiguities that underlie the relations between the individual and society. In so doing, the deployment of the drug in TYP is weighted toward the semiotic demands of its protagonist and serves as a metaphorical link to her pursuit of unrestrained *jouissance*.

⁶² I highlight this connection because “turbidity” (*nigori*) uses the same *kanji* ideograph as “muddy flow” (*dakuryû*).

Indeed, the greatest challenge presented by TYP is its demand for a reading as a text of *jouissance*. This goes much further than narratives focalized through Nakagami and Murakami's drug-addled protagonists, in which the obscene, the grotesque, and the violent characterize the clash between value (and signifying) systems. Mori's protagonists do not face conflicts but passively observe their resolution in oblivion. The escapist fantasies they perform are abstract in that they attack the modes of signification that create individuals bound tightly to society. Her characters are hard to identify with because they eschew identification as a commonly understood signifying practice. In TYP, the drug signifies the text's fundamental ambivalence toward fixed structures and meanings. The hallucinatory narrative, with its unmarked digressions and inscrutable analeptic passages, breaks down the connections between cause and effect. Politics is beside the point; in TYP, solidarity is expressed only in Mako's assistance of someone committing suicide. Agency and subjecthood, the affirmation of the individual's bond to the communal, are abnegated. Resistance to patriarchal structures is not expressed in a desire to reform or reconstitute but only to avoid, to disavow, to dissociate. TYP suggests an experience at and of the margins as an undercurrent of struggle with the normative, whose centripetal forces try to ensnare its reigning ambivalence. The only weapon available is *jouissance*.

The protagonist of TYP represents a withdrawal from signifying systems and a reconnection with the bare fact of human existence: only by disavowing identity, origin, memory can we build in its place a new life that is not so arbitrarily oppressive. The text insists, in its own ambiguity, on the complete deterritorialization of stable meanings; it does this not only through the narrative construction of an asocial, tentative "self," but also in its disruptive deployment of abstractions. The *taidô* is foremost among these, seducing us with its ubiquity while challenging us with its indecipherability. TYP fosters uncanny similarities to Hamano's depiction of the "Flowing 70s" but shares none of its

optimism. Hamano envisions a “new culture” in which “modern logic” is overcome and individuals live their own creative lives, where every action is a work of art — all of this mediated by a profusion of sex and drugs. He constructs “life” as the development of “human connections that overcome fanaticism, as the liberation of desire, as the proliferation of creativity, as the liberation of sensation”;⁶³ TYP’s account of this process is bleak by comparison.

Mori’s fictional story diverges from Hamano’s vision by disrupting any sense that wanton sex and drug use bring people together to create “art,” much less “liberation.” TYP places its protagonist among various groups of people who are fundamentally disconnected and mutually apathetic outside of their own spheres, despite their nominal investments in symbolic law. Although liberation from “existing systems” or any other oppressive structures would bring relief to the persecution of the marginal, TYP presents the results of any “liberation” as a vast void rather than a communal utopia. In that sense, the story also revolts against the discourse of “*ningen kaifuku*,” the societal response to a perception that economic progress has created social alienation. Mori problematizes *ningen kaifuku* as a punitive approach toward enforcing norms that effaces the contingencies and limits of its own normative definitions. As with discourses of “liberation,” the underlying ideology of this operation calls for examination. In TYP, for example, “free” is deployed euphemistically by the juridical authorities. Mori’s fiction expresses skepticism toward the effectiveness of political liberation. Hamano’s fashion-centric utopia would likely reconfigure the basis for the various forms of exclusion that constitute categories in the first place. The margins would simply be displaced and reconstituted in another form. This is implicit in Hamano’s proclamation that “the other culture” would take the place of “mainstream culture”; his is a tale of winners and losers. TYP’s protagonist does not want to eliminate society; she just wants live outside of its

⁶³ Hamano, “*Kyôshin o koete*,” p. 41.

restrictions. Mako's vexing problem lies in society's persistent attempts to subject her to normative values while simultaneously emphasizing her essential marginality.

The resistance of many critics to TYP's social critique lies in their intolerance toward a narrative that depicts "a meaningless woman walking meaninglessly."⁶⁴ Their readings of TYP fail to raise questions about their own "historical, cultural, psychological assumptions," as Barthes writes, taking for granted a shared social foundation for representing fictional reality. Indeed, it would be nihilistic to simply represent meaninglessness meaninglessly! In TYP, Mori holds up a mirror to contemporary society, refracting its image through the lens of a marginalized woman who transcends its boundaries. It is not dissimilar to what Numa does in *Yapoo*, and what Nakagami and Murakami are noted for doing across their respective oeuvres. Mori's refractions target signifying practice as oppressive, in a general sense, toward the marginal, but on gendered terms in particular. Rather than reading an image of society mediated through the protagonist as the motivation for the text, contemporary critics tried, unsuccessfully, to squeeze meaning out of Mako's actions and abstractions.

GENDERED NORMS> Society is portrayed in TYP as a panoptic web of discipline and punishment that particularly targets socially powerless women. Of concern to the authorities are not the johns who frequent prostitutes, not the young men who spend their days following around women, not the traveling salesmen who steal from the naïve islanders; instead, social control is directed toward the willfully suicidal old woman and Mako, the indifferent "prostitute." The quoted dialogue of the various authority figures specifically targets Mako's gender expression. The police officer describes her as "this kind of woman" to refer to her troublesome nature; the innkeeper couple target her dangerous sexuality, claiming she is "like a cat in heat." Asking Mako about sleeping with

⁶⁴ Akiyama Shun et al, "Wakaranai shōsetsu," p. 114. The interlocutor, in the role of "guide," asks whether "writing about [Mako] holds any meaning for 'our lives,'" and fails to find a convincing answer.

many different men, the interrogator asks a puzzled Mako if that makes her feel “uneasy” (69). All of these comments are directed at a perception of Mako’s out-of-control sexual agency, the presumption that she recognizes the law and is specifically transgressing it. TYP demonstrates that the symbolic not only fixes meanings where they might be left ambiguous, but that it further overdetermines the actions of a marginal woman with respect to her sexuality.⁶⁵ This is nothing new, of course; modern societies, including Japan, have often established the boundaries of the social by inscribing them on the bodies of women.

I read TYP’s critique of this gendering of marginality as targeting the methods by which the symbolic system represents or represses difference. While the story is full of examples in which ambiguities are repressed, there is one mysterious scene in which there is evidence of repression of the symbolic, too. On Kusujima, Mako is baited by the “buglers,” a group of traveling salesmen-musicians who solicit her outside her window one night: “We know all about you... you won’t refuse” (53). What follows appears to be a gang-rape, though its details are completely elided from the text. First, as Mako approaches the men, she senses that she “will be able, after quite some time, to arrive in that underground world of darkness that opens up the end of a day” (55). Then the narrator merely depicts Mako “feeling in all parts of her body the weight of the men, like clumps of pleasure rubbing up against her body.” When she wakes up the next morning, she feels “the *taidô* dragging the flesh of her body along with it toward the horizon.” The sexual act becomes all the more astonishing in its absence. Mako may only perceive this encounter as the conversion of “desire” (*yokubô*) to the “collapsing feeling” (*kyodatsukan*) that fills her the next morning, but the narrative refuses to represent the

⁶⁵ Sexual difference, I should note, is also key to Kristeva’s formulation of the semiotic chora. Prior to the establishment of the phallus as the *ur*-signifier, the lack that underscores the rift between signifier and signified, the infant recognizes the continuity between its own and its mother’s body. I will explore this attachment to the maternal more in the next chapter on Nakagami, the semiotic excesses of whose matrilineal family web constantly disrupt and forestall the protagonist’s auto-analytic narrative.

sex, whether as rape or as somehow consensual, as anything carrying meaning. The elision of details in this encounter owes, I believe, not to the somehow insignificant nature of rape, nor to the symbolic construction of rape as discourse beyond the ken of the semiotic. Rather, I infer that the scene is elided because it *doesn't even hold* significance in the symbolic. The symbolic attends to the methods by which Mako's lack of boundaries disrupts normative social codes; as a marginal woman, there is no need to represent the sexual violence perpetrated against her. For her part, Mako brushes off the encounter as she does the grains of sand beneath her back, intent to continue down the path of "the flow." No floating signifiers from the gang rape will return to oppress her because the significance of this act is always already repressed in discourse. It is troubling that the unwritten violence appears not the least bit consequential; without any explanation, the text ends up replicating a naturalized violence toward women rather than offering a critique.

The text's criticism instead targets the broader linguistic structure that supports social normativity and represses difference. TYP represents a marginal woman who withdraws to a space of symbiosis that, for her, only exists outside the normative center. The protagonist is continually rebuffed and violently pulled toward that center, which takes every opportunity to mark her marginality. She embodies an ambivalent waywardness that disturbs the center by refuting its significance. Her gender, in particular, highlights the ascription of her marginality to a dangerous sexuality while making imperative society's need to "rehabilitate" her according to its own codes. The confusion and in some cases opprobrium of critics faced with TYP serve as an indicator of the strength of that center, foregrounding its resistance even to the acknowledgment that norms perpetuate violence.

Mori's existentialist-inspired "flow" gives priority to *jouissance*. TYP depicts the flow as the singular and fundamental truth through which an individual can experience

“liberation.” “Liberation” from the oppressive codes imposed by society occurs only in solitude; others traverse the same unidirectional path toward death, but ultimately “people are alone.” Hamano similarly constructs his “Flowing 70s” out of a deconstruction of the symbolic order: “the modish (*kyôteki*) way is to quit trying to fix things in fixed concepts like ‘fields’ or ‘territories’ and is the singular path to live as a human in this decade of the 70s.”⁶⁶ However this deconstruction is in fact a perpetual reconstruction under the symbolic logic of fashion; the “fluidity” of categories is but a continuous reshuffling of the deck, displacing one symbolic system for another. Rather than disrupting the symbolic with incursions of semiotic *jouissance*, Hamano restructures the symbolic so that it affirms all “desire.” Gender difference appears to be the pitfall of this utopia, though. Hamano predicts that the “new people” who populate his fashion-oriented society will be oriented as “trans-sexual,” erasing difference in the expression of gender as either masculine or feminine. The erasure of gender difference ultimately fails to account for how an imagined society of fluid values will recognize that difference. The transcendent (masculine) universal subject, after all, takes his subjecthood for granted. Mako represents a position that deems subjectification — the subjection to subjecthood — as duly suspicious. Anything — signifiers, values, meanings, the law — that interferes with the primacy of the “flow” and its unadulterated expression of the path of existence is subject in TYP to demolition by the *taidô*. Only by transgressing the boundaries of the normative, by disrupting the values of being a subject, will the protagonist be free of society’s incessant oppression.

⁶⁶ Hamano, “Kyôshin o koete,” p. 12.

Chapter Three

Everything is Fake: The Inauthentic “I” of “Gray Coca-Cola”

Nakagami Kenji discovered that he had an improbable gift for writing, improbable given the circumstances of his upbringing. His mother was only semi-literate, and for much of his early childhood his single-parent household faced poverty and instability. After high school, Nakagami fled the coastal community of Shingû, hemmed in between the mountains and the sea in an area known as Kumano, for Tokyo, taking advantage of the new train connection that had just been completed. Perhaps he thought he would never look back. The metropolis in the mid-1960s, teeming with millions of people at the peak of a postwar migration phenomenon, served as the center of contemporary youth culture, political activism, and cosmopolitan intellectuals. As much as Tokyo offered the potential for self-discovery or self-re-creation, it also represented a site of dislocation, of fractured identity, and of longing for home in the provinces — none of which, it must be noted, was new in the 1960s, except to Nakagami. Having escaped from Kumano, Nakagami’s writing would gradually flourish. By the time of his untimely death at age 46, in 1992, he would deservedly be considered one of the foremost contemporary Japanese authors.

Many of Nakagami’s early works contain autobiographical elements that have been loosely fictionalized and constructed into narratives. These short stories provide a glimpse of an author searching for his voice, often told from the first-person masculine using the pronouns “*ore*” or “*boku*.” But many also take up directly the issue, the crisis, of who exactly that “I” might be, an “I” with an eye toward a stable, mature, assured

writerly selfhood. In GCC, for example, the protagonist is narrated in the first-person as “*boku*” but uses “*ore*” in dialogue with other characters. (This distinction arises more frequently in Murakami’s work, taken up in the next chapter.) However, when the protagonist speaks to himself, he uses “*boku*,” suggesting that this self concerns him more than the performance of “*ore*” for his friends.⁶⁷ Nakagami skillfully orchestrates fictionalized autobiographical details through protagonists who seek to discover or construct a legible “self” that corresponds to the narrating “*boku*.” Nakagami’s investment in language demonstrates how much he valued the blurring of textual and metatextual issues of representation, baiting the reader to superimpose the “I” onto the author while calling attention to the performativity of writing and narrating.

This struggle to construct, define, and write a “self” took place in the midst of a frenetic engagement with various subcultures in the turbulent capital. His ability as an author to mold a fictional narrative as he saw fit prompted Nakagami to question the relationship between representation and reality. The availability of all manner of drugs carried this representation issue into the realms of experience and sensation and knowledge — what is real or authentic or true or even meaningful outside of a narrow subjective lens? His introduction to avant-garde jazz in cafés throughout the Shinjuku section of Tokyo highlighted a new paradigm of discordant rhythm and provocative combinations of sounds, one that could be said to either mimic the bustling city or offer a model for how to represent the confusion therein. The fact that most of the jazz musicians were African American offered the allure of a position of outsider authenticity to art, as well. These were among the factors that provoked a confrontation in Nakagami’s writing between the autobiographical as story versus his own lived experienced, the narrativization of the self and the dissimulating underside of

⁶⁷ I speculate that the distinction between these two first-person pronouns lies in consideration of the audience for each. The gruffer *ore* is assertive when used with friends or, for a young child, with family members. The softer *boku* puts forth a diminutive stance that seeks sympathy or understanding. Either pronoun can be deployed strategically to suit the posture of the speaker.

representation. These questions arose — though never naïvely — out of the stark contrasts between Tokyo and Kumano; however Nakagami’s exploration of these issues in the form of short fiction underscored the continuities and differences in relations of gender, class, ethnicity, political engagement, and familial structure, as well as their manifestation in linguistic practice, between the two sites. This in turn offered Nakagami an opening for the exploration of his characters’ subjecthood and the subject’s constitution through imagined places, through intoxicated sensation and bodily experience, and through family.

In this chapter I take up the short story “Gray Coca-Cola,” published in 1972 in *Waseda bungaku*.⁶⁸ GCC is a heteroglossic text of multiple voices and dialects of Japanese, replete with rampant drug use and depictions of imagined violence, where the grotesque body is placed on display alongside the grotesque psyche. My reading highlights the text as an experimental sketch on writing fiction out of the material of experience, sensation, and memory. The story purports to interrogate the struggle to define a narrative selfhood in a world in which everything is increasingly revealed to be “fake.” It sets up a conflict between two places, Tokyo and Kumano, which respectively represent modes of clashing signification in a struggle to control the narrative of the self. GCC highlights the protagonist’s use of drugs as a narrative technology. Drugs, along with free jazz, provide openings in which the narrative is disrupted by various elements tied to the abject⁶⁹ of the protagonist’s origins, memories and sensations that haunt him and prevent him from moving beyond the realization that “everything is fake.”

GCC is an experimental sketch of how to stage the conflict between what Kristeva theorizes as the symbolic and the semiotic by using drugs to shape the narration such

⁶⁸ Nakagami Kenji, “Haiiro no kokakôra,” *Waseda bungaku dai-7-ji* 4:10 (October 1972), pp. 8-59. (Hereafter GCC, with page numbers cited in parentheses in the body of the chapter.)

⁶⁹ By “abject” I refer to Julia Kristeva’s depiction of all that is “radically excluded” from the subject “I”: “It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.” Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 1-4. Death is a prime example of abjection.

that binaries — of dream and reality, of life and death, of ideal-self and fragmented self — collapse under the weight of their ambiguity. The story, told in a series of linked vignettes, is driven less by plot than it is by sheer force of the symbolic-semiotic conflict. That conflict congeals in the question, “Who am I?,” and the story progresses as this solipsistic crisis of the self plunges the protagonist deeper into the memories of his childhood. The crisis of a self torn between the center/Tokyo and periphery/Kumano maps very neatly — indeed too neatly — onto the differences between the normative and the marginal, the subject and the abject. Drugs become one of the obstacles that prevent any lucid narrativization of a self, but they are crucial in pointing out the elusive nature of the very project of seeking out a self. Drugs — as well as jazz, which have a complex relationship both inside and outside the text — determine the contours of the narrative in many of the scenes by providing impetus for a change in the technique of focalization. Drugs also provide openings — ambiguities, particularly the convergence of dream and reality — that evoke an alternate narrative space for semiotic expression. At the end of the story, the protagonist resorts to a large dose of drugs to stage his own self-destruction — literally, the destruction of his symbolic self.

The story’s interrelated vignettes are repeatedly interrupted by analeptic passages in the form of dreams, fantasies, and hallucinations. The analepses disrupt the act of reading the story by suddenly shifting the focus or voice or sentence structure of the narrator, but they also underscore the protagonist’s struggle to form coherence out of intersecting, illogical experiences. This struggle is heavily reliant on Doloran, a moderate painkiller sold to alleviate toothaches and menstrual cramps, and at times it is unclear whether the narration is filtered through the Doloran numbness or enabled by it. The ubiquitous white Doloran pills are part of a vicious circle of apathy and identity crisis, and as such the causes and effects are mutually constitutive. Doloran (as with drugs broadly in the text) is a supplement to Akira’s Tokyo life that underscores its

incompleteness, its primal lack, and forces him to account for the repeated upsurge of nonsensical elements — markers of alterity, memories, facets of his identity — that interfere with his attempts to find that completeness.

What I have described as nonsensical elements, however, hold an important place in the protagonist's memory and return to his consciousness when an association is triggered. Present narrated time of the protagonist's sensations and experiences in Tokyo maps onto the space of the symbolic. Akira has come to Tokyo to seek a university education and the elite status that this represents. Narration from Akira's past — or from an undifferentiated time that interrupts the linearity of the narrative — I refer to as the semiotic, expressions that disrupt the flow of the symbolic narrative and problematize its linear time, its standard language, or its construction of a coherent spatial location. The issue of self-identification plays out here as Akira's intoxication is in full spate and, as a consequence, any established boundaries dissolve and the past and present overlap. This collapse of time is a result of the structure of the text, which enables a degree of looseness in narrative time so that shifts between what I am calling the semiotic and symbolic expressions in the text occur without explicit demarcation.

To highlight the repetition of themes throughout GCC, I begin by introducing one of the digression-like vignettes in the text, a pair of scenes that take place right after Akira's friend Mori,⁷⁰ a native Tokyoite six or seven years older, has (allegedly) committed suicide. Akira breaks into a supermarket one night, but this burglary is remarkably unmotivated — only after breaking into the Peacock Store does he wonder what he should steal. Nonetheless, the very act of breaking and entering summons a recounting of a series of three memories from his childhood. One involves his 12-year-old brother,

⁷⁰ In significant ways, Mori is everything Akira is not — from the urban center, “bourgeois” and raised without any notable issues in a stable family (37). As a fellow *fūten* (drifter) who hangs out at jazz café R, Mori performs his role as elder superciliously, a self-proclaimed “mutant” and “*voyant*” (*vowaiyan*, visionary) whose acceptance of his own “fakeness” is constituted by a sharp divide between himself and the rest of the “yellow-skinned” “fake-jazz listeners” using “fake sleeping pills” (15).

whose suicide at age 24 has left deep, unresolved scars that Akira had successfully repressed until he moved to Tokyo. Akira's impending criminal activity leads him to remember when his brother broke into a store to get New Year's presents for his family. Another memory that stems from the first shifts to a group of childhood friends, some of whom stole some mandarin oranges. Upon finding out about this theft, Akira's mother and brother punished him in turn. Finally, Akira recalls the time his grandmother visited and offered him a sweet jelly treat (*yôkan*). Akira refused by spitting on the ground, provoking his brother into punching him. "I recall how much I regretted that over and over again, and I'll absolutely never forget it" (43).

This narrative recounting of the past in the present is attributed to Akira's casual attitude toward his brother's suicide — "I told you so!" (*sora miro*) (43) and "Serves you right!" (*zamaa miro*) (41) — triggered in large part by a similar attitude toward his friend Mori's suicide: "It'd be better if everyone went and died. What do I care where Mori vaporized off to?" (43) Akira's initial experiences in Tokyo lead him to believe that the metropolis is a city of "corpses" (*shitai*) going about their daily routines. He rampages intoxicated about the mundane city, crashing indiscriminately into both passers-by and a series of weighty, recurrent memories from his past. Life and death in this schema are not so clearly differentiable, and thus the memories of both the dead older brother and Mori retain a vitality in Akira's mind that the millions of residents of Tokyo lack.

To tell the truth, everyone is dead. Dead humans give birth to dead children, and the dead children grow bigger as they are given dead toys and a dead dog and a dead ginkgo tree and dead red flowers the color of vomit about to be spit up. Rotten cunt. Standing there, I reached for my genitals. For a moment I thought that my genitals were afflicted with syphilis and starting to rot. (44)

Torment from the past colors everything in the present. The abjection Akira must expel to completely separate himself from those memories has permeated his body and is destroying it. The interjection lashing out at female reproductive organs makes the maternal body complicit in this destruction. However there is no simple reversal of the terms of life and death here; rather, death in the context of Tokyo characterizes the daily

life of the occupants of an imagined center. Life and death in the story become meaningful terms only in Akira's perception of them in opposition to the unshakable ties to his abject origins.

The purposeless Peacock Store burglary, which goes awry before it even begins, ends in murder, the recounting of which contains trace memories of Akira's reaction to his brother's suicide. Akira, penis in hand, begins to urinate as though playfully drawing a landscape portrait; he is summarily apprehended by the store's security guard, who hits him on the head with a flashlight and tries to drag him back to the office. Akira wrenches free and pulls out an icepick he had brought along. He stabs the guard repeatedly as the narration switches rapidly between Akira's psychopathic violence and descriptions of the guard trying to defend himself. Akira runs away to avoid being caught, but his first response to his own violent action is "serves you right" (*zamaa miro*), the same response he had when he learned of his brother's suicide (44). The brother who in death remains ever-present in Akira's mind must be destroyed by proxy, and this guard was the unfortunate victim of circumstance.

Except that there was no murder. As Akira continues to run away out of fear, he realizes that the icepick has "vanished without a trace." Moreover, in a frenzied state, he has coincidentally returned to the scene of the crime he had just fled. The only evidence of the previously narrated events is a cold, wet urine stain on his pants. Suddenly Akira wonders,

was it all an event in a dream? It felt like nothing more than a lie. Everything was little more than a hallucinatory side effect of the toothache-and-menstrual cramp painkillers. (45)

Drugs render the narrative focalization unreliable. The discrepancy between dream and reality — which is narrated, which is experienced, and how does one make the distinction? — underscores the inability of representation to be held up to any ideal correspondence with anything "real." The drug produces a trace that characterizes any narration of experience: lacking accountability to any reality, textual or metatextual.

It would be plausible, in light of this portrayal of representation, to throw up one's hands in exasperation at such a text. I am instead inclined to uncover how the text arrives at this conclusion. I introduce this vignette because it highlights the major interweaving themes that appear ubiquitously throughout the text. In this chapter, I will address these points in more detail as they reveal the ways in which GCC situates Nakagami's tangled relationships with identity, representation, and memory. In the next section, I will address how GCC stages the questioning of the self as a process of complicating identity and problematizing the relationship between the textual and the metatextual. In the following section, I will address the ways in which drug intoxication and writing demolish the possibility of truth in representation as the protagonist comes to the realization that "everything is a lie." This ties into a construction of the protagonist as trapped in a metaphorical "mirror stage," struggling to break free and become a full-fledged subject but tormented by his connections to his childhood. Nakagami constructs the story of this torment around a series of binaries — life and death and reality and unreality the foremost among them — that fold back upon themselves and undermine the categories within which Akira had been operating. At the end of the text, as Akira ingests painkiller after painkiller and laments that "there is no hope," that he "will never be free," it becomes clear that the binaries represented false dichotomies from the start. Akira's irresolvable dilemmas ultimately demonstrate that constructing the "self" is not a choice between becoming an autonomous subject or regressing to childhood, but is a matter of accepting the self as a hybrid construction subject to the vagaries and dissimulating qualities of representation. Incorporating the traces of the past into a presence in the text fails to resolve issues of authenticity, veracity, or autonomy, but allows these problems to be channeled through narrative processes that transcend the all-or-nothing binaries of real/fake, life/death, and subject/object.

THE AUTHOR AND THE “BOKU”

Nakagami Kenji, born in 1946, was raised by his mother and lived at first with older siblings whose only blood connection to him was that mother. The household was extremely poor.⁷¹ While Kenji was in elementary school, his mother married a contractor, but took only Kenji to live with her, leaving her older children to fend for themselves. Kenji’s older brother committed suicide when Kenji was 13. As a result of his mother’s remarriages, Kenji’s last name changed several times. His adopted father was named Nakaue, but when Kenji moved to Tokyo and started writing after high school, he took the name Nakagami — which uses the same pair of *kanji* characters as Nakaue — and it stuck.

In Tokyo, Nakagami enrolled in a prep school that would ready him for university entrance exams, but he stopped going after a short stint there. Through friends he discovered the wonders of the youth-filled Shinjuku section of the city, including the intoxicating sounds of avant-garde jazz and the availability of all manner of drugs. Nakagami also pretended to be a Waseda student and joined student protests as he worked on his writing, acquiring a taste — and distaste — for the turbulent leftist politics of late-1960s Tokyo. In the 1970s, for the sake of his writing, Nakagami claimed to have settled down and left his jazz-and-drug lifestyle — and any writing about it — behind him.⁷²

GCC is grouped with Nakagami’s “early works” in the anthology of his writing. These

⁷¹ It is almost *de rigueur* to highlight that Nakagami was born to *burakumin* parents and grew up in the outcaste neighborhood of Shingū. *Burakumin* is a euphemistic term used to describe an archaic taboo designation of people who performed occupations thought to be unclean. Nakagami did not avow his *burakumin* origins until five years after the publication of this text, however, so I have chosen to avoid drawing an overdetermined, direct line between the depiction of abjection and his *buraku* identity. For more information on Nakagami’s relation to the *buraku*, see Eve Zimmerman, *Out of the Alleyway: Nakagami Kenji and the Poetics of Outcaste Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), pp. 4-11, 17-18, and 40-43.

⁷² *Nakagami Kenji vs. Murakami Ryū: oretachi no fune wa, ugokanu kiri no naka o, tomozuna o toite* — (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1977), p. 25.

works, often viewed as “immature,”⁷³ were published between 1965 and 1974 in the magazines *Bungei shuto*, *Waseda bungaku*, and *Bungei*. Desperate to see his writing in print, Nakagami paid the 150-yen fee to join *Bungei shuto*, a literary coterie, and submitted his earliest manuscripts there. He saw the various coterie magazines as the best venues for eventually getting himself noticed by “that society that used to be called the ‘*bundan*’” (literary establishment).⁷⁴ With this in mind, I will illustrate that GCC is much more than a fledgling story by a confused, displaced young writer. Rather, I read it as an experimental work in which Nakagami cannily deploys and interrogates different modes of representation across a series of stark binaries in order to narrate the discovery of how to construct a narrative.

Nakagami later recounted that GCC was originally written for the then up-and-coming literary journal *Subaru*, but the editors wanted significant and repeated revision.⁷⁵ It was submitted two-and-a-half years later to *Waseda bungaku*, where it was published without such ado. GCC is the best example of Nakagami’s writing that focuses primarily on drugs and their narrative potential. The title bears very little on the content of the text. Coca-Cola is mentioned only once in the text, and it is explicitly depicted as “brown.” “Gray” (*haiiro*, literally “ash-colored”), however, appears often in the text, as well as other early Nakagami fiction, to describe the Tokyo cityscape and the protagonist’s ambivalent position therein. Neither black nor white, gray represents the blurring of the binaries set up in the text, which combine to form a slurry of ambiguity. Perhaps the title posits gray as a metaphor for the lens through which the narrative focalization represents the protagonist’s thoughts and actions.

The opacity of the title notwithstanding, GCC was published in *Waseda bungaku*

⁷³ Nina Cornyetz, *Dangerous Women, Deadly Words: Phallic Fantasy and Modernity in Three Japanese Writers* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 207. Cornyetz is paraphrasing the critics who assemble each year at Shingû rather than offering her own assessment of these works.

⁷⁴ Nakagami Kenji, “Jûhassai no koro” *Bungakukai* 31:10 (October 1977), pp. 165-166. The magazines put out by these coteries were viewed as the means by which a burgeoning writer could get noticed by the established literati.

⁷⁵ Nakagami Kenji, *Jidai ga owari, jidai ga hajimaru* (Tokyo: Fukutake Shoten, 1988), p. 252.

without any signs of editing, full of typographical errors and inconsistent punctuation. Nakagami's style features a compulsive shift between long, dependent clause-heavy sentences and short, staccato declarative statements. In the early works, simile is wielded like a blunt instrument; there is also an abundance of imagery concerning the gaping body, bodily fluids and scents, and comparisons to the bodies of non-human animals. Reading some of the archived manuscripts submitted in Nakagami's handwriting, I am struck by the rounded characters that completely fill the squares as though the paper is barely able to contain the force of the words.

Nakagami was very savvy about using his "outsider" status once he successfully joined in the discourse of Japanese literary critics. He claimed in a 1977 published collection of discussions with Murakami Ryû that he wanted his fiction to be like "setting a bomb."⁷⁶ Nakagami wanted to be a literary terrorist, but his ability to plant his "bombs" was contingent upon first infiltrating the critical discourse. Nakagami seemed to consider this outsider stance a means of acquiring the authority to set himself apart as a writer, as not educated at college, as a poor provincial émigré struggling to negotiate the urban, cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Tokyo metropolis. Murakami, who had become an instant celebrity after publishing his debut work (see Chapter Four), suggested to Nakagami that he stop trying to escape from the "land" of Kumano in his writing and develop Kumano as a motif.⁷⁷ Nakagami had been constructing Kumano as a motif of alterity from his earliest stories, but his conversation with Murakami highlights the degree to which he invested the "authenticity" of his work in sites that eschew privilege or elitism. When Nakagami criticized Murakami for his "bourgeois" experience of Tokyo, of drugs, and of writing,⁷⁸ he marks the junior writer's work as somehow less "authentic" as a result.

⁷⁶ *Nakagami Kenji vs. Murakami Ryû*, p. 51

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Japanese scholars do not take up GCC as an object of analysis. Those dedicated to research on Nakagami meet annually in Shingû for a symposium, and their focus lies almost entirely on Nakagami's writing after he received the Akutagawa Prize in 1975. Shibata Shôji describes Nakagami's early works as portraying a protagonist struggling to become "a full-fledged adult" (*ichininmae no otona*)⁷⁹ and Watanabe Naomi reads GCC as a basically autobiographical work "that represents his early portraits of youth."⁸⁰ The story appears to Watanabe as inconsequential and blasé: "There were numerous youth like Nakagami in Shinjuku at the time, and they wrote about it repeatedly and probably still are writing about it."⁸¹ In this chapter I want to emphasize that GCC is not simply a "portrait of youth," but a depiction of the dilemmas produced in the process of writing that are not simply overcome by maturity. My analysis will focus on how the narrative is constructed to address the conundrums of writing sensation and memory and experience through a protagonist who has not reconciled how to be the subject of those sensations and memories and experiences.

Throughout my analysis, I focus on Nakagami's obsession with the constitution of a "self" that might somehow correspond to the speaking and writing "I." This self is linked both to a maternal body and a complicated personal history, both of which infiltrate the narrative and underscore how the narrating "I" is incomplete or somehow lacking. This lack manifests itself in the narrator's construction of everyone else as Other, and this constructed Other is the measure against which the self experiences lack. In GCC, as in Mori Makiko's "The Yellow Prostitute," the Other occupies the imagined center of society where people blindly adhere to normative standards and never question the difference between words and their unstable meanings. However, Akira must confront the possibility that his suffering lies in the construction of his own "self" negatively in terms

⁷⁹ Shibata Shôji, "Seimei no yodomi: Nakagami Kenji-ron" *Yamaguchi daigaku bungakkai-shi* 40 (1989.12), p. 30.

⁸⁰ Watanabe Naomi, *Nakagami Kenji ron: itoshisa ni tsuite* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobô Shinsha, 1996), p. 57.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

of the Other. Indeed, the repression of his brother's suicide is an effect of treating death as the ultimate split between self and other, between subject and abject. When memories of his brother return to haunt Akira, he begins to realize that defining himself against the masses of "dead" Others is untenable.

As a result of this negative definition, for Akira nothing is as linguistically unstable as the "I" that narrates the text. In GCC, the subject that is stable in the symbolic is always subject to incursions from the semiotic realm of drives and unintelligible rhythms, rendering the "I" a palimpsest whose inscription is never complete. The narration repeatedly foregrounds an acute anxiety over the incompleteness of that "I," understanding that positing a subject in language does not necessarily correspond to the completeness or coherence of that subject as the signified of "I." The narration focalized through Akira uncovers the simulacral nature of *genbun-itchi*, an ideology of modern Japanese literature that posits a foundational concordance between spoken and written language,⁸² illustrated by a persistent questioning of the first-person pronoun. The text repeatedly posits a metaphysical split between presence and absence, where a subject posited as "I" is always beset by incongruities that are repressed. The text accounts for the instability of enunciating that "I" when Akira is intoxicated on painkillers and listening to jazz music. In the next-to-last scene, GCC further mocks the possibility of any authenticity of representing that "I" by portraying the act of confession as contrived performance steeped in repression and omission. Even as the drugs Akira consumes expel the material of abjection from his body, the text traces his gradual awakening to

⁸² Tomi Suzuki provides details of the proposals, theorization, and codification of *genbun-itchi* from the 1880s onward in *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 42-47. The urgency, expressed by intellectuals in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War, of adopting a "national language" that purported to represent a unified vernacular offers an interesting approach to the construction of the nation out of center-versus-periphery binaries problematized throughout Nakagami's oeuvre.

I refer to the ideology of *genbun-itchi* as "simulacral" because, in positing an equivalence between the spoken and the written, it carries the implication that language can offer a transparent representation of experience (Suzuki, p. 8), whereas Nakagami's fiction questions whether signifiers can refer to anything besides other signifiers.

the inability to simply expel from his psyche the semiotic articulations and abject memories they summon; doing so only further destabilizes an “I” that has been defined against its negative terms.

THE MAGGOT IN THE MIRROR

Nakagami used GCC to experiment with the interplay between intoxication and narrative. This trope already had a potent literary history in France as a project of bourgeois culture and led Walter Benjamin to experiment with hashish to better understand the connection. In a distillation of the record of Benjamin’s experiments, Gary Shapiro details how Benjamin discovered that “the space of writing and the time of the hashish trance ... are uncanny variations of one another.”⁸³ Shapiro points out, crucially, that Benjamin does not suggest that the drug trance is somehow transcendental, beyond language or culture, but offers a “profane illumination” that is particularly conducive to the space and time of writing. “As [Benjamin] notes, the illumination achieved is not in the experience itself but in the reflection upon it, a reflection that takes a specifically literary or prosaic form.”⁸⁴ Benjamin’s experiments stemmed from a fascination with a salon of writers in 19th-century Paris. Charles Baudelaire and his cohort of *Hashischins* “equated literary production with drug consumption” so that “life and art thus became one, and both were dreamlike, unreal, asocial.”⁸⁵ In GCC, Nakagami explores how to represent the underside of this relationship, between *death* and art, when the unrepresentable bubbles upward and threatens to collapse all meaning. While the transformation of experiences with death to prose spawns a reflection on the potentialities and pitfalls of relying on the medium of

⁸³ Gary Shapiro, “Ariadne’s Thread: Walter Benjamin’s Hashish Passages” in Anna Alexander and Mark S. Roberts, eds., *High Culture: Reflections on Addiction and Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 60.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

⁸⁵ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: a Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants*, trans. by David Jacobson (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), p. 207.

language, there are occasions when the narrative project appears as simulacrum, when the practice of signifying exceeds and displaces the very referent it seeks to represent.

Throughout the text drugs occupy an ambiguous position, as both material substances and narrative devices. They circulate as licit global pharmaceutical commodities and illicitly trafficked goods, but also as textual supplements to the story's emplotment. Akira self-medicates habitually with Doloran⁸⁶ because it relieves the pain around his wisdom teeth, but it is his drug of choice because it is a cheap, over-the-counter medication. Akira's drug use also catalyzes the infiltration of memories from his past into his experiences of the present, bogging down his daily life in repressed pain. Doloran cannot cure this type of pain, the alleviation of which turns on finding a means to exorcise the repression by incorporating its source. However, through these haunting memories the painkillers stir in Akira an awareness that his present "self" is somehow incomplete; the "I" with which he speaks re-enacts the repression with each enunciation. One solution to this problem, he hopes, lies in uncovering a way in which to inscribe a more complete "self" in his writing, one that can permit him to represent an authentic "I" so that he will not be tormented by his past.

In this section, I will first discuss how the deployment of drugs functions in conjunction with the narrative focalization. Drugs give rise to representations of memory that challenge the narrative authority of Akira's experiences. Drugs and jazz — "so long as I have a case of Doloran and modern jazz, I'm happy" (28) — highlight the dilemma: Akira's (unattainable) pursuit of a coherent self — in language, in the symbolic — is undermined by the drugs, which rather than helping him escape instead invoke those traces of his past that prevent the self from developing autonomously. Drugs and writing have parallel effects on the worlds captured and constructed by their lenses: both

⁸⁶ Although perhaps a medicine fabricated by Nakagami for this text, there is a real referent to Doloran. It is a Pakistan-made brand of mefenamic acid, a mild painkiller marketed for use, as in the text, to suppress pain caused by toothaches or menstrual cramps. "Dolor" is the Latin root for "pain," and in English is associated with grief, distress, and melancholy.

produce an ambiguity between presence and trace that underscores the fraught relation between representation and reality. In the previous chapter, I discussed how in TYP the protagonist treats written representation as inherently contingent in order not to be trapped by the fixed meanings put forth by society. For Mako, meaning — her drug overdose as an “attempted suicide,” for example — dissolves outside of its isolated context, pulverized by the *taidô* that protects her from oppression. In GCC, Akira is gradually learning to distrust representation, and this is emphasized when memories of the past conflict with his ability to experience a present. Repeatedly across the text of GCC, both drugs and storytelling lead to the realization that “everything is fake.” Drugs provide the model for a distrust of the content of fiction; this bleeds into repeated passages bemoaning the inauthenticity of the narrating and/or authoring subject as “fake.” It almost goes without saying that no satisfactory self will be found by our protagonist. The story critiques the very possibility of a simultaneously authentic and coherent subjecthood and enacts that impossibility in the narrative focalization of its protagonist.

