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Japanese literature as world literature: visceral engagement in the writings of Tawada Yoko and Shono Yoriko

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JAPANESE LITERATURE AS WORLD LITERATURE: VISCERAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE WRITINGS OF TAWADA YOKO AND SHONO YORIKO

by

Robin Leah Tierney

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Comparative Literature
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Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Maureen Robertson

ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that the writings of the contemporary Japanese writers Tawada Yoko (1960-) and Shono Yoriko (1956-) should be understood as literature that is commenting upon global processes and should therefore be categorized within the newly re-deployed category of "World Literature." In the first chapter I explore the political project of Shono Yoriko's fictional and polemical writings. Shono uses the *bundan* (literary establishment) as a platform for her critique of neo-liberal economic trends and launches a campaign that is both global in scope and *kyoku-shi* (hyper-personal) in tone. She counters universally applicable socio-economic trends with intensely personal myths and private vendettas against public intellectuals who deny the value of non-profit-grossing "serious" literature. In chapter two I perform a close reading of her 2004 novel *Kompira* as well as her *busu mono* (ugly tales). *Kompira*, I argue, is both a historical narrative of a particular kompira *kami* (deity) and the postulating of a system of resistance that involves hybridity and embodiment.

While Tawada Yoko is most often identified as a border-crossing, multi-lingual writer who publishes in both German and Japanese, in chapter three I argue that this "identity" threatens to eclipse the ways in which she investigates the bodily reception of language. My claim is that Tawada's interstitial explorations pose translation and bodily coding as inherent to language acquisition in general and suggests that all words carry their own libidinal imprint. In chapter four I argue that Tawada mines bodily processes for her representational strategies. In Tawada's texts the unraveling of national and masculine aesthetics forms a critical part of decoding the body as a fixed and gendered entity. When Tawada positions the male body as an object of tactile inquiry and explores the bodily-confusion-with-another inherent in the process of ovulation as a narrative drive, I see a re-working of corporeal and cognitive logics. This reworking, I contend, is

not a conclusive “righting of wrongs” but an invitation to join in the ongoing process of articulating difference in a potentially post-national world.

In exploring the oeuvre of both Shono and Tawada this dissertation begins to chart an emerging field of contemporary Japanese literature in which writers craft an imaginary that accounts for both global processes and one-off particular bodies.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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most and I have to say that I am deeply grateful for not having put on hold so many wonderful relationships and events. I owe thanks to my sister, Tracy, and my brother, Matthew, for playing with me throughout, and for sharing their growing families with me, and for (hopefully) understanding my constraints when they arose. My dear friends Maria R, Karen, MK, Lilly, and Rachel, have kept me grounded and adventurous, and in recognition of the so many different projects and paths to be pursued.

When I was a young girl of seven or eight my mother let me skip school and go with her to her university library in Bridgeport Connecticut. A year or two later, in Tokyo, I was able to trail after her and eat the many *mikan* always on the tables at the various venues where she pursued her Japanese studies. During junior high, now in Hong Kong, I mined her trove of books in the linen closet, hungry for big ideas found within. It is no understatement to say that I can not imagine how my own mind would work now if it had not been so intimately shaped by hers. In many ways I feel like a continuation of her dreams and energies, and in humble recognition that, because of the gifts she has given me, I will never make leaps as big as she has, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Carole Anne Tierney.

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INTRODUCTION

Vintage International's 2005 packaging of Kirino Natsuo's *OUT* exemplifies the reception trends of Japanese literature in the English-reading world. This tale of suspense and murder amidst night-shift workers at a lunch-box factory straddles the categories of horror and the wackily improbable that are popular with western audiences of Japanese fiction. But while the story itself, revolving around four female workers who, in coming to the aid of one of their own, inadvertently begin a trade in the disposal of dead bodies, is gory and rife with twisted social relations, the glossy and varied bookmarks that Vintage inserts into the books pay homage to an elegant and classical Japanese culture. In a spare style, single fans or individual tea cups are photographed and printed on luxuriously thick bookmarks and inserted in the pages of the English translation. The bizarre contrast between the grimness of the tale and the suggestive "zen" simplicity of the inserts is, to my mind, a telling indication of the parameters of the reception of Japanese literature in the English-speaking world. English readers are frequently encouraged to either revel in a particularly Japanese wackiness or to wax elegiac about a simultaneously beautiful and steely spiritual philosophy. And in the case of *OUT*, they seem to be encouraged to do both at the same time. Interestingly, while all three of Vintage International's English translations of Kirino's fiction - *OUT* (2005), *Grotesque* (2008), *The Real World* (2009)[1] - feature on their covers the partially occluded face of an Asian woman, not one of the Japanese versions of the novels has a female face on the

[1] The three books by Kirino Natsuo that Vintage International has published are *OUT*, trans. Steven Schnyder, New York: Vintage International, 2005, *Grotesque*, trans. Rebecca Copeland, New York: Vintage International, 2007, and *The Real World*, trans. Philip Gabriel, New York, Vintage International, 2009.

cover nor is there any thematic overlap in the contents of the Japanese covers of the three different novels. [2]

How did the actual expansion of offerings in Japanese fiction to include a contemporary and popular Japanese writer simultaneously lead to the reduction of her oeuvre to that which is represent-able by the alluring face of an Asian woman? My project here focuses on the works of two contemporary Japanese writers, Shono Yoriko (b. 1956) and Tawada Yoko (b. 1960), who explicitly work against the paths of least resistance in which the cultural consumption of another culture, in domestic or global terms, culminates in an erasure of difference rather than an expansion of sensibilities and logics. So while I am not looking explicitly at Kirino Natsuo's best-selling thrillers, the logic that conflates the creative work of a mature woman to one particular motif of feminine attractiveness is exemplary of the problematic I wish to trouble here. I place Shono and Tawada together because the fictional worlds they create are located outside of compulsorily- heterosexual, familial, and nationalist frameworks, and because they both write in a fantastic register that privileges the sensual and visceral experience of dominant structures of meaning and exchange. I am by no means the only one to place these two female writers of the same post-war generation in conversation with one another. Yonaha Keiko, one of the foremost critics of contemporary women's literature in Japan, positions Shono and Tawada together in her generalized schematic of contemporary women's literature. In Yonaha's tripartite schematization Tawada and Shono represent the third category which encompasses the first and second categories – writing that mixes high and popular culture, and writing that explicitly takes on feminist insights into gender and

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[2] The cover of the Japanese-language *OUT* published by Kodansha (1997), for example, features a picture of the bathtub in which the chopping up of bodies takes place, and the Japanese-language *Grotesque*, published by Bungeishunjū (2003) features stylized flora and fauna on its cover..

sexuality, respectively - and, also, seeks to generate a wholly new type of literary discourse and stimulate a new relationship to language. [3]

I would add to Yonaha's groupings two further defining characteristics of Tawada and Shono's writing; the indivisibility of cognitive thought and corporeal sensation, and a combative posture toward forces of homogenization. How, both writers constantly ask, do thinking and feeling reciprocally inform one another? The simultaneous deployment of cognitive and corporeal logics is a critical component of their individual projects of expressing difference in our globalizing era of neo-liberal economics and worldwide tourism. [4] The awareness of grander temporal and cultural machinations make the "worlds" of their texts open and interactive, and it is for this

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[3] Yonaha breaks contemporary women's literature into the following three categories; writing that mixes high and popular cultures exemplified by Yoshimoto Banana, writing that is motivated by feminist insights and addresses issues of gender and sexuality, of which Matsuura Rieko's works are a representative example, and thirdly, writing that includes the characteristics of the first two categories but also seeks to change literary discourse altogether and stimulate a different relationship to language. Tawada Yoko and Shono Yoriko are Yonaha's models for this last category. See Yonaha, Keiko, "Gendai sakka" [Contemporary Writers] in *Josei bungaku wo manabu hito no tame ni* [The Study of Women's Literature], Tokyo: Sekaishisōsha, 2000, 192-193.

In the literary magazine *Bungei* Shono and Tawada are placed in the same section of a schematic map of contemporary Japanese literature (*j-bungaku*) titled "Language Trance Zone" (*gengo toransu zon*) which is positioned on the "avant-garde" section of one axis, and towards the "Techno" end of another axis (the other ends of the axes being "pop" and "hard core," respectively), see *Tokushū: J-Bungaku '90-nendai bungaku mappu* [Special Issue: 1990s J-Literature Map], *Bungei Bessatsu* (August 1998): 41-42. Shono and Tawada are also grouped together under the heading "Battling Against Language" in a special issue of the journal *Kokubungaku* [National Literature], see *Josei sakka no genzai* [The Current Sate of Women Writers], Kan Reiko, ed, *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kansho bessatsu* (March 2004). They have also reviewed one another's work and have engaged in *taidan* (formalized literary discussions) with one another:, see Shono Yoriko and Tawada Yoko**,** "Shono Yoriko, Tawada Yoko,Taidan: Ten no ryū, daichi no hebi" [A Literary Discussion between Shono Yoriko and Tawada Yoko: Heavenly Dragons and Earthly Snakes]. *Bungei* 34.1 (February 1995): 140-160.

[4] Neo-liberalism can be defined as an economic policy initiated in the 1980's by Margaret Thatcher in the UK, and Ronald Reagan in the US, which supports global capital fluidity and is adverse to state support for cultural or economic activity, with the exception of support for a large military. Under reigning neo-liberal policies new signatories to GATT, for example, need to agree to work towards the elimination of free public libraries. See Bourdieu, Pierre. *Contre-feux 2: Pour un mouvement européen* [Counterfire: Towards a European Movement], Editions Raisons d'Agir, Paris; 2001, 72. More detailed discussion of neo-liberalism follows in chapter 1.

reason that I categorize their works as part of the re-invigorated genre of "World literature."[5] I argue that the works of both Shono Yoriko and Tawada Yoko offer a training ground for the imagination to perceive afresh multiple layers of temporal, conceptual and corporeal difference. Rather than cultural cachet for increasingly cosmopolitan consumers, I understand their writings to be world literature that is critiquing and commenting upon the processes of globalization.