Drugs function in the narrative in multiple ways, each of which I will explore below. First and foremost, they provide the model for what I describe as the “intoxicated narration,” a focalization of experience and sensation that both effaces its constructedness and collapses all narrative into a questioning of authenticity. I will characterize this mode of narrating by its deployment of a camera-eye-centered free direct discourse that invests everything in the first-person accounts of the protagonist even as it reveals his unreliability. This intoxicated narration also establishes the contours of the sensual world created in the text, shifting between visual realism and highly subjective dissociation. Finally, where drugs outline a space in which multiple realities clash, they create a stage for the enactment of a still-formative (or presubjective) self trapped in the mirror stage, that phase of an infant’s life, prior to language

acquisition, in which the body appears coherent in its reflected image. This mirror stage situates Akira in a hazy space between the symbolic “I” and the body detached from its origins. Drugs reveal that Akira is torn between an inconsistent ideal-I image on one hand and the fragmented, sick body that constantly misrecognizes itself for its image on the other.⁸⁷

CONSTRUCTING AN INTOXICATED NARRATIVE> The story opens with a long passage, narrated in the first person, with Akira walking along some train tracks. From the first two sentences, the narration intermingles sensation and memory to introduce a series of concerns: “*boku*” and his core sensualism, the relationship between experience and its representation, and the body’s reflexive attempt to expel the abject.

I picked the stem of a plant and put it in my mouth, where I immediately felt the unripe, green juice expand in my oral cavity, and then spat the juice, mixed with some saliva, out of me. The desensitized saliva sought out the memory of the green juice left in my mouth as it flowed outward from the base of my tongue. I was cold. (8)

Long, complex sentences are punctuated by a terse phrase to deliver a grotesque and gratuitous representation of an otherwise mundane experience. The bodily abject, here in the form of saliva, highlights the issue of presence and absence, of traces/memories permeating and being expelled by the narrator. These first three sentences distill the basic pattern repeated throughout the story: Akira ingests a drug, tries to expel the bitterness it creates, seeks out the traces of what was expelled, and then changes the topic.

These sensations constitute the focalization of a narrating “I” deeply engrossed with the representation of his own bodily functions. The protagonist notes that he is thinking “with a head screwed up by the six-or-so tablets of painkiller medicine swallowed that morning” (9). He again re-emphasizes his impairment: “I, who was completely messed up on six pills of that white medicine, used my two legs, which I couldn’t at all move

⁸⁷In Lacanian psychoanalysis, this is the precursor to narcissism in a “fully developed subject.” Dino Felluga, “Terms Used by Psychoanalysis,” *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*. <<http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/psychoanalysis/psychterms.html>>.

smoothly according to my own will, and walked toward R.” Akira passes alongside the train tracks toward the station on his way to “modern jazz café R,” and except for a violent fantasy digression concerning blowing up the train — the literary terrorist always sublimating his violence into language — the narration faithfully records his bodily sensations and follows his gaze.

I crossed the tracks and came upon a small shopping area. Florist, butcher, fruit stand with a hanging three-way mirror and with mandarin oranges and persimmons and bananas lined up on a shelf, where residents of that neighborhood were moving, screaming, standing, engaged in conversation. A child is holding and swinging about a doll with red hair, and when bored of that tries to grab the opening and closing eyelids of the doll with both hands. A knocked-up woman is carrying a big shopping bag, standing in front of a butcher shop that has the giant thighs of some skinned animal dangling. She is trying to make up her mind in front of a glass case of sausages that look like genitals with the skin peeled back. Too annoying, I thought. I just wanted a glass of water to get rid of my nausea. (8-9)

The camera-like pan from shop to shop, the selected details, and the grotesque metaphors place the passage in the subjective experience of the narrating “*boku*.” The reader’s gaze follows the protagonist’s. We appear to see everything, as the gaze settles on specific items but also provides the context of an establishing shot. Akira is in the middle of a bustling shopping district in the nation’s capital, a place as normal and unremarkable as any other, Akira’s drug-induced nausea notwithstanding. The text establishes this pose of unmediated first-person subjectivity under the guise of a narrated authenticity in which dissembling is impossible. The drugs, rather than a viewing subject, appear to have control of the narrative. Although the gaze settles on some details to the exclusion of others, the objective pose of a camera-eye recording its objects diverts attention from what might be excluded.

The objective gaze breaks down temporarily in the depiction of the sausages, however, by comparing them to genitalia. The metaphor shifts the focus from the gaze of the camera to a visual detail that is abstracted — the phallus with its foreskin peeled back marking a subjective shift to carnality that serves as a counterpoint to the pregnant female customer. Akira expresses hostility toward pregnancy, mothers, and female reproductive organs throughout the text, and this appears connected to growing up in a

matrilineal household from which his biological father had been expelled. The expulsion of the father prevented Akira from recognizing the mother as lack and thus bound him to her, to a maternal space from which he had to separate in order to achieve independent subjecthood.⁸⁸ As with the sausage metaphor, the father appears everywhere as a trace, that phallus that is always lacking in Akira's life, reminding him that his life will always be structured around lack. Moreover, the metaphorical abstraction from sausage to phallus disrupts the veneer of the recording gaze's non-mediation by mapping the present onto the absent, pointing out the traces that overflow and destabilize meaning. The sausage-as-phallus turns us away from the camera eye and leads us back to Akira's subjective experience, his annoyance with the scene in front of him and the focus inward on his own nausea. That is, the intoxicated framing of the scene serves as the source of subjective associations that exceed the visual.

With the drugs in control of the protagonist and *his* narrative, the space and time of the focalization become subject to the unpredictable vicissitudes of the intoxication. At times the narration is constructed to appear objective, which provides contour to the protagonist's experience of urban life, of his isolated position with respect to his surroundings that enables him to gaze, to abstract, to judge. This pose of objectivity sets up the stark divide between the authoritative, urban persona of the narrator and the associations that lead him into more dangerous territory.

As Akira continues to scan the shopping district, he comes across a florist. The sight of a rose sends his memory back to his childhood, but it is hardly an idyllic moment of nostalgia. The digressions and subjective asides and metaphors have thus far been violent or grotesque, but they have been abstracted fantasies that appear unmotivated, as direct, unfiltered observations. In this passage, we are introduced to the most common

⁸⁸ Kristeva describes Lacan's formulation of the discovery of castration as a decisive point in which the (male) infant becomes invested in the symbolic. Discovery that the mother lacks phallus, that she represents lack where the phallus represents the possibility to enunciate in language, leads the child to separate himself from her. *Revolution in Poetic Language*, pp. 46-51.

form of dissociation experienced by Akira, the memories from his childhood in Kumano:

When I was a child, the rose grew like a tree by the odoriferous night soil basin of the house next door. It had buds like a crunchy-hard rock, which my older sister stole — after going crazy when at work there was a domestic dispute that led to a murder — and put in a cup of water on top of the water basin cover in the kitchen. The time I saw a tulip was definitely in that town, on the border with the Korean neighborhood in a ditch full of slimy sludge. There were no tulips at the florist. (9)

These associations, notably, leave the realm of the visible — the rose (present) leads to a tulip (absent) — and inhabit the lacunae of Akira’s experience of Tokyo. Suddenly, with nothing to signal the transition across space and time, we are confronted with a protagonist who is carrying around a great deal of baggage. At the very least, his past is out of the ordinary. We learn that his sister went crazy after witnessing a murder. This detail, notably, is embedded as a subordinate clause in the depiction of the rose, as though it is an unremarkable modifier of the word “older sister.” And we learn that he lived on the border of a Korean *buraku*, which only hints at social and class difference by locating the protagonist’s childhood at the periphery of mainstream Japanese culture. The jarring juxtapositions — of urban florist and an outhouse in a poor neighborhood, of a close family member and violence, of a flower and a ditch full of sludge — spiral outward from the visual cue into a separate world altogether. Critics have noted that these telling details are often embedded in Nakagami’s texts without any prominence, that their obscurity within the narrative belies the significance with which they have been read.⁸⁹ However, Nakagami tends to repeat these revelations in numerous iterations in each text — and sometimes across texts — so that their recurrence calls attention to them where they might otherwise be glossed over. Here, panning across the mundane row of stores results in the recounting of a traumatic memory in the same intoxicated mode of auto-narration, whereby the retelling *appears* to stem from an uncontrollable cascade of past trauma rather than the deliberate construction of a scene that amalgamates absence and presence into a seamless experience.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Shibata Shôji, “Seimei no yodomi,” p. 30.

In more than a dozen instances hereafter in the text, Akira's intoxication calls forth memories of his childhood, his abnormal web of family relations, and the landscape of his early years. After this particular introduction to his past, the narration picks back up when Akira has entered the train station restroom, pulled out the "blue case of painkillers for toothaches and menstrual pain," and swallowed the remaining four pills (9). Akira's fraught memories have a symbiotic relationship with the painkillers as narrative devices, the one leading to the other and back again. Akira takes drugs and imagines a Korean woman selling fried entrails (11). Akira takes drugs and is transported back to the mountains around the Kumano River (13). Akira takes drugs and remembers the grilled rice balls his sister "picked up" (i.e., from the garbage) and brought home to the poverty-stricken household (29). Akira takes drugs and remembers his mother and her third husband, the stepfather whose name he shares but whose blood he does not (41). In a narrative controlled by these painkillers, Akira's mind simply wanders to his past, and the text appears to have no choice but to follow these associations. Upon returning to the narrated present, Akira feels the desire to ingest more of the pills. Drugs frame these intrusions of the past to call attention to the inscrutability of memory, not least of all in the re-inscription of memory in language.

Akira tries to subsume these memories, to repress them, but they continually re-emerge and re-inject him into the cycle of drug-memory-drug. Trying to narrate the self as a means of actualizing such a self requires him to break this cycle, and for this Akira's self-medication is completely counterproductive. The self that he seeks appears to be one that has overcome the ambiguities of his past, most notably his older brother's suicide. Yet the constant use of drugs continually opens his narrative up to a basic ambiguity: how to differentiate between what is real and what is fake.

Recall from the Peacock store incident the recurrent exposition of narrated experience that may have all just been a "dream" or "side effect of the drugs." The text is

assembled out of a pastiche of loosely connected vignettes subject to the same fictionalization as the unreliable and uncontrollable stories that bubble up into language while Akira is in a drug haze. Akira's long-term memories are also identified as constructions, and as such contain fabrications and elisions that question their relation to any reality external to their narrative construction.

In a subsequent part of the opening section of the text, Akira has emerged from the train station restroom, where he has ingested even more Doloran, and is on the platform watching the movement of the people and the trains. He digresses to a memory from elementary school:

I thought once you got on the train you had to take off your sneakers. With my 30-yen crayons I tried to draw that imaginary train from images I picked up in picture books or textbooks. With my rough crayons mixed with stone, I made it round like a bus with straight lines for the floor and walls and windows. But the picture was not of a train and its passengers that I had imagined, but instead of my house, which suddenly appeared in the middle of the green mountainside. It turned into a picture of my mother and father and older brother and sister pounding rice cakes. A girl in my class who was good at drawing was peeping at it from behind and I explained that we were pounding rice cakes. She went to tell the teacher: "Yamada's drawing a picture of pounding rice cakes." No, this memory is a lie. I wasn't Yamada at the time. I was Kinoshita. The doors to the train closed. With a thud, the real train that seemed like it was out of a landscape painting left without me on it. The town glinted in the dust. I narrowed my eyes, which failed to focus on any one point due to the drugs, and just stared at the glaring gray of the connected rooftops, the signs, and the noisy town.
(10)

This passage refers Akira back to his childhood and introduces the volatility of his imagination and the competing claims of fidelity to truth and present meaning in his mind. The cheap crayons and the mountainside house contrast with the dusty cityscape, its trains and busy commuters, to further point to the protagonist's outsider status — economic, social, and geographical. The family finds its way into nearly every memory somehow, and here it signals another instability in Akira's reality. The girl who told on Akira, in this memory, used his current name, Yamada; however, Akira realizes that in elementary school his surname was Kinoshita. His mother had remarried — an autobiographical reading notwithstanding, the circumstances are revealed later in the text — and this signals a significant difference between the elements of the past and the construction of them in memory. In this passage focalized through a protagonist who is

trying to figure out what is meant by the “I” he uses to enunciate, the elements of the past that indicate non-normativity disturb the process. The detail of the changed surname makes the whole memory into a lie, a representation that fails to connect to a previous reality and thus must be discarded as fake. Drugs-memory-drugs: the “real train” looks like one in a painting, but the intoxicated Akira cannot focus on any single point and thus stares off into the distance. Drugs led him into this mixed-up memory and they prevent him from any disambiguation between reality and fakery.

NARRATIVE CONTOURS> The representations of drugs in the story leave their mark on the manner in which experience is signified. To illustrate this, I turn to a vignette in which Akira and his friend Mori inject ephedrine hydrochloride, a stimulant once commonly used to treat asthma, in the restroom of the jazz café. The contrast between the description of the injection and the narration of the effects of ephedrine intoxication is stark. The process of injection is narrated matter-of-factly, as though panning across the scene in a film, with only a scattering of similes (using “*no yô ni*”). The intoxication experience is characterized by traces, by an explosive use of simile and metaphor that reach beyond the visual frame to represent sensation through a series of abstractions. As the abstractions exceed any structure of reality Akira knows, his only conclusion is that “everything is fake.” This is not represented as the reflective “profane illumination” of Benjamin’s hashish experiments, but instead as the immediate experience of intoxication, as signification collapses on itself and absence overwhelms presence. When the drug effects wear off, however, the narrative returns to the objective camera-eye, panning across the cityscape as though the intoxication were a mere distortion of an otherwise straightforward narrative technology.

First, the injection:

Once we went to the restroom and closed the door, the sound of the jazz grew distant. My throat hurt and the joints in my arms were hot as though I had a cold. Mori locked the door from the inside and took out three ampoules of ephedrine and a syringe and then flushed the water in the

toilet to change it to water clear enough to drink out of one's hand. Mori washed the syringe in there. "Your left hand," Mori ordered, as though as accustomed as a surgeon, while he sucked the liquid from the ampoule into the syringe. "Gotta roll up your sleeves." I did as directed. The pain welled up. The iodine tincture left a red-black lump at the wound on my left wrist, the bandage sticking to it. Taking off the bandage made a slightly dirty blood, like the fluid of an insect's body, flow from the wound.⁹⁰

"What happened?" Mori asked, squeezing the syringe needle in his hand. What happened indeed?

The sharp tip of the syringe needle broke the soft skin on my left arm, covered in little hairs, and moved around looking for the blood vessels between my skin and my muscle. From my view, the nerves connecting to the flesh and skin of my left arm steadily gripped the needle. Got it. It found the river of blood rushing about my body. Black blood suddenly floods the syringe. Upside-down. This time the ephedrine in the syringe pushes its way inside of my body. (33-34)

The process is narrated in detail, inviting the reader to revel in fascination at the meticulous coordination of actions required to inject a drug (comparable to Murakami's portrayal of injecting heroin described in the next chapter). The narration carries the action from the external to the internal, emphasizing the drug as a material supplement traveling from outside of the body to the inside.

By way of contrast, the experience of intoxication that follows is centered on Akira's disorganized perceptions.

It felt like I had on a hard nylon wig, with hairs growing one by one out of holes in the skin, while the heat in my cheeks and neck became fine particles and peeled away, and the ephedrine that rushed around the blood vessels inside my body soaked into the flesh. As though set off by a chemical reaction, I grew listless. I left the restroom and sat in my seat. The [green] and red and topaz lights hanging from the ceiling penetrate my eyes and are sucked up by my hollowed-out, mannequin-like innards. Jazz doesn't enter my body through my ears but scrapes across my nylon hair and flies through my body, which had become an object that occupied the fixed space of modern jazz café R, like the stuffed duck with a torn up neck... I grasped a Highlight between index finger and thumb, stared at the matchbox with a sexual intercourse diagram, pulled out a match by its white end, and lit it. It burned the color of bloody [pus], but I didn't try to light the cigarette between my fingers. I'm not thinking of anything. I can't even think about the hot anxiety of reality withstanding the tension as objects fail to dissolve into one another. Everything is fake. You are just sitting. You are no longer a maggot, nor a pebble. Even the fragment of concrete, pounded down into a sidewalk and now broken off and picked up, is warmer than you.

The ephedrine, medicine used for heart disease and asthma, is working. Crowds of people are walking.

I stand still... Mori had been walking with me but his figure suddenly melted into the crowds of pedestrians and he was invisible until I found him, thinking it was as though we were wandering about a wilderness full of beasts banished there. ... Sadness develops in the gap between the effects of the drug and my alertness. Should I cry? No crying. I opened my mouth as wide as the area of my face. Mori came back for me. I was happy that someone in this wilderness knew me. (34-35)⁹¹

Under the influence of ephedrine, Akira's experiences follow no logical order and are

⁹⁰ This is a reference to Akira attempting suicide by slitting his wrist in an earlier vignette and will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

⁹¹ Bracketed terms have been extrapolated from the nonsensical *kanji* in the *Waseda bungaku* text and aligned with similar-looking characters used in the edited anthology version of the story. See *Nakagami Kenji zenshū* v. 1 (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1995), pp. 334-335. Below I discuss discrepancies between the two texts in more detail.

described as though immediate and unrelated. Where the injection is described in the narrated past, the intoxication largely occupies the present or present-progressive. Metaphor explodes: The body reveals its grotesquery, appearing as an empty vessel suddenly rendered immobile by the injection of the drug, its fluids invigorated and set into motion. The action is within and without this body, operating in lieu of Akira's consent or control. Hair does not grow but feels synthetic, nylon, as though Akira were a doll. Colored light penetrates the body at one instant and then dances as a flame ("the color of bloody pus") in the next.

However, there is a curious inversion at work here. The representation placing intoxication in command of the focalization points to the treatment of drugged subjectivity as a narrated textual event par excellence. The deployment of metaphor pre-empts the possibility of treating ephedrine as an extratextual referent: it spreads lethargy throughout Akira's body "as though set off by a chemical reaction." By treating the injection of the drug as a metaphor, the textual depiction of intoxicated narration glosses over the fact that what it is representing refers, on a very literal level, to a series of chemical reactions that are purportedly the source of the sensations that elicit the metaphors. Instead, the attempt at portraying intoxicated narration, with its gratuitous metaphors, treats the drug as a narrative device, in this case *instead of* as a material substance.

This inversion underscores the issue of representing binaries, such as those of life/death and intoxication/sobriety. It isolates the characteristics of the drug as a marker of the lacuna — of a space for death within life, of the "gap" between intoxication and sobriety, in short, of the abject that overflows discourse and must be excluded for (symbolic) meaning to be produced. Mori further describes ephedrine as a drug that "makes you feel like you're dead, a mysterious feeling like your flesh is rotting and might come off" (35) and Akira immediately imagines that sensation. I will consider Akira's

fascination with dead bodies in detail in the next section. Here it is sufficient to conclude that the drug is deployed to reveal the gaps in discourse that spill out when binaries collapse. The ephedrine intoxication reveals nothing about the chemical effects of the drug, but it reminds us of the quintessential kernel of knowledge produced by intoxicated narration: “Everything is fake.”

Once the ephedrine high wears off, the narration focalized through Akira’s gaze returns to the surrounding wasteland of the urban landscape. For Akira this is an alienated space that is narrated in the same filmic establishing shot as the story’s opening passage in the shopping district:

Clothing store, bookstore, shoe store, a classic-movie theater showing a Jean-Luc Godard film. Walking along, the ephedrine is expelled from the outside of my skin and from my large intestine, and I feel my own body reviving from a four-hour comatose state. A giant building covered in brown dust occupies my field of vision. It sits in a place where the grass and trees are all dead, with people just walking around. (35)

There is again a seamlessness in the transition between the experienced present and the narration of memory, in the narrative’s shift from injecting the ephedrine to succumbing to its effects and then back to the sober rhetoric of the objective camera-eye. The focalization through the first-person narrator offers a continuity between these states (of experiencing and recalling-narrating, of intoxication and sobriety) that refuses to prioritize one over the other. Everything is a lie, everything is fake: reality, if such a thing exists, is little more than a claim that cannot be verified.

WRITING ABOUT WRITING> Using the motif of intoxicated narration strategically, GCC interrogates the potential for writing to serve as a means of resolving the crisis of a self caught in the middle of a multivalent tug-of-war between sets of irreconcilable binaries. In the final part of this section I will examine the personas attributed to Akira to uncover how he negotiates the multiplicity of his selves. First, I will examine how the act of writing is variously portrayed in the text. I will demonstrate how the text stages the performance of any representation as a sort of linguistic Ponzi scheme — an investment

in language tied to multiple layers of meaning that collapse because the referents are unstable. In the self-reflexive act of writing about writing, the author and the narrator-protagonist, who is also an aspiring poet, overlap across the fine line separating text and metatext.

In GCC, Akira is on the brink of gambling his life on the promise of salvation through writing. It is important to point out that Nakagami's own investment in language somehow overcomes the kind of suspicion Akira has toward these binary dilemmas. Nakagami produces writing with a critical eye on the enterprise of representation. His texts challenge the notion of coherent representation, undermine the primacy of standard language, and deploy an assortment of devices to stretch meaning beyond "comfortable" signifying practices.

Nakagami's attitude toward his early writing is framed by his claim that "fundamentally, I think that the fictional narrative (*shôsetsu*) is none other than realism (*riarizumu*)."⁹² Moreover, Nakagami describes his fiction as "masochistic," in that he uses it to "seek a vanishing point."⁹³ In the case of GCC, Nakagami claims that the "vanishing point" (*shôten*) — where those parallel lines in perspective drawing appear to converge as they fade off into the distance — refers to "others" (*tanin*), his family and relatives expressly among them. For most of the text of GCC, however, *tanin* and family occupy opposing poles; the others are living, breathing corpses in the symbolic, while his family evokes the semiotic and the abject. Nakagami wants the "vanishing point" of his family to collapse into the symbolic, but it doesn't work for Akira. The members of his family are more alive in his narrated experience than anyone else. Constructing distance has not extinguished but rather has brought into focus the central dilemma of the protagonist's life, namely that his family history haunts his identity at every turn.

Watanabe Naomi suggests that Nakagami was gradually coming to realize that the past

⁹² Nakagami and Murakami, p. 14.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

he intended to escape would instead become his future, meaning that it would provide unlimited material for his literary career.⁹⁴ I propose that, in writing about writing, GCC is a critical text in shaping how Nakagami would redraw and reposition his narrative perspective to give voice to what he once hoped would vanish.

In the very middle of GCC, there is one section that stands out with regard to portraying writing. Akira suddenly pulls a notebook out of his pocket and pages through it. In the story up to and including this section, there is evidence of a loose progression in the role of writing: writing is first utilitarian, a means to convey a message or to help us remember past events. This includes such content as graffiti scrawled on the walls of jazz café R and a message to Akira from his mother. He counsels himself in the notebook on what to read, where not to go, what bad habits to avoid. When he has passed out at the jazz café his friends apparently write comments in the book. Next, writing serves as representation, a means of expressing something by toying with the trope of equivalence between signifier and signified. Representation here is exemplified by the expression of abstract ideas using concrete signifiers. Akira's attempts at poetry seek to harness this means of artistic representation, to be able to say one thing and have it signify something else. Writing poetry also implies the grave risk of failure for Akira, for whom words and truth have a shaky relationship. Finally, writing becomes a matter of existential import, as Akira vows to discover the ability to write authentically or else kill himself trying. His torment is caused by an inability to follow through on this resolution.

A "poem-like sentence written in red ballpoint pen" in his notebook is reproduced in this section of the text in boldface type. The short free-verse poem repeats the juxtaposition of the themes of flowers and suicide-by-hanging, introduced previously as one of Akira's memories of his hometown.

[I] want to be like a beautiful sunflower, one that is slumped forward. Its head faces the sun like it hanged itself at midday and died. *STAND ERECT*, explosive. (32)

⁹⁴ Watanabe Naomi, *Nakagami Kenji ron*, p. 53.

Just as with the stem of a plant in the opening passage of the story, this flower is attributed some degree of agency. And while the flowers at the florist direct Akira's memories toward his sister's breakdown, this sunflower appears to reference his older brother's hanging suicide. The words that follow the poem are opaque: "Stand erect" is written in English in all capitals, while "explosive" (*bakuretsudan*) follows as though it is the recipient of the English command. The poem begs the question of *who* might want to resemble that sunflower, whether it is taking the point of view of the older brother or perhaps is just an unspecified subject — the poem has no subject marker. A subsequent reference to this sunflower in the same paragraph sheds no further light on the topic: "the sunflower wilts beyond a stone fence, the leaves all dried up and the head slumping with the breathing belly of a giant beast in the middle of it" (32). The nouns "explosive" and "beast" could as easily describe Akira, ticking away with torment and always on the verge of violence, as they could his older brother.

More than the content of the poem, however, I am interested in the inscription of this piece of writing in the narrative. Explorations of the connection between representation and experience pervade the text, and here we have an example of a protagonist self-reflexively reading his own work. Between the poem and the subsequent depiction of the sunflower is a reference to Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*, which Akira recalls shoplifting and using as a model for a hitchhiking road trip with friends. The intertextual allusion directly points to the continuity between reading and performing Kerouac's text, to representation as a template for action (or the representation of action) rather than vice versa. It further underscores the transformative nature of the intertextual; Akira's friends sought to re-enact an *On the Road*-like experience on their own terms, "reading" and performing it in their own ways. *On the Road* metonymically represents youth and drugs and adventure, on the one hand, and the pursuit of an "experienced" stream-of-consciousness narrative on the other. Akira and friends got high together and prepared

to enjoy their trip but suddenly lost interest and hitchhiked home, forsaking the enactment of the intertext. Stream-of-consciousness, they discovered, is much more interesting as a narrative device than as a lived experience. The narration of this digression in GCC, however, leads the reader on a stream-of-consciousness voyage through the road trip, back to the sunflower, and through another series of disconnected images before ending, abruptly, with the subject-omitted phrase, “feel nauseous” (33). Indeed, the long paragraph coheres so little that the nausea could apply equally to the reader reading, the narrator narrating, or even the writer trying to keep track of his prose. That is, the representation of reading and writing highlights the metatextual concerns of the text by gesturing toward the overlap between inscription and performance.

In the final paragraph of the section, Akira returns to his notebook, now to write rather than read. As though trying to mimic the Kerouac-inspired style of free writing, Akira immediately laments, “However words did not flow forth from my pencil” (33). He instead decided to “try to write down a stanza of someone else’s poem,” although there is no reference to author:

In the leaden throat of a youth who ejaculated in a public restroom. (33)

The poem is a non sequitur and its lack of context makes it difficult to read. However we can read the deployment of parody — or the gesture toward parodying an imaginary poem (for example, by Antonin Artaud, known for his fondness for writing ejaculation) — as a comment on the continuities between reading and writing, of encoding and decoding language within discourse. In GCC, Nakagami posits the incoherence of the self within an array of binaries as intertextual and metatextual performances, as the encoding of language always in reference to innumerable fragments of prior texts. Writing becomes a re-enactment and re-composition of existing materials so that any claims to “authentic” experience must account for the prefiguring of experience in prior

representations.

The intersection of representation and experience occurs only when one effaces the process of reflection that differentiates reading practices from writing. For Akira, however, the continuity between reading and writing covers up a gaping hole full of repressed memories that defy linguistic representation. Any attempt to translate those elements into signifiers immediately undermines their authenticity as they are constructed out of a series of prefigured linguistic performances. Grasping for a way around this, Akira guesses at the underlying intention of the poem he quotes.

Perhaps that poem tried to express adversity. However, my theme will be “renouncing the present” — not the adversity of the present with this over-sugared coffee, but the renouncing of precisely that. Flushed, I suddenly thought, Live until I’m twenty and then what? I can truly renounce it and kill myself just like my older brother, or I can go on living as a sellout and continue to bear it. Jazz continued to blare. I closed the notebook and shoved it in my pocket, closing my eyes as though I had bottled up something inside of my flesh. (33)

Suddenly, writing has become an existential concern; Akira makes the very possibility of living his life hinge upon a writerly posture. This posture, of “renouncing the present,” equates the act of writing with living an authentic life, one that culminates in suicide. It plays out in a melodramatic binary — write/renounce and die or be a sellout and live — that converts representation into a zero-sum game. “Renouncing the present” leaves only the trace behind and resolves the ambiguous relationship between experience and representation by eliminating the former term and collapsing everything into the latter.

The choice between authentic death and fake life is constructed as a vital decision in the protagonist’s self-actualization. I have already described Akira’s attempt to re-inscribe his brother’s suicide as a serves-you-right murder at the Peacock Store. Here writing and suicide function as analogous mimetic practices, as the only remaining methods of representing authentically in a world (or, alternately, in a system of signifying practices) based on fakery. To encode in language is to court death. The sound of jazz music serves as a release valve to this tense equation by offering an authentic enunciation without acceding to normative signifying practices. By “renouncing the

present,” Akira seeks to free his writing from such practices, where death is the price of doing so. However, when Akira chooses to close his notebook and accept a life of self-betrayal (*uragiri*, translated above as “sellout”), by proxy he votes for that utopian correspondence between signifier and signified that foregrounds a deadly presence and represses all else.

THAT MAGGOT IS ME> The idea of “constructing the self” is the source of that slippage between Nakagami writing in a self-consciously fictionalized autobiographical mode and Akira in GCC trying to write through his dilemma. Nakagami has altered autobiographical details and converted them into a narrative, but this is largely a distraction from the project at hand: how to situate his protagonist in between two opposing worlds, how to underscore the dilemmas he faces in negotiating between past memory and present experience, and how to use narrative to depict abjection as both that which must be expelled and that which is essential to uncover the basis for self-representing as “I.”

Perhaps the most fundamental question in Akira’s self-examination is, “Who am I?” This question is asked and answered repeatedly in GCC. Akira’s friends have their own relation to him that exists completely outside of his self-doubt and introspective interrogation. Their various comments, recorded as dialogue in the text, confirm the multiplicity of Akira’s personas without ever piercing his skin. Akira tries to discern his selfhood through processes of identification in two examples I will present below. The act of trying to identify himself in his own reflection places Akira in a metaphorical mirror stage, that period of an infant’s development in which it learns to differentiate self from other. The mirror stage is key to the infant’s entry into the symbolic, as it finally identifies an object outside of itself and thus demonstrates the first indications of

becoming a subject.⁹⁵ For Akira, identifying that ideal-self in the image does not always lead to a realization that there is a discrepancy between the two, however. In the process of figuring out who that “I” is, he is forced to confront those elements that prevent him from making the clean break from the semiotic space of maternal attachment.

Akira is positioned in several ways by other characters in the text, offering a multi-perspectival but shallow picture of his fraught self-identification. Friends know him as an unpredictable druggie (*rarippa*). A female friend, Toko, explains that “you never know what Akira will do when he’s on drugs” (18). A restaurant waitress refers to him as a *fûten*, one of the thousands of young people hanging around Shinjuku posing as disaffected resisters against social norms (17). To his mother, Akira is her volatile youngest son, going to prep school so that he may attend college. To his girlfriend Robin, Akira is lovable and yet “truly a liar” (37). His older friend Mori considers Akira to fit the stereotype of a know-nothing poseur who hasn’t had enough experience to understand anything. There is even the mysterious character of the little girl who proselytizes on the street. She appears to have accurately pegged Akira’s self-doubt, asking him, “Have you ever wondered if everything is a mistake?” / “You probably no longer know who it is that you are” (29). (It turns out she says this to anyone who will listen.) The narrative focalization through Akira recounts a superficial portrayal of him by his acquaintances, one that belies his obsessive and anxious attitude toward his own self-representation.

Akira tries to displace himself from his own “sick” body by imagining he can assume the perspective of someone else. This is his attempt to pursue the possibility that there is no difference between self and other, subject and object. Sitting on a train platform bench, “aided by Doloran intoxication,” he decides to take on the perspective of a man he

⁹⁵ Jacques Lacan first outlined his proposal of the mirror stage in the 1930s. Julia Kristeva includes the awareness of castration in this phase and refers to it as the “thetic phase,” “which posits the gap between the signifier and the signified as an opening up toward every desire but also every act, including the jouissance that exceeds them.” “The thetic phase marks a threshold between two heterogeneous realms: the semiotic and the symbolic.” *Revolution in Poetic Language*, pp. 47-48.

imagines is a construction worker. Akira's struggle to define himself is thoroughly linked to his class origins, and so his attempt to identify the perspective of another man highlights a similar class positioning. Notably, he adopts the metaphor of the camera lens to infiltrate another man's perspective, possessing the man with his gaze under the guise of identifying with his point of view.

I am me! I am, I thought as though exhaling a hot breath, if I could be anyone else other than me. Are you sick?, the little girl asked me. Yep, that's it. I've been sick for a long time. A man who looked like a construction worker had a knapsack on his shoulders as he walked along the road next to the tracks. Where could he be going? Did he come from the laborers' boardinghouse? My eyes followed after him. Sitting on the bench I stared at the man, his shoulders swinging as he walked, with his fuzzy fur-collared jacket. Just like adjusting the focus on a camera, I tried to make his gaze overlap with mine. Using the transmogrifying technique based on the mutation formula, $AL=BL$, I mutated into that man immediately. The town was covered in an inhospitable, grungy weak light. The man thought, I just pulled in 200,000 at the boardinghouse. But I've left Miyoko and the seven-month-old kid in her belly to die up there in the mountains, in a place where there are no stores selling anything red [to celebrate the birth] and the wolves are howling away. I wonder if I could blow the whole 200,000 in one night. ... The man walking along the tracks felt like he wanted to cry and was overcome by a pained emotion that wouldn't settle down. Suddenly it all went out of focus and I quickly returned to the real me. The man carrying the knapsack slowly turned left on the road and left me behind as he melted into the town and disappeared. (30-32)

Akira, in a desperate wish to be "anyone else," morphs into the laborer's perspective as though narrating a story. When he returns to the "real me," he appears to have achieved a subject position that masters this particular narration. However the success of this displaced identification is questionable. Akira imagines the man thinking about a woman he impregnated and her unborn child, rehashing his own father's absence during his childhood. The pain attributed to the construction worker causes the focus to shift back to Akira, and the allusion to the absent father suggests that it is likely Akira's pain. That is, here too there is a slip between narrator and narrated, the textual and metatextual, that arises in the gap between visual presence and absence. This attempt at identifying with an other fails to help Akira better detach himself from the past, as his own set of traces intervene.

Akira's attempts to uncover the characteristics of his own "I" are thwarted even as that speaking quasi-subject addresses itself as "you" (*omae*). Akira is negotiating the entry into a realm of subject and object, of you and I as complete and differentiated

entities. Where other binaries collapse, “you” and “I” forge a tentative bond that accounts for their mutual constitution if not their difference. This deictic relationship is staged most tellingly in the context of mirrors, reinforcing the notion that Akira’s struggle is linked to a metaphorical mirror stage. His initial self-introduction on the second page of the text is in the context of looking at himself in a mirror after swallowing some Doloran.

The fingerprint-stained mirror above the restroom sink reflected my face. Yamada Akira, nineteen years old, warped face. You are a pallid-faced maggot seething out of the rotten, torn belly of a stray dog found in the middle of a grassy field. I faced my reflection in the mirror and moved my cheek muscles to form a smile, attempting to say “[I] love [you].” [I] love [you] very, very much. Feeling my body and eyes intoxicated, I faced myself in the mirror and spoke. (9)

Akira identifies his own reflection, in the coherent image of his body separate from the body that perceives it, as what in Lacanian psychoanalysis is labeled the “ideal-I.” However, this ideal-I is hardly ideal: Akira fixates on his “warped face,” suggesting that his fragmented self is made manifest to his “intoxicated” perceiving eyes in the mirror image. Moreover, he addresses himself as a “maggot” in one instant and expresses love for himself in the next.⁹⁶ The trope of the maggot, an insect larva that garners its vitality by feasting on decaying matter, appears in multiple places throughout GCC. In this first deployment of the trope, Akira describes himself as a maggot to point to his abject origins beyond the ken of culture or even humanity (he implicitly likens his mother to a dog here). Repeated references to himself as a maggot (cited multiple times in the next section of this chapter) bear out this relationship that links Akira’s life to the persistent traces of death.

Yet Akira is not completely despondent; instead, he faces his disfigured image and expresses his narcissism, an affirmation of connections to his own body when faced with death and dissolution. In Akira’s quest to confirm a basis for his enunciating “I” in the mirror image, he dissimulates his abject body by smiling and expressing self-love *without* pronouns. So long as the subject and object of that “love” are left unstated and

⁹⁶ Japanese language allows implied subjects and objects to be elided, and thus the expressions of love (*ai shiteru yo*) do not include pronouns in either the subject or object position. (I have indicated this by bracketing the pronouns.)

implied, so long as they accord with the inherent ambiguities of language, they may retain a kernel of self-truth. For Akira, even in despair, love is in the air.

Akira seeks some form of accommodation in mirrors, some ability to speak as a subject and visualize what it means to be spoken to by him, but his mirror-mediated exchanges do not result in any positive self-identification. To the extent that Akira sees his reflection in the mirror and is addressing himself, there is a marked dearth of visual narration. In contrast to the camera-eye-like narration of streetscapes, Akira uses the mirror here as a mediating device between an external image of his self and the internally fragmented “I” that perceives it. A similar encounter takes place in the wake of the Peacock Store incident, where Akira enters a restroom to swallow the last four pills of Doloran in his possession and checks himself out in the mirror. Here, too, he throws himself a kiss and says “[I] love [you],” and again his observation in the mirror is conceptual rather than visual:

I thought it strange that anxiety and the sticky feeling of tree resin began to shrink inside my face and body, which looked like someone else’s reflected in the mirror. A transparent syrup-colored resin that sticks to the bark of a cedar tree adhered to my hand and I wiped it on the seat of my pants. It grew hard to breathe. Resin like blood. Pine sap. (46)

The depiction of Akira’s abstract sensations here displaces his reflection even as the mirror image fails to return a recognizable external image of him. Though Doloran usually initiates his body into a cycle of ingestion and expulsion, in this case Akira’s sensations are at first entirely contained within his body. The anxiety of the simulated murder at the Peacock Store diminishes within Akira’s body, and the tree resin on his hand replaces the blood (to which it is compared) that would have spurted out of the security guard he “stabbed.” This misidentification of the sticky fluid has ramifications for the self, as well. In the aftermath of committing a dramatic murder that was little more than a fantasy in his mind — “a hallucinatory side effect” of the Doloran — Akira sees his face and body as if it were that of an “other” (*tanin*). The drug effects that reveal his inability to distinguish reality from illusion further destabilize his attempts to identify

the basis for his self.

To illustrate the tensions in Akira's quest for an elusive selfhood, the text situates him in a developmental period akin to the mirror stage for infants. Leaving his hometown in Kumano for Tokyo has trapped him in that position between the real and the symbolic. The real represents that unbounded space of the infant whose body is still continuous with the mother's, and who has not yet figured out how to separate from his own self-image in order to capture it. Entry into the symbolic requires a separation from the mother, repression of the unrestrained *jouissance*, and an acceptance of a break between self and other. For Akira, this process is situated in the cut between home and capital, between periphery and center. His move to the center of culture should bring about his gradual acceptance into the symbolic, but for Akira the semiotic rhythms and articulations of his childhood in Kumano keep bursting in and calling him to account for the marginal aspects of his life. Akira is thus faced with a choice: to return to the site of his childhood to confront his abject memories or to pursue that ideal-I self-image that should appear as a coherent, individual subject. The drugs that underscore the dilemma of selfhood, however, can also lead to a distortion of this confirming mirror image. Even when the mirror returns an identifiable reflection, though, such a subject, according to GCC, faces a life of being fake, of being a sellout, and, if the narrative can be extrapolated, of a life inevitably thrown into torment by the semiotic — traces of the past that resist expulsion.

MEMORIES OF KUMANO

The dilemma for Akira, trapped in the mirror stage, is the collapse of the chronological — the incursion of the elements of the past into present (narrated) experience, often elements that focus on a land comprised of mountains or sea or, specifically, the Kumano River — that results in an experienced reality completely outside of his grasp. His

inability to write his way out of these memories results in despair, and so he drowns this despair by living each day in a drugged haze (which, of course, only leads to more despair).

In this section, I will look at the ways in which the text represents those past elements in an attempt to map out a topography for the representation of the abject, to uncover linguistic sites onto which the abject can be displaced without folding it into the symbolic. The abject is fundamentally unrepresentable, apparent only at those places where meaning collapses,⁹⁷ and so the challenge is paradoxical: to uncover a language that represents it without completely repressing or excluding it. This is first effected in the opposition of binary terms, particularly between Kumano and Tokyo. Kumano is the space of his memory of the real, Akira's un-differentiation from his mother that inscribes a pre-subjective state of dependence. Its articulations take form as drives and rhythms within the space of the chora, always fraught and potentially repressed. So long as he is in Kumano, the extended matrilineal family, in its poverty and its insanity and its perpetual reconstitution (as the mother remarries), appears as a coherent structure. Once he leaves for Tokyo, however, and is confronted by the normative culture of the symbolic, his skillfully repressed reaction to his brother's suicide haunts him continually. He wonders if he is destined to repeat the same act. He wonders if he is trapped by the destiny of his bloodline. Memories of his brother repeatedly burst into the narration of his experience, indicating that he cannot write his way out of this psychological burden.

The act of enunciation is foregrounded as the result of this focus on the alterity of place, which highlights Kumano in terms of Akira's class issues, his relationship to the natural environment, and his unshakable ties to family. Akira's failed attempts at writing mimic the text's recurrent positing of irreconcilable differences between Tokyo and Kumano. The text's juxtaposition of passages indexing each of these places, often in

⁹⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 2.

concert with Akira's internalization of ambient jazz music or successive doses of Doloran, serves the project of seeking out heterogeneous expressions that can transcend the differences. If Akira can find some accommodation between the geographic poles of his experience, it might afford him a site from which to represent abjection such that it is neither sublimated into symbolic language nor so nonsensical as to obliterate all meaning. The difficulty of this task is too much, however, leading Akira to seek alternative methods of displacing the abject. When displacement of the abject onto language fails, all that is left is the body, sick and festering and grotesque. Akira subjects his body to large dosages of drugs, and these flow through him and are expelled as vomit, urine, sweat, blood, pus, and semen. No matter how much he engages in this cycle of intoxication and purging, he is unable to expel the abject traces of Kumano.

TWELVE HOURS BY TRAIN> GCC embeds difference in a multitude of overlapping discourses that lead to two interrelated conclusions. First, the text posits that linguistic (self-)representation must face up to the heterogeneity that follows writing subjects from the periphery to the center. Second, the text tells us that the center is still accountable to the periphery, as well as to the journey between. Thus the challenge Akira faces revolves around engaging the abject, suspending its exclusion, and incorporating it into his life as a writer in Tokyo. Authenticity emerges only out of those signifying practices that harness semiotic language and subordinate symbolic expression, which Akira derides as merely a performance or as a staged version of the self. Intoxicated on Doloran, however, Akira falls short of achieving this by incorporating only the bodily abject and abandoning the constitution of the self.

The jazz helps Akira, numbed by the Doloran, to visit Kumano in his imagination. In his mind, Kumano is constructed as an idyllic landscape of mountains and trees that becomes visible against a number by John Coltrane. Drugs and jazz conflate to idealize

this lost space:

I wasn't listening to Mori talk. I was instead following a jazz phrase ringing deep inside my ears as I chased after a group of images like warm tears gushing forth from behind my eyeballs. My body was there, led to a calm slumber and continued numbness by the drugs. It was a maze. I continued walking along a path in the midst of tall grasses in a mountainous area planted only with cedars. How long had I been walking on this mountain path? From deep in my throat, throughout my oral cavity, I was bone dry. My cotton jeans got caught on briar thorns. The grasses were brightly painted in splotches. It was dark. The air was cold on my nose, and I could detect that shortly the sun, which had risen beyond the overlapping treetops of the cedars, would fall far beyond the range of mountains, and the darkness of the pitch-black night would saturate these grasses. In the modern jazz café, only the strings of a bass rang out *dub dub dub. Dub dub dub, dub dub dub*. A man came to a halt: where in the world is this? He knew he had crossed the village. On the bank of the Kumano River, he threw rocks to surprise the crows that gathered like sargassum seaweed where the sea opened up, and then he took the wrong road and no matter how long he walked no bus passed by. The roughly breathed flute hung over the sound of the bass strings. A crow hiding in the thick grass didn't fly away, but the wind started to blow as if from nowhere and brushed the man's body as it passed. His body grew heavy as though the blood in his upright frame had solidified. The smell of the green from the mountains reached his nose. The place is like a cemetery. As I was enjoying these images evoked by John Coltrane's jazz, I slowly lifted my body, which had lost its sense of balance as though under hypnosis, and walked toward the restroom. (13)

Drugs and jazz have transported the body to Kumano, the images of Akira's hometown literally seeping out of his body as yet another expelled substance. This scene of presence and traces is both familiar and, like a maze, disorienting. Both time and sensation become properties of the imagination detached from the jazz café. The visible gradually gives way to darkness and the bass line shifts the perspective to an identity-less man, someone who finds himself completely lost and alone.

The shift from first- to third-person removes all of Akira's personal affiliations and allows him to focus on Kumano as an aesthetic site. The sound of a flute in R carries the wind to the solitary individual in Akira's imagination. The sensory perceptions experienced by/through this man lead back to Akira, who views it as a graveyard. This is not the same order of site as Tokyo, rather a sensory topos produced by rhythms, evoking not the overcoming of the natural environment but the psychically encroaching space of Akira's origins. Nonetheless, focalized through the third-person, the aestheticized Kumano appears desolate and is likened to a site of death. The sensations that encapsulate memory and meaning for Akira cannot be extrapolated beyond his imagination. His thoughts return to the jazz café, where all that remains is his body. Thereafter Akira heads to the restroom to expel both the drugs and the images.

GCC is not about a lonely young man in Tokyo longing for his home in the provinces.⁹⁸ Indeed, Akira has a profound ambivalence toward both his hometown and the metropolis to which he has moved. In the story this ambivalence is explosive, as though there is a pressure to choose sides that cannot be contained. The ambivalence is also irreducible to any simple logic. The city in which origins and identities are easy to shed, in which self-discovery and self-advancement are so prominent, and in which drugs and jazz are widely available, is a city of “corpses.” Home is marked by poverty and instability, violence and filth, illiteracy and physicality, and yet for all of its vitality is still beset by all of the lies, those imperfectly performed family roles, that prevent Akira’s self-understanding.

The text places Akira in an untenable situation, caught between these irreconcilable binaries. Tokyo, representing the space of the symbolic, is where Akira can go to prep school and, eventually, university; in the semiotic space of Kumano, he would be a manual laborer. In Tokyo he can mix with people of various classes and reinvent himself, whereas Kumano is a site of poverty and an unproblematic self — unproblematic because there is no cause to interrogate it — tied to his markedly fraught family structure. Tokyo people, by contrast, are mapped onto terms that are completely *other* to Akira: they are “corpses” or “sick” or “bourgeois,” while the space of Kumano is full of vitality in its laborers, whose abject non-identities demand no self-reflection as they never attempt to *write* their selves. Tokyo is the site of reading literature and writing poetry, while Kumano is marked by illiteracy and orality. In Tokyo, Akira has only drugs and jazz, whereas in Kumano he is in the natural world and, he had imagined, linked there by blood. As such, Tokyo serves a psychological space of the imaginary⁹⁹ (and eventually of

⁹⁸ I refer to Akira’s home region as Kumano, but it also appears as Kasuga-chô, the specific neighborhood in which one of Akira’s childhood homes was located.

⁹⁹ The imaginary order lies between the real and the symbolic in Lacanian psychoanalysis but continues to exert influence on the subject after the move to the symbolic. Dino Felluga, “Modules on Lacan: On the

the symbolic), while Kumano represents the pre-subjective space of the real.

Tokyo and Kumano are played off of each other repeatedly in the text, taking on significance in contrastive statements. Tokyo, in particular, serves as a narrative template for cliché. Akira repeatedly constructs Tokyo as “a land inhabited by ten million or so Others” (24), depicting it as a physical surface of land (*tochi*) in order to compare it to the land of his birth. In one narrative digression, Akira imagines a man and a woman waking up together, drinking tea, brushing their teeth, and having sex. The fantasy fades as he probes his mouth for the hole in his wisdom tooth, proclaiming of his imagined scenario that “somewhere surely this kind of thing is happening” (24). Tokyo is constructed as a series of prefigured representations while the real is experienced in the body, in blood and in pain.

The contrast between Tokyo as cliché and a naturalized Kumano is also made explicit. For example, Akira fixates on the restroom (*benjo*) as the quintessential site of transgression in Tokyo. He details a list of acts performed in the *benjo*, acts which must be kept from figures of authority. The *benjo* serves as the one category of site in Tokyo designed to handle the bodily abject. Akira describes his initial discovery of this site in order to construct Tokyo as Other.

Once when I had just starting coming to R, someone was locked in there for thirty minutes, and when I peeked through a little gap in the door, I saw a long-haired girl with bare breasts having intercourse with a man. It looked like something out of a sex scandal article from a weekly men's magazine and made me think: I'm not in that town of 40,000 surrounded by mountains and sea, but have turned into a prep school student in a town with a population of 10 million people living like dogs. (33)

Akira constructs this binary as though to emphasize the gap between his hometown and the metropolis. Both are described by the vague municipal designation of “town” (*machi*), as though fundamentally fungible. The dichotomy is drawn starkly between sites of nature and culture. The sea and mountains characterize home, whereas the city represents the jumble of culture high and low. Akira's fascination, naturally, settles on

Structure of the Psyche” *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*. <<http://www.cla.purdue.edu/English/theory/psychoanalysis/lacanstructure.html>>.

the low. Akira's understanding of the two different sites develops out of this contrast, but not without a great deal of contradiction.

To construct the binary divide between the two sites, Akira sometimes elides a great deal of his own experience and maps difference onto an essential nature-versus-culture schematic. The restroom serves as the site of transgression in Tokyo, but there is no comparison to the toilet without plumbing of home, a site that he linked to his sister witnessing a murder. Kumano is merely a place of people in nature; Tokyo is a place in which performance is embedded within an already narratable experience. Quasi-public sex in Tokyo mimics its representation in low-brow culture, as though every act were staged to be reproduced and consumed. Akira understands his movement from periphery to center as a translation from being to performing.

Even when this shift is seamless, the contrast between home and Tokyo is overwhelmed by ethnic and class difference. Akira attempts to identify and capture those pockets of Kumano's difference within Tokyo as a proxy for confronting those discrepancies. He discovers food that reminds him of home, of who he *is*, and satisfies his semiotic drives by allowing that food to transport a bit of Kumano to Tokyo.

I saw a store selling Korean food ingredients and bought a large quantity of pig organs, and then ate it with soy sauce and sugar and garlic and hot pepper. Just like a construction worker. When they eat dog meat in Kasuga-chô they say, "Wow, it's fish!" (*hô, toto ya na*) and call it "*hôtoto*." I felt the construction worker blood flowing through my body, me who had arrived here after twelve hours on an overnight train and was eating greasy intestines and liver and stomach (called *hatsu* and *nankotsu* and *shiro* and *senmai* and *mino*). (49)

This passage, a digression that begins and ends abruptly, links Akira's hunger to a site of difference. This difference, which resides in his blood, is evoked by three identities:

Korean (ethnic), construction worker (occupational), and Kasuga-chô (hometown). Food serves as a site of continuity amid translation, a marker of otherness that exceeds geography but is still experienced psychically as a geographical site. His arrival in Tokyo — when he steps off of the overnight train twelve hours from home — requires him to perform the new identity of prep school student, but the food permits him to direct his

attention toward prior associations. Despite entry into the land of the symbolic, Akira's hunger is still stimulated by his class consciousness and its material manifestation in his "construction worker blood."

I particularly want to call attention to this passage's demonstration of the breaks and continuities in the euphemistic signifiers applied to dog meat, which must somehow be denied as suitable for consumption, as well as other offal. The euphemism serves as a means to both conceal and effectively call attention to the symbolic need to separate certain referents from their representation in language. In this passage, the referents point directly to a perception of irreconcilable differences, between words and things as well as between Tokyo and Kumano. Akira notes that the dog meat is renamed using the babytalk word for fish (*toto*). In the text, *toto* is represented with the *kanji* for "fish" (*sakana*) with a gloss to indicate an alternate pronunciation. The euphemism for dog meat emerges out of the local dialect and adult's speech directed at infants — "*hō, toto yana!*" — locating it squarely in the oral; indeed, without the narrated explanation, the euphemism makes no sense in written language. The text reveals that spoken language, too, can be a dissimulating medium of representation, as unstable and malleable as the written word. Furthermore, it points out a continuity in this type of dissimulating language between Tokyo and Kumano, whereby offal is assigned alternate terminology as a means of concealing the reference to "othered" cuts of pig. In the focalization through Akira, however, euphemisms are not permitted to perform this dissimulation. Akira refers to an intestine as an intestine, with a parenthetical aside that enumerates the degree to which the naming of food is accompanied by a scission between words and things.

This passage, moreover, highlights a metacritical issue with the transmission of Nakagami's work in anthology form. Nakagami's initial text appears not to have benefited from even cursory editing, so Karatani Kōjin used his prerogative as editor of

the anthology, published three years after Nakagami's death in 1995, to fix typographical errors, clarify the punctuation, and, on occasion, remove passages. The discrepancies (*idô*) between the source text (*teihon* or *sokobon*) and the anthology version are meticulously catalogued at the end of each volume, though there is no indication of the logic behind the elisions. This passage about food is the longest passage of the first-published text of GCC omitted in the anthology version of this story.¹⁰⁰ I speculate that this passage, for example, was removed because it appears to add a nonsensical element to the paragraph in which it appears. This unnecessarily presupposes a certain imperative to the practice of reading, however. After all, this passage foregrounds the disconnect between Akira's body and living in the "town" (*machi*) of Tokyo discussed later in the same paragraph, and its exclusion diminishes the significance of the conflict between bodily abject and the symbolic. With respect to my reading of this story, Karatani's choices for elision in the anthology re-inscribe the semiotic-symbolic conflict onto the process of transmission of the text, with editorial choices that attempt to repress the logically opaque but nevertheless constitutive components of the story as first published. It is particularly ironic, then, that the content of this elided passage points directly to linguistic discrepancies between center and periphery and Akira's rejection of the euphemisms that repress the other. The ethics of posthumous editing aside, the anthologization of Nakagami's story undercuts the very critiques emerging from this text. In a story that gives the semiotic voice some degree of priority over symbolic language, the removal of this passage in particular indicates a problematic incursion into Nakagami's experimental writing.

In GCC, the problems of the self are extrapolated and reconstructed as radical differences between the binary of Tokyo/Kumano. Akira looks on life in Tokyo as a series of performances that follow some logic of narratability, whereas in Kumano those

¹⁰⁰ See *Nakagami Kenji zenshû* v. 1 (Tokyo: Shûeisha, 1995), pp. 353 and 569-570.

performances are instead located in the body or in nature. Food from a Korean grocery in Tokyo evokes the same kind of movement Akira has made from the periphery to the center, offering him a “taste” of his origins in the space of the symbolic. However, the names given to spicy pig organs underscore the manner in which representation is a type of performance that *also* conceals otherness rather than elucidating it.

THE FAMILIAL ABJECT> The exposition of the story follows Akira’s gradual awakening to the possibility that he will never be able to reconcile his experiences of the real with those of the symbolic. Spending time in cafés listening to jazz, high on drugs, gives Akira access to the space of the real. From the outset of the story, jazz music evokes the maternal space of home: “Modern jazz obstinately resounded like my mother’s light-red-patterned *geta* strap” (14). The rhythms of the music provide a context for imagining that pre-subjective maternal space in which instincts and drives are linked to sounds and rhythms that do not cohere into meaning. Jazz cafés in general, and R in particular, become liminal spaces in which Akira can reconvene the expressions of the maternal chora, that place in which a non-subject can produce expressions that haunt the symbolic components of signification.

Jazz music takes on a materiality analogous to the only space a presubjective infant knows, that of attachment to the mother. Moreover, in GCC the maternal space of Kumano is directly linked, as a site of abjection, to the mother and to her exclusion from the symbolic order.¹⁰¹ Again in the text a jazz number elicits a brief anecdote about his mother:

¹⁰¹ In an analysis of Nakagami’s later attempts at ethnographic writing, Margherita Long is critical of Nakagami’s scapegoating of the maternal. She singles out the ways Nakagami constructs matrilinearity and origins “predicated on rejection, repression, [and] dereliction” as a means of representing resistance to the patriarchal rather than as meaningful tropes in themselves. Margherita Long, “Nakagami and the Denial of Lineage: On Maternity, Abjection, and the Japanese Outcast Class” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 17:2 (2006), pp. 20-21. In GCC this attitude toward motherhood is already legible.

I was in a good mood, singing *You be so nice come home to*.¹⁰² I pulled a thousand yen out of a moneygram I kept in an empty shoe box in the closet and then looked over a letter in there that was written in distorted, disheveled characters on Yamada Construction letterhead that said: don't get into fights with your superiors or friends, from mom. My mother can only read *hiragana* and *katakana*. (28)

This revelation of Akira's mother's inability to read or write beyond the phonetic syllabaries (*hiragana* and *katakana*) situates her outside of dominant culture and constructs the boundaries of her expression around orality and phonetics rather than the inscription of meaning through *kanji* ideographs. The reprinting of the mother's letter is gratuitous, signaling her difference by constructing her as the source of Akira's ambivalent position between center and periphery, where class is legible via both (lack of) education and construction work.¹⁰³ The association between "You'd be so nice to come home to" and Akira's home is nothing short of ironic. "You'd be so nice" is a torch song in which coming "home" refers explicitly to physical desire (of varying degrees, depending on who performed the song). Akira directs his longing for home through a song reference that situates his mother, rather than something about "home," as the object of his desire.

Where Akira identifies with his mother, it is always to signal her role as the anchor at the periphery, in poverty, in difference.

That was a time when we still lived as a family next to the Korean neighborhood in a town full of crumbling houses, when my mother hadn't yet married my third father and we were living like a matrilineal Polynesian clan, us kids only linked by our mother's blood. (41)

¹⁰² The lyrics are written in *katakana* as "*yû bii sô naisu kamu fômu tsû*," in reference to "You'd be so nice to come home to," Cole Porter, 1943. The song was performed often by Helen Merrill in Japan, a hit off of her eponymous debut album in 1954, but also by Frank Sinatra, Dinah Shore, and Ella Fitzgerald. In a February 2009 interview, Merrill notes its continued popularity in Japan and refers to it as her "signature tune," noting that "audiences go nuts" when they hear the introductory notes. From an interview with Marc Myers dated 3 February 2009. *JazzWax*. 1 March 2009 <<http://www.JazzWax.com/2009/02/interview-helen-merrill-part-2.html>>.

¹⁰³ Moreover, in GCC this use of the maternal other appears strategically to deflect attention from the allowance the protagonist receives from his family. Money, a floating signifier of alienation from the material conditions of his stepfather's construction work, transcends the radical difference between Tokyo and Kumano and enables Akira to spend his days intoxicated, listening to jazz with his friends.

More than a decade later Nakagami attributes inspiration for his writing to his mother: "The reason I became a writer was because I inherited an oral culture from my mother." This quote is the epigraph to Eve Kathleen Zimmerman's doctoral thesis, "A Language of Rebellion: Myth, Violence, and Identity in the Fiction of Nakagami Kenji" [dissertation] (Columbia University, 1997), p. 1. From "Shimin ni hisomu sabetsu shinri" in Noma Hiroshi and Yasuoka Shôtarô, eds. *Sabetsu: sono kongen o tou* v. 1 [1977] (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1984), p. 212.

Akira's childhood is so far removed from mainstream culture that it cannot be associated with anything Japanese. The family, revolving around a nearly illiterate mother, becomes a site that synecdochically represents a radical othering, an abject association that permeates the protagonist's blood.

However, in Akira's case, blood does not easily map onto the complicated structure of his family. When Akira mistrusts representation as a means of signifying the real, it is his family that appears as the source. Repeated references to his family, as memories experienced in Tokyo, reveal the persistent problem of the multiplicity of fathers and the resultant dispersal of the phallus as the source of language. Akira's mother expels his father and with him Akira's ability to divest himself of his attachment to maternal space. No father means no fear of castration: in a phallogocentric interpretation of infant development, the mirror stage, coupled with a fear of castration, enables a recognition of space outside the mother, of the mother's alterity, that helps the child differentiate self from other.¹⁰⁴ The absence of the (blood-related) father, which Akira first faces when trying to write in the symbolic, prevents him from leaving behind his Kumano past when constituting his self in writing. Because language proves insufficient, Akira instead uses Doloran to expel the abject elements that plague him in Tokyo.

Akira's realization of this inadequacy only emerges after he has left Kumano and moved to Tokyo. However, he claims to have recognized at a young age that "family" was little more than a performance subject to the same ambiguities of all representation. The passage below directly follows Akira's realization that he did not actually murder a security guard at the Peacock Store, that his experience of the murder was possibly just a side effect of the Doloran. "I am having a bad dream," he declares (45). In this dream Akira recognizes that not only are his experiences potentially unreal, but that his family

¹⁰⁴ See Kristeva's reading of Lacan above or Dino Felluga, "Modules on Lacan: On Psychosexual Development" *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*. <<http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/psychoanalysis/lacandvelop.html>>.

may also be part of “a lie” in which he too is unreal. As a result of this re-characterization of family relations as artifice, Akira questions whether even his family can be a source of authenticity.

Everything’s a lie, I thought. Once when I was a child I also thought everything was a lie, that adults were just putting on a morality play (*kyôkun-geki*) for me to show me, the child, what it meant to come of age and become an adult, I recalled. First my mother was an actor. There were two husbands, one she left when he died, the other when he was alive. My older brother and sisters also had important roles as kids from the first husband. My alcoholic brother heard aural hallucinations. Then there is me, the actor, playing a role unconsciously as the son of the second husband. The third husband also plays a role as father. My alcoholic brother shows up drunk — his body messy, the blood vessels in his skin swollen from head to toe with alcohol — and threatens us in Kasuga-chô with an iron axe or froe or knife, getting violent and yelling, “I’m gonna slaughter every last one of you!” My brother breaks things while my sister tries to appease him like a lunatic and my mother gets angry and cries a lot. That night is Act II: the siblings have left and I’m in my study room while mother and father are in a scene where they ... talk about whether or not to separate. Truly everything is a lie. There’s no way to claim that what is really happening now is even the true truth — it’s all lies. *Older brother is twenty, younger sister is nineteen*. I suddenly remembered the lyrics to the Kasuga neighborhood’s *Bon* festival dance song and wiped the water droplets stuck to my face with the sleeve of my sweatshirt. Yamada Akira: you are not a human but a maggot. I stood up. *It is a touching sibling double-suicide. A brother in love with his younger sister. As a result of this love he grows sick. What have I done with my life up to now? What am I doing here? I’m just standing here alone on this dark night. Anxiety is causing my two legs to begin to decompose. My legs, my body, my neck begin to melt. I am me, the only one who possesses the name Yamada Akira, but what in the world am I?* (45-46)

After realizing that he had just committed a murder that did not happen, Akira summons an earlier memory that portrays the dynamic in his family as a type of artificial performance. First his mother is at the center, where the children are actors representing her different marriages to actor husbands. The dramatic result of the repeated reconstitution of the family is violence and dissolution. The “moral” of the play appears to signal that the instability of the family as a unit translates into socially abject behaviors: insanity, incest, suicide. The cycle of dissolution and reconstitution, by “Act II,” afflicts the relationship between Akira’s mother and her third husband; if the cycle continues, Akira’s coming-of-age, he fears, will mimic that of his brother.

When Akira concludes that “everything is a lie,” he forsakes the possibility of uncovering authenticity from anywhere. Does he mean that “family” is merely a performance, an artificial construct in which the various roles and plots and outcomes are predetermined? Alternately, does Akira’s claim that “everything is a lie” suggest that, like his experience with the Peacock Store, his memory is the lie that can never be

confirmed? He “recalls”— or parodies or rewrites! — an uncanny link between his older brother and sister and a song performed at his neighborhood’s annual festival to honor the spirits of the dead. If he cannot confirm any truth, the past is always subject to reformulation; his sister’s attempts to appease his rampaging brother are recast as an incestuous love story that results in double-suicide. Their familial roles are conflated with and reduced to ritual performance. His brother’s suicide is understood not as a singular event, but as the enactment of a cyclically repeated story. The “morality play” of this fragmented family serves as a Kumano-specific take on the Oedipal myth and teaches about the dangers of incest when the father is not connected by blood to the children. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the male child’s discovery of the mother’s lack of phallus offers the possibility that the punishment for incest would be castration at the hands of the father; Kristeva elaborates on this by noting that the awareness of castration, in concert with the child’s recognition of a separate image in the mirror, allows the child to separate from the mother and enter the symbolic as a subject separate from her.¹⁰⁵ Akira’s mother’s repeated act of leaving her husbands has left this lesson unfulfilled, and Akira is meant to witness the consequences in his family’s crazy performance: brother-sister incest¹⁰⁶ and double-suicide. He discovers that his attachment to Kumano, his reliance on his family as a fraught source of authenticity, is entangled in repeated abject performances resulting from his incomplete (psychosexual) separation from his mother. As he discovers that this lone source of authenticity is

¹⁰⁵ Kristeva theorizes castration as the final part of the mirror stage in a child’s separation of the semiotic signifier from the signified of the mirror image: “The discovery of castration ... detaches the subject from his dependence on the mother, and the perception of this lack makes the phallic function a symbolic function — *the* symbolic function. This is a decisive moment fraught with consequences: the subject, finding his identity in the symbolic, *separates* from his fusion with the mother, *confines* his jouissance to the genital, and transfers semiotic motility onto the symbolic order. Thus ends the formation of the thetic phase, which posits the gap between the signifier and the signified as an opening up toward every desire but also every act, including the very jouissance that exceeds them.” From *Revolution in Poetic Language*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁶ Nakagami’s Akutagawa Prize-winning story, “Misaki” [1975], climaxes when the protagonist, Akiyuki, engages in sex with his half-sister (his birth father’s daughter), a prostitute. “Now I’m spilling that man’s blood, he thought.” From *Nakagami zenshû* v.3, p. 242.

potentially unreliable, he feels his body, that which links him concretely to his family, disintegrate. He depicts himself as an incomplete subject without a body to inhabit: if anything can be a “lie,” then what does it mean to be “me”?

COMING TO TERMS WITH DEATH> Dead men tell no lies. Akira’s performance of his Tokyo “self” at the very least confirms that he is alive, though much of the tension and anxiety he expresses suggests that his is a life constructed out of fragmented associations with death. The traumatic moments in Akira’s life that reappear when he moves to Tokyo manifest themselves most prominently in memories of death and instill an awareness of his fundamentally abject origins. Entering jazz café R one day, where a fellow *fûten* is trying to set a record number of pills swallowed, Akira’s thoughts on death emerge in an aside: “I was not a complete corpse but an incomplete corpse” (52). One reading of this phrase suggests that the body performs life but always prefigured as a corpse-in-waiting.¹⁰⁷ The subject defines itself as that which has expelled the abject, but it is illusory. If the subject is merely a repression of death, the jettisoned abject demonstrates that our bodies are always already the material of abjection, that death is a temporal rather than physical process and the body-as-corpse is continuous. For Akira, this offers relief from anxieties about the persistent memories of death that invade his thoughts. However, the continuity of the corpse also offers him the tantalizing if morbid possibility that an authentic life — “completeness” as a corpse — is found only in death.

Just as Akira’s repressed issues with his family become legible over the course of the

¹⁰⁷ “Incomplete corpse” (*fukanzen na shitai*) is an ambiguous term, potentially referring (1) to a body (alive) that is simply waiting to become a corpse (dead) or, alternately, (2) to a corpse that has been dismembered. The phrase seems so uncanny but I have not found a reference prior to Nakagami’s. In the first sense of the term, playwright Terayama Shûji wrote a poem that describes his own life as a matter of gradually moving from birth as an “incomplete corpse” to death as a “complete corpse,” titled “Posthumous: my nostalgic home,” but this was first published in 1982 in *Asahi shinbun* (see *Zoku Terayama Shûji shishû* (Tokyo: Shichôsha, 1992), pp. 70-71). Science fiction author Larry Niven used the term in the second sense in his 1976 collection, *The Long Arm of Gil Hamilton*, about a future society in which people were abducted and their body parts were sold on an interstellar market; the second story of the anthology, “The Defenseless Dead,” is known in Japanese as “Incomplete corpse” (*fukanzen na shitai*) and serves as the title of the same collection in Japanese translation. The story was written in 1973 but not published in Japanese until 1984. GCC, written around 1970, first appeared in print in 1972.

story, so does his fixation on death. Memories of his family's encounters with death infect the smooth flow of the narrative, but Akira only begins to come to grips with the significance of these memories when he begins to fixate on his own death. Thereafter he slowly recognizes that the death of others around him has affected his own life and revealed it to be little more than a performance with a predetermined conclusion. Akira begins to fear that his own self is inextricably rooted in the abject behaviors of his family. One day Akira wakes up in his apartment feeling weary of everything (*unzari*) and suddenly begins to address himself:

Yamada Akira, age nineteen, you are me (*omae wa boku na no da*), I tried saying in a low voice. You have neither past nor future. You are just here breathing and existing. You neither fall asleep nor wake up. I stared at the body and the consciousness that had lapsed into a state of lethargy. Two open eyeballs that never closed were set in the middle of that face. The landscape of the room reflected in my eyeballs. The tatami mat made of rush. The blackened window frame, MG5 [a hair tonic] and hair caught in a silver comb. And there's the jackknife, which for some reason I put inside my pocket and carried around, lying at my folded legs. ... I hold out my arm and pick up the jackknife. I don't want to go crazy like my sister, who mussed up her hair and ran in front of a train yelling, I wanna die like big brother. I'd hate to be like my brother, who at age twenty-four hung himself by the neck. I want to live on and on and on. I don't want to age. (27)

There is no mirror mediating the deictic relationship in this scene; Akira attempts here to define himself outside of the pre-subjective stage of visual self-confirmation. He equates "you" with "I" in his monologue, a tautology that only further obscures what might be lacking in either term. Without the mirror and some visual identification, Akira can only imagine his ideal-I as a coherent being. He declares you/I unaccountable to time; the "I" he speaks to himself performs the role of the privileged and non-complex transcendental subject not bound to self-construction. This subject is instantiated as a logocentric "I" that proves immediately untenable, because in refusing time it necessarily represses all of the memories and sensations that return to fragment Akira's sense of self and bind him instead to his family history. (By denying himself a future, Akira also dissociates himself from the consequences of his actions.) The tension builds to a pitch at the end of the passage, when he specifically positions himself against his siblings, whom he defines by their suicidal tendencies. Immediately thereafter Akira takes the jackknife

and slits his left wrist, performing precisely that role he so emphatically renounced.

Akira responds to his own declaration first by cutting himself and then observing the results to judge the effects: “Blood began to flow from my wrist. Stupefied, I just stared at the blood flowing like a red, living thing. The landscape of the room reflected in my eyes” (28). Slitting his wrist is for Akira just another experience to record. His previous identification with maggots focused on a new form of life swarming out of and feasting upon death. Here blood runs from the self-inflicted wound, but it immediately becomes aestheticized. The blood is both mapped onto a vague but dynamic metaphor that is composed against the image on the eye of the protagonist. The I/eye is agentic in “staring” (*mitsumeru*) at the flowing blood while a view of the room passively “reflects on the eye” (*me ni utsutte iru*). Both items transform into signs of themselves: the room becomes a “landscape” and the blood represents life. The aestheticized scene suits Akira’s self-conception; he catalogs the same objects in his room he saw before cutting himself, all of them “lit up by a whitish light,” and concludes, “This is definitely the place of the current me” (*ima no boku no basho*) (28). Bleeding from his wrist in a room sparsely furnished, Akira stages his own suicide as a visual tableau. His claim to have “neither past nor future” is self-fulfilling as the “current me” adopts a timeless “place” within the landscape. Yet this performance of death allows Akira to constitute “*boku*” as a sign of the self, as an effect of the landscape rather than as an agent acting within it.

Against this aesthetic backdrop, the gesture toward death points to a state of pre-birth. The staged suicide is but a repetition of his sister’s experience years earlier, a prefigured “story” that invokes the dependence of the infant on the mother. Suicide refuses meaning in the symbolic, but as a semiotic drive it reads as an attempt to return to the chora, where the infant’s and mother’s bodies are undifferentiated:

And then, just like the story from my childhood of my sister witnessing a murder, blood drains as my body gradually shrinks and ends up metamorphosed into something about the size of a fetus inside the belly of a pregnant woman. (28)

Letting blood returns Akira, metaphorically, to the family, to the mother, to that state before which a father is known and thus prior to entry into the symbolic. The “I” disappears and only the body remains. Perhaps this serves as an explanation of Akira’s brother’s actions: abandoned by his mother, suicide might have been his attempt to return to the womb.

Akira confronts the possibility that he can derive meaning out of suicide. Unable or unprepared to kill himself successfully, Akira’s indifference toward his older brother’s suicide transforms into an understanding of death as the only site on which to compare his self-centered dilemma against some kind of transcendental subjecthood. At the time of his brother’s death, Akira repressed any negative reactions and settled into life with a reconstituted family in which his only blood ties were to his mother.

What shall I think about while stoned tonight at a bar in this neighborhood? My brother’s suicide, laughed at by Mori who likened it to a *naniwa-bushi* karmic drama.¹⁰⁸ Or my older sister, who temporarily lost her mind from the shock of witnessing a murder after a domestic fight at her workplace. Shall I spend my time thinking of these siblings tied to me by my mother’s blood? Or shall I think of life after my brother’s death, with my contractor father and his child and my mother and me, living *satisfactorily* in a house in Noda? (48)

For once his “family” was “orderly.”¹⁰⁹ Akira recalls that, with his brother dead, he could resume life in a hybrid but normal-seeming nuclear family. However, moving to Tokyo reveals to him that the matter was not closed, that it would be problematic for Akira to uncover the source of his subjecthood precisely because he had failed to account for the enduring psychic effects of blood ties to his brother *through his mother*.

At the opening of the story, memories of childhood irrupt into the narrative without clear motivation. By the final few sections of the story, Akira is made to reflexively associate intoxication on Doloran with traumatic memories of his family. Mori derides Akira’s obsession with these stories by comparing them to a pre-modern performance, a

¹⁰⁸ The *naniwa-bushi* performance usually consists of a storyteller reciting to *shamisen* accompaniment. I have translated “*inga-mono*” as “karmic drama”; the term refers to a theatrical work based on the notion of punitive justice, meaning that evildoers are eventually punished for their misdeeds.

¹⁰⁹ The term “*junchô (ni)*,” which I have translated above as “satisfactorily,” can also signify events proceeding “smoothly” or “in an orderly fashion.” In the text the term is represented using *katakana* to make it stand out.

primitive representational form that signifies the backwardness of the periphery. Mori mocks Akira's narrative of his brother's suicide as an *inga-mono*, a type of performance that appropriates Buddhist terminology by purporting to represent karmic retribution. Such a performance is a means of manifesting prohibited or taboo behavior as spectacle within the context of moral normativity, since the punishment of such behavior is prefigured as part of the genre. Akira ultimately recognizes that not only were his brother's suicide and sister's insanity inscribed in his recounting as narrative performances, but his purportedly "satisfactory" life was also a type of performance. Akira realizes that his brother's suicide was not an event that precipitated a stable normalcy in his life, as he had once thought, but merely led to a generic performance of that normalcy founded on repression.

Akira must re-interrogate the significance of suicide when his friend Mori precipitously kills himself. At first, he maintains the same indifference as he did toward his brother's suicide. When it is reported to Akira that Mori killed himself upon finding out that his pregnant wife miscarried, Akira wonders unsympathetically, "Why didn't Mori just express his pain?" (38) Akira continues to treat suicide as a bodily performance of ridding the self of pain in an ultimate act of partitioning self from other: "just because one morning suddenly someone else puts a noose around his neck and dies does not mean that I have to be surprised and sad and shedding tears" (40). Death represents the complete separation of subject from object; it reinforces for Akira the distance of his own fraught self from the dead others. This scission remains problematic for him, as his undefined selfhood is only defined negatively against the death of his brother and friend.

The penultimate section of the text begins: "January 45, on that day [I] encountered Mori" (53). In this alternate temporal framework, Akira — high on eight tablets of Doloran — stumbles upon an opportunity to interrogate Mori's suicide and uses it to reflect upon death in ways that he hadn't at the time of his brother's suicide. Mori

reappears on the street and entices Akira to go to a café, tempting him by offering to “tell a secret” (54). After his brother’s suicide, too, Akira recalls thinking he saw his brother;¹¹⁰ he reluctantly decides to follow Mori, thinking, “for my entire life I am unlikely to forget this day, January 45, on which I entered a café with that Mori” (55).

Mori —this vision of Mori, back from the dead and dressed atypically in a suit and tie, whom Akira has encountered while intoxicated — initially claims that he just wants Akira to listen to him. Akira protests that he is stoned and comments on Mori’s “affected” clothing, to which Mori replies:

“Akira is Akira and I am me. It’s okay to be stoned. I’m not asking you to understand me. It would be strange to think you’d understand. I just want to confess anything and everything. I want to just yap your ear off, just talk and talk and yap away.” (54)

Confession is a means of constructing a narrated self that foregrounds authenticity, treating language as a transparent instrument of truth. However, confession also presupposes an audience that is receptive to the equation of words and truth. Mori separates himself from Akira explicitly, creating a dialogue in which both are coherent and individuated. Although Akira cannot rely upon his own “I” to reflect a truthful self, he prepares to accept the dead Mori’s offer. Indeed, Mori frames his confession against the generic expectations of a confession: he does not expect his words to be comprehensible, and the content of his utterances is comprised not of a story but of speech without any implicit boundaries beyond “talking” and “yapping” (“*shabette, shabette, shaberimakurita*”). Mori repeatedly uses the term “confession” (*kokuhaku*), and his urge to speak is constructed not as performance but as formless and free-flowing.

Akira’s intoxication is crucial to this scene. After the drugs Akira ingests begin to take effect, his thoughts are repeatedly beset by nonsensical elements outside of his objective frame of reference. The frame of January 45 constructs an entirely semiotic space, in

¹¹⁰ “Once when I was a kid and my brother hung himself, even though I saw his coffin burn in the crematorium I really thought he had just suddenly run away and then would come home and get drunk and go on a rampage. At night when the sky looked dirty and the sunset was just about over, I was astounded to see a man wearing boots and riding a delivery bicycle in the alleys near the school. I recall hurriedly chasing after him. Did my brother truly die?” (54)

which Mori and Akira are both coherent and can enunciate from tentative subject positions. From such a site Mori, too, claims to seek self-confirmation by speaking to an other:

“I just want to know about myself. And I want someone, anyone else, any person with a different body, to understand me. Of course, if any jerk claimed to know me intimately I’d bash his brains in.” (56)

Akira accepts Mori’s claims and urges him to speak, but Mori ridicules the very idea:

“Confess?”
“Yeah. Confess. I’ll listen to you.”
“Moron. All of that was a joke. ... Confess — what would I confess? Should I confess that I don’t know what I should confess?” (57)

The semiotic frame offers a critique not just of language as a transparent medium but of confession as a somehow “authentic” means of expressing experience. Confession is always already prefigured as narrative and takes for granted the constitution of the self; Mori mocks the whole enterprise by suggesting that the self is something we want others to understand but would be incensed to the point of violence if anyone actually claimed that knowledge. The suicides Akira seeks to understand do not ultimately inhabit a ritualized generic form (such as the *inga-mono*) because they disavow construction out of symbolic language.