Attunement to new sensibilities and differing logics requires an engagement that is ongoing and dynamic, and it is the embodied nature of thought at work in both Shono and Tawada's imaginaries that grounds their frameworks in structures of impermanence and change. The never-ending nature of Shono's "eternally treasonous spirit of embodiment" and the ceaseless full-bodied traveling of Tawada's perpetual "beginners" reflect their quest to remain open to endlessly new becomings. My argument is that without such training against tendencies to replace actual difference with the sedimenting repetition of self-referential fantasies, most of us, like Vintage, will do precisely that. Rather than a nefarious plot initiated by conspirators – which isn't to say it isn't sometimes just that - the erasure of difference is a process critical to human communication and interaction. For the bulk of our development as social beings, standardizing language and comportment is exactly the goal. The aporia, of course, is that that which is hugely productive of social and cultural exchange is at the very same time reductive and blinding. But intellectual critique, as Gayatri Spivak has articulated in regards to the process of deconstruction, is best leveled, not against some mishap that led us down the "wrong" path, but at that which has been vastly productive of our thought: "If I understand deconstruction, deconstruction is not exposure of an error, certainly not other people's error. The critique in deconstruction, the most serious critique in deconstruction, is the critique of something that is extremely useful, something without

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[5] I discuss the current calls for world literature more below.

which we can not do anything."[6] The myriad forces of globalization – and processes of nation consolidation - set in motion contradictory relations of exposing more people to farther flung cultures in the forms of travel destinations and cultural products, at the same time that the potential for that newness is, in many instances, enfolded into the target culture with little sense of difference. Ironically, the "local" may become less a counter to the homogeneity of globalization than a product of it.[7] As in the celebration and consumption of local cultures offered up in the "antenna" stores of various Japanese prefectures increasingly established in the high-end Tokyo shopping districts, greater variety of cultural products can fit seamlessly into dominant logics of production and consumption.[8] While this process is not new to our contemporary era – and has certainly been part of a much longer history of domestic tourisms, for example – "local" has become an even more widespread marketing term for a newly consumable commodity in the global commercial system. One of the conundrums presented by this seemingly circular logic is how to then actually represent a difference when the category of "different" and "unique" and "local" – or "wacky" in the case of Japanese literature –

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[6] Spivak, Gayatri, "In a Word. Interview with Ellen Rooney," *Differences* 1 (February 1989):136, quoted in Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* New York: Routledge, 1993, 27.

[7] For more on the local as an effect of the rise of global capital see David Harvey, *The Position of Post-Modernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Cambridge Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, 1989, and *Global/Local:Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, eds Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, Durham: Duke University Press, 1996, 5 and Arif Dirlik "The Global in the Local" in *The Decolonization of Imagination: Culture, Knowledge, Power*, eds Jan N. Pieterse and Bhikhu Parekh, London: Zed Books, 1995, 21-45.

[8] The vast majority of prefectural governments sponsor antennae shops, in Tokyo's high-end shopping districts of Ginza and Minami-Aoyama, that sell goods produced in their regions. A comprehensive list of the antennae shops can be found at"Jichitai Dotto com"[Prefectural Organizations dot com] http://www.jichitai.com/link/01_012.asp#OBJECT12(accessed November 11 2009).

are eagerly awaited by a process of consumption that seems remarkably impervious to cultural difference regardless of the content it consumes.

For Shono and Tawada the way out of that circular logic is grounded in the experience of their individual body. Always one-off and unique, the body perceives that which is new and not-able-to-be-immediately-assimilated. Driving their distinct but overlapping literary projects is the desire to convey an as-of-yet imperceptible experience of bodily-thought and the impulse to wield this newly-wrought capability. Their praxis involves hovering over the movements between sensation and thought -- the liminal spaces in which Luce Irigaray defines "mucous" as "the unthought moving towards representation."[9] Posing the body as the point where thinking and feeling are intertwined, and where universal principles and individual experiences converge, Shono and Tawada craft images which stimulate an imaginary rich with multiple value-systems and varied sensibilities. The ability to constantly recalibrate bodily receptors of abstractions is a process that Shono strives for with her ocean dwelling deity-narrator who traverses cultures and centuries to morph into a 20th century consumer of religious tablets in her 2006 epic *Kompira*.[10] It is also the process at work in Tawada's manifesto-like *Moji Ishoku* [Transplanted Letters],[11] a fantastic account of the bodily experience of linguistic translation. Whether it is in opposition to the neo-liberal positioning of the market-place as the sole arbiter of value, as in the case of Shono, or in regard to the extra-lingual support fixing the coherence of a "national" language in place, as in the case of Tawada, the body is imagined as that which can apprehend multiple ways of materializing the world. Defined as the flux between our cognitive and corporeal selves,

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[9] Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, 64.

[10] Shono Yoriko, *Kompira* [Kompira], Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2004.

[11] Tawada, Yoko, *Moji Ishoku* [Transplanted Letters], Tokyo: Kawade bunko, 1999.

rather than the mass of our physical beings, "the body" is strikingly local at the same time that it is comprised of forms and involuntary functions that are universally shared. This transpersonal nature of having a body -- the fact that possessing an individual body is something we all share -- means that bodily experience takes place in the body but is not fully contained by any one body.[12]

The transversal schematics employed in Shono and Tawada's writings -- translational, transnational, transpersonal, and as we shall see, trans-sensory and transgender-ed -- heighten sensibilities of physical connections by insisting upon the possibility of movement. The kinetic energy and intersecting corporeal and cognitive logics at work in Tawada's "travels away from a mother tongue" and Shono's "hyper-personal myths" traverse the currents of public foundational myths and singular private experience. The hope is for a grasp of far-reaching machinations that loses none of its individual specificity -- a contradictory combination that defines Shono's peculiar notion of literature as "that largeness that spreads from my small self."[13] It is this impulse that the French literary critic Bernard Banoun comments upon when he writes that Tawada remarkably eludes the trap between "the hazy horizons of globalization" and "the siren calls of a withdrawal into identity."[14]

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[12] As the alligator-shaped deity in Shono's *Kompira* (2004) emerges from the swirling waters off Yokaichi after centuries at the bottom of the ocean, she reflects upon this transpersonal experience of having a specific body: "I didn't yet have a nose, but I had a head, and though my eyes were covered in some sort of membrane I could see clearly…There I was, nameless and placeless, anything I did was like a universal act that could be done by anyone. But I was in this specific flesh, this individual me," Shono, *Kompira*, 13. The physical transformation Kompira undergoes is like that of a birth where universal and involuntary biological processes produce a specific being.

[13] Shono, Yoriko, "Interview: Shono Yoriko" [Interview: Shono Yoriko], *Ronza* 157 (June 2008), 184.

[14] Banoun, Bernard, "Words and Roots: The Loss of the Familiar in the Works of Yoko Tawada," in *Tawada Yoko: Voices from Everywhere*, Doug Slaymaker, ed., Lanham, Lexington Books, 2007, 133.

At the nexus of this project, then, are the overlapping sets of relations between globalization and multiple systems of value, between the psychical representation of the body and our apprehension of the material world, and between gender and corporeality. I do not take it as a coincidence that the alluring images repeatedly employed by Vintage were those of a female face. Indeed, this is an exemplary case of representing the "other" --in terms of both culture and gender-- as the other of the "same" rather than representing genuine difference. If one accepts the not particularly controversial claim that "man" is the privileged referent of subjectivity -- the standard bearer of the universal third person pronoun and the basic model for "unisex" clothing -- then it follows that the imaginary stemming from such a point of departure struggles to represent "woman." One strategy that feminist theorists have employed for exiting such a system is to repossess and work through the images and representations that have been created of "woman as other" such as they have been coded and internalized in the mind, body, and lived experience of women.[15] This is the strategy that Shono employs when she relentlessly invokes the image of her own self-described "mealy" and "ugly" face in her *busu-mono* -- "ugly tales." Vintage chooses attractive faces, and Shono hones in on ugly ones. Shono, however, is still working here with the "other of the same," because the logic that allows "ugly" to come into sight and accrue meaning remains the same as that which produces the attractive faces on the covers, namely the way that the spectrum of attractiveness is so important for the valuation of women. "Attractive" and "unattractive," therefore, are not in a relation of genuine difference to one another, but exist, rather, as the "other of the same."

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[15] This particular type of mimetic strategy is employed by theorists such as Luce Irigiray and Judith Butler, for example in whose works intentional repetition often functions as a burrowing that creates potential exits from given structures of thought. It is also a concept at work in Slavoj Žižek's practice of "going through the fantasy" which involves taking an idea so literally that its impossibility is clarified. See Irigaray, Luce, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Trans. Gillian C. Gill, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985, Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990, and Žižek, Slavoj, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London: Verso, 1989, respectively.

Corporeal and Cognitive Logics

Forces of homogenization, such as the extension of neo-liberal economics and of World English, often make other ways of imagining the world difficult. Shono and Tawada both generate modes of contestation in which corporeal and cognitive logics are recognized as mutually constitutive. If difference, or the newly thought, emerges from experience of the barely-perceptible in which thinking and feeling are not yet differentiated, then bodies are necessarily involved in such a contest. [16] Shono's battles against the dominance of commercial literature, economic liberalization, and state-sponsored religion[17] are all anti-totalitarian in nature; their goal is to allow for a multiplicity of value-systems. She counters these overweening regimes with her own sensate and self-defined "ugly" body, and suggests a homology between the "quarrelsome and mealy ugly-woman writer"[18] and that which is excised by the market-place, the marriage system, and the nation-building project. But such a rational metaphor alone does not account for the shame and irrational responses evoked by feeling one's own ugliness. Cutting through the digestible abstraction of "ugliness" as a concept,

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[16] Here I am using Tasmin Lorraine's definitions of "corporeal logics" and "conceptual logics" as "the background processes informing the perceptual awareness" of traditionally irrational processes (mood, intuitive "gut" feelings, and emotions) and traditionally rational processes. As Lorraine explains, "referring to both sides of the mind/body dualism in terms of a logic underlines the socially situated nature of such logics and the insight that "natural" bodies are as informed by social processes as are minds." Her emphasis on the "background processes informing perceptual awareness" underscores a connection between conscious thought and the still inarticulate elements that shape embodied experience. See Tasmin Lorraine, *Irigaray and Deleuze: Experiments in Visceral Philosophy*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999, 6-8.