BROKEN RECORD> The final section of GCC recycles all of the issues surrounding Akira’s quest to find accommodation between his past and present. Akira is in his own apartment at night, engaged in a cycle of dreaming and wakefulness, one state indistinguishable from the other.

Under the covers of my futon, I cannot tell if I am sleeping or awake, here in this place vaguely resembling the membrane of a plant cell. I vaguely awaken and then repeat the exercise of falling into a bad-tasting dream. When I awake from the bad dream, I can’t move arms or legs. It’s my 4.5-mat room. I don’t want to do anything. There’s the scent of dried tree resin. Mucous from a too-long-neglected venereal disease dribbles from my body in threads. Some part of my body is rotting. It’s dark. ... Now I’m a vessel of emotion, a single tumbler that scoops up liquid and gives it form, wondering if I’d be better off crushing that tumbler to pieces and turning it into glass shards, wondering if I’d be better off destroying all of my sensory organs and squishing my brains. I have a mother and a father. That’s a given. Everyone has a mother and father. [I] have older and younger brothers and sisters. However, I’m not free in the least. I’m tied up and cursed with a sexually transmitted disease as my body begins to palpably rot. I recall Mori’s words — Shall [I] confess? — and utter them from the back of my throat. (57-58)

In the liminal space between being awake and asleep, the binaries in Akira's life begin to break down. His bad dreams manifest themselves in his awake body by expelling mucous. The tree resin he had previously mistaken for blood refers back to the misrecognition of his mirror image and incomplete break from that maternal space. Akira's body, still continuous with the mother's, is decaying from lack of development. The traces of the absent phallus, bursting through Akira's attempts at repression, manifest themselves in the decay and in the mucous that forces its way out of his body. The physical and mental pain are excruciating and Akira ponders whether destruction of his body is the only way out of this torment. He gropes for some form of identification within the ranks of family — a generic family of parents and siblings, not necessarily his own — but this only binds him further to his despair. As a last-ditch effort, he resorts to the performance of confession, which though lacking authenticity might be a way out. In any case, there is no one to hear his confession.

The torment continues: Akira feels persecuted and trapped but succumbs once again to a dream state. He dreams of himself running from the police, who hold up duralumin shields and yell, "You are under arrest for obstruction of official duties."¹¹¹ In his dream, at least, Akira is interpellated by the police; he may be an errant subject, but he is a subject nonetheless. Panicked, he hides on a train and in his dream confronts his despair:

¹¹¹ This likely refers to the repeated confrontations between student groups and riot police (wielding batons and duralumin shields) over a variety of government policies throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s. Many of those arrested were charged under the broad rubric of obstructing public officials from carrying out their jobs. Other asides in the story also reference the fractious politics, including graffiti on the wall of R, "Hail the eternal world revolution," which produces nausea in Akira (13). Akira notably remains completely detached from these politics. To illustrate this, there is a scene in "café M" in which Mori mocks the "former comrade" of an ex-girlfriend involved in sectarian student politics: Mori quizzes him about his sect affiliation ("B"), about being a police snitch, about whether the guy is "a dog or a monkey" (these animals represent the trope of natural enemies; Akira, meanwhile, claims he is a maggot), and about renouncing the struggle and changing sides (*tenkô*, a loaded term from the Pacific War-era referring to Communist party members who were coerced by the police to publicly renounce revolutionary politics). Throughout this conversation, Akira focuses on himself and merely laments that his Doloran high is "slipping away" (17-20). The text situates Akira's political struggle in his self-identification and, significantly, outside of the contemporary political struggles that consumed students at the time.

I stood on the train looking at the landscape outside. Outside it was raining. Just as the little girl with glasses predicted, the time of destruction has come. It will continue raining through the tenth day of the tenth month (*totsuki-tôka*), the ground covered in water, the fine endless rain collecting so that we are all swallowed up by water. Destruction! There is absolutely no hope. My teeth hurt. While enjoying my sleep coated with pain, I gradually began to wake up. Then I thought, I will definitely not be saved, not from the rains causing a big flood, I realized, but from the tooth pain that leapt from my nerves. (58)

Akira constructs his own interiority by gazing outward at a landscape. In his dream state he experiences this stable binary of inside and out. However the only site at which binary structures do not collapse is at their origin within the maternal body. The rain will last 280 days, precisely the average gestation time for an infant.¹¹² The flood waters may represent amniotic fluid, in which case “destruction” arrives at the moment of birth. That is, destruction of the stable binaries, of the theretofore known world, is effected by the infant’s violent expulsion from the womb. Once the body is self-contained, it has no protection from the various sensations that plague it. In separating from the maternal chora, the external landscape morphs into the pain of the body, as though Akira can feel the foreclosure of *jouissance* in his teeth. The physical pain jerks Akira out of a dream-like pre-subjective state and brings him back to a wakeful presence, where the question of salvation is not spiritual or religious but wholly rooted in the body. The torment continues.

In response to his intense discomfort, Akira repeats the same fruitless activities over and over like a broken record. He promised to end this performance, this fakery, by taking his own life, but he failed to follow through. He defined himself against the city full of “corpses” to no avail, and so each time he looks into the mirror he must strain to recognize the reflected image as himself. Unable to rid himself of psychic pain, his only recourse is to act upon his body.

Blood began to flow from my tooth. If I just wiggle it a little more I’m sure it will come out. Red blood started to stick to my index finger and thumb, so I reached out for the mirror I had tossed into a corner of the room and, lying face up, checked out the inside of my mouth. It was bloody. Just like Dracula. The Doloran hadn’t kicked in yet. My face in the mirror formed a smile. Yamada Akira, 19 years old, maggot. Only my cheeks started to go numb. Eventually I would end up with my whole

¹¹² *Totsuki-tôka* means nine full months plus ten more days (9 months x 30 days + 10 days = 280 days) and is an expression used specifically to refer to the gestation period of a human baby.

body crazy-numb from a single 80-yen case of Doloran. I figured that in the morning I would again wake up dizzy with a hangover. What a healthy start to the day. I gathered my strength and got up, went to the sink, and leaned against the wall so that my lolling body wouldn't fall over. There I twisted the faucet on and took in the water that flowed forth with great power. I gargled. Nausea suddenly made a beeline from the depths of my throat toward my eyeballs. Water mixed with blood pushed up from my stomach and passed through my throat, and I vomited the milky fluid into the sink all at once. What the hell was I doing? I vomited out the medicine that I had dissolved into a milky color before it began to take real effect. Again I put my lips to the faucet and took in water, gargling with it. Then I took the glass from atop the shelf, rinsed it, and filled it with water. I carried it without spilling and put it next to my pillow, opened the seal on the remaining five cases and took the pills out. Five pills for my mother, the other five for my brother, three for my older sister, three for the guy I stabbed with an icepick, and one each for Mori and Robin and Toko and Jin. Twenty pills in total. That was a new record. I took them all at once. They got caught between my throat and my stomach and caused a bitter nausea. I stood up again and filled the glass with fresh water and drank two glasses at once, flooding my esophagus and stomach with the feeling of being invaded. I thought I'd add three more pills: for the girl with the glasses and sash by the station, and for R, and for Miles Davis, one pill apiece. (58-59)

Although he seems to repeat the same actions that similarly fail to yield any results, this time is different. Akira's blood does not make him think of his family ties, but of Dracula (who feeds off of others' blood). Akira's face in the mirror is recognizable as his own. His body obeys the drugs and gradually moves to eliminate sensation and control. Finally, even if tentatively, Akira is himself, inhabiting his own body and experiencing its sensations. If ingesting Doloran is an attempt to pursue *jouissance* and return to the maternal chora, it fails; his body purges this supplement because it is already self-sufficient.

Akira's narrative cannot end, however, with his self-reconciliation and acceptance of his entry into the symbolic. That manner of repression, of acceding to the lie of the repeated performance, would constitute the betrayal that made him want to return to the womb previously. Instead, he incorporates everything into his body in the form of Doloran pills, a "new record" for quantity of painkillers ingested. Compared to the surrounding narration of fear and sensation, this gesture is represented as calm and calculated though it is performed out of a dramatized desperation. Akira takes the most pills for his family members (not for a father, but for the man he "stabbed"), and then for acquaintances in Tokyo. He adds an additional pill for mediating devices — the proselytizing girl, the jazz café, a famous jazz performer — in whose names he creates a

space for questioning himself. Akira uses the Doloran as a supplement to fill in for all that he lacks, but also to substitute for the *jouissance*, the instinctual drives and dreams and rhythms of his origins. Those origins underscore his attachment to blood and family in the periphery, those primary sites of lack that resist the meaning and value and law that occupies the center. He could not write his way out of this dilemma, for language cannot account for these resistances. Instead he swallows case after case of painkillers to collapse the different sites by which he constitutes his “self,” subsuming everything under the pursuit of his pre-subjective past and re-injecting himself into an irresolvable cycle of subjection and abjection.

Chapter Four

Almost Transparent Experience: Tourism and Murakami Ryû's Debut Novella

In musing on the success of his debut publication, *Almost Transparent Blue* (*Kagiri naku tômei ni chikai burû*), Murakami Ryû told Ishihara Shintarô that he had “made a calculation” that he would receive acclaim by “describing drugs and orgies to people who had never experienced these things.”¹¹³ As I argue in this chapter, that calculation is inscribed firmly in the narrative ideologies that make the text a “touristic” literary production. As the mass media in mid-1976 inundated the reading public with developments in an international bribery scandal that brought down the prime minister, Murakami’s novella, stamped by critics with both approval and opprobrium, drew attention in the literary world as “the most sensational topic of conversation of the year.”¹¹⁴ Detailing the sex-and-drugs lifestyle of a handful of youth who converge on Tokyo and eschew morality and productive labor in place of hedonistic abandon, the text was written about in the media as a non-political, non-ideological “scandal” of anti-social youth behavior. The focus on the content of the text and its literary-award validation as “pure literature,”¹¹⁵ however, left unquestioned the representational politics out of which Murakami crafted his work. In this chapter I argue that the text, through its deployment

¹¹³ The discussion from *Shûkan bunshun* is quoted in Mori Yoshio, “Ningensei no fukken o koso” *Akahata* 23 June 1976, p. 10. Ishihara’s debut novella, *Taiyô no kisetsu*, won him the Akutagawa Prize in 1955 and, due to similarities in sensational reception of a story about youth gone wild, served as a comparison for many critics assessing Murakami’s work.

¹¹⁴ Akiyama Shun, “Bungaku gainen ’76” *Bungei nenkan* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1977), p. 64.

¹¹⁵ “Pure literature” (*jun-bungaku*) has been a contested category since the 1930s. It is neither necessarily pure nor serious but tenuously opposed to “popular literature” (*taishû-bungaku*, literally, “mass literature”). Some have argued that “pure literature” is a fixed category of “realism” in which the author is mapped onto the protagonist, while others argue that it highlights the artistic qualities of a work rather than its commercial appeal. For a historical discussion on the distinction, see Matthew C. Strecher, “Purely Mass or Massively Pure? The Division Between ‘Pure’ and ‘Mass’ Literature” *Monumenta Nipponica* 51:3 (Autumn 1996), pp. 357-374.

of reductive identity politics and the reification of experiences into a series of snapshots, is modeled on the touristic photograph's "power of capturing any piece of empirically witnessed reality and transforming it into a sign of itself."¹¹⁶ The aesthetics of representing experience and the politics of constructing a self in opposition to the exotic Other obscure the manner by which the tourist's gaze seeks authenticity — that is, treatment of the narrated experience as an object possessed by the narrating subject representing truth-value — in these commodified photographic signs. I will analyze how the text's manipulation of these signs relies on a narrative apparatus to simulate the authenticity of sensory description.

The issues I wish to highlight resonate strongly in the text's second orgy scene, in which the narrator-protagonist, Ryû, has brought two of his (ostensibly Japanese) female friends to the apartment of Oscar, a black American soldier stationed at the nearby Yokota U.S. Air Force Base. Another soldier, Jackson, recalled a time when Ryû had been made up to look like Faye Dunaway, and in this scene, too, Ryû becomes intoxicated (on hashish and, thereafter, heroin) and is dressed in a stripper's silver negligé as makeup is applied to his face. He creates a spectacle for the other four men and four women in the apartment, dancing on command and turning himself into "an extremely happy slave."¹¹⁷ The drugs reduce his body to two vital organs: "I feel like only my heart and penis are linked and active and the rest of my organs have melted away" (83). But this needs to be read as an inversion of the cause-effect relationship that narratives of drug experience often concoct: auto-dismemberment here is the product of representation rather than the source of it.

While in a previous orgy the attention shifted between the various participants and

¹¹⁶ John Frow, "Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia" *October* 57 (Summer 1991), p. 144

¹¹⁷ Murakami Ryû, *Kagiri naku tômei ni chikai burû* (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1976), p. 80. Hereafter referred to as *Blue* with internal citations in parentheses. Translations are my own and refer to this version of the text. The text was first published in *Gunzô* 31:6 (June 1976) and again in *Bungei shunjû* 54:9 (September 1976). Translated thoughtfully into English as *Almost Transparent Blue* by Nancy Andrews (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1977). Andrews's translation will be cited as *ATB* hereafter.

their sexual configurations, in this scene the action as narrated is centered around Ryû. Rudiana, described as “the black woman” (*kokujin-onna*), first stimulates and then mounts Ryû’s penis. She “yells just like Tarzan” and breathes “roughly, like a black javelin thrower” from a movie about the Olympics. Next, Jackson straddles Ryû’s face and forces his penis into Ryû’s mouth, exclaiming, “Hey, Ryû, you’re completely a doll. Our yellow doll. We could stop the wind-up screw and kill you” (85). Additionally, a “fat white woman” with “red-black genitals” that look “like a liver cut out of a pig” sits on Ryû’s feet (87). The woman “smelled just like rotten crabmeat” and contributes to Ryû’s nausea, first brought about by the body odor of Rudiana and the sweat dripping off of Jackson’s chest. The nausea causes Ryû to nip Jackson’s penis, and in response Jackson smacks Ryû’s face and bloodies his lip.

The black woman wiped my blood with her tongue. She smiled nicely like a battlefield hospital nurse and whispered in my ear that she’d soon make me shoot my load. The white woman’s huge genitals buried my right foot. Jackson put his penis back in my cut mouth and I desperately held back nausea. Stimulated by the blood and my wet tongue, Jackson squirted out a lukewarm liquid. Sticky like phlegm, the semen stuck in my throat. I spat out the pink liquid that had mixed with my blood and screamed for the black woman to make me come. (87-88)

This passage represents an exceptional scene in the text, in which Ryû is portrayed as an object to others even as he remains the narrating subject. It also exemplifies the convergence of representing experience authoritatively and assembling the elements of “scandal” — in this case a gathering of explicitly marked racial Others engaged in an omnisexual foursome — into a controlled pastiche.

This convergence highlights how Ryû is the subject (1) narrating in the present in retrospect, when the immediacy of the narration belies the impossibility of such direct transmission of the experience and (2) whose own identity, as a Japanese man, is the unmarked universal subject against which Others are constructed. The author is praised by critics for his unflinching, matter-of-fact portrayal of sexual acts. However such an observation precludes an examination of the identity politics at work. There is an investment in essentialized racial identities, in which the racial Other to the narrating

subject is always associated with and defined via sexual organs. The voices given to the Other, in indirectly quoted dialogue “translated” seamlessly into Japanese, enforce an implicit racial power hierarchy by threatening violence even while the Others’ bodies sexually dominate the protagonist. Ryû’s nausea, however, never completely dissociates from his scopophilia, his voyeuristic fascination at the scene of “scandal” and the underlying *pleasure* of gaining access to the accoutrements of black soldiers’ lives by providing sexually willing women and controlling the representation of the scene as narrator.

After discussing the author and the publication history of the text, I will analyze the issues of representing identity and sensation that helped to make *Blue* such a controversial text when it was released. *Blue* constructs its identities essentially to make them “miscegenate,” to index them to power, and to represent them reductively so that the only legible aspect is the positioning of racial difference. The universal subject is the Japanese male, and the text itself derives from his rhetorical investment in cultivating sexual relationships with a series of Others. My discussion of the representation of sensation in this text stems from Anne McKnight’s observation that

the act of photographing occurs throughout the book — whether as a thematic or as an epistemic device through which the characters formalize the impulse to stage and record a moment that articulates a material referent of experience.¹¹⁸

Out of McKnight’s framework, I examine how a negotiation of various sensations are manipulated as discrete units and deployed to bridge the gaps between experience and representation to endow the text with a measure of authenticity. Finally, I conclude by situating the text amid theoretical discourses of tourism. I argue that the touristic literary relies on a prefigured narrative topos that rests on the authentication of everything as legible experience while obscuring its fundamental constructedness out of chains of signifiers. To bolster its authority as realism, the touristic literary enunciates

¹¹⁸ Anne McKnight, “Modan taimuzu: kagiri naku tōmei ni chikai burû —shintai, shisen, kurishe” *Yuriika* 29:8 (June 1997), pp. 173-174.

through a trope of direct experience, whereby sensory perceptions become the property of the narrating subject and are put on display to affirm his ownership. As a result, the touristic literary closes off repressed discourses and short-circuits any interrogation of the subject positions that might demystify the authenticity of a masterful narrator and his trophy, the text.

A SENSATIONAL TEXT CIRCULATES

Murakami Ryûnosuke was born in 1952 in Sasebo, the child of two public school teachers. His given name uses the same *kanji* characters as the long-deceased writer Akutagawa Ryûnosuke, whose eponymous literary award Murakami would win at the age of 24.¹¹⁹ The Sasebo port, which had once been used by the Japanese Imperial Navy, became a base for the United States Navy after World War II and was a primary staging ground for U.S. involvement in the Korean War. While Murakami was in high school, he watched from afar the mobilization of left-wing student groups opposed to the use of bilateral U.S.-Japan relations to expand American influence on the Asian continent. In January 1968, the U.S.S. Enterprise made a call on the Sasebo port, and the city became the site of a violent confrontation between student protesters and riot police firing water cannons and tear gas. Murakami had seen the student protesters from the Communist Party-influenced *Zengakuren* on television when they blockaded Haneda Airport the previous October to prevent Prime Minister Satô Eisaku from visiting Vietnam. When thousands of students came to his hometown, Murakami went to see them on Hirase Bridge, at the center of the protest, and witnessed a protester getting beaten from close-

¹¹⁹ The Akutagawa Prize, administered by the Bungei shunjûsha publishing company, has been awarded twice annually since 1935, although sometimes no award is granted. Works of “pure literature” published in the prior six months are eligible for the award. For the history of the prize, see Edward Mack, “Accounting for Taste: The Creation of the Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes for Literature” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 64:2 (2004), pp. 291-340.

up.¹²⁰ Murakami was rebellious at school — he fictionalized this period in his life in an ironic book entitled *69* — but in retrospect he claimed that his actions were less oriented toward “politics” (*seiji*) and more toward “being cool” (*kakko-ii*).¹²¹ *Blue* assumes an analogous posture.

For a time after graduating from high school, Murakami moved to the Tokyo metropolitan city of Fussa, the site of another U.S. military base, and eventually entered Musashino Art University. He was still a student when he submitted his debut story in a competition for new writers. Murakami noted that it took him about three years to write a story of some 350 pages, but that his friends told him to cut the uninteresting first part.¹²² In a retrospective article, Murakami details the single week between seeing an announcement of the competition in what he claims was the only issue of *Gunzô* he ever purchased and completing what amounted to the last forty percent of the manuscript.¹²³

Murakami’s submission for the *Gunzô* New Writer’s Award,¹²⁴ which reportedly attracted 663 other works, made it through the second round of evaluations, which narrowed the fiction field to 15 works total. Alongside the announcement of his story as the winner in the June 1976 issue of *Gunzô*, Murakami stated that he wanted the award to be a silver anniversary present for his parents to make up for a surfeit of “unfilial piety.”¹²⁵

In early July, an announcement was sent out that *Blue* had been awarded the Akutagawa Prize. The pair of awards set in motion a sales phenomenon that recycled concerns about the diminishing gap between “pure” and “popular” literary production.

¹²⁰ Inoue Mitsuharu and Murakami Ryû, “Bungaku-teki fûdo to seishun: Sasebo-jazu-onna” *Bungakukai* 30:9 (September 1976), p. 178.

¹²¹ *Nakagami Kenji vs. Murakami Ryû: oretachi no fune wa, ugokanu kiri no naka o, tomozuna o toite* — (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1977), p. 18.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹²³ Murakami Ryû, “Nana-nen-mae no isshûkan” *Gunzô* 38:4 (April 1983), pp. 230-231.

¹²⁴ This award has been administered annually since 1958 by the Kôdansha publishing company, which puts out the literary magazine *Gunzô*, and accepts submissions for fiction and critical essays of relatively short length.

¹²⁵ Murakami Ryû, “Jushô no kotoba” *Gunzô* 31:6 (June 1976), p. 147.

The book version of *Blue* was released on July 14, 1976 and sold 300,000 copies in two weeks, 700,000 by the end of August, and 1.3 million by the end of 1976.¹²⁶ This was nothing short of amazing for a work labeled “*jun-bungaku*.” No Akutagawa Prize-winner had broken the “million-seller” mark, much less a debut novel by a young, unknown author.¹²⁷ At a time of deep recession in the book market, Murakami’s work flew off the bookstore shelves nearly as fast as it was printed, “the only book selling like that nationwide.”¹²⁸

The manner in which *Blue* captured the public imagination and the speed with which it proliferated in public discourse seem to have driven much of the reportage on the text. By contrast, textual analysis of the story remained a low priority. The relationship between the story and the context of its publication perhaps explains this, particularly with regard to the graphic representations of drug use and sex, on one hand, and the apparent glorification of the minute details of individual hedonistic sensation on the other.

Award committee judges were surprised that a work written in Japanese dealing so graphically and explicitly in drugs and sex been so highly acclaimed, even among themselves. But even those who praised it found themselves partially taken aback by the content, and admitted to being won over by the aesthetic conjured through topics that had never before seemed worthy. Kojima Nobuo called it “immaculate.” Nakamura Mitsuo was surprised that such “base materials” (*hirô na sozai*) could leave such a “gentle feeling.” Fukunaga Takehiko, the oldest member of the Gunzô committee, granted that, though the representation of “filth” wasn’t his preference, it was still done

¹²⁶ Shuppan nenkan henshûbu, ed. *Shuppan nenkan* (Tokyo: Shuppan Nyûsu-sha, 1977), p. 54.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.62. The reaction to Murakami’s work was often compared to the release of Ishihara Shintarô’s *Season of the Sun* in 1956 in terms of the sensation it caused, but Ishihara’s Akutagawa Prize-winning novel sold fewer than half a million copies. Ishihara’s award in 1955 first created an aura of celebrity around the prize that was exceeded by Murakami decades later. See Mack, “Accounting for Taste,” p. 293fn.

¹²⁸ “Henpin mata henpin: yûshoku fukamaru” *Yomiuri shinbun* 20 September 1976, p. 8.

according to a recognizable aesthetic.¹²⁹

In light of the risqué content, the Gunzô and Akutagawa prizes affirmed the text's literary quality. This affirmation may have kept the censors at bay. In July 1972, the publishers of the parody magazine *Omoshiro hanbun* were arrested for reprinting an explicit story, *Yojôhan shitabari no fusuma*, attributed to Nagai Kafû.¹³⁰ *Blue* did not suffer this fate at all. One year earlier, *Playboy* introduced its Japan edition, with a majority of content specific to the Japanese-language edition, and the 430,000 copies sold out in the first three hours of sales.¹³¹ Nikkatsu studios was putting out an average of 4 "Roman porno" films per month in 1976. The market was clearly prepared for representations of a more graphic nature than were previously permitted, though the Tokyo high court would still find *Omoshiro hanbun* officials guilty of distributing obscene materials and force them to pay hefty fines when the decision was handed down in 1977.

That *Blue* was read as apolitical relates a great deal to the limited definition of politics proper at the time. Any talk of "political" leanings resurrected memories of the failed leftist student movements, and the second-wave feminist truism that "the personal is political" (widely attributed to a Carol Hanisch essay from 1969) had not penetrated the critical discourse of domestic literary criticism in the 1970s. The recent group of authors known as the "inward-looking generation" (*naikô no sedai*), in particular, were thought to have turned their backs on "politics" to explore individual psychological

¹²⁹ Kojima Nobuo, "Sekkyoku-teki na seiketsu-sa," and Fukunaga Takehiko, "Sunpyô" *Gunzô* 31:6 (June 1976), pp. 152-153; Nakamura Mitsuo, "Rôba-shin" *Bungei shunjû* 54:9 (September 1976), p. 383.

¹³⁰ *Yojôhan* is an erotic story (*shunpon*) attributed to Nagai Kafû that explicitly details, in flowery late-Meiji prose, how a man should initiate and perform sexual acts on women. It was circulated privately for decades and then published in the July 1972 issue of *Omoshiro hanbun*. This publication led to arrests for distribution of obscene materials (*waisetsu-butsu*) and jail time, and subsequently fines, for several people related to the magazine. The charges were confirmed by a 1977 judicial decision and an appeal was rejected by the Tokyo High Court in 1980. Prior trials on translations of *Lady Chatterley* (ended 1957) and works by Sade (ended 1969) determined "obscenity" to have three aspects: 1) causes sexual excitement or stimulation; 2) would cause sexual shame to "normal people" (*futsûjin*); 3) violates "good" (*zenryô*) sexual morals. (Yabuki Satoru, "Torishimari no ronri" *Motekku tsûshin* 4 (10 March 1973), pp. 11-12.)

¹³¹ *Shuppan nenkan* (1976), p. 58.

issues, and so absent a direct confrontation with the legacy of post-movement politics, Murakami's work would not be read politically.

Instead, it was depicted as a sign of the times. Haniya Yutaka's depiction of the work as "representing the 'era of rock and fuck'" was featured prominently on the *obi*, the paper band attached to the outside cover, of the book. The "scandalous" nature of the story focused attention on the flouting of morals and social roles and drug laws. These were apparently viewed as separate from politics proper, as merely the limited object of fascination of young people infected with the cosmopolitanism of youth culture. Even as university-centered movement politics lost its appeal earlier in the decade, youth-oriented consumer culture proliferated and formed a sphere viewed separate from "politics" altogether.

The political landscape in 1976 was grossly overdetermined by the attention directed toward the Lockheed bribery scandal. In February 1972 the scandal, the subject of a U.S. Senate investigation led by Frank Church, expanded to reveal millions of dollars in payments to the office of Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei — already no newcomer to scandal — to ensure a Lockheed contract. Tanaka resigned in July just days after Murakami accepted the Akutagawa Prize at Tokyo Kaikan, less than a kilometer from the center of government power. The "shocking" representations of *Blue* encompassed a minor social phenomenon — what Etô Jun would fixate on as "subculture" rather than "total culture"¹³² — whereas government figures peddling influence for large sums of money was covered extensively as a "shocking" perversion of politics. Indeed, playing on the work's title, a publishing industry yearbook referred to *Blue* as a "boundlessly lucky book" (*kagiri naku kôun no hon*), suggesting that the Lockheed scandal increased the public's consumption of print media generally.¹³³

¹³² Etô Jun, "Murakami Ryû Akutagawa-shô jushô no nansensu: sabu-karuchaa no han'ei ni wa bungakuteki kanmei wa nai" *Sandee mainichi* 25 July 1976, p. 136.

¹³³ *Shuppan nenkan* (1977), p. 54.

The discursive focus in 1976 on allegedly non-political aspects of *Blue* and the “scandalous” sex and drug use represented has spurred me to call attention to the text’s political leanings, particularly in terms of its construction of identity and its representation of sensation. Jean Baudrillard points out that “scandal” invokes the “moral superstructure” that ultimately bolsters the status quo by focusing on the content of the scandal rather than the corrupt underlying structures that enable it.¹³⁴ The success of *Blue* as scandal, I argue, glosses over and ultimately affirms the fetishism of Otherness in a touristic narrative.

IDENTITY MATTERS

Murakami’s text revolves around a cast of about a dozen characters all connected by the narrator-protagonist Ryû. The characters’ names are all in *katakana*, a script that, as far as names go, signifies either a non-Japanese origin or a means of indicating the pronunciation of a name when the characters are not known. Irie Takanori criticizes this use of katakana names as part of a critique of the “thin world” of the text, which, he claims, displaces the “traditional” use of characters that have long helped people identify one another in Japanese culture. Irie suggests that Murakami is “consciously refusing” a link to the cultural heritage of using *kanji* ideographs in a meaningless gesture.¹³⁵

For Irie, this is part of a general trend in contemporary fiction away from “literature” (*bungaku*) and instead directed toward “design” (*dezain*).¹³⁶ The opposition of these terms reveals a rigid categorical distinction that obscures a fundamental continuity between the two. Irie might as well be echoing Murakami’s claim of performing not in the service of “politics” but just to “be cool.” Just as a text is crafted out of aesthetics that merge orthographic and signifying components, politics involves a negotiation between

¹³⁴ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* [1981], trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 14-15.

¹³⁵ Irie Takanori, “Waga chokugen: kagiri naku kihaku na mono” *Shincho* 73:9 (September 1976), p. 204.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

the exercise of power and the representation of one's position. The use of *katakana* for *all* of the names puts the characters on an equal plane. The connection Irie makes between the script of the names and the "thin world" of *Blue* presupposes literary production as somehow quintessentially emerging out of the "thickness" of cultural representation. However, the thin world is precisely what is represented in *Blue*, one in which the names of characters — and, furthermore, the connection between nicknames and the names as officially registered — are largely irrelevant beyond endowing each character with certain traits.

The setting itself, as I will argue below, is constructed as a type of "contact zone," where young people interact with little regard for the codes and values of the world around them. The use of *katakana* names does not necessarily disavow anything about culture, but it instead produces the contingent identities of the characters as they perform their respective roles in the fictional story. The use of *katakana* for names furthermore produces a continuity *among* names — Moko, Jackson (*Jakuson*), Yoshiyama, Okinawa, Rudiana, Lili — that organizes them around the same system of orthography and, to some degree, differentiates the names from referents beyond their designation of characters in the text. Murakami claims that the names come from "real" people — that the character Okinawa is based on an actual heroin junkie from Okinawa, for example¹³⁷ — so the use of *katakana* distinguishes the character from the place name, leaving the reference to the connection between the two intact but foregrounding the nickname.

The character for whom naming is the most fraught is the narrator-protagonist, Ryû. This name, too, is represented in *katakana*, and only appears in dialogic passages since the text is completely focalized through his first-person narration. Indeed, the contrast between the *kanji* for author Ryû ("dragon") and the *katakana* for character Ryû

¹³⁷ Nakagami and Murakami, pp. 29-30.

produces an ambiguity that is central to the authority that each derives from the other. I agree with Etô's assessment that the overlapping of names is used to "guarantee the reality" of the text.¹³⁸ However, I interpret this as a mutual investment; the success of the character is as much invested in his indexicality to the author as vice versa, such that the overt fictionality of the story is merely an *alibi* for an alleged "truth" of the events portrayed therein. The authority of the fiction, its anchor in truth, is constructed outside of the text by reference to recreational drug use and contact with black U.S. soldiers.¹³⁹ These are both treated as authenticating experiences, as objects that confirm the position of the author's investment in the narrator.

A distinction between the first-person pronouns differentiating the narrator from the protagonist highlights a strategy of positioning within the text. As in GCC, the narration consistently guides the text using the first-person masculine pronoun "*boku*." When the character Ryû is speaking to other characters, however, the quoted dialogue is marked with the pronoun "*ore*." The focalization of the text never leaves Ryû's perspective, so this distinction has little bearing on the subjectivity of the narration. Rather, it highlights a kind of self-conscious contrast in performativity between the two enunciating positions. "*Ore*" links Ryû to his acquaintances by engaging them as equals, while "*boku*," a more humble "I," tries to maintain the attention and sympathy of the reader.

Critics tend to overlook this bifurcation between narrator and protagonist in the text and instead target the self-prepossessing "I." They critique the self-centeredness of the text, its purported lack of interest in anything but the psycho-sensorial concerns of the protagonist-author. Etô calls *Blue* "narcissistic," distancing it from, for example, Mishima's narcissism by identifying the limits of its metacritical scope. Jô asks where the "eye turned toward the self" is, a (potentially sinister) reference to the Communist

¹³⁸ Etô, p. 138.

¹³⁹ Nakagami and Murakami, pp.29-30 and 153-157.

Party's practice of demanding "self-criticism" from adherents.¹⁴⁰ Both of these critiques seem intent on pointing out how the text fails to engage discourses beyond personal sensations, ignoring all of the issues of society and politics that might be channeled through representations of individual experience. I instead move toward uncovering what it is that allows that "I" to sense and experience within representation in the first place. The distinction in pronouns between the narrator and the protagonist, after all, does not point to a complication of the construction of the narrating or speaking "I." Quite the opposite, *Blue* can only create its pastiche of dialogue, visual description, and sensory experience from a stable, masterful narrative position, one that controls the focalization of the text and, moreover, one that orchestrates the content of scenes that must be prefigured as narratives to be *captured* by that focalization.

To demonstrate this, I will introduce the repeated references to essential identities and demonstrate how the text manipulates these identities as an array of Others that serve to bolster the primacy of the "I"-self. Identity labels are treated by the narrator essentially and are not subject to any discussion of their construction. Categories of identity — black, white, Japanese, Korean — are wielded instead so that they ambiguously circulate around the universal subject of the narrator. The narrator, in turn, derives his authority from the combination of being a non-Tokyoite and his ability to "unmark" his own identity and function in the text in a privileged, liminal position between characters mapped onto various essential identities. These essential identities are juxtaposed and isolated, made to interact with one another as well as provide direct monologues to the narrator-protagonist. But they are also abstracted, beyond any concrete notion of contact, to the term "foreign" in the imagined scenarios constructed by the protagonist, as though the world were suddenly divided into Japanese and non-Japanese. (It seems that "foreign" designates "non-Asian" in this text; the one mention of

¹⁴⁰ Etô, p. 139; Jô Susumu, "Jiko e no me wa?" *Akahata* 21 September 1976, p. 10.

a Korean character specifically identifies his nationality (4).)

The majority of the text is set in the city of Fussa near the Yokota U.S. Air Force Base, a site on the western periphery of the Tokyo metropolitan boundary. Yokota is U.S. territory and as such signifies in multiple ways. In the early 1970s, it served as a thriving way station for materiel and personnel going to and returning from Vietnam. It still to this day serves as a territorial marker of Japan's loss in the Pacific War and subsequent occupation by American military forces. And yet the base was constructed during the Pacific War, prior to its appropriation by the U.S. military. Yokota has prior reference as a Japanese Imperial Army airfield — analogous to Sasebo, in Murakami's hometown, which was operated under the auspices of the Imperial Navy before the U.S. military took it over as a U.S. Naval Base — and is tied to Japanese imperial expansion and colonial power relations on the Asian continent during the war. That is, the political dimensions of the base as site are fraught and fractal, though in the framework of *Blue* the focus is on its supply of Others. As such, the extratextual site as military installation references global power differences and the ways they play out on the edge of Tokyo.

The Fussa of the text is a topos, a literary construction in which people of different identities converge; for this reason, identity labels serve as substitutes for “proper” names and are writ large upon the characters they depict. Fussa — although only mentioned explicitly in the text a couple of times — becomes a contact zone for the young Japanese man to accumulate experiences. In the text, the topos of Fussa is less a municipal designation than a site for “miscegenation,” for various forms of intercourse (broadly intended) among the characters who represent various identities. I use the term “miscegenation” to indicate that, given the politicization of identity, this mixing is always fraught with political baggage. The topos signifies by engaging the geopolitical significance of the base, largely outside the frame of the text, while the text focuses its lens on a group of young émigrés to the city for whom the topos primarily provides

opportunities to use illicit drugs and engage in various configurations of sexual relations.

The overt identity politics of *Blue* map onto the overlapping axes of race and sex. Race plays a central role in the representation of the Other. The narration refers to characters from the base by name as well as as a group, using the term “black people” (*kokujin-tachi*) or “black soldiers” (*kokujin-hei*), or as a rough, informal third-person collective “they” (*aitsura*). One of the soldiers is described as “a child of Japanese-mixed-blood called Saburô” (57). Although this complicates the most essential of racial-ethnic categories — and there are several other characters described as being “mixed-blood” (*konketsu* or *konketsu-ji*) — non-Japanese characters are always positioned as radical Other to the narrator, requiring adjectives that construct their identities as embodied difference. Racial difference is *always* made explicit, and, with only one exception, is fixated on an overflowing sexuality that the Japanese characters strive to match. In the first orgy scene, Ryû enters the soldier Oscar’s apartment and claims that he wants “to feel the flesh of the blacks” inside of his body (57). In this scene he plays the voyeur, watching the “three Japanese women”¹⁴¹ and the “penises of the blacks that were long and thus looked thin” (58). The women are also constructed to direct their attention to the men’s penises; upon entering the room, Kei immediately drops to her knees to determine which of the four soldiers has the “biggest” and letting Ryû know that it is twice the size of his (implicitly inferior Japanese) penis.

In the dialogue, the (presumably) Japanese characters, male and female, often use the derogatory term “*kuronbo*,” which Nancy Andrews, in her translation of the text, maps onto the term “nigger.”¹⁴² When Moko, a female character of unmarked race or ethnicity, refers to the soldiers with this word, the protagonist Ryû warns her, “it’s bad to use the term *kuronbo*. They’ll (*aitsura*) kill you, ’cuz they know the Japanese word

¹⁴¹ This is an interesting slip, since an earlier reference to Reiko refers to her as “mixed-blooded” (23). In that reference, her identity is embodied, linked to the contrast between the sour smell of a rotting pineapple and the sweet smell of her underarms.

¹⁴² *ATB*, p. 25 and passim.

'kuro'" (35). The racist objectification itself is not constructed as objectionable, however, and the women presume it goes both ways. Moko knows that she is being Othered and objectified as well, and wonders aloud "how much" (money or drugs) she can get from the *kuronbo* in exchange for sex. Kei cuts her off, declaring that "parties" are for "fun."