[17] The development of State Shinto was initiated by the young Meiji State (1868-1912) in order to increase centralization and government control of the plural indigenous religious practices (collectively termed "shinto"), and to celebrate a pure ethnicity by excising the "foreign" import of Buddhism. More discussion of State Shinto and *shinbutsu-bunri* --the separation of Shinto and Buddhism-- follows in Chapter 3.

[18] Shono, Yoriko, "Koko nankai-sugi karuku nagashite ne busu no isakai onna yo" [Just Ignore this Ugly too-Difficult-to-Read Quarrelsome Woman Writer], *Gunzō* (July 1999): 104-133.

Shono allowed a photo of herself with the words "an ugly Akutagawa-prize winning writer" super-imposed over it to appear in Kawade shobō's marketing campaign for her books.[19] The socially unacceptable term "ugly" traverses corporeal and cognitive logics and touches upon aspects of her lived experience that can not be fully accounted for in social constructivist terms.

At the epicenter of Shono's imaginary process is the ceaselessly changing physical body. On the pages of *Gendaishiso*'s [*Contemporary Thought*] 2007 special issue "Shono Yoriko: Neoriberarizumu wo koeru sōzōryoku" [Shono Yoriko: The Imagination to Overcome Neo-Liberalism][20] the modern Japanese literature scholar Sato Izumi describes Shono's "Kompira Process" in the following manner: "You stand still while the confounding power relations whirl around. You resist the correctness that makes things invisible and explode against the formula that ignores details."[21]

While Tawada adopts an almost surrealist tone of waking wonder which may initially appear far less combative than Shono's, it is through an equally embodied process that her narrators seek a way out of over-determining representational codes. Entering the gaps that are exposed when different languages and their privileged sensibilities are brought into contact with one another becomes a full-bodied affair of experiencing difference: "I don't want to cross the ditch that exists between languages," Tawada proclaims, "I want to live there." [22] Tawada's linguistic expeditions are

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[19] From the literary histories of the beautiful ninth century poetess Ono no Komachi, to the presentation of literary beauties in the pre-war literary journal *Bungei kurabu*, to the literary scholar Hirano Ken's musings about whether or not the post-war writer Kurahashi Yumiko was good-looking, the notion that Japanese women writers are also beauties has a long history.

[20] "Tokushū Shono Yoriko: neoriberarizumu wo koeru sōzōryoku" [Special Edition Shono Yoriko: The Imagination to Overcome Neo-Lliberalism], *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007).

[21] Sato Izumi, "Shisha wa "Kawari ni omoidashite kudasai" to yobikaketa" [The Dead Called Out, "Please Think of us for a Change"], *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007), 117.

[22] Tawada, Yoko, "Oitachi to iu kyokō" [This Fiction Called 'Childhood'], *Bungakukai* 47 (March 1993), 32.

physical journeys that, in traversing differently developed sensual attunements, move across languages and media and press texts and bodies very tightly together. Her translating narrators suffer from skin allergies when their most external organ registers the threat against its established conduits of abstract concepts and sensitive matter -- a process that I understand to be the reorganization of a bodily map. In Tawada's fiction, in which narratives are compulsively drawn to borders and margins, the space of becoming is always "one of dynamic marginality."[23] I coin the term "orificial" to imbue words with a libidinal poetics that emphasizes their membership in multiple economies of perception and their participation in a necessarily contingent embodied process. Possessing a simultaneously corporeal and abstract valence, "orificial" refers to both bodily openings and potentials for re-mappings, and to the "ditches" between different systems of meaning. I read Tawada's narratives as explorations of how cutting across language involves a sensual and tactile encounter with words, as well an engagement with the coding of bodies that she finds embedded therein.

Bodily Images: Shaping Bodies and Minds

The figural scenes that both Tawada and Shono craft possess a charge in the body that invites simultaneously visceral and intellectual responses. Building off of Elizabeth Grosz' definition of the body as a kind of peculiar object that resists the binary of a psychical interior and a corporeal exterior, and is characterized by an "uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside," [24] I argue, that Tawada and Shono's images participate in developing language that grasps the visceral nature of thought that emerges from such an understanding of a body. Grosz's call for

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[23] Braidotti, Rosi, *Nomadic Subject : Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, 72.

[24] Grosz, Elizabeth, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, 21.

representational apparatus that moves beyond the mind-body dualism in which the mind is generally viewed as translating the body (rather than the body also informing the "mind") has not gone unheeded. The titles of important works in western feminist philosophy in the past two decades reveal the ongoing project of articulating "embodied subjectivity" and "psychical corporeality":[25] Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Elizabeth Grosz' *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (1994), Donn Welton's edited volume *Bodies and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader* (1996), and Tasmin Lorraine's *Irigaray and Deleuze: Notes on a Visceral Philosophy* (1999). Each of these texts interrogates the clear distinction between a non-material inside and a purely material outside. In particular, it is the ways these texts interrogate how the representational economies employed within language produce such a binary that is the focus of my investigation here. A major influence on the scholarship noted above is the work of Luce Irigaray, and her emphasis on the ways in which a specular economy -- a mode of conceptualizing that privileges the sense of sight -- is operative in language.[26] While touch, for example, always involves both touching and being touched, Irigaray argues that a logical economy based on sight fosters a strong break between self and other and obfuscates inter-subjective experience. In particular, Irigaray asserts, a specular economy fails to account for the experience of bodily confusion with another. Resulting, partly, from this heightened sense of self-sufficiency, the specular economy does not facilitate touching up against genuine difference. The other of the masculinist specular economy, Irigaray repeats, is not the "feminine" but rather the "other" of the "same." While

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[25] Ibid., 22.

[26] It is not so much the simple sense of sight that Irigaray critiques as much as its privileged position in western meta-physics. For commentary that redeems the sense of sight and still maintains Irigaray's contributions see Martin Jay's discussion of various "scopic regimes" in *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in 20th century French Thought*, Berkeley: University of California Press Berkeley, 1993, or Donna Haraway's "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" in *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (Fall 1988), 579-599.

Irigaray's gendering of the economies and her focus on two clear and distinct male and female anatomies has generated considerable criticism of her "essentialism," I share Jane Gallop's understanding of Irigaray's essentialism as a form of linguistic impropriety[27] and Rosi Braidotti's definition of Irigaray's "feminine" as "displaced schemas" that are not-yet perceptible.[28] As Tasmin Lorraine explains, one such displaced schema that Irigaray's "feminine" invokes is a structure of subjectivity that is informed by our corporeal limits.[29] Sexual difference is a productive difference to focus upon in developing notions of embodied subjectivity, not because it is the sole organizing difference, but because it is a clear example of how we deny corporeal limits when it comes to an understanding of universal subjectivity. In Butler's self-admittedly speculative title essay to her 1993 book *Bodies that Matter* she explores the sex of materiality, as opposed to the materiality of sex, and invokes Irigaray's analysis of how female reproductive processes are stripped of their potential for shaping representational practices.[30] Playing off the nuances of "matter," as both that which matters to us, and that which is, purportedly, irreducibly material, Butler suggests that the processes by which our realities are materialized follow a masculinist logic. Butler's reading of Irigaray frames our bodies as rich sites of potential for various logics and sensibilities that shape our language and materialize our worlds. As I argue below in my readings of Tawada's narratives, for example, bodily confusion with an "other" in the involuntary processes of ovulation and reproduction, bear the potential to figure far larger in the way

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[27] Gallop, Jane, *Thinking Through the Body*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, 91.

[28] Braidotti, Rosi, "Becoming Woman: Or Sexual Difference Revisited," *Theory, Culture, Society* 20.3 (2003): 43-64.

[29] Lorraine, 220.

[30] Butler, Judith, "Bodies that Matter," in *Bodies that Matter : on the discursive limits of "sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993

people of all sexes imagine inter-subjective relations. Why, for example, hold a seemingly independent womb as the pinnacle of creation as opposed to the necessary dynamism and difference of conception or the bodily confusion of the umbilical cord? The potential that sensate experience holds for shaping our processes of representation and our understanding of what constitutes thought is not relegated solely to that which is specific to a given sex Emphasizing connections between processes of representation and the "lived body," Grosz contends that "any adequate model must include a psychical representation of the subject's lived body as well as of the relations between body gestures, posture, and movement in the constitution of the processes of psychical representations."[31]

Much current scholarship on Irigaray's philosophic interventions, Grosz's included, engages with the work of Gilles Deleuze and his figurations for new becomings and non-linear subject positions. Distinct from the conventional "figure" or "figurative," figurations, and the figural, are images constructed to produce sensation rather than to represent a concept. Deleuze's notion of the figural is largely influenced by his reading of Francis Bacon and Bacon's efforts to capture a sense of movement in painting. Bacon's art is always about the body, Deleuze finds, not because of the manifest content, because the body is where its reception plays out. The figurations that Deleuze generates - rhizomes, becomings, lines of escape, flows, nomads, relays and bodies-without-organs (bwos) – strive to express active states of being and present the body as a site of transient inscription or a zone of temporary intensity. Notions of pre-oedipal wholeness do not hold immanent meaning in place. Rosi Braidotti defines Deleuze's figurations as "a living map, a transformative account of the self…that attempt to draw a cartography of the power relations defining its respective positions." [32] The thinking of Irigaray and

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[31] Grosz, 21.

[32] Braidotti, "Becoming Woman," 60.

Delueze converge significantly, Braidotti claims, in that they both "agree that the very condition of possibility for a separation of the symbolic from the material (the inflated, universalistic posture that flies into abstraction and leaves the embodied subject gasping for air) --the sheer thinkability of this separation -- is the mark of the patriarchal cash-nexus of power."[33] Operating from the understanding that the material and the symbolic are mutually imbricated, both Deleuze and Irigaray use language and figurations to actively shape and trigger, rather than reflect, felt experience. For both these thinkers the ineffable unrepresentability of bodily experience provides a fecund limit -- a parameter with vast powers to shape "consciousness" -- that bumps up against a beyond in which thinking and feeling are not separated out and codified. Tasmin identifies a parallel between Irigaray's "sensible transcendental" -- which is immanent to all sensuous experience but elusive of determinate forms -- and the "imperceptible" of Deleuze's nomadic subject in which new becomings occur below thresholds of the perceivable and conceivable.[34] Crafting their language to draw attention to the fringes of awareness that elude determinate forms of representation, Deleuze and Irigaray interrogate the grounds of representational possibility where, perhaps, the terms of many debates are established. Deleuze's central figurations of becoming-minority, or becoming-molecular, consistently gestures towards the singular and the particular that are not encompassed in (and may be "incompossible" to) conventional modes of representation.[35] The images of thinking that Deleuze and Irigaray shape encourage fresh influx of non-representable material[36] -- a receptivity to newness that does not dictate the forms or meanings that newness takes.

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[33] *Ibid*., 61.

[34] Lorraine, 11.

[35] Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix, *A Thousand Plateau : Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, London: Athlone Press, 1987.

[36] Lorraine, 228.

I place Tawada and Shono's newly wrought images and language in lineage with this project of representing the not-yet-represented. The figuration of a thrashing subject "exploding against the formula that ignores details," trying to stay its course "as the confounding power relations whirl around," which Sato locates in Shono's writing, is one of a subject striving to be in its own difference. Shono's narrators yearn for oxymoronic "personal myths" and "family gods with no collectivity." She wants, that is, to wield the grand power to symbolize and shape relations without the obligation to generalize and accommodate the material and psychic needs of more than one being at one particular moment in time. Tawada's rarely named and frequently beginner-protagonists roam the hinterlands of their perceptive capacities in attempts to recruit corporeal logics into their modes of representation. In *Museiran* [The Unfertilized Egg, 2005], for example, Tawada invokes ovulation as a representative trope when her writer-narrator watches a bus pull away and senses something in movement away from herself that is simultaneously part of her and not part of her.[37] Practicing "exophany," which she defines as "traveling away from the mother tongue," Tawada travels to more than twenty cities around the world, and intentionally hovers on the margins of awareness as she sensually experiences languages that she does not at all comprehend.[38] Her stories feature cyborg-printers that only work along national borders,[39] narrators traveling in tunnels that connect two linguistic regions,[40] dragons encountering the moment of their

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[37] Tawada, Yoko, *Museiran* [The Unfertilized Egg], in *Gottoharuto no tetsudō*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005, 126.

[38] Tawada, Yoko, *Ekusofuoni: bogo no soto e deru tabi* [Exophany:The Travels of Leaving a Mother Tongue], Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2003.

[39] Tawada, Yoko, *Hikari to zerachin no raipuchihhi* [The Leipzig of Gelatin and Light 2000], Tokyo: Kodansha, 2000.

[40] Tawada,"Gottuharuto tetsudō."

representational extinction,[41] girls about to menstruate,[42] and women who experience parts of themselves leaving and becoming other.[43] The brink of change -- be it biological change, the change of symbolic economies, or the change of national and linguistic systems -- is where Tawada finds phenomena-in-the-world to be best discerned but barely able to be represented.

Imagining, Reasoning and Imaging

> "The human body is the best picture of the soul."
> -Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Philosophical Investigations*

Fantasy, the Lacanian-indebted critical theorist Slavoj Žižek, asserts, is the screen upon which we project reality. The screen itself, he posits, is what protects us from a chaotic "Real" in which things do not make sense and there is no answer to such questions as why living creatures have finite lives or why we may be the only human-species. In Žižek's equation fantasy is on the side of reality.[44] Though this may initially appear counter-intuitive, most of us would readily agree that imagination is a necessary component of basic thought. If, as Žižek asserts, all we ever see are partial objects then we must fill in the rest with our assumptions, projections, and fantasies. Without imagining connections and extrapolating similarities, without, that is, fantasy-bytes,

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[41] Tawada, *Moji ishoku.*

[42] Tawada, Yoko, *Seijo densetsu* [Tales of a Holy Girl], Tokyo: Ōda Shuppan, 1996.

[43] Tawada, *Museiran,* 126.

[44] The loss of a firm ontological foundation that may seem like a nightmarish universe is not fantasy for Žižek, but, on the contrary, "*that which remains of reality after reality has been deprived of its support in fantasy*." See Žižek, Slavoj**,** ***The Plague of Fantasies*****,** London: Verso, 1997, 66 italics in original. This is a point that Žižek repeats elsewhere: "…if what we experience as 'reality' is structured by fantasy, and if fantasy serves as the screen that protects us from being directly overwhelmed by the raw Real, then reality itself can function as an escape from encountering the Real. In the opposition between dream and reality, fantasy is at the side of reality, and it is in dreams that we encounter the traumatic Real, see Žižek, Slavoj, *How to Read Lacan*, "Lacan with Eyes Wide Shut,"http://www.lacan.com/zizihowto.html.

thought would certainly not take us very far. Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous and pithy statement that "the human body is the best picture of the soul"[45] asks that we employ powers of imagination to discern our human selves. Wittgenstein's statement also implies that our human selves are best discerned through bodily images.[46] The human body itself, however, has proven to be a slippery and hazy object. The picturing of the body is a project that is never fully disassociated from faculties of imagination. Historical analyses of scientific texts and anatomical drawings, as well as contemporary imaging processes, illustrate how even basic physical depictions of the human body are imbued with cultural values and preconceptions.

Studying the bodily images that science produces has proven to be an effective way of grasping the excess of meaning that is attributed to anatomical observations. In *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* Thomas Laqueur examines European scientific texts and drawings of male and female genitals and traces the ways that culture is always present in representations of the human body.[47] Laqueur outlines the shift from the one-sex model of human anatomy -- when woman was understood to be a lesser variant of man -- to the two sex model where qualitative differences between two sexes were established. While the one-sex model was dominant the vagina was viewed as an interior penis, the womb as a scrotum, and the ovaries as testicles. These understandings were reflected in anatomical drawings that emphasized the correlation

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[45] Wittigenstein, Ludwig**,** ***Philosophical Investigations : The German Text, with a revised English translation*****,*** Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2001, 178.

[46] Interestingly, recent neuroscience research has located empathy in the part of the cereberal cortex (f5) that responds to bodily movement. Extrapolating from our own bodily movement, the theory goes, we infer the machinations of other subjects. Therefore the schematic understanding we have of our bodies, and how and why it moves, is integral to our social interactions. See Metzinger, Thomas, *The Ego Tunnel : the science of the mind and the myth of the self*, New York, NY: Basic Books, 2009.

[47] Laqueur, Thomas, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

between the respective sexual organs. When the two-sex model arose, unevenly, in 18th century Europe, male and female were then seen as two distinct sexes with incommensurable organs, functions and sensations – and non-correlative names, such as the vagina, were formulated. Laqueur makes sure to emphasize that the paradigm shift does not reflect a shedding of "cultural blinders" as much as a changing of the blinders: "Two incommensurable sexes were, and still are, as much a product of culture as was, and is, the one-sex model."[48] "Almost everything one wants to say about sex -- however sex is understood -- already has in it a claim about gender," Laqueur concludes.[49]

Maureen McNeil observes, in her study *Feminist Cultural Studies of Science and Technology*, that the increasing importance of visualizing technologies in the field of medicine and science practice has made these visualizing practices the objects of study in feminist science cultural studies.[50] In her study of 19th century skeletal drawings Londa Schiebinger found the contemporaneous cultural investment in women's child-rearing capacities and women's lower intelligence present in the very wide pelvises and relatively small skulls depicted in the drawings. [51] Investigating contemporary medical visualizing practices, Karen Barad points to the "high status accorded to the visual in our

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[48] *Ibid*., 154.

[49] *Ibid*., 12.

[50] Maureen McNeil, *Feminist Cultural Studies of Science and Technology*, London: Routledge, 2007, 18..

[51] Schiebinger, Londa, "Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustrations of the Female Skeleton in the 19th century Anatomy," *Representations* 14 (1986), 42-83. In a later work, *Nature's Body* (1993), Schiebinger details how contemporary mores about sexuality shaped the schematization within botany as well as the history of how the category "mammal" was established after the botanist Linneas' first attempt to group human beings with other 4-legged animals (he presented arms as a type of leg) was shot down, and during a period in which his wife had been breastfeeding for years without cease.

epistemological economy" as one reason for the powerful effect of the fetal ultrasound.[52] Ultrasound technology, Barad explains, involves a process that actively creates what is seen by vibrating piezoelectric crystals and figuring the produced waves onto a screen. Textbooks on reading ultrasounds make explicit the degree of ad-hoc accommodation the technician must be able to make and the high incidence of inaccurate readings by even trained professionals. In selecting what parts of the pregnant woman's body to vibrate, and then further adjusting the outcome to best meet the expected images, ultrasonography involves more than taking an unmotivated snapshot. Ultrasound fetal imaging has been developed in such a way that occludes any indication of the necessary connection to the pregnant woman, her uterus and her physical and emotional state. The "technomaternal" environment that the pregnant woman is often placed in, Barad writes, has led at least one women to say that, when all the medical professionals entering her room turned their eyes immediately to the ultrasound screen, she felt like the machine was going to give birth, not her.