Kei's assertion conceals Ryû's role in organizing the women to go the party at Oscar's. Ryû plays the role of pimp for the soldiers. His access to drugs and parties is contingent upon procuring willing women for the soldiers to have sex with. Ryû himself does not call attention to this role he plays outside of his close circle of (what appear to be) friends. When he meets a former acquaintance, Meiru, at a concert and is asked about living near Yokota Base, he avoids mention of sex altogether:

"Yeah, well, the blacks are there, and it's fun with the blacks. They (*aitsura*) are amazing, you know, smoking 'grass' and gulping down vodka, getting trashed and playing incredible sax, you know, it's amazing." (123-124)

This dissimulation, a strategic omission of Ryû's traffic in women, emphasizes that the protagonist's sexual *modus operandi* is a narrative operation for the benefit of the reader rather than something to be circulated throughout the text's diegesis. In speaking of his relation to the military base, Ryû completely effaces any signs of his own active participation in the spectacle he describes. His depiction is a calculated exoticization, linking the racial Other to music and intoxication while effacing the sexual objectification that drives the exchange in the first place. The narration multiplies these exoticized depictions through metaphors that emphasize a foreign and, furthermore, *primitive* character of the black soldiers.¹⁴³ To me, it precipitates a question that remains repressed in the text but is crucial to any analysis: if not merely for the entertainment and edification of the narrator, as elements of a potential story to be circulated and consumed, *why are these exotic creatures here?*

¹⁴³ There are references to the filmic image of a black javelin thrower, of a woman "laughing like aboriginal African" (59), of the smell of a "Jamaican soup made of blood and grease" (84), and of the "Tarzan-like scream" of Rudiana noted above.

In *Blue*, there is a single, memorable, graphic moment in which geopolitical relations are mapped directly onto the race of the characters. It occurs in the second orgy scene just prior to the passage I introduced at the start of this chapter (there is some overlap), in which the primary sexual subject *and* object is Ryû. Ryû, shot up with heroin, his face painted with makeup, and his body forcibly shorn of the negligé that adorned him, is being physically and sexual dominated by “the black woman” (*kokujin-onna*), who is sitting atop his penis.

The thin flesh behind my temples was sore like skin burned after touching a spark. I noticed this soreness and, once I concentrated my senses on it, I fell into the illusion that my whole body had become a giant penis. I thrust into the woman and went wild with my whole body, as though I were a dwarf designed to please women. I tried to hold onto the black woman’s shoulder. She bent over without slowing down the gyration of her hips and chomped on my nipples until they bled.

Jackson, singing, straddled my face. He lightly slapped my cheek with his palm, saying, “Hey, baby.” I thought Jackson’s anus was huge and, folded back, looked like a strawberry. From Jackson’s thick chest drops of sweat fell on my face and the smell strengthened the stimulation from the black woman’s hips. Hey, Ryû, you’re completely a doll. Our yellow doll. We could stop the wind-up screw and kill you.

Jackson said it like he was singing and I wanted to cover my ears. The black woman laughed really loud, loud like a broken radio.(84-85)

Ryû shifts his position from the passive to the active by concentrating on his own sensations and imagining himself as a penis. To achieve a subject position, he must not only grasp phallic power but completely transform into that phallus in his mind.¹⁴⁴ The representations continue to emphasize the otherness of the black characters — smell, sound, touch, sight — and the character for “woman” (*onna*) must be appended to designate a non-male (non-universal) subject. The woman, Rudiana, is not yet named in the text and signifies only through her body. She does not speak but only produces noises, an aggressive sexual partner but also an object exchanged between Ryû and Jackson.

This contact, specifically this rhetorically dangerous contact, which is produced exclusively through a discursive othering constructed as mutual, constitutes the protagonist’s desire. It shares with the formal requirements of masochism (refer to the

¹⁴⁴ On becoming a dwarf designed to please women, see the following chapter on *Domesticated Yapoo*. Murakami was familiar with the story of *Yapoo*. (Nakagami and Murakami, p. 31.)

next chapter) a desire to stage one's own subordination and objectification in order to achieve a particular subject position. It is a role that must be occasionally staged to ensure that, in a broader phallic economy, the traffic in women plays out according to roles that are mutually understood by desiring males. Jackson intervenes to remind Ryû of the racial power dynamic and his ability to enforce it via violence. The exchange portrays Ryû's sexual pleasure as a consequence of his lack of agency, as though his performance is scripted by the black characters and his pleasure is contingent upon being "wound up" by them. Ryû wants to cover his ears, perhaps believing that his phallic position is secure if only he does not hear what Jackson has said to him.

The construction of characters performing essentialized identities permits the situation of Ryû in a privileged liminal position. This liminal position is (again) not a site from which the boundaries of identity are interrogated but rather represents the privileged position —the "outsider inside"— from which to transgress and further reify categories of identity in social and sexual interactions freighted with a politics of identity. The unmarked, universal self interacts directly and discretely with each of the individuated Others (as *ore*, a fellow outsider "within") while staging these already narratively prefigured interactions for the reader (as *boku*).

This reads as authority and authenticity in terms of the production of the text, which has an interesting relationship to "reality" or "realism." The scandalous nature of the identities and sensations represented in the text *flourish* in the authentic veneer of narration and quotation from the liminal subject position. Ryû's multi-racial sexcapades and nonstop drug use belong to contact with various aggregate permutations of the Other — black soldiers, junkies from Okinawa, a violently jealous grown-up orphan, women who model nude for money, an alleged prostitute who runs a hostess bar catering to U.S. troops. Inasmuch as this contact with Otherness validates the authenticity of the represented experiences, the contact also manages to efface the normative or privileged

position of its narrator. Ryû can and does leave Fussa and all of these Others — this becomes evident in the Afterword — but only after capturing the experiences, assembling them pastiche-like into narrative clichés, and converting his privilege into a commodity form of literature.

The depictions of drug use and sex with soldiers are recorded as “shocking” in the media, but the shock appears to lie in the utter normalcy with which the characters unreflectively engage in illicit activities. This is echoed in the depiction of the police intruding into Ryû’s apartment, the text’s one explicit gesture toward the characters’ confrontation with social normativity. When the police enter the apartment, Ryû is making coffee and the other characters are naked and asleep. The police ask Ryû if he is a student — the only indication in the text of *why* he might be in Tokyo — and check his arm for needle marks. Once the other characters wake up, the oldest officer lectures them about their behavior:

“You kids, you shouldn’t mess around so much. It’s a problem: everyone naked and wandering around at midday. Maybe it’s okay for you, but there are people who get embarrassed by this, people different from you all.

...
“It’s not okay to go around showing your ass to people. Maybe you don’t know it, but you’re not a dog.

“You all have families, right? They don’t say anything when you go around looking like that? It’s all fine? Huh? Yeah, I know you all happily trade partners. Hey, you, you, I’ll bet you’d even sleep with your own dad. Yeah, you.” (116-118)

The police berate the characters for their presumed wanton sexual behavior and lack of shame, but there are no consequences. The oldest, Yoshiyama, signs an “apology” form down at the police station and they are free to go. The characters are represented confronting the enforcers of the law and winning. The characters thus conceive of themselves as special. The artless Yoshiyama, in a fight with his girlfriend Kei, tries to appeal to her sense of solidarity by pointing out, “We’re living in a different dimension than everyday folks” (150). The reference is obscure — Yoshiyama has appropriated an abstract discourse that he does not fully understand — and when Kazuo tries to intervene for a clarification Yoshiyama tells him to “mind his own business.”

SENSATION

The manipulation of identities is one means of constructing the narrating self in opposition to a series of encapsulated, manipulable Others. The text doubly develops this narrating authority through its sensory-rich representations of drug experiences and polyamorous sexual relationships. I argue that the narration of these experiences relies on a series of moves that align the reader's perspective alternately with the protagonist and the narrator, creating a model of "realism" that stems from the ambiguous interplay of the narrator's sensations with a *shishôsetsu*-tinged trope of authorial experience.¹⁴⁵

In discussing the composition of *Blue* with Nakagami, Murakami describes a realization that he is only able to write what he understands, and that is limited to his sensations.

It's my first novel, right, and so I thought to myself, don't write anything that you cannot grasp as your own wound (*kizu*). The blacks coming back from Vietnam or the Korean prostitutes — it's not my wound and so I don't understand it. I thought I should only write what I understand, and so there wasn't much to write about. All I have are my own sensations. So I thought I should limit the focus only to things I saw or the sounds that came to me or the smells.¹⁴⁶

There is a disingenuousness to the claim that representational authority derives from understanding, for the concept of "understanding" must first be molded by the conditions of representation. Alan Tansman writes of Shiga Naoya's similar writerly position:

In his fiction, Shiga impresses his will through a connoisseur's eyes, through a narrator or protagonist who permits readers access to the world he describes or experiences only through the narrow narrative perspective of his intuitive viewing and recording of the world. Only what gets filtered through direct experience is knowable; only the protagonist's intuitive judgment — not his intellect — shapes the narrative.¹⁴⁷

Murakami similarly constructs his narrative out of sensations, creating his authority by

¹⁴⁵ Edward Fowler notes that the *shishôsetsu* has always relied upon the reader to recognize the author in the protagonist as a source of "sincerity." "The myth of sincerity is founded ... on the illusion of authorial presence." Belying Irie's critique above, Fowler writes, "As a verbal construct, 'sincerity' in the *shôsetsu*, no less than design, is part of a rhetorical rather than a referential field." *The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishôsetsu in Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 65-69

¹⁴⁶ Nakagami and Murakami, pp. 12-13.

¹⁴⁷ Alan Tansman, "Images of Repose and Violence in Three Japanese Writers" *Journal of Japanese Studies* 28:1 (Winter 2002), p. 134.

simulating something that resembles direct experience to the reader. When identities are constructed essentially as Others, they purport to be subjective observations that bypass any interpretive or mediated representational lenses. Sensations follow a similar model, permitting a slippage between protagonist-narrator and author that stems from attempts to represent everything as “direct experience.” Where this serves as an alibi for articulating an identity politics that naturalizes racial stereotypes and women as objects of exchange among men, it also establishes sensations as endlessly atomizable commodity units that can be manipulated and replicated for consumption as objects representing the authentic experience of the author.

I am indebted to Anne McKnight’s insightful analysis of the visual metaphor of commemorative photography that operates throughout *Blue*. McKnight introduces Dana Polan, whose analysis of Gilles Deleuze’s critique of the photographic image in the work of Francis Bacon uncovers anxieties about the ways in which photography can efface its own representationality.¹⁴⁸

Deleuze plays on the double meaning of *cliché* which, in French, indicates both a stereotyped thinking and a snapshot (the link being that both are born out of an instantaneous act that requires little effort and that results in a freezing of reality into a reified image). The photograph is a particularly dangerous form of short-circuited thinking and representation, since its chemically based realism gives it an air of authenticity, of innocent directness, that anchors and supports all its stereotyping.¹⁴⁹

The production of a reified image in photography is deemed “dangerous” inasmuch as it encompasses a significant enough degree of detail to potentially efface the limits of its own realism, namely its decontextualization (and decontextualizability), its staging and framing (its constructedness), and its reduction of all nuance to a two-dimensional representation (its flatness). Treating a photograph as a model for literary realism means producing a series of clichés that are *intended* to displace or supersede the reality they purport to represent. Through a filter that seeks a narrative mastery comparable to or

¹⁴⁸ McKnight, p. 174.

¹⁴⁹ Dana Polan, “Francis Bacon and the Logic of Sensation” in Gary Genosko, ed., *Deleuze and Guattari: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers* v. 1 (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 153.

even exceeding Shiga's, Murakami deploys the cliché as the basic textual unit of *Blue*, creating a pastiche of frozen images that are at once staged and also modeled on a photographic trope of unimpeachable realism.

McKnight astutely points out the rehashing of this discourse of recording in a conversation between Ryû and Lili as they consume mescaline together. Lili calls Ryû “a strange person, a poor person,” who is always thinking about things rather than enjoying them. She tells him, “You’re always trying to see something, like you’re making a record to do research on it like an academic” (91-92). McKnight refers to this as the “four stages of Ryû’s visual hermeneutic: staging the scene, perceiving it, recording it, and interpreting the artifact as it circulates.”¹⁵⁰ In the logic of the cliché, however, the initial staging of the scene is already prefigured by the representational apparatus through which it will be recorded and interpreted as an object of perception that constitutes a discrete scene.

Lili and Ryû’s conversation also serves as a metadiscourse for the composition of the various elements of the text, and it extends beyond the visual to all perceptual sensations, as well as to the construction of essential identities. In this section I will detail three interconnected methods by which the protagonist’s sensations are constructed and narrated to trace the text’s strategy of manipulating clichés. First, I will consider the repeated deployment of lists, catalogs of items that comprise a series of loosely constructed tableaux that remain separate from the (relatively) more coherent threads of the narrative. Second, I will examine the present-tense narration that negotiates Ryû’s five senses while he is debilitated by the effects of drugs. Third, I turn to the construction of various narrative tableaux, each of which encompasses the various senses. The strategy for composing these tableaux begins with isolating individual sensations and endowing them with descriptive flourishes. Thereafter, the tableaux are

¹⁵⁰ McKnight, p. 175.

deftly integrated into paragraphs that churn together visual cues to the “camera eye,” dialogue, and non-visual sensations modeled after the visual hermeneutic mentioned above.

Lists of items and sensations appear in the very first passage of the text and are scattered throughout. In many cases, these lists form a snapshot-filled catalog of material items or sensory observations. Most often they are presented via the trope of the filmic camera panning across the diegetic landscape and “capturing” items that fall within the visual frame. The lists suggest a passive viewing mechanism that simply records objects as they are.

People pass by like shadows. A postal carrier in his blue uniform pushing a bicycle, several elementary school students carrying backpacks, a tall American leading a Great Dane, passing through a narrow gap.

...

Through a slightly wider gap, two elementary schoolgirls with arms outspread pass by, talking, red rubber boots. A black soldier in uniform runs across the tracks with a motion just like a basketball player taking a shot, jumping to avoid the mud puddles. (72-73)

The list suggests a vibrant and diverse neighborhood right outside Lili’s apartment, where Ryû has spent the night. The matter-of-fact observations here depict a bustling scene, full of characters who could potentially enter the narrative as representatives of various essentialized identities.

Toward the end of the text there is a short scene of Ryû sitting in his apartment. Though a mere thirteen lines, half of the scene is comprised of a list of debris from prior gatherings of people in the room.

Various things had fallen on the floor. Round tangles of hair, definitely Moko’s. The wrapper for some cake Lili bought, bread crumbs, red and black and transparent fingernails, flower petals, dirty tissues, women’s underwear, Yoshiyama’s dried blood, socks, a bent cigarette, “grass,” a piece of aluminum foil, a mayonnaise jar.

A record jacket, film, a candy box in the shape of a star, a syringe case, a book, the book is a Mallarmé poetry anthology that Kazuo forgot. On the back cover of Mallarmé was the black-and-white-striped moth whose stomach I had smushed. There was a sound of fluid leaking from the swollen stomach distinct from the quiet cry the moth emitted. (178-179)

Whereas most of the lists serve as catalogs of characters (or sensations, evident in passages cited below), this list enumerates the traces of events previously detailed in the text. It serves as a collection of photographic “evidence” that attests, from a purportedly

objective lens,¹⁵¹ to the authenticity of the experiences through their remainders. Murakami is notably precise with his subjects, objects, adjectives, adverbs, particles, and other syntactical elements. This scene, composed of decontextualized snapshots, constructs an apparatus that equates visual apprehension with textual realism. It is comprised of largely extra-grammatical elements amid an otherwise meticulously grammar-oriented narrative, using material objects individually endowed with meaning-value.

The pose of objective vision and the free-form catalog-like presentation of clichés entice the reader to construct intratextual references that conform to this realist logic: women removed their underwear here; Yoshiyama slit his wrist and dribbled blood on the floor; someone dropped some marijuana; Reiko smashed Okinawa’s syringe and all that remains is the case; and a collection of French symbolist poetry has finally accrued some use-value. This catalog of items creates out of (always already) individuated units of materiality a construction of reality that abets its own narrative apprehension as evidence — of prior effects as well as of the indiscriminate-seeming objectivity (Polan’s “innocent directness”) of the apparatus of seeing-equals-knowing. Below I will explore analogous apparatuses that are deployed to construct the sensory tableaux out of a wide range of reified images that ultimately invest authority in the experiences of the author-narrator-protagonist nexus.

One of *Blue*’s feats as a text is apparent in its vivid, graphic, and matter-of-fact portrayals of drug use and sex. Fukunaga Takehiko notes that the drug use ironically permits the author to depict sensations “with unusual sharpness” as though “always looking with a sober eye.”¹⁵² Intoxication is foregrounded as a means of perceiving and knowing in the text, and this “sharpness” bolsters the source of that knowledge. The

¹⁵¹ Mori Yoshio refers to the descriptive elements as “portrayed as though looking while separated by a single pane of glass.” Mori believes this affects the “stimulating scenes” by “making the sense of reality terribly weak,” whereas I argue that it simulates a television or movie screen. (Mori Yoshio, p. 10.)

¹⁵² Fukunaga, p. 154.

“sober eye,” furthermore, creates an effective transparency that effaces the authorial hand (if not eye) even as the unique manner of recording and representing these sensations characterizes the auteurism of the text.

Intoxication in *Blue* serves not to question “reality” but rather to bolster the construction of it in the text. Nakagami praises Murakami’s skill in this regard, suggesting that the narrator

is looking with eyes in an intoxicated (*raritte iru*) state. The narrator describes things, but when I read it I feel there is a strange slippage (*zure*). In terms of realism, say you have a bowl, and then there is a cigarette on the other side of it. Looking from our eyes, you have to preserve that distance. However, because the eye is intoxicated the items appear to be lined up, and they end up being written as though they are equidistant.¹⁵³

Nakagami points out how Murakami’s portrayal of drug use simulates an “intoxicated” eye by constructing descriptions according to an altered “realism.” Murakami agrees with this assessment that links intoxication to the focalization in the text, attributing this to the “camera eye” (*kamera-ai*) of his narrator.¹⁵⁴ Where Nakagami focuses on the effects of the narration, I seek to uncover the narrative strategy that produces these effects. The present-tense of the narration of these sensations links the acts of narrating and reading to the time of experiencing.¹⁵⁵ The relationship of the narrating *boku* to the protagonist, who enunciates in dialogue as *ore*, is left unstated, but follows a logic of transparent continuity, whereby *boku* recounts to the reader that which (an implicit) *ore* experiences through sensation, effacing any gap in space or time between the sensation and its narration.

This is well illustrated in a short scene “after the orgy,” when Ryû is alone in his apartment recovering from the heroin-fueled party at Oscar’s apartment.

The rain spatters in various places and produces a plethora of different sounds. Above the grass and pebbles and dirt, the rain fell as though being inhaled and made a sound like a tiny musical instrument. A sound resembling a toy piano that could fit in the palm of my hand overlapped with the ringing in my ears caused by the leftover ripples of the heroin.

¹⁵³ Nakagami and Murakami, p. 9.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁵ That is, marked by the use of non-past (*-ru*) or progressive-action (*-te iru*) verb forms. Japanese non-past verbs do not map directly onto the English language present tense.

A woman is running down the road, her shoes in hand as her bare feet kick up water. Perhaps her wet skirt is stuck to her body, as she holds the hem out while avoiding the water splashed by cars.

Lightning flashes and the rain intensifies. My pulse is terribly slow and my body very cold.

...

My cold body is warm only at the tips of my feet. At times that heat rises slowly to my head. When the core of that heat, like the stone of a peach whose flesh has been peeled away, rises, it catches on my heart and stomach and lungs and vocal chords and gums.

The wet outside is gentle. The silhouette of the landscape atop the raindrops becomes blurry, and the voices of people and sounds of cars have their corners scraped away by the continuously falling silver needles before they reach me. Outside is dark, as though it is inhaling me. It is damp and dark exactly like a woman who has relaxed her body and lain down on her side.

I toss a lit cigarette that makes the sound of being extinguished before it hits the ground. (89-90)

In this scene, the narration transmits the sensations of Ryû, shifting among aural, visual, and tactile perceptions and embellishing the descriptions with both abstract and concrete similes. As Nakagami observed, the objects of perception lose their distinctive positions; their overlap, as well perhaps as their haphazard sequence, is attributed to the traces of heroin in the protagonist's body. The sensory descriptions become discrete linguistic units as though these subjective experiences and observations are perceived whole in successive instants. The focal point shifts rapidly so that the narration appears to just follow the perceptions. The narrator, then, is marked by the very same heroin aftereffects as the protagonist, and the narration invites the reader to consume each sensory unit as a morsel of packaged, and yet seemingly immediate and unmediated, presence.

When the sensations are exclusively audiovisual, the reader can understand the protagonist's experiences narrated in the present-tense as though they are projected onto a screen. This familiar mediating apparatus foregrounds a temporal and spatial displacement of sound and image from experience. However, this becomes problematic, as we will see, when other senses come into play. In such cases, although this immediacy is preserved, the connection between narrator and protagonist cannot always be plausibly maintained. For example, the narration of Ryû's sensations while he is under the influence of heroin or mescaline disrupts the continuities between the two forms of "I" in the text, the "I" addressing the reader and the "I" experiencing various sensations.

In such passages, the narration and the protagonist's subjectivity necessarily diverge, although this is not reflected explicitly on the page. This refusal to bifurcate the two "I"s foregrounds the artifice of this presence *a posteriori* and highlights the role of representation in *constructing* rather than *reflecting* its referents.

In the second scene of the text, in Ryû's apartment, Okinawa prepares a tincture of heroin and a syringe. The meticulous description of this process is dispersed among passages of dialogue as Okinawa argues with Reiko. The short, crisp sentences are matter of fact — "The spoon is held over the candle. In an instant the solution boils. The inside of the spoon fills with bubbles and steam, the bottom charred black and dirty" (16) — in a narrative fit of fascination with the mechanics and technology of shooting up that evokes hard-core pornographic representation. That is, the narration of these tidbits appears artless, completely avoiding metaphor in favor of orderly, unadorned step-by-step action. Once the heroin is injected, the narration shifts to a focus on Ryû's sensations. The language remains clear and lucid despite the altered state of the protagonist's subjectivity.

Coming right up! How 'bout it? Okinawa laughed as he pulled out the needle. My skin quivered and the moment the needle left, the heroin was already circulating to my fingertips and a dull impact reached my heart. My field of vision was covered by something like a white fog and Okinawa's face was not visible. I held my chest and stood up. I want to inhale a breath but the rhythm of my breathing changes and I can't do it very well. My head is numb as though I had been punched and inside my mouth is burning dry. Reiko clasps my right shoulder and tries to support me. When I swallowed the bit of saliva that leached out from my dried-out gums, nausea welled up as though shooting up from my toes, and I fell to the bed with a groan.

...

I bury my face in the pillow. Though the back of my throat is endlessly dry, saliva overflows from my lips, and each time I scoop it up with my tongue a violent nausea attacks my gut.

I breathe but no air enters. It feels like there are little holes in my chest rather than in my mouth or my nose. My lower back tingles and I can't move as a clenching pain pokes intermittently at my heart. A swollen vein in my temple quivers. I close my eyes and feel a terror as though entering a tepid whirlpool with incredible speed. My greasy body feels nuzzled by the terror, like cheese melting on top of a hamburger. Like clumps of oil and water inside test tube, the cold and hot parts of my body separate and circulate. Heat travels around inside me, to my head and my throat and my heart and my genitals. (19-20)

Every agonizing sensation is depicted here, almost entirely in the non-past. The intoxicated protagonist has no control over his bodily functions — thereafter he reports "feeling like [he] had turned into a plant" (21) — and is subject to sharp fluctuations in

temperature, sudden fits of nausea, and the feeling of stabbing pain. The narration, focalized entirely through *boku*, exposes this vividly, in clear, grammatical sentences that *represent* and yet also *betray* the protagonist's state. The pose of seamless continuity between what Ryû experiences and what *boku* reports cannot be maintained as before. The commitment to limiting content to the representation of direct experience foregrounds here the mediating apparatus, and its distinct spatial-temporal coordinates, as it attempts to *resituate* the heroin experience to coincide with the act of reading. The knowledge derived from direct experience, not surprisingly, must be constructed, too.

This is where the smell-touch-taste sensations come in — because the textual representation extends beyond the visual into these other realms of sensation, the text is shedding the camera apparatus and trying to give the reader access to the sensory experiences of the protagonist. But it is more complicated than that: the camera apparatus can offer a present-tense model of viewing, since it doesn't matter when the experience took place if the perspective is aligned with someone viewing. In terms of experiencing these other sensations, though, the use of present-tense requires that spatial-temporal gap, since the act of experiencing these sensations from the protagonist's subjective viewpoint — as though there is no mediation — can only exist as presence in the text if it is constructed after the fact. That is, the mediation of the camera allows for subjectivity to be transferred to a viewer, but the narrating of experiences exceeding the sensory capabilities of the camera eye can only be achieved in the present-tense if they are always already constructed as *narratable*, and thus posit a gap between the present-tense of the subjective experience *as experience* and the present-tense of the narration of that experience. This is a utopian or phantasmatic position, since the subjective experience is always already part of a narrative in the textual economy and thus never “purely” experience.

This mode of representation — of simulating a hermetic continuity between narrator

and protagonist — further concerns me with regard to the construction of this knowledge-experience. On the level of language, the experiences of heroin (and mescaline) intoxication remain undifferentiated from the other elements in the text. Here the iteration of snapshot-like descriptions of sensory experience encompass a kind of flattening of language, a uniform consistency in grammar and syntax. This points to a potential overdetermination of the series of sensations that comprise “direct experience” not as the source of knowledge but rather as its textual effect. The sensations as represented take on the form of clichés, those commodified units of language that are manipulable and interchangeable. The arrangement of these clichés into narrative itself, rather than their translation into a language of intoxication, becomes the art, the objective, the ends. The process of narration, then, primarily serves to demonstrate the authorial mastery of this construction; the representation of experience as knowledge is but the camouflaged vehicle.

The staging of these sensations through the trope of direct experience perhaps feels duplicitous because there is no shortage of overt stagings of visual metaphor, as McKnight argues, throughout the text. Following directly after the representation of this heroin experience are a pair of motile images introduced as ambiguously dream-like and filmic. Both are inscribed on an abstracted female body, and both are introduced as passively apprehended rather than actively constructed.

A woman jumping off of the roof of a building floated into my mind. Her face is distorted with fear as she looks off into the distant sky, her feet and legs moving like she is swimming as she struggles once more to rise upward. Her tied-back hair comes loose in the middle of this and waves like seaweed. The trees and cars and people get bigger as her lips and nose are twisted by the wind pressure, this scenery, like a dream of anxiety from dripping sweat in the heat of midsummer, floated into my head. It was like a black-and-white slow-motion film, the movements of the woman falling from the building. (22)

I recall the face of a certain woman. I saw her long ago in a film or a dream, skinny, her fingers and toes long, slowly dropping her blouse from her shoulders, taking a shower behind a transparent wall, water droplets falling from the tip of her pointed chin, the face of a foreign woman gazing at the reflection of her own green eyes in a mirror. (23)

Here the composition of each tableau is said to be inspired not by direct experience but out of an indeterminate visual cliché. The decontextualization of these two passages

reifies their content. The visual trope fixates on isolated body parts, constructing each female body as a composition of disparate elements seen-and-therefore-known. The viewing subject constructs these women without agency, the one falling to her death in terror and the other exhibiting her naked body, as objects of his gaze; the showering woman is staring at herself, at the green eyes that denote her “foreignness,” and not, for example, back at the “camera eye” that captures her. These visual tableaux, represented as incidental apprehensions rather than purposefully constructed clichés, differ only in degree of abstraction from the objectification of women as objects of exchange and fascination in the orgy scenes. There are no names for these women — just “woman” (*onna*) — and the one essentialized identity beyond sex is “foreign,” as though only the embodied female’s non-Japaneseness carries significance as such.

The ambiguity between dream and movie highlights how the text represents both of these clichés coequally as prefigured narratives that appear captured by a masterful subject rather than constructed, and which take on meaning only when circulated by the apprehending subject that possesses the tableaux. The scenes of vivid sensation are constructed in order to reify experience and package it as a narrative for *boku* to masterfully relate.

One can read the text’s references to composition and construction as metadiscourses on the writing of *Blue*. These references foreground the reification and composition that always precede the product and, in so doing, unravel the pose of direct sensory observation as the foundation for knowing. The narrator must first know — or establish the limits of knowledge — in order to narrate the experience of sensations that accord with that knowledge.

Above I introduced the four-stage visual hermeneutic that McKnight distilled from protagonist-Ryû’s discussion with Lili about looking. Directly after this discussion, Ryû proposes an example of a constructed scene: taking a drive, stopping at a scenic spot to

drink tea, eating rice balls (92). Nested within this scene is a description of how such scenes are composed, highlighting in particular the photographic metaphor. I quote at length to illustrate the layers of cliché that potentially go into each construction.

The scenery and the things inside your head get mixed together. ... You apprehend them and then soon they aren't visible anymore, so you mix them in your head with what came to you before that. Got it? ... And then I slowly mix them together, however I like: things I see and what I'd been thinking about. I take my time, seeking out dreams and books I've read and memories, to make, whaddya call it?, a photo, to make a scene like a commemorative photo (*kinen shashin*).

I gradually add to this photo the new scenery that jumps into my eyes, and finally the people in the photo are made to talk and sing and move around. They move around, right. And then always, always, it turns into a really huge palace-like thing, a palace in my head, where people come together and do things.

Then I finish making the palace and enjoy looking inside, just like looking down at the earth from above the clouds. Everything's there, everything in the world. People from all over talking different languages, the palace has various styles of pillars, and a row of food from every country in the world.

It's so much larger and more intricate than a film set. All types of people are there, really all types: blind people and beggars and cripples and clowns and dwarfs, generals decked out in gold braid and soldiers stained with blood, [cannibals and]¹⁵⁶ blacks in drag and prima donnas and bullfighters and body-builders, nomads praying in the desert. They're all there doing something at the meeting venue. And so I watch them. (93-95)

As this passage demonstrates, the individual elements of each tableau prefigured their own recombination into a larger “commemorative photo” (*kinen shashin*) that requires an authoritative subject to add coherence and produce meaning. The palace begins empty and is filled by abstracted characters whose identities are shaped by their creator. This depiction of actively constructing the pastiche, that which is effaced in most of the text, acknowledges and emphasizes the staging and framing of scenes. “I” mix “just the way I like.” “I add to this photo.” “I make them move.” “I watch.”

Recall, however, that McKnight's four-stage visual hermeneutic includes “recording” and “circulating” the snapshot once created. This recounting of constructing a tableau out of a pastiche of clichés lacks any mechanism for producing and disseminating the snapshot it so diligently and meticulously composes. Indeed, the process described here is merely a by-product of taking the drive. Once out of the car and at his destination, Ryû tries to “protect” his composition from outside influence: “Another person will say something like, Hey, the water here's pretty clean, not polluted at all, or something, and

¹⁵⁶ For whatever reason, the term “cannibals” (*hito-kui dojin*) was omitted from the single-volume edition. See *Gunzô* 31:6 (June 1976), p. 40, and *Bungei shunjû* 54:9 (September 1976), p. 418.

it all goes to waste, you understand, Lili?” (95) Without skipping a beat Ryû goes on to talk about getting a film made out of one of his tableaux, using a series of opaque metaphors to describe how the film should be constructed. Lili, who has been silently listening to Ryû’s vision as the mescaline begins to take effect, proposes an opening scene to his film: a helicopter carrying a statue of Christ (which, McKnight points out, is the iconic opening scene of Fellini’s 1960 film *La Dolce Vita*). Ryû is left speechless.

The process of composing a scene is one of mastery that derives from identifying elements from individual experience and integrating them into a whole. The trope of *possession*, of *auteurism*, is essential here, since any kind of external disruption or collaboration signals the disintegration of an authenticity that is rooted in the nexus of author-narrator. Ryû attempts to “protect” his creation from interference as though there is some fundamentally unadulterated relation between direct experience and its reconfiguration as atomized elements in a larger whole. Ryû’s enthusiasm for a filmic version of his tableau is crushed when Lili tries to merge it with a scene constructed by a famous auteur.

The lesson is not lost metatextually, however. Murakami skillfully interweaves dialogue and action into his own pastiche compositions comprised of reified images and stereotyped characters. Where Ryû never gets beyond the fantasy construction of his commemorative photo, Murakami “captures” his own snapshot-laden narrative in writing and, thanks to a couple of literary award committees, circulates it more widely than any prizewinner had before. To “protect” his text from outside meddling, he situates it rhetorically as a product of his own direct experience. No one should be able to penetrate the nexus of author-narrator-protagonist, as these figures are linked (in reverse order) by the acts of experiencing, recording, and circulating. These performances are modeled after a hermeneutic that disavows the distorting effects of mediation from one act to the next. Yet in the very choice of limiting writing to that

which is allegedly the product of direct experience, Murakami — just like Shiga — prefigures the experiences he chooses and the recording apparatus that captures them as overdetermined constructions staged to cover up the nuts and bolts that hold them together.

TOURISM

Marilyn Ivy's analysis of the "Discover Japan" advertising campaign of the 1970s, in the wake of Expo '70 (the World's Fair in Osaka), provides many astute observations about the construction of the contemporary Japanese tourist industry as it linked individual to nation and to the ideologies of transnational capitalism. To understand how the ad campaign was conceived, Ivy cites interviews with and texts by an advertising executive who was in charge of "Discover Japan." The executive reveals the "campaign concept" of this promotion of National Railways as a means to "discover myself," whereby, in Ivy's analysis,

discovery thus becomes an epistemological imperative, divorced from "nature or scenery or people." What remains, simply, is myself (*maiserufu*), as both the desiring consumer-discoverer and the object of discovery, in a solipsistic internalization of the circuits of travel.¹⁵⁷

Ivy's focus on the discursive construction of this campaign touches on the reified divide between self and other at the root of the campaign, but she also recognizes that the advertisements seek to downplay the specificity of that other. Instead, the ads focus on the trope of "contact" (*fureai*) with the other, and the advertisements consisted of a variety of staged photographs that sought to "capture the instant of contact."¹⁵⁸

Murakami's text appears, in this light, as an ironic subversion of "Discover Japan." Japan as it appears in *Blue* is but a referent for essential identity, a category endowed with meaning only in the topos of the "contact zone" where it can be constructed vis-à-vis

¹⁵⁷ Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 40.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

alternate identities. Murakami's subversion of the advertisement's discourse of Japan centers on 1970s Japan not as a topos of nostalgic discoverability, but as heavily invested in transnational capitalism and un-nuanced geopolitics. Furthermore, this fascination stems not from an appeal to recovering that from which one has been alienated in modern, urban society — nature, religion, cultural history — but rather from a desire to consume and possess “transgressions” of the (mythic, unified) nation. The trope of “discovery,” thus, is central in *Blue*, where it targets the self, to be sure, but is also deeply tied to an investment in the mechanisms of authenticating and circulating signs of that transgression. The 24-year-old author's statement on garnering acclaim by writing about orgies and drug use, quoted at the opening of this chapter, hints at the anticipation of how his work might accrue value: by capturing the unknown exotic and harnessing it as an expression of his own selfhood.

The staging of the Other essentially is part of the staging of scenes as cliché, both literally as photographic or filmed snapshots, and figuratively as fungible and manipulable commodity forms in the construction of a “textual economy.” The staging of sensation is represented as the motivation for creating visual artifacts based on those experiences, but is always already prefigured as a narratable snapshot, an empty placeholder whose content is filled by the author-narrator-protagonist. The narrator calls attention to using a pastiche method of composing scenes from snapshots in his own mind by further essentializing and abstracting the identities of those who populate the constructed tableaux — within the text's already constructed tableaux, a representation within a representation — and reveling in his mastery of these fetishized, Othered identities and their manipulation. These snapshots are linked by quoted and indirect dialogue, but they are also catalogued in series of lists, whereby many of the individuated clichés serve as a kind of “evidence,” as unassimilable remainders, for the events that precede their cataloguing. Moreover, the first-person non-past recounting of experiences

relies first on a mediating filmic apparatus, which allows the reader to “experience” the narration of the events as they unfold *as* an experience captured and re-presented in the present tense. It also hinges upon the representation of sensations exceeding the visual confines of that apparatus by focusing on those senses beyond sight and sound that point to an *unmediated* representation, positing a convergence of the narrating *boku* and the experiencing *ore* that overcomes the spatial-temporal gaps between the two. The touristic emerges from the authenticity supplied by that fantasy convergence in a representation whose narratability is an *a priori* condition of its enunciation and value.

John Frow writes that “the product sold by the tourism industry ... is a commodified relation to the Other. ... The relation involves the Other not just as a provider of services but as an object of attention.”¹⁵⁹ The touristic literary ties together the reified representations of identity and the cataloguing (staging, arranging, manipulating) of snapshots as a *symbolic* function of dividing self from Other and authenticating the self through the attention lavished on narrated experiences with Others. This authentication of the self is symbolic in the sense that it does not seek to complicate the construction or stability of the self, but to affirm the unambiguous self’s mastery of the Other through objectification. I have tried to highlight this objectification through the text’s practices of reductive essentialism and reification, manipulation, and circulation of the Other. The *semiotic* — those enunciations and disruptions and rhythms that defy linguistic coherence and disrupt the narrative logic — appears nowhere in this text, and this is a symptom of the dichotomous self-Other and subject-object foundations of a text modeled on the touristic narrative. Whether this is further symptomatic of, an effect of, or a result of the simulacral economy of tourism, is ambiguous. As Frow notes, in tourism the objects of fascination are prefigured as “signs of a sign” — representations that are founded upon the representability of something Other — and this

¹⁵⁹ Frow, p.150.

representability is crucial to the appropriation and re-presentation of the tourist experience as an *authenticating* narrative. This simulacral economy of tourism is constructed precisely to peddle that which is decontextualized and reified, the souvenir (or the commemorative photograph), an object several degrees removed from its “original” referent such that it exceeds, replaces, and supersedes the “original” that may never have existed in the first place. This is why *Blue* makes the distinction between a referential place with a proper name and a topos that is constructed to redefine the boundaries of such a place for circulation in a narrative. *Blue* stages a “scandalous” and “transgressive” series of interconnected snapshots that appeal to an ever-elusive referentiality to authentic experience but function through a staid bourgeois trope of adventure and escapism¹⁶⁰ that validates an essentialized, masterful self by objectifying Otherness constructed as “untouched” substance awaiting the arrival of a symbolic master to represent it.

There appears to be so much coincidence to the success of *Blue* and its author in 1976 and the years since. Had Murakami only won the Gunzô award for new writers and not the Akutagawa Prize, would copies of the published text have flown off the shelves in record numbers for the next six months? Did it truly “represent” the voice of the 20-something generation, at the tail end of the baby boom, as so many older critics believed, and were these the primary consumers of it? Certainly Murakami capitalized on the reading public’s demand for meticulous but graphic sexual representation. Perhaps the scenes of drug use confirmed that marginal characters, those from Okinawa or those living on the periphery of Tokyo, remained safely at the margins. And it is possible that the bourgeois trope of escapist adventure — in literature generally or in this specific trope of tourism, which seeks out and defines the exotic Other against the self — held a powerful pull in a post-growth era. I do also believe that what I have described as the

¹⁶⁰ Hans Magnus Enzenberger, “A Theory of Tourism” *New German Critique* 68 (Spring-Summer 1996), p. 125.

touristic literary model of the text invites a reading that (re)produces a desire for one's own intimate, commanding experience with Otherness. I wonder if the mass consumption of a text that so openly deals in exoticism and fetishism is a *reflection* of contemporary racial and sexual attitudes; perhaps it just signals the willingness of a million people to consume stereotypes. Or might the appeal lie in the vivid sensations, the authority of experiences made to appear unmediated, what Tansman identifies as a "fascist aesthetics"?¹⁶¹ I am fairly certain, though, that it is the kind of text that could only be written from the outside looking in, by a tourist who knew that, after the orgy, there was somewhere better to escape to.