The ability to grasp unique physical objects without recourse to abstractions, as in the idea that the fetus is a fully individuated subject in Barad's account above, does not really seem possible. Our faculties of imagination will always be part of the project of seeking unmediated apprehension of bodily sensation. The growing fields of feminist science studies, and feminist science cultural studies, engage precisely with the schematics of human perception and the relations of physical phenomena. At the cross-section between cultural studies' imperative to understand the creation of meaning in everyday life and feminist science studies imperative to identify the narratives and practices shaping our knowledge of the natural world, feminist science cultural studies produces a powerful interrogation of the ways in which our bodily experience is

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[52] Barad, Karen, "Getting Real: technoscientific practices and the materialization of reality,"*Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10.2 (1998), 32.

mediated. Growing criticism that the discursive focus of feminist theory throughout the past two decades -- the "linguistic turn" exemplified best, perhaps, by Irigaray and Butler -- relegates the material body to a site for discursive inscription and cultural fabrication even when "the body" is putatively the topic at hand, has increasingly led contemporary feminist scholars to search for paradigms that overcome an opposition between felt experience and social constructivism. McNeil contends that feminist philosophers of the body have been uncomfortable referencing the actual biological body as though fearful of what might be found there. [53] Karen Barad argues that Butler's theories, while invaluable and productive in many ways, re-inscribe matter as a passive product of discursive practices by failing to account for how "matter comes to matter." [54] Theorists in these fields are locating agency – though not subjectivity - in the material, and the non-human, world.[55]

Despite dissatisfaction with scholarship that seemingly relegates the body to a passive site -- a mirroring of the mind/body hierarchy that it had been striving to overturn -- current materialist-feminist theories remain indebted to the postmodern discursive

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[53] McNeil, 18.

[54] Barad, "Getting Real," 22. For an introduction to Karen Barad's influential framework of "agential-realism" in which agency is always located in relation, as opposed to belonging to an object, and objective reality is not dismissed out of hand, see Barad, Karen "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," in *Material Feminisms,* Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008, 120-156.

[55] Hekman, Susan, "Constructing the Ballast," in *Material Feminisms***,** 92. Rigorous engagement with science as well as the recognition of the ways that matter "talks back" and informs potential discursive-material relations are significant tenets of this approach. The introduction to the 2008 edited anthology *Material Feminisms* provides a clear overview of the paradigmatic shift away from a feminist corporeal theory that privileges the discursive and socially constructed over lived experience and biological investigation. The introduction opens by stating that the purpose of the collection "is to bring the material, specifically the materiality of the human body and the natural world, into the forefront of feminist theory and practice" (1). For more on the turn to include scientific knowledge and materiality see also *Bits of life: feminism at the intersections of media, bioscience, and technology*, Nina Lykke and Anneke Smelik, eds., Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008.

emphasis and do not disparage the gains and possibilities created by the ground-breaking work of theorists such as Judith Butler. Barad, a theoretical physicist who is possibly the most frequently referenced proponent of the newly invigorated materialist-feminist theory, proposes a framework in which echoes can be heard of Irigaray and Deleuze's shared desire for an openness to difference that does not dictate what form that difference will take: "I propose an understanding of reality that both accounts for the exclusions upon which it depends and its openness towards reworkings, I call this ontology agential-realism."[56]

That Barad's ground-breaking article, "Getting Real: Technoscientific Practices and the Materialization of Reality" (1998) had to do with fetal imaging underscores just how significant images, and in particular images of the human body, are to both our apprehension and constitution of material reality. Ultrasounds craft an image that then retroactively accrues social value and agency to the fetus. The deployment of this technology in this particular way assumes an individuated fetus, and the images then strengthen that assumption (as the common practice of placing ultrasound images in baby photo albums well illustrates). The role of the imagination and collective cultural imaginaries are not dethroned in the turn away from discursive-intensive theorizing, rather its "intra-actions" with material phenomena is more rigorously explored. [57]

Playing off of the shared meaning of "an involuntary orienting response" at work in both the literary term "trope" and the scientific term "tropism" the feminist science studies theorist Donna Haraway also sees narrative as inherent to materiality: "In no way is story-telling opposed to materiality," she writes, "but materiality itself is tropic; it

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[56] Barad, "Getting Real," 18.

[57] Barad uses the term "intra-action" rather than "interaction" to emphasize the ways in which objects come to be in relations, as opposed to previously existing as whole entities that then interact with one another. Her work also refuses a full distinction between discursivity and materiality, a refusal that is evidenced in her term "material-discursive."

makes us swerve, it trips us; it is a knot of the textual, technical, mythic/oneiric, organic, political, and economic." [58] Harraway notes the historic designation of tropes as verses interpolated into liturgical texts to embellish and amplify their meaning, and contends that "nature has liturgical possibilities; its metaphoricity is inescapable."[59] Not only, then, might materiality and discursivity be mutually constitutive, as theories that privilege discourse would also have it, but human subjects are likely not the only agents.

If it seems I have wandered far afield from contemporary Japanese literature I would like to argue, that indeed I have not. Accepting the metaphoricity of the world-with-us-in-it entails developing faculties of imagination and image-making. The dynamism of our worlds, and our bodies-in-the world, requires that we cultivate skills of envisioning difference. Haraway and Tawada sound remarkably similar in their quest for imaging difference; Haraway describes her favored optical metaphor of diffraction as "the complexly erotic practice of making a difference in the world as opposed to displacing the same elsewhere," [60] while Tawada writes of ripping the masks off of words so as to witness the wound created by the clash between the image of the word and the purposes for which she employs it.[61] Both figure becoming anew in terms with a sense of eros and movement. They also possess a similar skepticism towards the type of scientific realism in which nature and society are "really" foundationally there; Tawada's narrators are routinely suspect of physicians whose over-confidence belies their own lurid

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[58] Harraway, Donna,"A Game of Cat's Cradle: Science Studies, Feminist Theory, Cultural Studies, *Configurations* 2.1 (1994), 63.

[59] *Ibid*., 60.

[60] Male internists with ulterior motives behind their "objective" examination of female bodies appear, for example, in *The Unfertilized Egg*, *Transplanted Letters*, and *Tales of a Holy Girl*.

[61] Tawada Yoko, "Chōkaku to shikaku no dobu wo nozoku – rōdoku to dansu no kyōen" [Peeking into the Gutter between Listening and Seeing], *Dansu Magajin* (March) 1993.

fantasies and Haraway states that establishing the categorical purity of nature and society is a "conjuring trick" and "quite totalitarian." [62]

While Tawada creates a playful tone and a slightly off-kilter disarming critique, Shono employs a more caustic register and relentlessly produces a critique that directly engages with the social and financial machinations of the world around her. The imagining of bodies, however, is integral to her critical polemics, regardless of the topic of the intellectual task at hand. The process of "rendering visible that which has been made invisible" that she initiates in her 2004 epic, *Kompira*, is one in which a trans-gendered, trans-species narrator follows foundational myths to find the bodies deformed by them -- from the leech child produced by the assertion of female sexual agency in the opening to the *Record of Ancient Matters*, [63] to the "ugly" women deemed unworthy by the modern marriage system. Even when undertaking such a seemingly non-bodily-interested endeavor as launching a campaign in support of serious literature, Shono invokes bodily images; she names her campaign the "Don Quixote debate," explaining that she, too, is a small town player in a big field, acts upon reckless passion, and, is "fat."

Scholarship of the Body in Modern Japanese Literature

During the past two decades interest in the body in Japanese literature in English-language scholarship has been strong. In *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Woman's Writing* (1996) Paul Schalow and Janet Walker gathered together

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[62] Harraway, 66.

[63] In the early eighth century *Kojiki* [The Chronicle of Ancient Records] Izanami and Izanagi, the founding couple of Japan, produce a deformed leech child because the female god initiated sexual contact. They agree to start over and it is from the ensuing male-initiated sexual encounters that the deities of Japan are born. The coupling of an older woman and a diminutive, younger male, mirroring the relationship between Izanami and her leech child, Hiruko, is the dominant romantic model of Shono's imaginary, and another example of re-possessing images which depict "woman-as- other" mentioned earlier in this introduction.

scholarship that was in the process of redressing the gender imbalance in the North American research and translation of Japanese literature. The dual purposes of the anthology were to inquire into the question of how gender and literary practice in Japan would, cross-culturally, contribute to redefining old notions of gender, and to suggest how theories derived primarily from western discursive practice could be fruitfully applied to a discussion of the linkages between gender and writing in Japan.[64] The second section of the anthology, "Narrating the Body," features critical essays on three post-war writers - Enchi Fumiko, Kanai Mieko and Takahashi Takako - in which the writers are shown to foreground their visceral moods and desires and to employ fantasy as a means of clarifying existing gender relations. *The Woman's Hand* both announced a new direction in Japanese literary studies in North America that had been underway, and encouraged the proliferation of interests in female authors and feminist criticism that is ongoing through today. Single-author monographs and dissertations on proletarian, or lumpen proletarian, writers have foregrounded corporeal issues; as in Joan Eriscon's work on Hayahis Fumiko and Linda Flores research on Hirabayashi Taeko.[65] Both Gretchen Jones, in her writing on masochism in Kono Taeko's fiction,[66] and Julia Bullock, in her study of images of woman-on-woman violence in Takahashi Takako's stories,[67] have explored the ways in which bodies are recruited to enact socio-economic dynamics. Scholarship on women writers has continued to expand and diversify into new

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[64] *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Woman's Writing*, Paul Schalow and Janet Walker, eds, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, 3.

[65] Flores, Linda Marie. *Writing the Body: Maternal Subjectivity in the Works of Hirabayashi Taiko, Enchi Fumiko, and Oba Minako*. unpublished Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles 2005, and Ericson, Joan, *Be a Woman: Hayashi Fumiko and Modern Japanese Women's Literature*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997.

[66] Jones, Gretchen, "Subversive Strategies: Masochism, Gender and Power in Kono Taeko's *Toddler Hunting*," *East Asia* 16:4 (2000): 79-107.

[67] Bullock, Julia, *The Other Women's Lib: Gender and Body in Japanese Women's Fiction, 1960-1973*, (forthcoming, University of Hawai'i Press).

directions, with, for example, Rebecca Copeland's most recent scholarship *Woman Critiqued* (2006) ,[68] an edited and translated collection of Japanese writing on women writers, broadening the selection of literary criticism by Japanese women in English, and Amanda Seaman's study of contemporary detective fiction by Japanese women, *Bodies of Evidence* (2004), taking the investigation of corporeality and subjectivity into a more popular form of writing.[69] Male and female bodies have received attention in the fields of proletarian literature, occupation-era literature, and in the cyborg of *manga* and *anime*,[70] where issues of labor, race and technology, respectively, are explored in relation to subjective embodied experience. Doug Slaymaker's *The Body in Japanese post-war Literature* (2004),[71] for example, examines the reaction against the nationalist and militarist recruitment of the body as it played out in the decadence and rebellion of "flesh-literature" (*nikutai-bungaku*). (Slaymaker later edited a volume of criticism on Tawada's Japanese and German writings, *Voices from Everywhere* (2006).[72])

Scholarship within Japan on women's literature in general has been particularly interested in expanding the canon of Meiji women writers beyond Higuchi Ichiyo,[73] an

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[68] Copeland, Rebecca, ed., *Woman Critiqued :Translated Essays on Japanese Women's Writing*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006.

[69] Seaaman, Amanda, *Bodies of Evidence : Women, Society, and Detective Fiction in 1990s Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004.

[70] *Mechademia*, a relatively new annual journal published by the University of Minnesota Press, is dedicated to the study of anime and manga and frequently covers the topics of virtual corporeality and the thresholds between the cyborg and the human. The journal's title comes from a combination of the term "mecha" used to refer to the giant robots featured in much anime, and "academia."

[71] Slaymaker, Doug, *The Body in Post-War Japanese Fiction*, New York: Routledge, 2004.

[72] Slaymaker, Doug, ed, *Tawada Yoko:Voices From Everywhere*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007.

[73] Higuchi Ichiyo (1872-1896) is a celebrated writer from the Meiji era whose portrait now graces the two thousand-yen note. Her coming-of-age stories frequently feature young girls caught in a nexus of gender and class relations which overwhelm their individuality and determine their future.

expansion that takes place in such works as *Josei hyōgen no meiji-shi: Higuchi ichiyō izen* [A History of Women's Expression in the Meiji Period: Before Higuchi Ichiyō, 1999][74] and *Jenda- no nihon kindai bungaku* [Gender and Modern Literature, 1998][75] an anthology of excerpts of fiction, criticism and primary source historical materials. In the form of literary debates (*taidan*) and book reviews contemporary fiction receives much attention in literary journals -- between 2007 and 2008, for example, the literary magazines *Bungei* and *Subaru*, as well as the journal of intellectual thought, *Gendaishisō*, and the monthly organ of the Asahi newspaper, *Ronza*, all dedicated special issues to Shono Yoriko's work. Contemporary fiction tends not to be the subject of book-length projects, in a similar way perhaps, that contemporary U.S. fiction is less likely to be the subject of scholarship than earlier literature.[76] Kanae shobō's book series on contemporary women writers, begun in 2004,[77] however, reflects an increased positioning of contemporary women writers as subjects of criticism and theoretical inquiry.

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[74] Hirata, Yumi, *Josei hyōgen no meiji-shi: Higuchi ichiyō izen* [A History of Women's Expression in the Meiji Period: Before Higuchi Ichiyo], Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1999.

[75] *Jenda- no nihon kindai bungaku* [Gender and Japanese Modern Literature], Nakayama Kazuko, Egusa Mitsuko, Fujimori Kiyoshi, eds., Tokyo: Kanrin shobō, 1998.

[76] There are certainly exceptions to this general trend. In March 2004, for example, the well-established literary journal *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* [National Literature: Interpretation and Appreciation] published a supplementary issue (*bessatsu*) *Josei sakka "Genzai"* [The Current State of Women Writers], edited by Satoko Kan, which included scholarship on several contemporary writers. Book-length projects on contemporary women writers are quite rare. Notably, *Yugamu shintai:gendai joseisaka henshinkon* [The Distorted Body: Modern Women Writers and Bodily Transformation] was written in Japanese by a scholar from Germany,Aman Katorin. See *Yugamu shintai:gendai joseisaka henshinkon* [The Distorted Body: Modern Women Writers and Bodily Transformation], Tokyo: Senshu daigaku shuppan, 2000. The subjects of Aman's book – Tawada Yoko, Shono Yoriko, Matsuura Rieko, Kawakami Hiromi and Tsushima Yuko – were all born in the post-war era.

[77] The *Gendai josei sakka toku-hon* series includes volumes on Hiromi Kawakami, Ogawa Yoko, Tsushima Yoko, Shono Yoriko, Matsuura Rieko, Tawada Yoko, Takagi Nobuko, Yu Miri, Yamada Eimi and Nakazawa Kei. Each volume includes samples of representative fiction, annotated bibliographies of the author's oeuvre, critical essays, and an exhaustive bibliography of writing about the respective writer and her fiction.

Japanese Literature/World Literature

A point of tension that hangs around the outskirts and situates my project, more than it informs its inner-workings, is the western reception of Japanese literature, both popularly, and in particular, academically. Japanese literature continues to be housed predominantly in area studies programs with titles such as the "Department of East Asian Civilization and Languages" or the "Department of Asian Languages and Literatures." The obvious benefits of such disciplinary structuring include an emphasis on linguistic skills needed for grasping the subtleties of texts in their original language, an ability to analyze texts within their given cultural and historical contexts, and ideally, the opportunity to understand linguistic, philosophic and historic cultural flows within Asia. The shortfalls, however, are that Japanese literature remains largely absent from conversations that go on about "literature" in departments whose main object of study is literature, namely English departments, and on the pages of journals dedicated to the study of literature, ostensibly at least, writ large.[78] Nobody outside the confines of area studies, that is, talks about the literari-ness of Japanese literature. My own experience at the National Conference of Modernist Studies (2006) supports this claim on a purely anecdotal level. Modernism is a highly studied movement within Japanese literary studies and so I was pleased, though not surprised, to see a panel on the early twentieth century Japanese writer, Inagaki Taruho, on the conference program at this well attended national conference. The only attendees at the panel, however, were three scholars whose faces I immediately recognized from the field of Japan studies. Conduits for dialogue between western literatures and non-postcolonial Asian literatures seem to be quite rare. The newly expanded literary canons that emerged from the public debates around

[78] One middle sized liberal arts college (Wake Forest) listed three "global literature" courses for spring 2010, not one of which included an East Asian text. Particularly striking was the course titled "Towards a Planetary Literature" that limned a Western colonial/postcolonial "planet."

multiculturalism and canonical exclusion in the 1980s and 1990s include texts from a far greater array of cultures than it had hitherto. Reflecting the history of imperialism, various canons broadened to include writers and works from the postcolonial world. Attention to literatures that neither pertained to the west nor to its former colonies, however, remained largely unchanged.[79] Comparative Literature certainly bore the potential of including Asian literatures, but as a field it has remained quite resistant to non-western literatures and instead, for the most part, houses European literatures.[80] Emerging categories of "World Bank Literature," "Immigrant literature," and even the potentially more de-centering "transnational literature" share the histories of economic dependencies on various western sites of which Japan does not partake.[81] While a discursive analysis of these particular disciplinary histories is beyond the ken of this project, the awareness of different pathways for literary and cultural dialogue animate both my choice of globally interested writers and my analysis of their works as cultural products which strive to develop imaginary faculties capable of apprehending and engaging with the pitfalls and possibilities of a globalizing world.

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[79] For more on Japan's exclusion from the colonial/post-colonial matrix see Tatsumi, Takayuki, *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dream : Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime.* Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

[80] I do not think that this is a controversial point – no one is arguing that non-postcolonial Asian literatures have found fertile ground within the discipline of Comparative Literature. There is ample evidence of this so I will cite just one here; as recently as 2008 the *Journal of Literature and Culture* published a themed issue "New Studies of the Fantastic in Literature" in which not one Japanese work was cited in the bibliography of more than three hundred critical studies. Ochiagha, Terri. "Selected Bibliography of Studies on the Fantastic in Literature." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 10.4 (2008): http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol10/iss4/11.

[81] Amtiva Kumar's introduction to his edited collection *World Bank Literature* (2003), as a representative example, invokes the post-national sentiments of Marx and Engels – "the intellectual creations of individual nations become common property" – and references Goethe's "world literature" via Frederic Jameson. The global relations which he maps, however, does not feature Japan. Kumar, Amtiva, ed., *World Bank Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

"World literature," as a methodology, is currently gaining support and interest in humanities fields in the United States and Europe.[82] As a redeployment of Goethe's prediction of a time when national boundaries would fall away and all literature would simply be "literature,"[83] discussions about world literature have attempted to re-energize comparative literature's mission of moving across cultures in open and sometimes unpredictable ways.[84] The recent conference "Japanese Literature and World Literature" (September 2009) at the University of Warwick showcased scholars with their own definitions of world literature at play in their scholarship. [85] Working definitions fell largely into three strands: a historical-materialist analysis of similar literary forms arising out of similar socio-economic shifts even in the absence of cultural contact;[86] evidence

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[82] See *Comparative Literature Studies "Special Issue: Globalization and World Literature"* 41.1 (2004).

[83] "National literature does not mean much these days; now is the age of world literature, and every one must contribute to hasten the arrival of that age," Goethe in discussion with his disciple Johann Peter Eckermann in 1827.

[84] The May 2009 conference "*Weltliteratur* in the Global Village: Yoko Tawada's West-Eastern Pillow Books" held at the Université de Francois-Rabelais in Tours, France is one example of this current emphasis.