¹⁶¹ Tansman, p. 111.

Chapter Five

The Intoxicating Hierarchies of *Domesticated Yapoo*

Could anyone, other than a man with the same inclinations,
understand my twenty-odd years of anguish as a deviant?
By day, I faced others and never lost a single argument.
By night, I sought intoxication through humiliation
at the hands of women. — Numa Shôzô¹⁶²

Sebe Rin'ichirô felt completely disoriented. "I've maintained consciousness the whole time so I can't have been dreaming. Did I lose my mind and start hallucinating?"¹⁶³ The previous day, a loud crash emanated from where he had left his fiancée Clara, and Rin'ichirô sprinted naked from the nearby river, where he was washing up, to make sure she was alright. That was in the year "1960-something" in Wiesbaden, West Germany, where the young lovers attended university. The crash appeared to have been caused by some sort of craft from outer space. Clara was unfazed and quite curious, so Rin'ichirô followed her into the vehicle. Inside they discovered a beautiful but oddly dressed woman who seemed to have lost consciousness. Rin'ichirô managed to revive her, but before he knew it he had been bitten by a vicious dog and paralyzed. The woman recovered quickly and decided that the Earth pair should accompany her to her home in outer space. A frantic Clara agreed to go only in order to free her fiancé from his paralysis.

Rin'ichirô, a Japanese exchange student studying law in Germany, certainly had cause to believe that he was not experiencing reality. The woman, Pauline, had taken him

¹⁶² Numa Shôzô, "Atogaki" [1970] *Kachikujin yapû* v. 5 (Tokyo: Gentôsha Autorô Bunko, 1999), p. 334.

¹⁶³ Numa Shôzô, *Kachikujin yapû kaitei zôho gentei-ban* (Tokyo: Toshi Shuppansha, 1970), p. 417. Hereafter references to *Domesticated Yapoo* will refer to *Yapoo* with page numbers from this version cited in parentheses in the text.

and Clara on her “time yacht” to a 40th-century intergalactic matriarchal empire run by cruel but stunningly beautiful blonde women. Over the course of a single day — but also over two thousand years — the once-devoted Clara had completely turned on her fiancé. She had begun to treat him as an object to abuse rather than as the man she fell in love with. Rin’ichirô had already endured a brutal transformation: he was drugged and castrated, and then branded with a registration number to mark his “domestication” as a possession of Clara’s.

As though that weren’t enough to convince him that something was seriously amiss, he had just learned that his deepest beliefs about his Japanese heritage were not quite “true.” Pauline promised to introduce Clara to her friend, another beautiful white woman who was known as Anna Tellus. From Pauline’s description, Rin’ichirô recognized this woman as Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess from whom, according to Japanese creation myths, the imperial line of Japan is said to be descended. However, according to Pauline’s account, Anna Tellus created not the earliest Japanese people but rather an animal species known as the “yapoo.” Rin’ichirô learns that Anna had traveled back in time to prehistoric Earth and, in a capricious scientific experiment, propagated a line of yapoo on the Yapoon archipelago.

If he thought about it, it made him happier to believe it was all a hallucination or a dream. His own body had met the fate of domestication, but it appeared as though in the future that this same fate had befallen all Japanese people. Since hearing Pauline’s “theory of yapoo” on the spaceship he had guessed at it. He felt this treatment was unjust, but at the base of his ethnic pride was an emotional attachment to the beautiful legendary gods who gave birth to the unbroken line of emperors. Even as an exchange student, he was a man who never failed to carry within himself the *Chronicles* and *Ten Thousand Leaves*.¹⁶⁴ Discovering this truth of the Japanese creation tales would break apart the last bit of ethnic pride that sustained his character. (417-418)

Rin’ichirô is torn between his “ethnic pride” and the contested “reality” of his new situation. Allusion to the earliest extant texts of Japan clarifies that Rin’ichirô’s ethnic identity was deeply intertwined with the authenticity of imperial lineage and its

¹⁶⁴ “*Chronicles*” (*Kiki*) is an abbreviation for the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, the two oldest extant texts detailing Japanese creation myths, which give varying accounts of the creation of the islands and people of what is now Japan. “*Ten Thousand Leaves*” (*Man’yô*) refers to the earliest imperial poetry anthology, the *Man’yôshû*.

inspiration for and influence on cultural production. The revelation that the accounts in these texts might not correspond to universal truth, then, would undermine the truth of his own identity.

In this mysterious world to which Rin'ichirô had been forcibly transported, Japanese people are known as “yapoo” and are treated as utilitarian possessions of the whites who ruled the interstellar empire. Rin'ichirô had encountered several kinds of yapoo since his arrival but had felt no sense of identification with these diminutive creatures, which were mute, altered physically, and completely servile. Suddenly, the prospect that he shared the same divine origin with these animals makes him reconsider his position and accept the “truth” of his new identity. He would no longer resist being turned into a yapoo.

No matter how bitter the truth might be, Rin'ichirô would soon accept it. His knowledge and intellect could not forever withstand the self-deception of treating as hallucination all he had seen and heard to be true. Furthermore, he thought, if he were going to be raised hereafter by Clara as a yapoo, for the benefit of his own happiness it would be necessary to quickly gulp down that bitter cup of truth. In addition to enlightening himself by putting his faith in “white worship,” it would be to his benefit to accept the historical understanding that “Sun Goddess Amaterasu was actually the white female Anna Tellus.” Once Rin'ichirô had been completely transformed into a yapoo, he would look back on this instant — this moment when he attained spiritual enlightenment by accepting his life as a yapoo domesticated for the white race — and would gratefully recount that, because he recognized the historical truth, he had never once faltered in his worshipful love of Amaterasu/Anna Tellus.¹⁶⁵ (418)

Regardless of the changes imposed upon his body, Rin'ichirô still thought of himself as a Japanese man rather than a yapoo. However, once he learns that there is myth-historical continuity between the Japanese and the yapoo, he reconsiders. Rin'ichirô's rationalizes the ultimate acceptance of his subordinate racial position by transferring his devotion from one progenitive goddess to another. It was just a matter of adjusting his “historical understanding” (*rekishi no ninshiki*). Now that he had found out the truth, he would stop resisting his fate and become Clara's possession as a yapoo.

Domesticated Yapoo (Kachikujin yapû), by Numa Shôzô, is a coming-of-age tale of masochistic awakening mapped onto a futuristic fantasy world. *Yapoo* is the story of a

¹⁶⁵ The *kanji* ideographs for “Amaterasu ô-mikami” have a *katakana* gloss for pronunciation as “*Anna terasu*.” The romanization “Tellus” is noted later in the text. One peculiarity of this text is its deployment of multiple orthographic forms side by side in order to both highlight the polysemy of language and attempt to control or direct the ways in which the text itself might be read.

40th-century outer-space empire based on a racial hierarchy in which white women rule, blacks are “half-human” slaves, and the yellow-skinned “yapoo” are animals that can be converted into living tools for the whites. The text — at once humorous and grotesque, intellectual and nonsensical — meticulously presents a white supremacist, matriarchal empire founded on the development of various models of yapoo to take care of the civilization’s lowly tasks. Racial domination is justified through a specious web of historical and scientific discourses, but the hierarchies are also sustained by the different drugs to which members of each level are respectively addicted. Numa’s construction of the (heterosexual) masochistic ideal adheres single-mindedly to its racial fetish, using an index of purity and filth to shore up both the racial hierarchies and their potential to be a source of rapturous pleasure. The subhuman yapoo may be disgusting to the beautiful but cruel aristocratic white women who nonetheless use and abuse them, but thanks to their addiction to the women’s waste products, their masochistic pleasure is incomparably sublime.

Numa had already begun to establish in writing his vision of the ideal masochistic scenario when, in the September 1956 issue of the magazine *Kitan kurabu* (Bizarre tales club), he proudly announced that his own fantasy epic was to begin serialization. Numa was one of many pseudonyms for a non-descript Japanese salaryman whose identity would long remain hidden, but his prolific essays on masochism gave him an authority that no public identity could at the time. In the announcement Numa complained that contemporary writing about masochism always rehashed the same female-master-versus-male-slave scenario. He was going to attempt something more extreme: his desire to be trained like an animal by a domineering white woman spurred him to fabricate a “society that recognizes the systematic domestication of people.”¹⁶⁶ Numa’s fantasy, first written shortly after the end of the formal Allied occupation of Japan when U.S. troops

¹⁶⁶ Numa Shôzô, “Kachiku-ka shôsetsu no tôte o yorokobu” *Kitan kurabu* 10:8 (September 1956), p. 45.

still maintained a visible presence in the country, satirizes contemporary politics by recasting the occupation as an aristocracy with an explicitly defined power structure. He structures his masochism not only around gender difference, but subversively around racial and ethnic difference, as well. As a result, his text posits pleasure in subjugation as a defining feature of the postwar Japanese landscape.

The epic-length masochistic narrative of *Domesticated Yapoo*, which would much later go on to garner critical acclaim, ran across twenty-one issues of *Kitan kurabu*¹⁶⁷ from December 1956 through June 1959, until the author ceased his submissions, leaving the text unfinished. Approximately once per decade thereafter, *Yapoo* would briefly enter the mass media discourse only to disappear again. In February 1970, a small publisher, Toshi shuppansha, released a 28-chapter single-volume version of the text and created a minor “yapoo boom.” In the early 1980s, the author came out of hiding and revealed his identity. A “conclusion” to the 1970 text, exceeding it in length, was serialized between 1988 and 1991 and was followed by a three-volume “complete” edition. Since 1999, *Yapoo* has been widely available in five paperback volumes. French and Chinese translations are available, and it has also been re-interpreted in an adult-oriented nine-volume illustrated *manga* version. What had once been a marginal text with a limited, self-selecting readership has, over half a century, emerged from obscurity and enjoyed widespread circulation.

Numa’s only connection to the world was Amano Tetsuo, an editor for Shinchôsha publishing company, who claimed publicly, from 1970 until his death, at age 82, on November 30, 2008, to be the “representative” (*dairinin*) of the *Yapoo* author. However, during this time period — but notably not between the time of serialization and the 1970

¹⁶⁷ *Kitan kurabu*, known affectionately by its readers as *Ki-ku*, was founded in 1947, publishing articles related to non-normative sexual practice submitted pseudonymously by its self-selecting readership. Some writers and illustrators for the magazine chose female names, but the vast majority of contributors were male, and the readership was primarily male. By 1952 *Ki-ku* had started to become closely associated with representing sadomasochistic material; this change is evidenced visually as page after page of each issue featured depictions of tied-up, unclothed women. The magazine ceased publication in 1975.

publication — Amano made it an open secret that Numa’s writing emerged from his own hand. The author of *Yapoo*, though, did not claim to be the selfsame *persona* as Amano; Numa Shôzô possessed a biographical narrative separate from that of Amano’s to demonstrate the rift.¹⁶⁸

Numa Shôzô existed in a parallel, textual world that only functioned as long as he remained “anonymous.” This led to no shortage of speculation about his “true” identity — Mishima Yukio was said to be among the most frantically trying to figure out who wrote the text¹⁶⁹ — and made every piece of information he offered up into evidence for the curious. Numa provided some vague clues about his past, in which the circumstances of his awakening to masochism would serve to explain his fetishistic fantasy.

At the end of the war I was in the colonies (*gaichi*) as a student soldier. It was my destiny, while in captivity, to be placed in such circumstances that forced me to embrace masochistic sexual pleasure from a white female. Thus was I demobilized as a sexual deviant (*seiteki itansha*).¹⁷⁰

This brief anecdote was often treated as a “true” account of the life of the “actual” author¹⁷¹ — so long as he wrote anonymously, why suspect that he would fabricate? — and set the context for the fantasy in terms of sex, race, and empire. I note this to illustrate how well coordinated the explanation was to *Yapoo*’s construction of a fetishized masochistic desire. The brief anecdote focused on racial and sexual power

¹⁶⁸ Amano finally announced in print in 1983 that he was indeed the author of *Yapoo*, but only to clear the name of an acquaintance. An article in the monthly magazine *Shokun!* created a minor scandal by naming a Tokyo superior court judge as the “real” author of *Yapoo*. The magazine sent a photographer to the judge’s house and published a photo of him in an undershirt. The judge apparently had a subscription to *Kitan kurabu* and this publicity, he feared, would be the source of gossip: how could he explain to other judges this embarrassing association? To correct this slight against a fellow masochism aficionado, Amano came valiantly to the rescue and reluctantly admitted authorship. Amano still maintained, however, that he and Numa were not exactly equivalent. See Morishita Kotarô, “*Kachikujin yapû* no fukumen sakka wa tôkyô kôsai Kurata Takuji hanji” *Shokun!* 14:11 (November 1982), pp. 220-242; Amano Tetsuo, “*Kachikujin yapû zôbutsu-tan: Shokun! yo shokun, nani zo sono gumaï naru!*” *Ushio* 285 (January 1983), pp. 150-160; and Kurata Takuji, “*Rô-hôsô no omoide-banashi (6) kachikujin yapû*” *Hanrei taimuzu* 56:18 (August 2005), pp. 4-8.

¹⁶⁹ This is recounted secondhand by acquaintances of Mishima’s. See for example Yakawa Sumiko, “*Ichi kakû sakka e no tegami*” *Han-shôjo no haizara* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1981), pp. 102-108, and Okuno Takeo, “*Atogaki*” *Kachikujin yapû* [first edition] (Tokyo: Toshi Shuppansha, 1970).

¹⁷⁰ Numa Shôzô, “*Atogaki*” *Kachikujin yapû* v. 5, p. 334. Note that this explanation was first provided when the text was republished in book form, in 1970, to respond to queries about the anonymous author. It was apparently not necessary for *Kitan kurabu* readers, who would have found nothing scandalous about an author using a pseudonym.

¹⁷¹ For example, Maeda Muneo claims that he only “knows” Numa via the afterword from which this particular passage is excerpted. See “*Kaisetsu: gyaku-yûtopia no eikô to hisan*” [1984], reprinted in Numa, *Kachikujin yapû* v. 2 (Tokyo: Gentôsha Autorô Bunko, 1999), p. 336.

difference and featured a context in which the subject is made a prisoner subject to the humiliating rules of another. The author's encounter left him unable to return from war as a "normal" man, but as a forever-converted "deviant." This constructed deviance could only be represented publicly if the author kept his identity private and anonymous.

WRITING DEVIANCE> For all of the secrecy and perceived shame surrounding the identity of the author, *Yapoo* serves as an affirmation of the intellectual pleasures of reading and writing masochism. Masochism is not treated as a pastime but as an internal drive to be appreciated and celebrated among men. Notably, the fantasy is structured *not* in terms of a "pervert" trying to understand his "deviance" in an alienating, repressive society, but rather quite the opposite. The masochism of the story is instead constructed as a symbolic system, a rigid system of laws that is gratuitously logocentric and obsessively detailed.¹⁷² The plotment of the fantasy is thus *not* about trying to accommodate semiotic drives within a hegemonic culture that seeks to repress them, as in TYP or GCC. Rather, the diegetic world is constructed to make masochistic "awakening" a crucial part of entry into the symbolic as a full-fledged subject.

Yapoo presents a rigidly structured society in which the masochistic pleasure of the male yapoo *appears* to be the perverse consequence of technologies that make the civilization run smoothly. The protagonist is forcibly dominated and coerced into subordination until he concludes that his interests are best served in such a position, as in the passages quoted at the start of this chapter. A reader unfamiliar with the generic qualities of *Yapoo* might never think that the text was carefully organized around the

¹⁷² The narration constructs and controls the minutiae of the fantasy to a fault — repetitively and self-indexically. In particular, the narrator expounds upon all of the various linguistic measures by which the racial and gender hierarchies are reified in the future society. Each elaboration of these details is accompanied by internal reference to prior explanations. Editions of the text subsequent to the initial serialized version even point readers *ahead* in the narrative. The "facts" are also presented as intertexts, quoting 40th-century "editions" of the *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Encyclopedia Britannica* as well as a machine called a "referencer," a hand-held encyclopedia detailing the history of the empire. The authority of these intertexts purports to derive not from the narrator but from the white women who wrote the entries; the authorship of most entries is attributed to various Hollywood divas of the 1930s and 1940s.

orchestration of this subordination as pleasure. Indeed, the trick of masochistic fiction centers on the *erasure of most of the signs of this manipulation* such that the torture appears to be inflicted on a pathetic object stripped of his agency. To conceal Rin'ichirô's position as a desiring *subject* is part of the masochistic text — his treatment as an object, a possession without agency, is so brutal and thorough that, except for in a few revealing passages, it conceals his longing for the women who torture him so. Numa could rely on the specialized readership of *Kitan kurabu* to read the story through an understanding lens, but this guarantee was lost once the text reached wider circulation.

My reading of *Yapoo* relies on an understanding of masochism as a formal system rather than as a psychosexual aberrance. In the next section of this chapter, I will discuss the formal structures of masochism, particularly in the construction of relationships on the model of a legal contract. That is, masochism uses precise language to represent the law as a contract, a binding set of rules peculiar to a discretely organized relationship, and the enforcement of this law is eminently a textual operation. Numa's masochism is remarkably pedantic and his writing engages in multiple levels of linguistic "play." In the fantasy world represented in *Yapoo*, words purport to *equal* specific meanings. Language is enforced as an unmediated, stable, and universal truth of racial and gender hierarchy. This truth is supported by historical and scientific discourses, which themselves derive truth value out of the fantasy empire's basis in rationalism. Of course, the rigidity of language and truth are demonstrably untenable — narrative asides sporadically indicate that the "fixed" language is historically contingent and that the discursive truths are less rational than they are expediently constructed — and this enlists the reader in the fantasy's mode of "play." This toying with language also underscores the ruse of the hidden contract, revealing that the legal-rational basis for the domination is fabricated.

Yapoo has a unique place in this project because it deploys a discourse of drugs to compensate for these untenable discourses and unstable language. The hierarchical

system in the text is firmly held in place by the respective drugs taken ritually, habitually, and forcibly by members of each race. The intoxicating pleasure derived by everyone in this system obviates any reason for the characters to interrogate the discourses. For the yapoo, in particular, these drugs, derived from the waste products of the dominant white women, offer not just pleasure but religious rapture. Neither blacks nor whites can achieve an analogous pleasure. The yapoo worship the white women as goddesses, and thus every act of torture meted upon their bodies is gratefully received as part of their pursuit of *jouissance*. That is to say, drug intoxication is linked metaphorically to religious rapture in order to construct a form of masochistic pleasure that is legible in symbolic language. By substituting drugs for rational logic as the foundation of the civilization's hierarchies, *Yapoo* makes its masochistic orientation obliquely manifest.

Much of the linguistic “play” of *Yapoo* is linked to its widespread deployment of parody, the adaptation of elements from prior texts for comedic effect. For example, Numa pays tribute to the literary eponym of masochism, parodying Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's 1970 *Venus in Furs* by seizing upon descriptions of dominance and subservience and re-encoding these scenarios with exaggerated effect in his own text. In *Venus*, for example, the domina Wanda admonishes the advances of her lover-slave Severin by reminding him he is as low as an animal, and then has him tied up and harnessed to a plough. In *Yapoo*'s rendering of this, Sebe Rin'ichirô — a comically “Japanized” form of the name Severin — is forcibly whisked away to a world in which he is converted into a utilitarian animal in service to his white female owner. The parody primarily serves to connect *Yapoo* to a broad array of other texts in which the author detects the representation of masochism. However, parodic appropriations at times also gesture toward satire, a critique brought about by ironic comparison of elements in the text to identifiable contemporary issues. I will explore in more detail how the parody of the Japanese creation myths cited above, for example, can be read as a satirical take on

the U.S. military occupation of Japan after World War II.

In this chapter, I will begin by demonstrating the ways in which Numa converted his “deviant” fantasy into a vast symbolic system of law rooted in language and linguistic play. I will look at how, in the text, the rules of this particular iteration of masochism are constructed out of the truth-value of discourses of history and science, but ultimately linked to the ecstasy of drug intoxication as a metaphor for religious rapture. Finally, I will piece together how the parody of a variety of texts and discourses makes certain satirical readings legible.

LANGUAGE AND LAW

Masochism, broadly understood as the derivation of pleasure from situations of pain or humiliation, makes for good storytelling. Like most masochistic fiction, Numa’s work engages the erotic not because it is explicitly pornographic but because it lavishes attention on the sensual. Masochistic desire is well suited to literary representation because it is given to the elaborate narrative depiction of a fantasy, the rendering of an ideal relationship in place of some more mundane reality. The masochist’s pleasure is encapsulated almost completely in the play of signifiers. The masochist signals, via his fantasy, the incommensurability of non-masochistic pleasure to his own, and must construct his desire through a system of signs that make this difference manifest. The elaborately constructed relationship is a linguistic performance inasmuch as it creates a fantasy world out of a series of codes that toy with the production and interpretation of meaning.

Numa’s writing takes its place among competing visual, literary, and theoretical conceptions of what exactly masochism might be. In June 1953, Numa submitted the first article of a series called “From the notebook of a masochist,” what would become a multi-volume scrapbook of pictures and references to material from around the world

that excited Numa's masochistic desires.¹⁷³ From this point onward, Numa was a regular contributor to the magazine, sometimes publishing multiple columns under various pseudonyms in a single issue. *Ki-ku* was a receptive venue for Numa's writing, particularly because it grew to harbor high-culture pretensions. In 1953, *Ki-ku's* subtitle was "a magazine of manners for a new era," where "manners (*fûzoku*)" serves as a broadly employed euphemism for erotica. In 1956, when *Domesticated Yapoo* began its serialization, the subtitle had changed to "the new literary research magazine," signaling outwardly the aspiration to be more than run-of-the-mill pornography. In his countless contributions to the magazine, Numa comes off as a pedantic intellectual. His linguistic fastidiousness, combined with an uninhibited plumbing of the Japanese, Chinese, and Western literary canons for material, lends an air of seriousness to an otherwise marginal subject. His essays expound upon an enormous archive, offering interpretations of diverse representations — images as well as texts — to demonstrate how they evoke masochism. The material ranges from photos and illustrations to films, from the ancient Greek epics to contemporary pulp novels, from feminist tracts to Nazi theories.

Numa constructed *Yapoo* as an eclectic and elaborate symbolic system in which masochistic drives are codified so as to enforce the desired power relations along racial and gender lines. The futuristic empire is ruled by an aristocracy with its legitimacy founded on the idea that language is a transparent representation of truth. The stratified social structure is founded on the absolute acceptance of this equation. Truth is a matter not only of linguistic precision, but also of scientific and historical discourses. The interplay of these discourses is heavily mediated by a narrator whose explanations repeatedly call attention to this linguistic determinism. The narrator also offers an

¹⁷³ The column in *Kitan kurabu* was known as "Aru mazohisuto no techô kara" from June 1953 to November 1956 and was then retitled "Aru musôka no techô kara" (From the notebook of a dreamer) from October 1956 to June 1961. A selection of the essays were annotated and compiled in *Aru musôka no techô kara*, 6 volumes (Tokyo: Ushio Shuppansha, 1976).

occasional release valve, however. At times the narration subverts the strict correlation between the language of the law and its status as truth by pointing out rifts in the construction of these truths. These asides can be thought of as akin to the “safe word” that a masochist may use to suspend play or torture, as it foregrounds the fantasy’s constructed elements.

Numa’s construction of masochism in *Yapoo* anticipates Gilles Deleuze’s writing on Sacher-Masoch in 1967. Deleuze elaborated a definition of masochism by analyzing the literary origins of the concept and tying them to Theodor Reik’s theorization of masochism as a “formal” system.¹⁷⁴ Reik identified four formal features of masochism in his book, *From Suffering, Joy*: fantasy, suspense, demonstration, and provocation.¹⁷⁵ Fantasy is the primary characteristic, defining masochism in terms of the ritualization of an imagined ideal, the careful selection of details that excite the masochist’s desire. Suspense refers to the masochist’s deferral of fulfillment by focusing on the anticipation of the pain. Demonstration is a feature whose reasons are least clear, but involves the masochist’s need for the suffering or humiliation to be witnessed. Finally, provocation describes the masochist’s desire to train the torturer in the act of torture. None of these formal features permits the torturer to be an agentive subject in the masochistic scenario; that is, the role of torturer in masochism directly controverts the erotically violent aims of the sadist, whose desire abrogates the subjectivity of the victim.

To Reik’s list of formal features Deleuze adds a fifth form, that of the contract.¹⁷⁶ The

¹⁷⁴ Gilles Deleuze, “Coldness and Cruelty” in *Masochism*, trans. by Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 74-75. Deleuze returns to Freud’s definitions of ego and instinct to demonstrate that the term “sadomasochism” commingles two types of behavior which in fact have incompatible symptoms and counterposed features. Earlier theorists have recognized that elements of sadism exist in masochism and vice versa, but Deleuze appears to be the first to suggest that the sadism that inheres to masochism is of a wholly different sort than the sadism that appeals to a sadist.

¹⁷⁵ Theodor Reik, *Masochism in Modern Man* [1940], trans. by Margaret H. Beigel and Gertrud M. Kurth (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Co., 1941), p. 5. *From Suffering, Joy* is my rendering of the original German title, *Aus Leiden Freuden*.

¹⁷⁶ Deleuze expresses surprise that other analysts had not recognized the importance of the contract. (“Coldness and Cruelty,” pp. 75-77.) Numa notes in an addendum to his *Notebook* that *he* had identified the contract as a salient feature of masochism in his column more than a decade before Deleuze’s book

contract binds two people together in a specific relationship and does not involve outside parties, allowing the masochist to establish in advance the basis for his idealized relationship. The contract between masochist and torturer is a perverse twist on the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, in which the ostensibly “free” master is actually bound to the slave in a reciprocal relationship that demonstrates unity at the source of otherness. The masochistic contract explicitly sets forth the provocative feature of the relationship, as though the slave were able to dictate the terms of his enslavement to a complicit master. However, the dialectic is merely a mirage. Albrecht Koschorke reminds us that “masochism only functions as a mystificatory enterprise,” that “the masochist gives short shrift to a relation of interdependent acknowledgment between master and slave.”¹⁷⁷ Indeed, the masochistic contract makes the slave the singular subject of the scenario. “The masochist appears to be held by real chains, but in fact he is bound by his word alone. The masochistic contract implies not only the necessity of the victim’s consent, but his ability to persuade, and his pedagogical and judicial efforts to train his torturer.”¹⁷⁸ The torturer is rendered a passive signatory of the contract from the start, and is ultimately replaceable with any other torturer the agentive victim finds suitable. Key to masochism fiction, however, is the veiling of the victim’s agency; Numa’s contracts, like Sacher-Masoch’s, can only be found outside of the text proper. In *Yapoo*, the terms of the contract are made manifest rhetorically in the form of an alternative futuristic legal and epistemological system.

OBEYING THE LAW> The futuristic empire of *Yapoo* inscribes the law directly onto the bodies of the characters according to strict labels of identification that define their

came out. Numa Shôzô, *Aru musôka no techô kara* v. 3 “Omaru gensô” (Tokyo: Ushio Shuppansha, 1976), p. 19.

¹⁷⁷ Albrecht Koschorke, “Mastery and Slavery: A Masochist Falls Asleep Reading Hegel” (trans. by Joel Golb) *MLN* 116:3 (April 2001), p. 563. The article’s title points to a scene in which the frame-narrator of *Venus in Furs* falls asleep while reading a book, a book which Severin’s servant, upon waking him, reveals is by Hegel.

¹⁷⁸ Deleuze, “Coldness and Cruelty,” p. 75.

respective positions and roles in the future civilization. *Yapoo* foregrounds the artifice of categories of identification by detailing the gap between 20th- and 40th-century constructions of race, class, and gender. These identities are treated as essential and natural in the future and thus must be spelled out explicitly in order to initiate Rin'ichirô and Clara — and the reader — into the hierarchies of the fantasy diegesis.

The elaboration of the racial hierarchy re-orientes Clara to the “truth” behind skin color. Coming of age in the 1960s in a post-Nazi value system, she believes — of course — that all human beings are equal. Her fiancé, who had once used his judo skills to rescue her from a gang of toughs, was an exemplary young Japanese man, and she knew in her heart that he was equal to any white person. After the initial encounter in the spaceship, Pauline is shocked that Clara would consider kissing a yapoo. Clara, in turn, is distraught to learn of such a backwardly racist civilization that frowns on her interracial relationship, and she protests Pauline’s matter-of-fact white supremacy. Pauline corrects her 20th-century notions to explain to the reader how this embodied identity was rigidly and linguistically categorized.

“You mean to say that because white people have enslaved yellow people in the distant future, it should have some bearing on our love for each other?” Clara said, her eyes glistening. “After all, slaves are a part of mankind too.”

“There’s no such thing as a ‘yellow slave.’ Slaves are black. And slaves are not part of womankind, but rather of *demi*-womankind,” Pauline stated calmly. “You don’t say someone’s a member of womankind unless her skin is white. There’s no need to add an adjective to denote ‘white’ people. We humans —”

“That’s prejudice. Slaves are the product of a system, and you can’t deny their human essence. In our world, we realized this a hundred years ago and liberated the black slaves.”

“That liberation caused America — it was America, I’m pretty sure — that’s how America met its destruction. They should have thought a little more before releasing the slaves. Yes, slaves are the product of a system. Physically blacks belong to the same *Homo sapiens* species as womankind. But it’s quite a stretch of logic to say that because they are *Homo sapiens*, they are therefore members of womankind. You’d expect that there is a *demi*-womankind, as well. Human rights just don’t match well with colored skin... but of course, this has nothing to do with yapoo.”

“Compared to black people, the yellow Japanese are—” a superior ethnicity, Clara was going to say, until she was cut off by Pauline.

“— different, of course. They are completely different. It’s practically ridiculous to even make the comparison. Blacks are *slaves*, while yapoo are *livestock*,” she asserted sharply. “Yapoo are apes, beasts. No matter how much intelligence they have, you don’t call a beast a slave. They are domesticated animals. A yapoo is just an animal with intelligence!” (51-52)

The triad of white/black/yellow represents the three types of racial identity in the empire’s ontological system: human/slave/yapoo. These correspond to the hierarchical

system of womankind/demi-womankind/livestock, and the absolute difference among these three groups leaves no room for contestation or border-crossing: “it’s practically ridiculous to even make the comparison.” Miscegenation is inconceivable in *Yapoo*’s diegetic world and thus each race can be essential in its whiteness, blackness, or yellowness. The 20th-century conception of love between Clara and Rin’ichirô violates the basic ontology of the outer-space empire, but a re-alignment of their relationship according to the hierarchy would certainly pass muster.

The hierarchy is designed to reconstruct a 20th-century “love” relationship between a white woman and a Japanese man as a masochistic scenario in the 40th century between a white goddess and a male yapoo. *Yapoo* goes about this task by systematically excluding other categories of characters from the scenario under the sign of the law. Yapoo females, the lucky ones, are used as surrogate wombs — “yapombs” (*yapûmu*) — for the white aristocracy. The “black slaves” (*kuro-yatsu* or *kokudo*, also glossed “*nigaa*” or “*neguro*” at times) are mostly the workers, instruments of the whites who enable the slavish relationship. Finally, the white males are subjected to a gender hierarchy that deprives them of sexual agency and removes their desires from the concerns of the text.

The gender hierarchy that favors women is depicted to be the result of both embodied power — “long life and resilient bodies” — and the legacy of the chivalrous policy of “ladies first.” After widespread use of the yapombs relieved women from the “shackles of pregnancy and childbirth,” women began to oppress men until, in the 27th century, the United Women take over Parliament and bring about a “feminal revolution” (316-317). This freedom from childbirth not only results in women’s empowerment politically, but it makes it *socially sanctioned* for them to express their sexual desires freely as wanton libertines always in pursuit of genital fulfillment.

The gender hierarchy, only enforced among the whites, is thus thoroughly sexualized. The text uses this as an opportunity to construct an already codified standard of social

behavior with a rich vocabulary to depict it. Women make the decisions, women inherit titles and property, and women are socially and sexually dominant. This phenomenon is introduced in the first chapter, as Pauline masturbates while thinking of her husband. To keep men from straying, white males are typically locked into “chastity belts” (*chasutiti-beruto*, *teisô-obi*) and expected to perform only when their wives deign to desire them. White males receive little sexual attention in *Yapoo*; the reader understands that the masochistic imperative of deferral of pleasure dictates that these cruel women only *anticipate* the sex act and take pleasure in knowing that their husbands — who are portrayed as equally masochistic as the yapoo before these powerful women — are restrained from any contact with their own genitals. The only intercourse between white women and men in the text occurs in the narrated memories of the female characters.

On the yacht, Pauline had been thinking about Robert.

The evening before I put the chastity belt on you, you were so full of energy, Bob. You killed the tunnel boy, and you even made five bonbons. (For more on the tunnel boy, see Ch. 9§3; on bidet bonbons, refer to Ch. 16§5.) *How many days has it been? You probably want me to release you. Just hang in there another couple weeks. Then I'll hop right up on top of you.* (In the empire, woman-on-top is the norm.) (15)

The implication is that Pauline had intercourse five times with her husband in one night; thereafter the husband must wait patiently for her return. The yapoo “tunnel boy” is an intermediary in this exchange and gloriously dies in the service of his goddess.¹⁷⁹ In a parenthetical aside, the empire’s gender hierarchy is made manifest through double-entendre; the phrase “woman-on-top” (*onna-jôî*) refers both to “female supremacy,” in a political sense, and more colloquially to a sexual position through which that superiority is purportedly expressed.

The identity assigned to white women, most of all, is sculpted in visual detail out of a narrated, fetishistic gaze. This gaze is first established in the text when Rin’ichirô

¹⁷⁹ Note the indexical references to descriptions of the various technologies of the fantasy scenario. The “tunnel boy” is a miniaturized yapoo that resides in the female genitalia with the “intestinal midget,” the “menstrual midget” and the “pubic parasite.” Because it maintains the mucous membrane of the vagina, it is described as a “divine vocation” (*tenshoku*) for yapoo (144). The “bidet bonbon” is a sugar-coated candy produced from the mixture of male and female “love juices” (248).

encounters an unconscious Pauline on the floor of the spaceship. The narration of his impressions introduces the heterosexual Japanese male as the subject of the gaze and constructs the idealized image of the torturess:

After looking around, he saw against the wall on the right a luxurious chaise, in front of which a woman had fallen. Rin's eyes were seized first by her mostly exposed lower half and her ample thighs, the splendor of the line of her leg ending in her well-shaped ankle. Approaching her, he was shocked further. She was an incredibly beautiful woman, about twenty-five or six, perhaps as tall as Clara. The glowing purple cape of strange fur she was wearing had come off and she was wrapped only in a light swimsuit-like garment covering from her breasts to the base of her thighs. Her right arm lay to the side, exposing a shock of golden hair under her armpit. Beneath the transparent, cameo-like simple clothing was a fine complexion of light pink, her protruding bust, a firm waist with plump hips drawing the curves of a mature female body — all of this provoking the eyes of Rin'ichirō. Her blonde hair lay in disarray as her eyes remained closed. The quality of her narrow but dense eyebrows; the coquetry of her thin lips guarding a mouth inside which one could see her pure-white teeth; the attractive nose and ears — despite the foreignness of her clothing, she was certainly a model specimen of the highest quality of blonde, northern European woman. (20-21)

Here Rin — this is Clara's "pet name" for him — visually dissects the unconscious Pauline, favorably assessing her part by part and concluding that, in her agency-less condition, she is a paragon of beauty. Piece by piece, Rin's gaze fetishizes the blonde European woman's body in its perfection, objectifying her through an eroticized process of dismemberment. The exposition follows her body from bottom to top, first highlighting her sexuality in its vulnerability and availability. Finally, Rin's gaze fixates on Pauline's race, as though the sum of her parts determines her desirability. The narration feeds the fantasy by explicitly constructing its object of desire, the torturess, as ideal. His gaze serves as the basis for the projection of desire in the text, moments before it is re-ordered into a masochistic relationship in which race, class, and sexuality have explicitly encoded correlations to power. Though this will be one of Rin's few opportunities in the story to look from an agentive subject position, the (Japanese) male heterosexual reader is initiated into this gaze and retains this voyeuristic position for the remainder of the text.

The beauty of this idealized white woman particularly stands out when compared to its opposite, and the text goes on to demonstrate the vileness of the blonde woman's racial Other by introducing the yapoo. When Rin moves Pauline, he notices "a deformed

midget, if you could call it human,” underneath her. This is the “cunnilinger,” which we learn is a custom-ordered yapoo whose penis has been transplanted onto his tongue, and is “contrasted in the extreme” with Pauline. Indeed, this device is viewed by Rin as “uglier the more he looked at it. Its skin was yellow and, compared with the lustrously pure white of the woman’s lower half, appeared slightly dirty” (21). The analogy is obvious and blunt: white skin is “pure” and “attractive” while yellow skin is “ugly” and “dirty.” The refraction of these judgments through Rin’s focalization demonstrates his marked lack of identification with the yapoo.

The primary trajectory of the narrative, then, is Rin’s awakening to his yapoo-ness and its corollary masochistic worship of beautiful white women. The passage I cited at the opening of this chapter is the climax: “No matter how bitter the truth might be, Rin’ichirô would soon accept it.” Rin’ichirô’s self-recognition as a yapoo, inscribed gradually on his body over the course of hundreds of pages, is no less than a religious conversion to “white worship” (*shiro-kami sūhai* (worship of white gods), glossed as *howaito-uôshippu*). There are two basic types of yapoo, the “raw yapoo” and the “native yapoo.” The former are mass-produced for use throughout the empire and are born with the physiological adaptations necessary to be converted into whatever tool their owners desire. The “native yapoo” are, like Rin’ichirô, from Earth and have grown up believing that they are “human.” The aristocrats regularly go out hunting for these yapoo and train their captures to become “tamed yapoo.” The “*raison d’être*” of allowing native yapoo to exist at all, the narrator explains, is to allow for the “recreation” of the aristocrats who want the challenge of “brainwashing” their own pet (189-191). As Rin learns to worship Clara as his goddess-owner, she learns to appreciate the process of training him in subordination.

Though Clara is supposed to enjoy this task, most of the pleasure explicated in the text refers to the subordinate position. The various roles yapoo are specifically

constructed to fill provide them nearly exclusive access to the bodies, particularly the genitals, of the white women in the story. Rin's meaningful gaze at the fallen Pauline serves as an establishing shot for the entire text's fetishistic foundation, a textual rendering of visual pleasure in which Rin approvingly overlays the aesthetics of his desire on Pauline's body. His conclusion that her hypersexual physical features are the paragon of ethnically specific feminine beauty establishes Rin as the juridical subject of the narration — "she was certainly a model specimen of the highest quality of blonde, northern European woman" — even as his fiancée stands beside him without any voice to narrate her assessment of the scene. Although his engagement to Clara is represented as a triumph for Rin, an exemplary (Japanese) man who managed to court the most desirable (blonde, formerly aristocratic, German) woman at his university, his particular predilections come to the surface only upon contact with Pauline's immobile body. The establishment of the male masochistic subject, whose apparently subordinate status belies the way the narrated scenario appeals to his tastes, is thus exposed in Rin's idealization of Pauline as the fetishized object of desire.