[85] The Japan field is by no means the only one in which a call for more open conduits of engagement are being forged under the rubric of "World literature." After five of Frances's seven major literary prizes went to francophone writers in the fall of 2006, for example, a large group of writers signed a manifesto in *Le monde* which was intended as an obituary for Francophone Literature, because "nobody writes francophone." At a follow up conference in Florida State University in February 2009 even more writers penned the statement "Toward a "World-Literature" in French" which concluded with the following lines : "With the center placed on an equal plane with other centers, we're witnessing the birth of a new constellation, in which language freed from its exclusive pact with the nation, free from every other power hereafter but the powers of poetry and the imaginary, will have no other frontiers but those of the spirit," "Towards a World Literature," Barbery, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Alain Borer, Roland Brival, *et a,. World Literature Today* 83.*2* (March 2009), 54-57.

[86] This methodology was exemplified by William Lee's paper 'The Emergence of Domestic Tragedy in England and Japan: A Test for Comparative Literature," which explored the emergence of domestic tragedy, as opposed to tragedy that occurs in the public sphere, at a point in both British and Japanese history where economic shifts of mercantilism and a combination of

of an awareness of the world outside of Japan within the text;[87] and the presence of a shared and cosmopolitan set of literary or philosophical references.[88] All three of these approaches, not totally absent from U.S. scholarship on Japanese literature, emphasize methodologies for talking about literature in terms of both its local and global negotiations. The mandate of the newly-invigorated world literature focuses more on tracking the global flow of literature than on the creation of mini-cannons. This imperative was evident in papers such as Shu Sakaguchi's 'The Transformation of the Japanese 'Magical'" in which he posited that Japanese literature of the fantastic -- exemplified by Murakami Haruki in the United States, and Ogawa Yoko in France -- is well received in the west because of the precedent established by Latin American magic realism for non-realist politically incisive literature. [89] Sakaguchi asserts that American

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urbanization and commercialization, respectively, led to a growing middle class. Paper presentation, Japanese Literature and World Literature Symposium, University of Warwick, September 17 2009.)

[87] Jiyoung Kim (University of Tokyo), in her paper "Occupation, Memory, Nation: The Narrative of Sawako Ariyoshi's *Hishoku***,**" for example, treated *Hishoku* (a made-up word comprised of the Chinese characters for negation "hi" and "shoku" for color) as a text in which the protagonist, a Japanese woman, marries an African-American man. Paper presentation, Japanese Literature and World Literature Symposium. Driving the plot and character development, this intermingling with another culture leads the protagonist to feel that she has become African-American. This paper is part of a larger project on the influence of time spent in the United States on the part of Japanese writers, in which the International Writer's Project at Iowa plays a role.

[88] Exploration of the impact of a shared, and international, set of literary references was carried out by Cecily Nowell-Smith (Oxford University) in her paper **"**Endless Discussions: Peter Kropotkin in the work of Ishikawa Takuboku." Paper presentation, Japanese Literature and World Literature Symposium..

[89] Sakaguchi invokes what Franco Moretti terms a formal "compromise" between two literatures. While Moretti's "compromise" focuses on literary production in which a non-local form merges with both local content and local narrative voice, Sakaguchi identifies literary reception as a process of compromise in which a given literary culture is predisposed to consuming a particular type of literature. 'The Transformation of the Japanese "Magical," Paper presentation, Japanese Literature and World Literature Symposium. For more on the concept of "compromise," see Morretti, Franco. "Conjectures on World Literature." *New Left Review*1 (January 2000:http://www.newleftreview.org/?issue=235

academic, and more popular reading audiences, have their own sets of investments and idiosyncratic precedents through which they engage with Japanese literature.

I place the writings of Tawada Yoko and Shono Yoriko within the frameworks created by this re-energized deployment of world literature. What I find in their writing is that the probing of relations between language and embodied experience goes hand in hand with the tracing of machinations of a global scale and an interrogation of the fabrications necessary to present an image of a single "Japanese culture." Indeed, Tawada repeatedly states that she has no interest in a "beautiful Japanese language." [90] When, in their *taidan* (published literary talk) "Heavenly Dragons and Earthly Snakes" Shono directly asks Tawada whether acquiring competence in German was part of a battle against the Japanese language, Tawada immediately replies, "Yes." When Tawada later ponders "Just how slim would a Japanese dictionary of swear words for women be?" she implicitly comments upon the relations between language and lived experience, at the same time that she is critiquing specific social parameters within Japan. Likewise when Shono concludes her lengthy piece of fantastic fiction about the rise of neo-liberal forces within Japan with the contention that "no one feels obligated to re-think their reaction to an "ugly" face, the way they would to a piece of writing or an idea,"[91] she is both exploring a dynamic of language usage in general, and elaborating a connection between the *bundan*'s (literary establishment) history of celebrating beautiful women writers and the ease with which the *lolikon* goods industry flourishes in a neo-liberal economic

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[90] Movement across national languages is critical to Tawada's project of illuminating the sensual and intellectually structuring work that language does: "For me the notions of 'beautiful Japanese' or 'skillful sentences' or 'a successful short story' are all equally irrelevant… In order to write stories it is necessary to have a place in which that type of language can be destroyed – for me that is German." See Tawada Yoko, *Katakoto no Uwagoto* [Babbling Delirium], Tokyo: Seidosha, 2007, 34.

[91] Shono, Yoriko, *Dai-nihhon, ontako meiwaku-shi* [Great Japan, The Troublesome History of the Ontako], Tokyo: Kodansha, 2006, 221.

framework. When Shono troubles the difference between the visceral reaction with which one might respond to a person's appearance and the reflective posture which one might feel compelled to take in relation to words, her critique cuts across national and global realities.

Concluding/Beginning

Two relatively well known scenes stand out in terms of my initial interest in the treatment of the body in modern Japanese women's literature. Both scenes reveal in a flash the social value and purpose to which an individual woman's life and body had been assigned. In Higuchi Ichiyō's *Takekurabe* [Child's Play,1895][92] Midori, the protagonist, was instantly transformed from a young girl who played in the neighborhood with friends of both sexes to an adorned courtesan whose done-up and sexualized appearance generated shame and embarrassment where there had been none hours before. The second scene, from Enchi Fumiko's *Onna-zakka* [The Waiting Years, 1957],[93] involves the long-suffering wife of a philandering provincial official who rejects her husband's last minute repentant desire to provide her with a lavish funeral, and says instead, "Just dump my body in the waters of Shinagawa." These images produced in me a visceral realization of the numerous charges that coursed through and materialized their bodies; pathos, commerce, and flesh merged into a moment of temporary clarity and intensity. And while I certainly see these scenes as opportunities to explore cognitive and corporeal logics, it is clearly not such a direct and "realist" socio-economic critique that drives my current investigation. Tawada Yoko and Shono Yoriko shape imaginary worlds to which their bodies bear authorship. The structures of these worlds would make

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[92] Higuchi Ichiyo, Takekurabe [trans. as "Child's Play"], In Robert Lyons Danly, *In the Shade of Spring Leaves: The Life and Writings of Higuchi Ichiyō, a Woman of Letters in Meiji Japan*. New Haven Yale University Press, 1981, 254-287.

[93] Enchi Fumiko, *Onna Zakka* [The Waiting Years], trans. John Bester, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1971.

it hard for either writer to craft a narrative in which the protagonist would all of the sudden be "reduced" to their body, because their entire worlds are (already) constituted by their bodily experience. Tawada and Shono's imaginaries, though not the socio-political worlds they inhabit, are post-compulsory-heterosexuality. Not because male characters, biological reproduction, and romance are negligible as narrative drives -- which they are -- but because their sensual selves are in the process of being accounted for in their ways of grasping the world-at-large. Such visceral thinking and perceiving doesn't make sex-acts disappear, but it does displace them from being one of the few privileged sites in which bodies and minds are clearly understood to be present and interacting. Building, perhaps, off of the insight of earlier writers who recognized that the body comprised the scene of so much that mattered, Shono Yoriko and Tawada Yoko work to forge conduits between language and bodies. In their writing, the corporeal and representational means by which lived experience is felt and apprehended takes the visceral charge of words as their point of departure. The body, then, which has been used to so effectively disclose pent up emotion of fear or rage, is actively recruited to inform the experience of a far greater range of feelings and the potential of new sensibilities.

Chapter Overviews

While Tawada Yoko is most often identified as a border-crossing, multi-lingual writer who publishes in both German and Japanese, in chapter one I argue that this "identity" threatens to eclipse the ways in which she investigates the bodily reception of language. Tawada's textual experimentitation involves train-riding narrators who cross national borders at the same time they traverse national aesthetic systems and the exploration of the somatic-linguistic development of young women. My claim is that Tawada's interstitial movement poses translation and bodily coding as inherent to language acquisition, in general, and suggests that all words carry libidinal imprints.

In chapter two I argue that Tawada mines bodily processes for her representational strategies. In her texts the unraveling of national and masculine aesthetics forms a critical part of decoding the body as a fixed and gendered entity. The gendered markers of "being filled up" and, conversely, not being "enter-able" are unmoored from their connections to femininity and masculinity and applied to numerous bodily functions. When Tawada positions the male body as an object of tactile inquiry and explores the bodily-confusion-with-another inherent in the process of ovulation as a narrative drive, I see a re-working of corporeal and cognitive logics. This reworking, I contend, is not a conclusive "righting of wrongs" but an invitation to join in the ongoing process of articulating difference in a potential post-national world.

In the third chapter I introduce the political project of Shono Yoriko's fictional and polemical writings. Shono uses the *bundan* (literary establishment) as a platform for her critique of neo-liberal economic trends and launches a campaign that is both global in scope and *kyoku-shi* (hyper-personal) in tone. She counters universally applicable socio-economic trends with intensely personal myths and private vendettas against public intellectuals who deny the value of non-profit-grossing "serious" literature. In her pursuit of various critics and editors, I argue, she clarifies a connection between the support of "for-profit" principles and an infantilized view of female sexuality and creative capacity.