Yapoo produces a textually circumscribed female agency designed primarily to fulfill the perverse — but, per the text, completely normal and indeed *natural* — pleasures of the male yapoo by redefining and expanding the boundaries of desire. Numa's fantasy exceeds the phallogocentric schematic by adding an extreme twist. Whereas the psychoanalytical theory of the phallus as *ur*-signifier makes fetishism about disavowing the female lack of phallus in order to offset fears of castration,¹⁸⁰ in *Yapoo* the fetishism of the dominant white woman is accompanied by an affirmative fantasy of castration. By

¹⁸⁰ Gilles Deleuze writes that "fetishism, as defined by the process of disavowal and suspension of belief, belongs essentially to masochism." ("Coldness and Cruelty," pp. 32-33.) Deleuze borrows the terminology of disavowal and suspension from Freud, who theorizes that fetishism is linked to a quest for the missing female phallus. Freudian theory presumes that sexual fetishism inheres only to men, who, by fixing on a substitute, try to disavow the "lack" represented by female genitalia that evokes the fear of castration at the hands of the father. Unable to find a substitute for the female phallus, the fetishist fixates on the last object he saw before recognizing this lack. Deleuze does not rely on this phallogocentric explanation, and instead explains the fetish as something that bridges the aspects of fantasy and suspense identified by Reik.

embracing castration, the fear of female “lack” is overcome and the fetishist is provided unfettered access to the objects of his fascination. Instead of ignoring female genitalia — which in the heterosexist schema are the “proper” objects of desire — the fetishized gaze is obsessed with them, and in fact expands the territory of its eroticization to all female orifices and excretions.

This twist does not mitigate the objectification at all, but rather further emphasizes it. The malleable yapoo body is attenuated, altered, and reproduced for the ostensible convenience of the whites. However, a great deal of attention is given to yapoo prosthetics involving the conversion of the male yapoo into various replacement phalluses. The “cunnilinger” is one example of this — the male yapoo’s phallus is removed and reattached to his tongue, altered in shape so as to provide customized pleasure to its owner. It is then trained in telepathy to respond to every request from its owner, whose sexual gratification is provided *exclusively* by this prized possession (in the course of the narration, at least). The advent of the “timbow” in this process of training also pays tribute to masochistic desire. The timbow, an Anglicization of a crude Japanese term for the penis, represents the yapoo phallus surgically removed and attached to a whip. The castrated yapoo is subsequently trained in subservience by this whip. The timbow becomes the device used to enforce the laws of the domina, ensuring that the yapoo’s severed phallus is constantly at hand in the application of torture (216-218). The masochistic fetishization of women in *Yapoo* involves the conversion of castration from a male trauma into an empowering tool of sexual access to the torturers. This access augments the fetish fantasy of Rin’s gaze: in his subjugation, the Japanese male-as-yapoo is provided exclusive genital contact with the beautiful white woman.

This means that Clara, too, must learn her role, both in her body¹⁸¹ and in assuming a new identity at the top of a racial hierarchy. Thanks to her physical beauty and her

¹⁸¹ Her new identity is also inscribed on her body: humans of the future have evolved to require only four toes, and an amputation is performed on her surreptitiously as she dozes (214-216).

fluency in English — the universal language of the empire — Clara fits in immediately. In fact, her belief system already showed nascent signs of her capacity for the cruel domination of animals in order to make them obey. In the opening scene, she brags about having whipped Rin'ichirô's dog into obedience. To keep a horse from becoming habitually disobedient, she tells Rin, "until you've made that horse understand that you are the strong one, the one in charge, you have to thoroughly berate it" (9), and cracks her red leather whip in the air. From the start, then, Clara is predisposed to become a yapoo torturess and has little trouble fitting in to the futuristic empire. Once Rin'ichirô accedes to the law, their rightful 40th-century relationship will be complete.

LINGUISTIC PLAY> There are several ways in which *Yapoo* tweaks language to represent the play of masochistic language. Definitions and terminology from the 40th century illustrate differences from the 20th-century society by gratuitously demonstrating how language structures the way people in the future think. Terminology made up from a combination of Japanese ideographs is made expressly polysemic with the addition of a non-Japanese pronunciation. And, though the text is written almost entirely in Japanese, the characters engage in multilingual dialogue that helps lay bare the ways in which the narrative is structured to meet the needs of a masochistically inclined male Japanese reader.

The playful use of language initiates the reader into the foreignness of the fantasy world and, satirically, calls attention to the continuities amid difference between discourses of the 20th and 40th centuries. For example, a narrative aside informs the reader that the term "white people" (*hakujin*) is in fact redundant, since only whites are considered "people." The narrator notes that the designation is only used to remind "the 20th-century reader" of the linguistic differences accompanying the altered racial status quo (52). Designations for women are always listed *before* those for men — wives and

husbands, sisters and brothers — to indicate female superiority. And women comprise the universal subject, so that every title without explicit gender markers is, in 40th-century language, gendered female.

Terminology is both precise and polyglot — in *Yapoo* Numa intermingles Japanese, English, and German words — and the etiology of nomenclature is often given more space in the text than the flow of the narrative. Great pains are taken throughout the text to introduce and assimilate neologisms into the standardized language of the narration. For the most part, the invented words comprise a string of *kanji* to represent their meanings, with a *katakana* gloss to introduce the Anglicized pronunciation; when ambiguous, a term is sometimes also set off in parentheses in English. Thus the “cuckoo operation” that transfers white human babies to yapombs for gestation is written in English but also written “*kukkû opereeshon*” as a *katakana* gloss to the ideographs for “*hototogisu shujutsu*” (literally, cuckoo operation).¹⁸² In other cases, the neologisms are far more sexually suggestive in translation than in the Japanese, in which the terms are innocuous enough to shelter the translingual eroticism from censorship.¹⁸³ For example, the female masturbation device, the “cunnilingus,” is written in English, *kanji*, and *katakana*. The *kanji* — “*shita ningyô*” (literally, tongue doll) — doesn’t even approach the sexual nuance of the gloss “*kaniringaa*” or its English rendering as “cunnilingus,” making the whole multilingual exercise laboriously humorous.

Yapoo also must grapple with the obstacle of representing dialogue in various languages mediated by Japanese. In the first scene, which takes place in Germany, Clara

¹⁸² Cuckoos are known for laying their eggs in other birds’ nests, expecting the host birds to hatch and care for the cuckoo chicks. The use of female yapoo to gestate white fetuses is portrayed as an analogous evolutionary adaptation by the white women of the empire, couching the exploitation in euphemism by linking it to nature (198-203).

¹⁸³ *Yapoo* deals heavily in genitalia and excrement, and this led to no dearth of censorship by the editors of *Ki-ku*. Excisions were an issue from the start: a paragraph in the first installment was half-converted to dots, marking it as unprintable material, and this bowdlerization was not rare. When Numa published an announcement in the September 1959 issue apologizing for suspending publication, he explained censorship as one of his reasons to call it quits. See Numa Shôzô, “Chûzetsu o-wabi no go-aisatsu” *Kitan kurabu* 13:12 (September 1959), pp. 116-117.

and Rin are ostensibly speaking German. Once they are taken by Pauline back to the future, Clara puts her proficiency in English to use and fits right in. Befitting his new status as a yapoo, Rin, who understands English but who can only communicate comfortably in German and Japanese, is completely left out of the conversation. However, this scenario is confusing because of the continuous use of Japanese for narration and dialogue. The effect of this configuration of languages, in contrast to the designation of English as the universal language of empire, is to make the Japanese language — and by extension the Japanese-speaking narrator and his Japanese readership — the masters of the text and its fantasy world.

The day after their arrival in the 40th century, Pauline and Clara are teaching Rin to obey his owner's whip. Rin, who has at this point been officially registered as Clara's possession, does not understand this as part of his domestication — under the rubric “spare the whip, spoil the yap” — and is desperate for Clara to cease his punishment.

Unthinkingly, Rin lost his temper and cursed at her — in German. “Clara, why are you doing such awful things to me? Remember, I'm—” But before he could finish, the whip came down on the nape of his neck, snapping his head and forcing his face to the ground so that no words could emerge.

“Quiet! You've forgotten what I just said to you! Impudent!”

It was fluent Japanese. From the tone of her words, Rin could imagine her face, with her beautiful eyebrows tented in anger.

Rin tried to speak German but was quickly stomped down by Clara, who added force to the pressure of her foot on him. She turned to Pauline: “I don't want this to talk,” leaving unstated that she wanted some sort of gag inserted into his mouth. ... She removed her foot, though, and immediately the yapoo began to speak.

“Clara, please forgive me. I was wrong yesterday. I apologize. Please regain your temper—” Rin'ichirō raised his constrained neck just a little — such that all he could see was Clara's lower half — and begged. He sensed that speaking in German had irritated her, and now that he knew she understood Japanese he decided to try speaking that. (339-341)

In the text, the entire dialogue is represented in Japanese. However to indicate that non-Japanese characters are speaking Japanese — known as “Yapoon” in the future — there is an orthographic difference in the writing. Rin's speech, the narration, and English dialogue are represented using *kanji* and *hiragana*. When Clara, or for that matter any of the white- or black-skinned characters, speaks Yapoon, it is represented in a

combination of *kanji* and *katakana*.¹⁸⁴ The representation of racial difference is hereby extended to the visual representation of language on the page. *Hiragana* and *katakana* represent equivalent phonetic syllables, but their significance in *Yapoo* lies in their potential to signal difference.

The use of the sharp-edged *katakana*, where otherwise the more rounded *hiragana* would be used, calls attention to a certain foreignness in the enunciation of Japanese by non-Japanese speakers.¹⁸⁵ More tellingly, this orthographic quirk points to the peculiar scenario in which rulers of an Anglophone, white-supremacist empire learn Japanese in order to issue commands to their possessions. Not only is the polyglot nature of the text a form of play, it is also a marker of masochistic provocation. The dominant women train their yapoo to perform according to their wishes, but first they must be trained to speak the language — to conform to the contract— of their ostensible victims. The law constructs masochism out of a negotiated contract between torturer and tortured in which the priorities of the tortured have significant if not exclusive bearing on the structure of the relationship. (Note that, in being silenced, Rin'ichirô catches a glimpse of Clara's "lower half.") That is to say, the author's meticulous control over the language of the text has its parallel here in the methods used by the masochist to control the terms of his torture.

TRUTH AND DRUGS

Numa's goal of creating a civilization in which masochistic power relations are systematically institutionalized required the construction of a value system that would affirm that power dynamic. Empires rely not only on the exercise of brute power but also

¹⁸⁴ Like *katakana*, *hiragana* represent phonetic syllables rather than meaning. While *katakana* are mostly used to represent the Japanese pronunciation of foreign words, in postwar standard Japanese *hiragana* are used in conjunction with *kanji* to express native vocabulary. The combination of *katakana* and *kanji* used in Clara's speech is reminiscent of the orthography of official government documents prior to the postwar codification of *hiragana*.

¹⁸⁵ This convention continues to be used in film subtitling to indicate a non-native speaker talking in Japanese.

on the control of discourses to assert truths and thereby justify the use of their superior power. Numa's particular fetish requires a scenario in which white women rule supreme and Japanese men lie at the bottom of the hierarchy, and his text establishes a system of value that legitimizes this arrangement. *Yapoo* presents these truths almost gratuitously, as over-the-top theories that openly revel in their constructedness. Scientific theory is wielded to ideological ends, applied to race and subjectivity as though these are bias-neutral discourses within its ken. *Yapoo's* discourses of science are boundless; they inscribe social discourses within the purview of scientific knowledge in order to provide the empire its requisite self-legitimizing truths. The text also details the ideological construction of these discourses, pointing out how they have become naturalized facts that obscure all contradictions.

The best example of this use of science as a discourse of truth involves the hierarchical status of the yapoo. In *Yapoo*, a 21st-century colonel named Alfred Rosenberg¹⁸⁶ performs experiments on "yellow people" discovered among the ruins of post-World War III Japan. In the 23rd century, another man by the name of Alfred Rosenberg, a descendent of the 21st-century Rosenberg, proposes in his *Origin of Yapoo* that humans are descended from Cro-Magnon man but that yapoo come from Neanderthal man, and his argument pervades society as a theory of "yapoonism."¹⁸⁷ The narrator explains the lasting effect of Rosenberg's theory, its acceptance and naturalization as a fact under the rubric of scientific knowledge:

Just as previously the theory of evolution has been used to assert the natural law of free competition in order to rationalize the nature of capitalism, the "theory of domestication" has been used as proof of the non-humanity of the yapoo in order to rationalize the system of domestication. You could say that this is a perfect way of illustrating the "ideology" of this theory. For the people of the empire, the Rosenberg theory on the origin of the yapoo is common sense. To these people, thinking of yapoo as humans would give the same impression as explaining the nature of electricity to 20th-century people by pointing to a picture of the god of thunder. The non-humanity of yapoo has already become an *a priori* scientific truth. (55-56)

¹⁸⁶ Rosenberg was infamous as one of the most influential writers of Nazi racial theory. I will discuss the implications of this more in the next section.

¹⁸⁷ This is the gloss for *Chikujin-ron*, the theory of domesticated people. It parodies the category of "*nihonjinron*" (theory of Japanese people) writing, attempts to explain Japanese uniqueness that were especially popular after World War II and continue to circulate ubiquitously.

Because the truth of the categorical labels of race must be supported somehow, scientific theory is enlisted to this end. Over time, that theory becomes naturalized as truth. Society then might apply this scientific “truth” to social issues without the requisite circumspection characterizing objective scientific inquiry. Darwin’s theory of evolution suggests a mechanism of the survival of the fittest, and this in turn is used to support the idea that capitalism is a natural means by which humans interact. Likewise, Rosenberg’s theory explaining that yapoo are *Simius sapiens* (“intelligent monkeys”), distinct from *Homo sapiens* and of lower evolutionary pedigree, justifies the treatment of yapoo without concern for their agency or autonomy.

The omniscient narrator, whose task throughout the text is primarily to guide the reader through the intricacies of the fantasy world, also performs the role of exposing the internal contradictions behind the fantasy’s philosophies. This feature of the narration bolsters the satirical message of the parody of Nazism by making its operations explicit and holding up to ridicule its targets, although the narrator’s stance is rhetorically neutral. The narrator depicts the appropriation of scientific language to social theories with the term “ideology,” as in the revealing quote above. Again in the 35th century, the narrator notes, a man named Kellerer exposes the emptiness of Rosenberg’s theory in a tract entitled *Yapoonal Emancipation*. Keller claims that his predecessor’s science was tainted by “ideology,” but the utilitarian argument for yapoo is so great that Kellerer is humiliated, ostracized from society, and forced to retract his claims (57-59). Many chapters later the narrator confirms Kellerer’s assertions, revealing that the initial experiments that proclaimed the yapoo to be subhuman lacked any scientific rigor — it was an entirely expedient decision made simply to evade responsibility should any of the yapoo die in the process. Expedience is revealed as the primary motivation for the maintenance of racial theories: in the centuries following *Origin of Yapoo*, as the technologies that allow yapoo to be converted into useful objects are being invented,

there is little motivation to re-examine the discursively naturalized theories about the yapoo. The empire, we learn, requires its fixed hierarchies more than it needs to justify its scientific practice. The narrator informs the reader that the utility of the yapoo to the civilization prevents any intellectual inquiry seeking to return them to the status of humans.

Despite the obvious holes in the scientific theory of race and speciation, the application of these rules constructed by the whites continues unabated for centuries. The resulting civilization of aristocratic leisure, made possible at the expense of the “lower races,” has created self-rationalizing discourses on evolution to keep the structure in place. This theory of evolution, much like social Darwinism and theories about the progression of civilization toward Enlightenment values, is applied to the social structure in the form of a discourse of teleological history. At the same time, this embrace of that history is problematic precisely because those in power in this science fiction fantasy have the ability to go back in time and alter it. The empire’s discourses of positivistic historical and scientific truths are systematically subverted, revealed to be operations in the sustainment of the racially hierarchical power structure. Discourses of truth are writ large as manipulable and ideological, creating their own discursive truth-values. The stance toward discourse employed in *Yapoo* demonstrates how empire tautologically makes truth a function of power by justifying its own power as an expression of some truth.

HISTORY BEFORE FACT> In the last three chapters of *Yapoo*, history is twisted around and then folded back upon itself like a Möbius strip. In the first exposition of their history, the yapoo are depicted as diseased, post-apocalyptic Japanese people who were rescued from Earth in the 21st century and turned into tools for the whites. However, a second version of their story folds this into a history in which the Japanese were always already

yapoo. These yapoo developed a civilization called Japan, but this was an anomaly; the aftereffects of deadly, virus-spreading weapons used in World War III merely returned the Japanese to their earlier status as yapoo. Like a Möbius strip, the history is impossible to parse, appearing to be two-sided and yet in fact a twisted line with a single surface.

The history of the yapoo reveals uncanny similarities to Japanese creation myths. Anna describes her experiment to Clara in the presence of Rin, who is undergoing training in telepathy in the “taming sofa” on which Clara is reclining. (Rin is “tamed” by learning to enjoy the arduous task of supporting the weight of his owner as Clara’s urine is introduced into his bloodstream.) The experiment was performed by Anna and her sister, Susan, who together took un-domesticated, “thoroughbred” yapoo back in time to propagate in a controlled space. The two original yapoo they take back in time are from the “*tennô* clan” and are named Sanamii and Sanagii, and this pair rapidly populates the islands of Yapoon under the leadership of Anna’s yapoo attendant, Ninigii. Their benevolent creator comes to be known as Anna of Terra Nova, or Anna Tellus, and these early yapoo worship her as the sun goddess Amaterasu. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, Rin begins to recognize that the story told by Anna is from Japan’s oldest extant text.

The narrator meanwhile comes to the rescue of the reader who cannot make the connections, suggesting that he refer to his own edition of the *Kojiki* (A record of ancient matters), a text dating to the 8th century that details the mythical creation of the deities and land that would comprise the archipelago of Japan and its populace. Anna Tellus and Susan are none other than the Sun Goddess Amaterasu and her “brother” Susano-o.¹⁸⁸ The reference to the yapoo are not at all coincidental either: “*tennô*” is the term for the emperor, and the yapoo names are easily recognizable as modified versions of the

¹⁸⁸ Anna’s proper surname is O’Hillman, but the yapoo-given corruption of this, Ôhirume-no-muchi, is another designation for Amaterasu found in the *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan, ca. 720).

names Izanami, Izanagi, and Ninigi, all figures from Japanese creation myths. It is thus essential to the narrative that Rin is forced to face the startling “fact” that Amaterasu, the mythical progenitor of all Japanese people, is a beautiful white woman from the distant future.

The exposition that the Japanese of the 20th century are “actually” the descendants of yapoo from the future points only to the overt fictionality of the text. Even the parody is short-circuited: if the historical discourse of the yapoo is that they are simultaneously the ancestors and the descendants of the 20th-century inhabitants of Japan, it is impossible to differentiate the target from the product of parody. The concept of history as a comprehensive explanation of the world is also shattered in this feedback loop.

DRUGS AND *JOUISSANCE*> The scientific and historical bases for explaining the subhuman position of the yapoo rely on intoxication in both chemical and simulated forms, to maintain the status quo. The daily rituals of addiction underscore the racial hierarchy by ranking the drugs symbolically according to an implicit benchmark of purity and taboo. Addictive substances are specific to each race, and it becomes clear that the hierarchy of addictions — or, precisely, the hierarchy of how filthy each addiction is — corresponds directly to racial status. Each race’s drug is produced, distributed, and ingested in manners completely dependent upon this absolute (hierarchical, racial) difference. The repeated ingestion of the drugs, which hold both sacred religious and ritualized ceremonial value to their respective consumers, sustains the hierarchy by ensuring pleasure to all.

Intoxication is instrumental to *Yapoo*’s construction of masochism in both material and symbolic ways. As a material substance, addiction to drugs serves to condition users to accept and receive pleasure from their respective positions of power. Symbolically, intoxication becomes a metaphor for the potential extremes of ecstasy achievable in the

position of subservience. The symbolic intoxication reaches beyond the profane and purports to provide pleasures akin to religious rapture.

Drugs are distinct for each of the racial groups in the text. The white rulers enjoy “soma,” a concoction ingested daily during “soma time” in the “soma room.” The enslaved blacks are kept obedient by ingesting “negtar,” the urine of whites presented as a cocktail, as well as through a mercilessly sadistic penal code. And the yapoo are trained on and nourished by the excrement of the whites and the blacks as well as via a variety of artificial concoctions. The arrangement of waste products is racially inflected: known as the “tri-color food chain system,” it orders the movement of excreta down the hierarchy from whites to blacks to yapoo. The functioning of this system, as well as the civilization, relies on the perception of these waste products as both sources of pleasure and indices of subservience.

The drug of choice for the whites, soma, has multiple effects, from stimulating the nervous system to making its user’s sweat smell better. Derived from the Yggdrasill tree on the planet Mitgard and approximating the taste of Coca-Cola,¹⁸⁹ it is ritually taken one or more times a day, with high potential for addiction. The most salient feature of soma, making it “worthy of the name ‘humanity honey,’” is its strengthening of racial kinship. Clara quickly grows to appreciate the drug while unaware of this corollary effect.

A full day had not passed and yet Clara had changed so much. But let’s not think it too twisted of her. This change is due to the density of time in this world, as well as to the *yomotsuhegui* effect of the soma she started drinking yesterday. Whites who drink the “humanity honey” begin to feel that anyone with non-white skin is not of the same kind as they are. (306)

Clara’s rapid acceptance of the empire’s paradigm of racial superiority and equation of her Japanese fiancé with the impure yapoo are an important milestone in the narrative emplotment. This change of heart is unidirectional and attributable to the soma, which is

¹⁸⁹ Both Yggdrasill and Mitgard are references to Scandanavian myths. The reference to Coca-Cola points to an interesting post-World War II history of the beverage. Coke was one of the few companies permitted to enter Japan in the months after the Japanese surrender, but remained by law off-limits to the local populace until 1957. See Mark Mason, *American Multinationals and Japan: The Political Economy of Japanese Capital Controls, 1899-1980* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 110, 151, and 169.

described above as having the same entrapping effect as eating food from the land of the dead.¹⁹⁰ The introduction of this fantasy drug effectively obviates the need for scientific and historical truths of race and gender to have any coherence. The ideology of absolute racial difference is justified by the whites according to the suspect truth value of both science and history, but this is rendered superfluous when they drink soma, which implants ideology in the mind so that it may never be negated or reversed. This intoxicant operates on its consumer's subconscious mind, leaving no trace of the causality of its effect. Rather, soma functions as the material basis for the empire's hierarchical consciousness. This consciousness is represented by discourses of truth, but in the text is revealed, by the narrator to the reader, to spring from habitual use of a mind-altering drug.

The human waste products ingested by the yapoo are exposed in grotesque detail. "Native yapoo" like Rin, who have grown up in the wild outside a network of yapoonaries, require training to elicit their innate sense of subordination toward whites. This training implicates the native yapoo in the "food chain" by conditioning them to desire candies made from the waste of humans. The candies combine with the yapoo's saliva and create an intense stench, which the yapoo learns to crave via "an intense, narcotic-like attraction" (249). The candies use an addictive substance known as "red cream," which though "disgusting to whites and blacks" has a flavor that appeals to yapoo and enough "vitamin Y" to relieve the pains of their labors. In Rin's case, the training takes over his desires and emotions neurochemically:

Unbeknownst to Rin, and in the same way one might learn a taste for cigarettes or get addicted to opium, the training had implanted a predilection for the foul taste of red cream candies in him. (320)

This process of conditioning is said to be done out of the beneficence of the whites, and is thus known as "red cream compassion." The association of compassion with coerced

¹⁹⁰ The term "*yomotsuhegui*" refers to the food of the underworld, Yomi. Visitors to Yomi who partake of its food are unable to leave. References to it are found in both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*.

addiction constitutes the basis for the symbolic pleasures of intoxication in the text. These pleasures stem from the yapoo religion of “albinism,” the belief that God is white, and serve the racially ordered masochistic desire presented in the text. Receiving the waste products of a white “domina” is cast as the highest honor for a yapoo, a sign that he is blessed by his goddess. The yapoo’s version of divine rapture, reliant on this masochistic position, arrives with the ritualized bestowal of the effluvia of the white deity.

The future civilization relies for its operation on the employ of yapoo and slave labor for every menial task. By conditioning the yapoo to crave certain drugs, the white rulers are able to train even the native yapoo to find pleasure in their work. However, Anna develops a method of training yapoo that works as well as drug use but omits the material substances. In contrast to her cruel sister Susan, Anna argues that she can achieve higher levels of productivity from the yapoo through the doctrine of “charitism” than Susan’s preferred method, using her whip on yapoo confined in a windowless room.

My younger sister insisted that because their work itself involved toil, the only way to be charitable to the yapoo would be to reduce their workload. However, if you could alter their psychological makeup so that their suffering was instead felt as pleasure, such a reduction wouldn’t be necessary.

But is it possible? It is if you use “super attraxin,” although prolonged use reduces its efficacy and so it’s not recommended for long-term treatment. Can’t this be done without pharmaceuticals? I have always been worshipped by the yapoo, and so I recalled the words of someone long ago that “religion is opium.” All faith is salvation. Deeds performed in front of God provide believers with comfort and peace.

Is this not the perfect opportunity to convert yapoo labor into pleasure without using pharmaceuticals? And then might I not also use this to satisfy the physical cravings I’ve had since I was very young? This is how I arrived at the fundamental tenets of “charitism.” (436-437)

Anna recognizes that long-term addiction to drugs is untenable, so she seeks to simulate the effects “psychologically” through religious devotion. The resulting religion posits no higher pleasure for the yapoo than one delivered via dutiful subordination. The pleasures of assuming a subordinate position are not mundane or genital, but instead stem from equating the reception of intoxicants to the rapture of religious faith. This occurs because the vocation assigned to the yapoo, of processing the waste products and performing the menial tasks of civilization, provide the same pleasure as the conditioning drugs *without*

recourse to intoxicating substances. The pleasure of the masochist, extrapolated from the metaphors of drugs and religion, is characterized by a rapture that is as euphoric in its effects as intoxication but arises on its own from the position of being dominated.

Clara's regular soma use and Rin's gradual addiction to her waste products fulfill the narrative trajectory by fixing the characters in respective roles that guarantee pleasure to both. Notably, the received pleasures are not equal: the whites get intoxicated on genital pleasures and the blacks derive a numbing sensation from their drugs. Only the yapoo experience the *jouissance* of divine rapture, a non-sanctioned extreme of pleasure for which they are prepared to sacrifice their lives.

Drugs become the conduit through which Numa converts the initial scenario of an interracial relationship into a masochistic one. Clara proves herself a suitable torturer from the start, so the text enlists her to awaken Rin'ichirô to his supposedly inborn masochism. This masochistic awakening represents his detachment from infancy and induction into a proper symbolic system. For "native" yapoo like Rin, only this entry into the symbolic opens the door to the pursuit of *jouissance*. The civilization functions smoothly without the pleasure of the male yapoo, however. The otherwise closed "tri-color food chain system" recycles everything without waste, but it has a single, crucial node of excess: the *jouissance* of the yapoo in the subordinate position of a domesticated animal, the surplus that exceeds all other intoxicating pleasures. In this fantasy world, the heights of ecstasy are reserved for those at the bottom.

PARODY AND SATIRE

Numa devoted himself to cataloguing textual evidence that pleasure in submission to a beautiful woman was a common theme in many cultural traditions. *Yapoo* is overflowing with parody, both in passing reference to prior texts and in the wholesale appropriation of ideologies that align with the masochistic fantasy. Parody is the adaptation of a text

and/or its discourses (the “hypotext”) in another, later text (the “hypertext”), often with comic or polemical effect. Linda Hutcheon posits that parody be defined “as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity.”¹⁹¹ Parody points to a self-reflexive aspect of the texts, foregrounding the edifice of representation, in both the text that parodies and the text that is parodied, and the contextual contingency of meaning by recasting or re-encoding discourse in a new context. In *Yapoo*, for example, Charles Darwin’s groundbreaking work on evolution, *The Origin of Species*, is parodied to demonstrate how an authoritative scientific text becomes naturalized in discourse and, as in the case of “social Darwinism,” extrapolated beyond the truth claims of the original theory. The parody, “*Origin of Yapoo*,” purports to be a 23rd-century text promoting the claim that yapoo are of a separate and evolutionarily inferior species to humans. The parody plays on similarities between the two texts’ titles and contents in order to signal its ironic position toward the discourses involved. These similarities also point to important differences: while the hypotext in this case is concerned with establishing the theoretical basis for evolutionary links between various species, the hypertext focuses on the potentially racist ramifications of the scientific discourse of categorization. *Yapoo*’s parody makes its critical operations legible within its fictional framework by appropriating and altering discourses in this way.

Even when the parody of another text is explicit, however, a literal reading of the hypertext, or an interpretation that ignores the coded references, is never entirely foreclosed. Signifiers in the hypertext have the potential to refer to multiple signifieds, and parody turns on the interplay of this differentiated signification by its particular reference to a previous context. Hutcheon writes in *A Theory of Parody* that “the pleasure of parody’s irony comes not from humor in particular but from the degree of

¹⁹¹ Linda Hutcheon, “The Politics of Postmodernism: Parody and History” *Cultural Critique* 5 (Winter 1986-1987), p. 185.

engagement of the reader in the intertextual ‘bouncing’ ... between complicity and distance.”¹⁹² The more prominent the parodic reference, the more likely a reader will be able to pleurably engage in this intertextual play.

Yapoo is invested in multiple layers of parody in its construction of an elaborate masochistic schema. Its fabricated empire in the distant future cannot but evoke the then-recent occupation of Japan by the Allied Powers (1945-1952) in the context of discourses of racial difference circulating at the time. The parody in *Yapoo*, whether of obscure texts from Tang China (618-907) and Nara Japan (710-784) or from contemporary discourses of race and sexuality, is used to the fullest transgressive extent through its construction of a world rooted in masochism and its extrapolation of all pleasure to the intoxicated *jouissance* of a formally servile position.

Earlier in this chapter I noted how Numa’s construction of “literary masochism” is modeled on the writings of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch.¹⁹³ After Sacher-Masoch, Jonathan Swift’s 1726 *Gulliver’s Travels* is the most visible target of parody. Takahashi Yasunari writes that “what Numa Shôzô tried to be aware of, to imitate, to rival, to invert, to surpass, was, more than anyone or anything else, Swift and *Gulliver*,” noting that the “important similarities are almost too numerous to count.”¹⁹⁴ *Yapoo* parodies *Gulliver* explicitly by borrowing terms and identifying them in relation to Swift and his oeuvre. *Yapoo* also mimics the hybrid generic attributes of *Gulliver*, which offer a multiplicity of lenses through which readers might read the text.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 32.

¹⁹³ The parody of Sacher-Masoch in *Yapoo* exceeds the concept of masochistic fantasy and the names of the respective protagonists to include the author’s fascination with racial difference. Sacher-Masoch’s fantasies also tend to call attention to ethnic difference, for example juxtaposing the eastern European man with the ideal of Roman and Greek goddesses invoked by marble statues and portraits on canvas. Furthermore, in *Venus im Pelz* there are “three negresses” who serve Wanda in subduing Severin and preparing him for torture; they have an analog in the black-skinned males in *Yapoo*, who abet the process of “domesticating” the yapoo as “veterinarians.”

¹⁹⁴ Takahashi Yasunari, “Sumuma sukatorogika” *Umi* 2:7 (July 1970), p. 221.

¹⁹⁵ *Gulliver’s Travels* is a particularly interesting study of experimentation with generic forms. One of the earliest commentators referred to it variably as “a satire, an allegory, a series of voyages, a ‘moral political romance,’ [and] a ‘philosophical romance,’” and Frederik Smith writes that contemporary critics still

Gulliver is directly cited as the source for the neologism “yapoo” (*yapû*), which also exposes the connection between the fictional creatures and the contemporary Japanese reader. “Yapoo” is a cross between the terms “Jap (*yappu*)” and “Yahoo.”¹⁹⁶ Although “Jap” is an American derogatory term dating back to the 19th century, the text of *Yapoo* explains it as simply an abbreviation for the German term for a Japanese person, “Japaner” (*yapaana*). “Yahoo” is the name given to the animal-like humans in the last part of *Gulliver’s Travels*, “A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms.” In this section of the text, Gulliver is abandoned by his mutinous crew on an unknown island ruled, he finds out, by absolutist, rational horses, the Houyhnhnms. There he encounters the Yahoo, despicable beasts with which he is both identified — these are also humans — and loath to identify because of their lowly status. The yapoo of *Domesticated Yapoo* also mimic this ambiguous relationship to an interloper: Rin’ichirô views them as disgusting creatures, but also as the racial Other to the mysterious but beautiful Aryan woman at his feet. But just as with Gulliver and the Yahoos, Rin’s antipathy toward the yapoo is rejected by the superior beings from a foreign land who identify the two as one and the same.

In addition to the derivation of the yapoo from the Yahoos, Numa also appropriates the racial hierarchy from “A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms,” the final journey Gulliver undertakes after his return from, of all places, Japan. On the island ruled by horses, Gulliver encounters a scenario completely at odds with that of contemporary Britain. The Yahoos are a barbarous species “with a strange disposition to

characterize it as “narrative satire, a picaresque tale, a novel, a political allegory, a travel book, a parody of the travel book, an imaginary voyage, a philosophic voyage, and as both a utopian and antiutopian romance.” To further complicate matters, “Part III has a clear relationship to the history of science fiction” while “Part IV suggests the beast fable,” and over time *Gulliver* has further been adapted into children’s books and multiple film versions. Frederik N. Smith, ed. *The Genres of Gulliver’s Travels* (Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press, 1990), p. 20.

¹⁹⁶ A 1970 addendum to the text further inverts the parody by suggesting that “Japan” is itself a perversion of the “official” name of the archipelago on Earth known as “*Jaban*.” The characters “*ja*” and “*ban*” refer, respectively, to “despicable” and “uncivilized” (“*ban*” refers to a specific ethnic group but its use has been abstracted). The term “Japan” is thus a hybrid form of “*Jaban*” and “yapoo.” (23)

nastiness and dirt,” while the Houyhnhnms are horses whose name, etymologically, is said to derive from “the perfection of nature.”¹⁹⁷ The shift from “yahoo” to “yapoo” is an easily recognizable element of *Yapoo*’s parody of *Gulliver*; but the horses, too, are distinguished in status by their coloring just as the “humans” in *Yapoo* are divided by race:

Among the Houyhnhnms, the white, the sorrel, and the iron grey were not so exactly shaped as the bay, the dapple grey, and the black; nor born with equal talents of the mind, or a capacity to improve them; and therefore continued always in the condition of servants, without ever aspiring to match out of their own race, which in that country would be reckoned monstrous and unnatural.¹⁹⁸

Numa’s parody of this essentialism of racial difference works by aligning the protagonist and reader with the characters in the same way as in Swift’s text. In *Yapoo*’s future civilization, it is the white “humans” who rule and the black “demi-humans” who remain in servitude. In the case of *Gulliver*, the Yahoos are considered to be the lowliest of beings, an altogether different species of creature that must be domesticated by the horses. Gulliver is at first repulsed by the Yahoos just as Rin’ichirô is repulsed by the yapoo he sees. Gulliver’s gradual identification with the Yahoos over the course of the section is largely involuntary, though, compelled by the unbudging Houyhnhnms, whose rigid system of signification enforces the truth of nomenclature. (Indeed, the über-rational Houyhnhnms cannot fathom why anyone would say something that is *not* true, a stance that requires categorical boundaries to remain fixed in language.) In *Yapoo*, the male Japanese protagonist considers the yapoo an absolute Other until his difference from them is revealed to contain an essential similarity. Rin is a paragon of Japanese masculinity in “1960-something” Germany, but extracted from that world — like Gulliver adrift on the seas — he becomes subject to definition by another. In the land of the Houyhnhnms, the subordinate status of the filthy Yahoos is an undeniable truism. In *Yapoo*, Pauline identifies Rin as a yapoo despite Clara’s protests because the equation of

¹⁹⁷ Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels* [1726] (New York: The Book League of America, 1932), pp. 370 and 272.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

yellow skin and yapoo represents an analogously transcendental truth in her civilization's system of categorization.

Numa further toys with the ambiguities of parodic reference to assert mastery over the fantasy world he has created. To call even more attention to the parodic appropriation of Swift and *Gulliver's Travels* and its refiguring for the masochistic text, Numa uses the trope of time travel to suggest that the parody is backwards. When Clara sees the "pygmies" (*pigumii* or *hikiudo*) and, using her knowledge of Swift's diffusely circulated work, remarks that they must have come from "a Lilliput-like island," Pauline is bewildered at Clara's knowledge of the empire. Pauline does not understand the reference to *Gulliver's Travels* when she affirms that most pygmies are raised in the pastures of Lilliput (*riripatto*, or *shônintô*) (136), which in the 40th-century empire is the island where miniature yapoo are propagated. A parenthetical note between paragraphs clarifies the relationship between *Gulliver* and *Yapoo*:

(*Gulliver's Travels* author Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) seems to have heard about the civilization from a time traveler. The country of small people "Lilliput," the flying island "Laputa," the domesticated people (*chikujin*) "Yahoo," etc., cause us to speculate this.) (136)

Using the device of time travel, *Yapoo* reverses the parody and implies that Swift is instead using elements found in the diegetic world of *Yapoo* in his own story. The narrator of *Yapoo* is made to posit the futuristic scenario of *Yapoo* as the hypotext-like "reality" that is parodied by other authors. Motifs and plot elements that are borrowed and transformed in *Yapoo* are tied to their parodic targets by implicating those target texts as an imitation, a parody, of what is represented not as fictional creation but as transcendental reality in Numa's text. As a result, all extratextual references are folded into the fantasy and subject to manipulation and control by the author.

SATIRE BITES> As a complex text full of allusions to race and sex and history and empire, *Yapoo* pleads to be read as satire. Satire provides its critique indirectly, alluding to its object of mockery in ways intelligible to the reader, who is ultimately responsible for

filling in referential gaps. The legibility of satire relies on a reading of a text against a particular context, a bouncing between the text and contemporary social discourse. Brian A. Connery notes that satire demands readings that consider the historicity of the text and make certain presumptions about authorial intentionality. Furthermore, Connery writes that works read for satire are usually characterized by generic hybridity and “militant disunity,” meaning that the texts are “structured on the basis of oppositions or hierarchies ... represented in their extremes in order to achieve maximum tension.”¹⁹⁹ In *Yapoo* the extreme contrast between the 20th century of the first few sections of the text and the construction of the 40th century in the rest of the text highlights certain similarities, as well, and thus provides a clear basis for reading the text for satire.²⁰⁰

Satire is made manifest to the reader in *Yapoo* both by drawing similarities between textual and extratextual discourses — what Stephen Greenblatt describes as “localized strategies in particular historical encounters”²⁰¹ — and by gesturing toward known conventions of satire. The over-the-top parody of *Gulliver’s Travels*, which has been read for centuries as a satire of contemporary English politics, points to a satirical bent in *Yapoo*. In his own commentary Numa is at times hesitant to acknowledge any allegorical link between *Yapoo* and the occupation of Japan, but the occupation — and “the complex derived from the occupation that completely crushed the pride of the Japanese”²⁰² — clearly provided fodder for his fantasy text. Many critics in 1970 read *Yapoo* as satire

¹⁹⁹ Brian A. Connery, “Theorizing Satire: A Retrospective and Introduction” in Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe, eds., *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), pp. 4-5.

²⁰⁰ Moreover, the copious meta-commentary of the author — in concurrent articles during the text’s initial serialization and in paratextual elements, like the afterwords (*atogaki*) of successive printings of *Yapoo* — suggests that there is a rare degree of documented authorial intentionality in the satire. Numa responds to critics and extends and explicates his fantasy in ways that both acknowledge the satire but also deny or ignore possible satirical interpretations in favor of Numa’s own claims for the text.

²⁰¹ Combe quotes Greenblatt in Kirk Combe, “The New Voice of Political Dissent: The Transition from Complaint to Satire” in Connery and Combe, eds., *Theorizing Satire*, p. 73. He also describes the dual nature of satire in terms of highlighting the local but referencing certain conventions: “No matter how intricate the ironic strategy employed by a satirist, in the end the writer wants the reader to know — quite plainly — that satire is the convention at hand. At some level satire must call attention to itself as a form. Recognizable convention, genre, and tradition is vital to the existence of satire” (p. 75).

²⁰² Numa Shôzô, *Mazohisuto M no yuigon* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobô, 2003), p. 24.

that directly referenced the U.S. occupation of the country decades earlier.²⁰³

The most easily identifiable targets of parody and satire in *Yapoo* come out of the conventions of science fiction and fantasy, in which allegory and contemporary sociopolitical critique have established traditions. Science fiction has as long a history of positive reception in Japan as anywhere else, and Numa states that he is an avid fan. In 1963, Mishima Yukio reportedly wrote a letter to a science fiction magazine calling it “the one genre that could mount an effective challenge to ‘modern humanism,’”²⁰⁴ and Numa has literally taken on this challenge. *Yapoo* is a story of masochism encased in a science fiction-fantasy framework, depicting a world of estrangement from a contemporary society that retains uncanny similarities to it.

The text uses the conventions of fantasy to explore the possibility that captivity and humiliation might be sources of pleasure in contravention to contemporary social mores. This fantasy reflects the intersection of Numa’s essentialist constructions of masochistic and ethnic identity that challenge post-World War II discourses.²⁰⁵ Anticipating critiques of his work, Numa identifies science fiction as an alternative to genres that simply reproduce contemporary political mores:

²⁰³ For example, Nakata Kôji reads *Yapoo*’s science fiction as something more than a generic marker, going so far as to suggest that it serves as “none other than a biting antithesis to ‘the postwar.’” (Nakata Kôji, “Sengo’ e no anchiteeze: ‘akui’ ni michita kessaku” *Tosho shinbun* 1056 (4 April 1970), p. 1.) Critic Isoda Kôichi states that “in the yapoo raised as domesticated animals one can see the figure of the Japanese under American occupation.” (Isoda Kôichi, “Bungei jiyô: ôraka na kasaku ni” *Tôkyô shinbun* 3 March 1970, p. 8.) A group review in *Fujin kôron* points to parody after the Occupation by suggesting that the text provides “a caustic satire of the Japanese who have been labeled ‘economic animals,’” a reference to the high-growth era beginning the mid-1950s. (“Fujin kôron dokusho-shitsu” *Fujin kôron* 648 (May 1970), p. 371.) However, Mishima Yukio’s only written critique of *Yapoo*, in the larger framework of the portrayal of “free will” in literature, dismisses the import of the satire. “Depicting a world that actually rests on the same logic of dominance-subordination as our own society — just one that is promoted with extreme indecency — means it would be wrong to overvalue this work’s analogy and satire. Analogy and satire are part of the ‘play (*asobi*).’” See Mishima Yukio, *Shôsetsu to wa nani ka* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1972), p. 118.

²⁰⁴ David Lewis, “Japanese SF” in Neil Barron, ed., *Anatomy of Wonder: A Critical Guide to Science Fiction* 3rd ed. (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1987), p. 482.

²⁰⁵ Numa writes that he is a masochist first and a Japanese second, that masochism is an “internal” (*naibu*) feature. At the same time, he attempts to argue that the inferiority complex that one of his critics depicts as the thread between masochism and the Allied occupation of Japan is “a more fundamental undercurrent hidden in the depths of the Japanese spirit, a problem of ‘inferiority’ that transcends any period of time.” See Numa Shôzô, “Jinshu-teki rettôkan ga umidasu mono” *Bessatsu ushio* 17 (Spring 1970), pp. 248-249.

To think of freedom and equality and human rights as inevitable products of human progress: is this not a view overly captive to the established fact of historical reality? Biologically, any image of humanity is possible. Science fiction taught me that.²⁰⁶

Numa exploits the boundless potential of fiction to avoid being “overly captive to ... historical reality,” using his own fantasy as a template for creating a metahistorical narrative. Science fiction fantasy is particularly amenable to parody to this end because it provides a set of generic expectations in which familiar elements are re-contextualized according to distinctly constructed diegetic codes. The temporal shift to the 40th century in *Yapoo* is not meant to forecast a future, but instead “to defamiliarize and restructure our experience of our own *present*.”²⁰⁷ The 40th-century masochistic fantasy reflects experiences that are palpable in postwar Japan, fleshing them out by ironically comparing and contrasting the respective contexts.

The satire in *Yapoo* targets changes in value systems in the aftermath of World War II when Japan was occupied by the Allied powers. It does this by constructing a 40th-century civilization in which Nazi values have been codified into law but contain uncanny similarities to occupation authority policies that create a de facto hierarchy. The fulfillment of the yapoo’s masochistic desire satirizes the perception of an embrace of this hierarchy by Japanese people after the war by treating it as an inherent ethnic trait. Numa claims to have felt humiliation at the sexualized component of the occupation hierarchies, which he saw as providing opportunities for U.S. soldiers and Japanese women to engage in sexual relations that excluded Japanese men. His fantasy foregrounds yapoo male access to the objects of his fetishistic desire and constructs a system in which both white men and yapoo females are excluded from the text’s elaboration of sexual pleasures. Finally, the text also satirizes the notion of Japanese ethnic identity endowed in the imperial line and its direct connection to the Sun

²⁰⁶ Numa, “Atogaki” *Kachikujin yapû* v. 5, p. 339.

²⁰⁷ Frederic Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 286.

Goddess. By parodying the *Kojiki* and appropriating its construction of an ethnically continuous history, but recasting the progenitor of the Japanese race as a time-traveling white woman, Numa's writing pokes fun at the postwar changes in the rhetoric of the position of the emperor.

Numa's satire targets the post-World War II discourses of democracy and their imposition on Japan during the Allied Occupation of 1945-1952 in multiple ways. Numa uses satire to target the ideologies reflected in the postwar Constitution of Japan that spell out freedom (articles 12 and 18-23), equality (article 14 in general and article 24 with regard to gender equality), and human rights (articles 11 and 97).²⁰⁸ The fantasy empire in *Yapoo* recycles Nazi theories that were harshly repudiated by the United Nations' "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," adopted in 1948, by directly parodying the pre-war authors of tracts on the science of race and the supremacy of whites. Science fiction, Numa claims, allows him to think beyond "human rights and equality" as the teleological product of linear historical progression. By constructing the diametric opposite of postwar democracy — racial hierarchy, aristocratic rule, authoritarianism, the "truth" of social Darwinism — as universal principles in a 40th-century setting, *Yapoo*'s satire critiques the hypocritical circulation of discourses of this democracy. The satire relies on his implied readership to identify the contrast.

A satirical reading of *Yapoo* highlights discrepancies between the lofty ideals set out in the imposed Constitution and the behavior of the Supreme Command under General Douglas MacArthur. The satire is legible through what John Dower describes as "the contradictions of the democratic revolution from above":

While the victors preached democracy, they ruled by fiat; while they espoused equality, they themselves constituted an inviolate privileged caste. Their reformist agenda rested on the assumption that, virtually without exception, Western culture and its values were superior to those

²⁰⁸ The Constitution was promulgated in November 1946 and enacted in May 1947. All references have been taken from "The Constitution of Japan." The National Diet Library. <<http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c01.html>>.

of “the Orient.” At the same time, almost every interaction between victor and vanquished was infused with intimations of white supremacism.²⁰⁹

Dower notes a marked hypocrisy in the discourses of liberation circulated by the Allied command, where democratic ideals were “preached” but not practiced. This is picked up in the historical narrative constructed in *Yapoo* when “General Mack” rescues the yapoo from a post-apocalyptic Earth; he then treats the yapoo as “yellow apes” and favors policies that eventually justify their eternal subordination to whites (390). By recasting a contemporary scenario in a future diegesis, this satirical parody of white supremacy takes a swipe at the racial hierarchy of the Allied occupation of Japan. *Yapoo*’s critique by juxtaposition lies in the implication that, United Nations declarations notwithstanding, Nazi theories on race are the ideological source for the continued hegemonic power of white people in the post-World War II era.

The sharp-edged critique is playfully executed, however, because Numa appropriates racial hierarchy as an affirmative component of masochism in his text. In Nazi philosophy, Numa finds the combination of the domination fantasy conjoined to a rationalization of racial hierarchy that he would reconfigure into his own masochistic narrative.²¹⁰ For his fantasy, Numa parodies the work of Alfred Rosenberg, most infamously the author of the 1930 *Der Mythos des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts* (The Myth of the 20th century). Rosenberg posited white supremacy as the foundational

²⁰⁹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, p. 211.

²¹⁰ Numa directly applied his understanding of Nazi theories to his construction of the racial hierarchy of *Yapoo*. The writing of Nazi pseudo-historian Wahrhold Drascher introduced Numa to the details of racist ideologies that he would then parody in his own fantasy. Drascher’s 1936 political tract, *Die Vorherrschaft der weissen Rasse* (The supremacy of the white race), proclaims that “Nature” has ordained that whites reign supreme and that “liberal thought,” which has elevated colonized peoples to the same level of humanity as their subjugators, is the enemy of the proper order. Drascher’s affirmation of Adolf Hitler’s ideology that “non-Aryans are not human” and should be treated as domestic animals, in particular, piqued Numa’s interest and led him to read “that terrible piece of writing,” *Mein Kampf*, by Adolf Hitler. Numa plumbs Hitler for his fantasy of racial domination, in which the “*Farbige*” (colored people, *yûshoku-jinshu*) are the world’s “first domesticated animals.” Hitler’s rhetorical moves especially impressed Numa: conquering and enslaving the “*niedere Völker*” (lower people) “not only saves them, but is a better fate than the so-called ‘freedom’ that we are giving them.” Numa also found himself agreeing with Hitler’s assessment of the Japanese as “imitators” whose culture was readily influenced from the outside. There is no mention of the atrocities committed in the name of these ideologies; Numa only seems interested in devising a mythical structure for his racial and sexual fetishes. Numa Shôzô, “Saisho ni suki o hiita mono” [1955] *Aru musôka no techô kara* v. 3, p. 122.

mythical source of German identity and provided the theoretical backbone of Nazi race ideology.²¹¹ As mentioned above, in *Yapoo* successive generations of men named Alfred Rosenberg perform experiments on the yapoo in the future. In performing these tests, the 21st-century Rosenberg declares that these creatures are, in fact, not humans, and thus have no “human rights.” The conclusions drawn from his experimental results indicate that Japanese people had always mimicked white society and had merely returned to their original “animalistic nature” after whites left the planet on the eve of World War III. Numa adapts Rosenberg’s name and theories to unite race-related discourses of science and myth under the law of masochistic fantasy in order to construct a scenario that denies the humanity of the tortured yapoo.

The recasting of occupation-era racial hierarchies through Nazi science is not simply a matter of depicting white racism. Numa also uses satire to target the general Japanese populace under occupation as “embracing defeat” and cites this as evidence of an ethnic basis for masochistic orientation. Returning home from the war to a country full of foreign soldiers, Numa “ended up learning to feel aroused by the very idea of the humiliation of Japan by white people.”²¹² Indeed, this statement reveals that the over-the-top fantasy structuring the pleasures of the text are intimately related to the experience of postwar politics. “The humiliation of Japan” treats “Japan” synecdochically to represent the collective humiliation of Japanese people — most precisely, men. But this use of “Japan” also suggests the nation-state as a container for pride that can be trampled on by another nation. “White people” is a metonym for the West, for power, for technological superiority and “properly” scientific epistemologies, evoking the use of white as the transcendental signifier of humanity in Euro-American imperialism. Finally, Numa’s arousal at humiliation is extrapolated in *Yapoo* to the level of race and ethnicity,

²¹¹ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Nazi Myth,” trans. by Brian Holmes, *Critical Inquiry* 16:2 (Winter 1990), pp. 304-305.

²¹² Numa Shôzô, “Atogaki” *Kachikujin yapû* v. 5, p. 335.

so that the peculiar subjectivity of the individual masochist becomes a communal problematic. After almost half a century of reflection, Numa recalls life in “occupied Japan” (*okyupaido japan*) as “feeling an ethnic masochism that exceeded the individual.”²¹³ Describing the occupation period in terms of masochism points not only to the experience of subordination but also to the active pursuit of pleasure from the hierarchy. *Yapoo* represents experiences of that time period through a representation of pleasure in racist domination, elucidating the continuities between experience and fiction by exaggerating the differences in its fantasy world.

The portrayal of irreconcilable racial differences is supplemented by the implementation of a rigid gender hierarchy that together point toward the fetish object. So that the racial hierarchy serves the masochistic desire of the (heterosexual) male yapoo, the text goes to extreme lengths to elevate women in the hierarchy. According to Deleuze, the masochist

does not believe in negating or destroying the world nor in idealizing it: what he does is to disavow and thus to suspend it, in order to secure an idea which is itself suspended in fantasy. He questions the validity of existing reality in order to create a pure ideal reality, an operation which is perfectly in line with the judicial spirit of masochism.²¹⁴

The fetish of the blonde, white-skinned woman represents the masochistic ideal. Because the masochist dictates the terms of the relationship, his fetishism necessarily objectifies the torturer. In *Yapoo*, the torturer — or torturess, properly — is a socially inscribed role taken up naturally by white women, whose hypersexuality and lack of shame make them continually sexually available. The author’s textual maneuvers seek to secure and discursively elevate the object of desire, the pedigreed white woman as libertine goddess, within an idealized framework controlled by the author alone.

This focus on the fetishized white female coupled with yapoo males relegates all others to bit parts in the masochistic scenario. This is Numa’s fantasy revenge for “ethnic

²¹³ “Beeru o nuida seiki no kisho ‘Kachikujin no yapû’ no chosha Numa Shôzô-shi ni Muroi Yuzuki ga semaru” *Sandee mainichi* 78:56 (26 December 1999), p. 159.

²¹⁴ Deleuze, “Coldness and Cruelty,” pp. 32-33.

humiliation” he felt during the occupation era (and beyond), when Japanese women consorted openly with foreign soldiers. In his *Notebook* entries, Numa depicts the occupation period as a time in which U.S. soldiers preyed upon Japanese women for sexual relations, referring specifically to multiple written accounts to add authority to his claims. Numa paraphrases the many texts he cites, echoing the patriarchal possessiveness in his own words: “This is where women, who truth be told *should be our wives*, are taken by whites and lowered to the level of prostitutes.”²¹⁵ *Yapoo* inverts the exclusions of this “humiliation” — which in the text are also gratuitously over-(hetero)sexualized — so that the sexual activity of white men and Japanese women are removed from focus and the author’s fantasy of the white woman and the “domesticated” Japanese man takes center stage.

Rather than simply reflect a product of the white-yapoo social difference, the fetish draws that difference starkly and essentially, making it a crucial operation in the narrative strategy of *Yapoo*. The racial fetish is always already sexualized, so that it is precisely this radical difference that produces extreme pleasure. Numa doubles the fetish along racial and sexual lines. His text revels in its satirical depiction of transracial encounters — of the fantasy, of the occupation period, of the space between the satirical fiction and the history it targets. At the same time, it celebrates the perversity of masochism, the transgressive pleasure of sexual power differentials in a world based on the universal principles of liberal humanism. That is, the fetish is by definition about a cultural gap in social value,²¹⁶ and the fetish represented in *Yapoo* expresses this gap by comically re-fashioning discourses on pleasure, oppression, and pleasure *through*

²¹⁵ This is offset by disdain for the Japanese women he portrays as victims wholly complicit in their encounters with the soldiers: “As a matter of fact, at the bottom of the heart of Japanese women lies hidden a worship of white people that allows us to see them all as *latent whores*.” Numa Shôzô, “Beikokuhei no nihon josei shuryô” [1956] *Aru musôka no techô kara* v. 4, pp. 57-58.

²¹⁶ William Pietz theorizes the term “fetish” as originating with the rise of the commodity form in early European mercantile capitalism. Pietz writes that “the fetish, then, not only originated from, but remains specific to, the problematic of the social value of material objects as revealed in situations formed by the encounter of radically heterogenous social systems.” (“The Problem of the Fetish, I” *Res* 9 (Spring 1985), p. 7.)

oppression. In the masochistic fetish, pleasure is derived from humiliation and domination with full knowledge that it is considered a “false” or “wrong” pleasure. In the context of the postwar program of “democratizing” Japan, conjoining this pleasure to the espousal of a white supremacist racial hierarchy is out-and-out provocation.

MYTHICAL ORIGINS> The parody of the *Kojiki* in *Yapoo* creates a web of implications that amplify the satire. Due to the ambiguities created in the process of parody, *Yapoo* has been interpreted as alternately patriotic and anti-patriotic.²¹⁷ It appropriates a text that ultranationalists consider inviolate in the service of erotic fantasy. This profane use, furthermore, posits an innate feeling of racial inferiority in the Japanese-as-yapoo. It goes so far as to portray the emperor as a “native” yapoo, the first of a long line of subhuman creatures who thought themselves human. The fantasy might have once titillated a self-selecting group of perversion literature aficionados, readers of *Kitan kurabu*, for whom potential satirical readings were a distraction from, if not part of the liberating pleasure of, the elaboration of the masochistic fantasy. When the single-volume book was published in 1970, however, the readership expanded logarithmically, and *Yapoo* was subject to interpretations by people not necessarily familiar with its use of generic conventions, sympathetic to its foregrounding of the pleasures of subordination, or receptive to its parodic license.

The choice of the *Kojiki* as a target of parody may have seemed transgressive, but it also represents the author’s eye for potential representations of masochism. Numa’s extensive scrapbook is full of eclectic excerpts, all of which are analyzed and deployed as affirmations of the ubiquity of masochistic representation. *Yapoo*’s appropriation of the

²¹⁷ One critic notes the portrayal of exceptional talents by Japanese-yapoo in the text and concludes that “the author is a paradoxical, warped patriot.” (Kamata Tôji, “Numa shôzô/kachikujin yapû: higiyaku no yûtopia” *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kyôzai no kenkyû* 34:15 (December 1989), p. 121.) Another suggests that the idea of “ethnic masochism” could easily upset Japanese “patriots.” (Takahashi Yasunari, “Sumuma sukatorogika,” p. 221.) In the summer of 1970, three members of an ultranationalist group broke into the publisher’s office and demanded that publication be halted and the print run be destroyed because *Yapoo* was allegedly “a poison to the patriotic spirit” of Japan. (“Uyoku, shuppansha odosu: sannin taiho *Kachikujin yapû wa kokujoku*” *Tôkyô shinbun (yûkan)* 3 July 1970, p. 14.)

Kojiki opens up the interpretation that the creation myths, too, are prefigured as a masochistic narrative, one in which a female deity is fetishized as the object of heterosexual Japanese male worship. In the passages I cited at the start of the chapter, Rin'ichirô claims to derive his "ethnic pride" out of these myths, and so the transgressiveness of this parody arises when the text calls attention to its reconfiguration of the myths to suit a racially inflected fetish. Rin'ichirô gives in readily to the revisionist "historical understanding" that Amaterasu was a white woman — but as an affirmation that he felt his identity derived from the *truth* of the myths as written in the *Kojiki*. *Yapoo's* parody very cleverly maintains the discourse of the creation myths' veracity and instead, through the device of time travel, reconstructs a history that aligns these myths to a different understanding of that truth. The character of Rin'ichirô demonstrates that, so long as a beautiful woman is the object of worship, the masochistic qualities of Japanese mythology are undeniable.

I also read satire into the implication that Rin'ichirô is so quickly willing to sacrifice his beliefs. During the war, the creation myths from the *Kojiki* were appropriated to define imperial subjects by emphasizing a direct line between the Amaterasu and the sitting emperor.²¹⁸ Dower describes how, during the occupation period, General MacArthur became the object of worship in letters that went as far as to call him a "living savior."²¹⁹ Rin'ichirô's rapid conversion from an Amaterasu-loving patriotism to "albinism" is a play on the perception that the defeated Japanese populace shifted their veneration after war's end from the imperial line to the god-like MacArthur. Numa's depiction of an innate masochism — in *yapoo* as well as in Japanese people generally —

²¹⁸ John Dower describes the 1941 *Way of the Subject* (*Shinmin no michi*), compiled and distributed by the Ministry of Education, as a work espousing

the direct descent of the emperor from the sun goddess Amaterasu and characteriz[ing] the national polity as a "theocracy" in which "the way of the subject is to be loyal to the Emperor in disregard of self, thereby supporting the Imperial Throne coextensive with the Heavens and with the Earth."

Subjection to the emperor is predicated upon the sacred character of the institution, evidenced by its direct lineage from Amaterasu, the founding deity. (*Embracing Defeat*, p. 277.)

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 227-233.

is represented as the fetishized worship of symbolic power. The implication derives its humor from its crudeness (and offensiveness to nationalist sentiment): “ethnic pride” loses out to erotic desire.

The revised history (in an age of time travel) exacerbates the profanation of the *Kojiki* in *Yapoo* when the “unbroken line” between Amaterasu and the emperor is mapped onto the racial hierarchies. The imperial line in the text is a “tribe” of yapoo; its “divinity” derives from the tribe’s submissive worship of goddess Anna rather than from their mythical creation by a deity. When Rin’ichirô accepts that the emperor is a yapoo just like him, he has accepted that historical discourse trumps the mythical, even if both are written to reflect the ideologies of those in power. I cannot help but read out of this a satire of the 1946 “declaration of humanity” by Emperor Hirohito, who proclaimed in an official rescript that he was not a god but rather a “deity in human form.” The conception and preliminary text of this declaration were written by occupation authorities.²²⁰ A 1956 survey by the magazine *Intellect* (*Chisei*) bears out the effectiveness of this rhetorical orchestration: roughly the same number of people — over 80% — claimed that prior to 1945 they saw the emperor as a “god” (*kami*) or “superhuman” as said that he was a “regular person” after the war.²²¹ In *Yapoo*, Rin’ichirô is forced to accept a revisionist history written by the white aristocrats because they have power to create truth out of discourse. The historical perspective from the 40th century depicts the imperial line as just one of many yapoo clans, while the source of the yapoo, the goddess Anna, becomes the rightful object of worship.

In such a light, Numa’s transformation of the mythology of the *Kojiki* is inherently transgressive: it treats sacred myth as just another profane text. *Yapoo* comically

²²⁰ The machinations leading to this declaration in the months after the Japanese surrender are detailed in Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pp. 308-318, and Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), pp. 560-563. The term for “deity in human form,” Dower argues, was deliberately obscure and esoteric.

²²¹ NHK hōsō yoron chōsa-sho, ed., *Zusetsu sengo yoron-shi* (Tokyo: Nippon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1975), p. 217.

demystifies the *Kojiki* by altering it to serve its own masochistic narrative, thereby subverting the significance of the mythology by suggesting it is a *false* version of a *true* history written and transmitted by whites. With respect to the U.S. occupation of Japan, the satire mocks the demystification of the imperial seat by representing it in the empire's historical record as always already subordinate to discursive truths circulated by the ruling whites.

THE PLEASURE OF THE TEXT

Satire is ultimately a function of reading, one that relies on presumptions about an author's intentions and on inferences about the relationship between a text and its context. Plausible deniability is the writer's defense when readers feel the satire transgresses too much: it's just a fantasy, it's just a fictional work, it's just a representation of my imagination. Numa — and Amano as his "representative" — both hinted at and contested the import of satire to *Yapoo*, though such a decision is always left to the reader. Yet the further the reading is from the site of production of the text, the more ambivalent any imposition of extratextual interpretation is bound to be. Perhaps it is my lack of enthusiasm for the meticulous details of the orchestrated scenario — I find much of *Yapoo* to be exceedingly boring — but I cannot imagine the text enjoying popularity or enduring in republication after 50 years were the satire not as legible as it is.

This calls attention to the issue of the temporality and context of reading *Yapoo*. When the story was released in book form in 1970, the print media made much of the anonymity of the author. Critics speculated on who might be qualified to write something so intellectual and yet so incongruously grotesque. The curiosity over authorship was certainly prurient in part; weekly magazines were very interested in identifying a self-professed masochist. Yet this desire to uncover the author's identity

must also have been related to the transgressive aspects of the satire. Only by knowing or asking the author could one confirm or deny whether his fictional portrayal of Japanese inferiority reflected his “true” feelings.

Moreover, the plight of the transgressive author would serve as a watermark for acceptable satire of the imperial seat. In retrospect, fellow sadism-masochism writer Dan Oniroku recalls that “it was thought natural that Numa Shôzô, who had constructed Japanese people as an inferior race in line with primates, would end up on the right wing’s assassination list.”²²² After all, *Yapoo*’s widespread circulation came less than ten years after the Shimanaka Incident, in which a fictional work about the public execution of members of the imperial family precipitated a murder as well as a lasting regime of self-censorship by major publishers.²²³ It was a question of whether, in 1970, such satire would also provoke the ire of ultranationalists. (As I noted above, several thugs broke into the offices of the obscure publisher but were immediately arrested; no other repercussions were reported.) Could Numa get away with portraying the emperor, not to mention the entire populace, as inherently masochistic?

Lost in the fuss about the author was consideration of the representational techniques used to construct the masochistic fantasy. Numa published essays that elaborated the intellectual and literary bases for his fantasies concurrent with *Yapoo* in *Kitan kurabu*, and these foregrounded the fetishism and the parody much more than the satire. Masochism is a function of the text — the script — and so *Yapoo* is an ambitious fantasy because it attempts to encapsulate the entire world (and outer space), as well as

²²² Dan Oniroku, “Numa Shôzô, *Kachikujin yapû*” *Bungei shunjû* 82:12 (September 2004), p. 295.

²²³ The wife and a maid of the president of publishing house Chûô Kôron, Shimanaka Hôji, were attacked by a right-wing youth a couple of months after the magazine *Chûô kôron* published in its December 1960 issue Fukazawa Shichirô’s short-story, “Furyû mutan.” The story presents an extended dream sequence in which leftist mobs take over the imperial palace and publicly execute the emperor and empress and several other family members, all referred to specifically by name. John Treat notes that “there is little in ‘Furyû mutan’ that initially invites the reader to take the story seriously,” but also that critics expressed “discomfort with its aggressive use of carnivalesque parody.” See John Whittier Treat, “Beheaded Emperors and the Absent Figure in Contemporary Japanese Literature” *PMLA* 109:1 (January 1994), pp. 102 and 104.

all of history and science and literature, into its diegesis. *Yapoo* insists upon its own importance, compensating for the exclusion of masochism from mainstream discourse by making it the source, the objective, and the foundation for all discourse.

Without pleasure, the masochistic scenario amounts to little more than torture. Masochistic fiction needs to make the pleasure legible, and legible in such a way that the extreme degrees of torture are compensated by equally extreme pleasures. Numa grasped the import of the formal features of masochism as components in a textual practice. The masochist engages in the encoding of desire because he knows the intellectual pleasure of decoding it. After all, there is virtually unlimited availability of explicit pornography in print and moving image. At some point there was even a *Yapoo*-themed sadomasochistic business in Tokyo, where customers could play the role of yapoo and be tortured by beautiful, scantily-clad women, though in Numa's opinion visiting such clubs was not equivalent.²²⁴ In *Yapoo*, Numa uses the concept of religion to emphasize unity in a particular belief system. He uses the trope of drugs to insist that these are pleasures felt in the body, that they operate as an addiction and provide their own rationale for continued use, even in contravention to anything socially useful. The masochistic text must then promise an experience of *jouissance*, of subversive pleasure that cannot be otherwise achieved, as its demonstrative imperative. In *Domesticated Yapoo*, this is predicated upon the postulation that masochism is the Japanese man's birthright, a legacy of his devotion to sun goddess Amaterasu.

²²⁴ Numa expresses this opinion in an interview with Muroi Yuzuki. ("Beeru o nuida seiki no kisho," p. 158.)

Chapter Six

Detox: Returning to Pleasure

Drugs present a basic ambiguity with regard to the body: they are external to it and yet readily absorbed and incorporated into it. This goes for food or alcohol or opium. A drug is a supplement that underscores the ambiguity of the coherence of the whole.²²⁵ It can only fragment something that was in pieces to begin with. In effect, it unmasks the folly of investing in sobriety, that state of denial in which it is easiest to believe that everything is exactly the way it is supposed to be.

I turn to drugs to highlight a crucial way in which the concept of the “self” is not co-extensive with the body in literary representations. Intoxication can direct the body toward desires that function beyond the boundaries of the physical. To explore this, I have turned to Kristeva’s theory of semiotic processes to contemplate a trope of resistance and disruption to the literary representation of the self, particularly as it is depicted with respect to the individuated body.

What we call *significance*, then, is precisely this unlimited and unbounded generating process, this unceasing operation of the drives toward, in, and through language; toward, in, and through the exchange system and its protagonists—the subject and his institutions.²²⁶

Semiotic processes originate in the infant’s body before it separates from the mother and linger on as traces once the physical break has occurred. The break has a psychic aspect, however, that is never complete and generates dangerous drives that tug at the body in

²²⁵ Jacques Derrida, reading Jean-Jacques Rousseau, critiques the assertion that writing is merely “a supplement to speech,” where speech is seen as closer to thought. Derrida’s explanation plays on the French term, *supplément*, which refers both to “substitution” and “addition,” to replacing as well as compensating for lack. “The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence. ... But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void.” Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* [1967], trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 144-145.

²²⁶ Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, p. 17.

order to return it to a site of unrepressed desires.

Drugs can be deployed in literary texts to denaturalize the body from socially constituted meanings. For example, in *TYP*, Mako's overdose on painkillers allows the state to read her body as a reflection of a stray subject in need of rehabilitation. However, there is more going on than that. When Mako regains consciousness in the first lines of the text, she engages in a solitary rebirth. This a break not from the mother but from "crowds of people" who had surrounded her when she passed out on a train station platform, and a delivery not via amniotic fluid but out of sweat.²²⁷ Mako is a child of the anonymous urban landscape, without kinship ties, and she resists the way the state maps its definitions of her onto her body. Instead, she liberates her "self" from her body through a set of existential drives that exceed and circumvent the body as a fixed object endowed with social meaning.

Perhaps, though, the semiotic can function on the body politic, as well. *Yapoo* attempts this by making an entire ethnicity subordinate, suspended in the anticipation of a promised ecstasy. *Yapoo* also does away with the mystique of the maternal body, so that "raw" yapoo bodies are primarily produced through industrial manufacturing processes and are endowed with auto-intoxicating drives, in the form of erotic fetish, prior to birth. (The fetish differentiates between the erotic female body and origins.) It is purposefully unclear where the ethnic characteristics begin and the single yapoo body ends.

In pathology, this is where distinctions between types of drugs and degrees of intoxication would come into play. But as far as intoxication as a trope is concerned, such distinctions play out in character development rather than in signifying practice. In *GCC*, Akira's friend Mori is disdainful of Akira's use of "fake" drugs and refuses to look for marijuana with him, instead recommending heroin, methamphetamine, and liquid

²²⁷ "She struggled to float up from the crowds of people through an abundance of sweat." Mori, "Kiiroi shôfu," p. 10.

ephedrine. Akira dreams of methaqualone and LSD as he consumes painkillers by the case. Akira's body becomes a "mannequin" as the sensations shift the focus of the text to his brain.²²⁸ What becomes crucial is not what rendered the characters intoxicated or how high they got, but how that *effect* affords them a site from which to enunciate in ways that would otherwise not qualify as language. The intoxicated body is but a vehicle for the drugs, featuring porous boundaries in relation to which the narration seeks to posit some kind of self as a subject in language.

Intoxication offers a site for representing sensation, experience, desire — but these, like the imagined body, are always already representation. Where does it begin and end? What does it exclude? Out of what kind of syntax is it composed? How does it circulate? A text may represent the body to posit an origin of these affective tropes, but where the body expresses the effects of intoxication, the supplement is already working its ambiguity on the reader. To spread its poison through the text, as the text, the intoxicated representation need not propagate dangerous new thoughts but instead elicit those sensations that were already there. To un-repress, to liberate. Intoxication tells us that the risks in pursuit of *jouissance* are well worth the rewards, and we just have to believe.

The analysis of intoxication in my study is tied to a readerly pursuit of *jouissance*, but it must also contend with pleasure, with the legible. Perhaps *jouissance* has a parasitic relationship to pleasure, squirming amidst its aporias, feeding on its contradictions, infecting its positivity with ambiguous germs. According to Kristeva's theory, *jouissance* is not left behind upon entry into the symbolic but constantly re-engaged in signifying acts (even if only to be overlooked as nonsense or smothered in meaning). Language gets torn apart and then pieced back together. Only through this "structuring and de-structuring practice, a passage to the outer boundaries of the subject and society, ... can

²²⁸ Nakagami Kenji, "Haiiro no kokakôra," pp. 15 and 34-37. Some of the drugs are referred to by their slang or brand names: *pei*, *hiropon*, *betasu*, *haiminaaru*.

it be *jouissance* and revolution.”²²⁹ It strikes me, however, that I have assembled a group of texts that engage *jouissance* without revolution. They seek not to overthrow repressive institutions but only to carve out a space for unsanctioned pleasures.

In this sense, *jouissance* is both an Other to pleasure, one that cannot be harnessed and defined, and nonetheless a vital component of pleasure. One must first be able to read for pleasure in order to even contemplate *jouissance*. And one must be receptive not only to the seductions of pleasure, but also to the potential for pleasure to discomfort and disorient and draw one out of any cherished system of values. But I don’t suppose readers are asked to poison themselves. Instead, they are expected to co-opt the toxic as a pleasure that turns on an ambivalence toward their potential to comprehend it. Intoxication, I argue, must remain a pleasure represented as marginal if it is to pull its readers out of their socially prescribed frames of reference.

In a critical warning over using terminology in translation, Jane Gallop questions the widespread use of the French term *jouissance* in Anglophone feminist theory under the assumption that “pleasure” is somehow insufficient. Barthes, she notes, specifically renounced any axiomatic use of the term in *The Pleasure of the Text*, and insisted upon instability as a fundamental component of the term’s deployment. By deploying the French term in opposition to “pleasure” (*plaisir*), however, Gallop warns that Anglophone theorists risk fixing *jouissance* in our critical vocabulary as a static principle. “If *jouissance* is ‘beyond the pleasure principle,’ it is not because it is beyond pleasure but because it is beyond principle.”²³⁰ Indeed, sometimes *jouissance* overlaps with a concept of pleasure, sometimes it refers to a fixed meaning, and other times it can be deployed critically against meaning. It shatters when used to cut into anything too solid. To maintain its sharp as well as blunt edges, *jouissance* only gets taken out of its box for specific purposes and then must be returned to the ether from which it was theorized.

²²⁹ Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, p. 17.

²³⁰ Jane Gallop, “Beyond the *Jouissance* Principle” *Representations* 7 (Summer 1984), p. 113.

My deployment of the untranslated term in this study is meant to amplify its instability rather than capture it. Where *jouissance* unites the texts I analyze by destabilizing linguistic practices in opposition to perceived norms, it nonetheless functions in ways particular to each text. Mori's protagonist seeks it as an antidote to oppressive signifying practices, as an ambiguity that reflects the lies of fixed meanings. Nakagami's protagonist needs to assimilate the *jouissance* of maternal attachment into an understanding of his past in order to live in the present. Murakami's Ryû does not seem to pursue anything more than mundane pleasures, but even these mock the normative from a peripheral frame of reference. Finally, *Yapoo* constructs a vast symbolic system that is designed around the paradox of converting *jouissance* into the law of the land. Each deployment of the concept corresponds to a different construction of desire out of language that is full of ambiguity. They are brought together under the sign of *jouissance* in my analysis because they are variously contrasted with socially acceptable forms of pleasure.

Nonetheless, I feel that in concluding a project, it is best to turn off the lights and lock the door on the binaries I have invoked, to exorcise them lest they haunt my writing forever. This performance of closure reminds me that I only take up fraught binary oppositions in order to collapse them into a critical ambiguity. "Everything is fake," for example, because the language required to construct something as "real" fails to correspond adequately to its referent. I discuss writing from the margins to highlight a strategy of dialectically critiquing the normative discourses of an imagined center. Staking out a position as marginal enables an interrogation of how the marginal character is enunciated as a subject. That leads to the problem of the "self," which is complicated from multiple sides. A self may be constructed as coherent in relation to a completely separate Other or it may always be beset by drives that seek to disrupt its functioning as a subject. I deploy the binaries as contested forces within a field of

signification that underscores my position as a reader of texts: I want to engage the fictional representation of intoxication in texts of *jouissance*. Alas, it seems best to shutter *jouissance* at this point, too.

My fixation on the representation of intoxication to invoke *jouissance* is part of the nostalgia of this project, an attempt to retrieve a *meaningful jouissance* that I imagine is now lost. This boils down to a question of value, and this particular value judgment of mine decries that now only “pleasure” is available. Compared to *jouissance*, pleasure appears to be an inferior degree of sensation and drive.²³¹ Mere pleasure is inferior because — if I take the binary too seriously — it is complicit with the rules, with power and the status quo. Pleasure does not contest oppression or manipulation or the lie that being a subject is the same as being an individual. Pleasure does not foment revolution.

Still, there is no guarantee that what is at one time read as *jouissance* will not later be incorporated as pleasure, or that such a distinction necessarily reflects the diverse field of reading practice. The writer and reader each seek out a relationship circumscribed by language, and it is a gamble whether their coupling will be a good match. If they “cruise”²³² one another in the dark recesses of the library stacks, they may court danger but ultimately settle for the sure thing.

Pleasure sells and writers sell out. Intoxication becomes part of the status quo. Readers unite, adapt, fragment, overcome.

The first two texts I analyze in this study, as far as critical reception was concerned, did not elicit any revolutionary interpretations or even entice critics into complex readings. My interventions in TYP and GCC, in reading the trope of intoxication, aim to elevate their critical import where other validation appears lacking to me. These two texts push their readers to delve into ambiguities and contradictions at the ways in which

²³¹ Gallop highlights this with irony: “The timid, defensive egos, cautious in their bourgeois comfort, prefer *plaisir* and shun *jouissance*, but we brave, feminist, revolutionary, *avant-garde*...” (*Ibid.*, p. 114. Ellipsis in the original.)

²³² This is Barthes’s term. *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 4.

language is deployed to create subjects. They both end inconclusively, suggesting that the rubric needs further working out, and this makes for an unsatisfying read. The pleasure, deferred across the text, is never delivered.

The final two texts were much more successful, both critically and commercially. They managed to direct readings that invited discomfort — if only temporarily — among a broad readership. *Blue* and *Yapoo* make their transgressive pleasures legible as pleasure, as hedonistic fun and erotic ecstasy, and both do so focalized through coherent subjects. Their pleasures are individuated, experienced by masterful subjects, and gratuitously perverse. Because they don't pierce the tender skin of how the subject got his voice, they limit and bound their significance. They flirt with danger, but in the end prove to be safe.

Ambiguities resolved, bodies whole. By the time I put down the book, the drugs have left my system.

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