I explore Shono's use of *onnen*, a folkloric trope of unresolved resentment, as a way of retaining the body's ability to feel, think and remember. Through an analysis of the *Gendaishisō* special issue *Shono Yoriko: Neoribarizumu wo koeru sōzōryoku* [Shono Yoriko: The Imagination to Overcome Neo-Liberalism],[94] I demonstrate how *onnen* is the element of her praxis that has been picked up on by social scientists and activists in the disparate worlds of dispatch employment and sex work.

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94 *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007).

In chapter four I perform a close reading of what is generally considered to be Shono's "masterpiece," her 2004 novel *Kompira,* as well as her *busu mono* (ugly tales). *Kompira*, I argue, is both a historical narrative of a particular kompira *kami* (deity) and the postulating of a system of resistance that involves hybridity and embodiment. In these works Shono's support of "pure-literature" is shown to be a campaign for a diversity of value systems that reach outside the realm of the literary. In battling the homogenizing forces of national myths, state-supported religion, and neo-liberal economic principles, her hybrid kompira-narrator and her ugly-woman narrators work to collapse the difference between abstract systems of value and visceral experience.

CHAPTER 1 PLAYING WITH WORDS TO GET TO THE BODY: TAWADA YOKO'S TRANSLATIONAL PRAXIS

"When I collected the keywords "immigrant literature," "border-crossing," "Creole", "minority," and "translation" into a net like so many fish," writes Tawada Yoko in the preface to her collection of essays, *Ekusofuoni: bogo no soto e deru tabi* [Exophany: The Travels of Leaving a Mother Tongue], "my writing didn't go very well."[95] Yet, as a writer who publishes widely in both Japanese and German, Tawada is often, and aptly, identified with the above categories. National boundaries and linguistic confusion figure prominently in her writings, which include stories about a cyborg translator who can only function along national borders, and literary discussions between Japanese expatriates in different countries.[96] Contributors to the anthology *Tawada Yoko: Voices from Everywhere*, the only volume of criticism on Tawada's work written in English, share an interest in translation studies, transnational writers, and multilingual literature. The editor of the anthology, Doug Slaymaker, for example, is currently working on a project about "the production of art across national boundaries" and fellow contributor Reiko Tachibana is writing a book on "translational women writers."[97] The three English-language anthologies in which criticism of Tawada's work appear -- *Rethinking Europe: Literature and (Trans)national Identity* (2008), *Multicultural Writers since 1945* (2004), and *Lives in Translation: Bilingual Writers and Identity and Creativity* (2003) -- show a similar focus on the cultural and linguistic

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[95] Tawada Yoko, *Ekusofuoni: bogo no soto e deru tabi* [Exophany: The Travels of Leaving a Mother Tongue], Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2003.

[96] I am referring here to Tawada Yoko, *Hikari to zerachin no raipuchihhi* [The Leipzig of Gelatin and Light 2000], Tokyo: Kodansha, 2000, and Sŏ, Kyŏng-sik and Tawada, Yoko, *Sōru Berurin tamatsuki shokan : kyōkaisenjō no taiwa* [Return Post from Seoul to Berlin: A Conversation above the Borderlines], Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2008.

[97] See *Tawada Yoko: Voices from Everywhere*, Doug Slaymaker, ed., Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007, 174.

plurality of her writing. Critical work on Tawada's German writing focuses largely upon Tawada's minority status as a Japanese author writing in German. York University professor of German Literature, Christina Kraenzle, for example, has completed a book project titled "Mobility, Space and Subjectivity: Yoko Tawada and German-Language Transnational Literatures," and German Studies scholar Bettina Brandt has recently published the article "Scattered Leaves: Artist Books and Migration, a Conversation with Yoko Tawada." [98]

In a globalizing era where emergent cultural forms partake of the necessities and possibilities of multiple border-crossings, it certainly makes sense to identify Tawada as a "border-crossing" writer.[99] Such a definition, however, runs the risk of overshadowing Tawada's investigation of the relationship between corporeality and language, an investigation that extends to all language-users, and through which Tawada crafts scenes that momentarily electrify the flux between our corporeal and psychic selves. Invoking Gilles Deleuze's distinction of images that target the experience of a sensation rather than the understanding of a concept, I argue that Tawada's 'figural' scenes cultivate attunements towards the bodily reception and production of language. [100] All words are

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[98] Brandt, Bettina, "Scattered Leaves: Artist Books and Migration, a Conversation with Yoko Tawada," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 45.1 (2008), 12-22.

[99] Although in Japanese scholarship Tawada is at times grouped together with writers working across languages such as Mizutani Minae and Hideo Levy, scholarship in Japanese on Tawada's writing has a wider breadth and frequently focuses on issues of language production, sexuality, gender and folklore, without directly referring to her border-crossing status. Tawada, a contemporary writer, however is considerably less an object of study by Japanese scholars in Japan than she is of scholars in the West, or of Western scholars in Japan. At the University of Tokyo for example, the first doctoral student to submit a dissertation on Tawada's Japanese writing, Danuta Lacka, is from Poland, and the professors writing and teaching about Tawada, Mary Knighton and Christina Ivanovic, are from the U.S. and Germany, respectively.

[100] Jean-Francois Lyotard, building on the art theories of Francis Bacon, coined the term "figural" to emphasize the bodily reception of art. Deleuze explicates Jean-Francois Lyotard's "figural" in the following way: "Sensation is what is being painted, what is painted on the canvas is the body, not insofar as it is represented as an object, but insofar as it is experienced as sustaining this sensation." Figuration, Deleuze further explains, refers to an object that is being represented, whereas the figure is connected to a

to some degree approximate and rely upon the supporting mesh of distinct logics and economies to convey their meaning; what a lay person might understand to be precise terminology an expert may recognize as a catch-all phrase lacking firm parameters.[101] Tawada's writing continually asks how much we feel these layers of mesh in the words that we think, and how viscerally their permeability forms part of our thought process.

I argue that Tawada uses the movement between different languages, as she uses the movement between differing socio-economic paradigms and the movement between different cultivated sensibilities, to apprehend interactions between our bodies and our words that are marginally perceptible in the gaps between the two systems. Her bilingual writing process is less about mastering German than it is about having two languages to rub together in what Suga Keijiro terms a process of "agitation" -- born of the back-and-forth evaluation of translation possibilities -- that potentially produces holes in the cohesion of either one.[102] What Tawada fleetingly glimpses in the interstices are relations between corporeality and cognition, or between thinking and feeling, that she had not yet before able to apprehend. The physical experience of language is one that Tawada always seeks to prolong; "That feeling of hesitation in the moment before one translates from one language into another… that is the feeling that there is something more important than words."[103] The moment's hesitation, indicative of a lack of correspondence between languages, is a simultaneously sensory and cognitive recognition that no language enjoys a relation of transparency with the reality beyond its

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sensation "that conveys the violence of this sensation directly to the nervous system." See Delueze, Gilles, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith. New York: Continuum, 2003, 27.

[101] I am thinking here, in particular, of both genre definitions and medical diagnoses

[102] Suga, Keijiro, "Translation, Exophany, Omniphony," in *Tawada Yoko: Voices From Everywhere*, 28.

[103] Tawada, *Exophany*, 35.

own linguistic terrain.[104] Tawada's explorations of such crevices are always full-bodied affairs: "I don't want to cross the ditch that exists between two languages," she writes, "I want to live there."[105]

Tawada's writing "didn't go very well" when she started from the generic categories of "immigrant literature" and "border-crossing," but once she revised her framework to foreground her particular embodied experience she quickly produced *Exophany*, a collection of essays about traveling to twenty different cities as far flung as Dakar, Beijing and Los Angeles. Likening her mode of interacting with the varied sensory and linguistic environments to that of a fish absorbing input through its scales, Tawada writes, "When I became a fish and tried swimming around in the sea I experienced many things I wanted to write about. It was best for me to physically feel the condition of languages through my scales." [106]

Fish scales, along with Tawada's other privileged images of the skin's pores and mesh nets, are ones that present numerous openings and call forth a design comprised of multiple repetitions that are not centered around any one single instantiation of the pattern. This dispersion of foci and the permeability it produces extends to Tawada's interest in the membranes and orifices of the human body; populated with characters who complain that their eyes are constipated because vision comes in but nothing goes out,[107]

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[104] The sense of "waking wonder" present in Tawada's linguistic explorations places her fiction in a lineage with Borges' and the investigation of the relationship between language and reality found in works of his such as "Avatars of the Tortoise"(1937), where he poses language as a "hallucinated reality."

[105] Tawada Yoko, "Oitachi to iu kyokō" [This Fiction Called 'Childhood'], *Bungakukai* 47 (March 1993), 35.

[106] Tawada, *Exophany*, 5.

[107] Tawada Yoko, *Seijo densetsu* [Tales of a Holy Girl], Tokyo: Ōda Shuppan, 1996.

or who speak with both their anus and their mouth,[108] and who can't resist sticking their fingers in other people's ears, [109] Tawada's texts consistently ignore the gravitas that is associated more with certain corporeal contours and openings than with others. The topography of Tawada's terrestrial world is frequently riddled with small holes – *hibi* (chaps), *kiretsu* (cracks), and *zure* (gaps)[110] -- that can produce a further rent in the surface at any moment. Even the temporality in Tawada's travel narratives is characterized by a type of incremental equality as the constant physical movement grants more significance to the multiplicity of her stops than to any one place itself.[111]

These infinitely pliable corporealities, topographies, and temporalities invite conversations and speculations that constantly diverge from a narrative climax or a profound psychological exploration. They open Tawada's narratives up to movement in many directions. Such texts invite close and intimate readings because the privileged sensibilities that lend a sense of cohesion are not over-determined. In their introduction to *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari outline the active engagement required to navigate the plural possibilities of such porous texts: "We will enter, then, by any point whatsoever, none matters more than another, and no entrance is more privileged."[112]

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[108] Tawada Yoko, *Futakuchi no otoko* [The Man with Two Mouths], Tokyo: Kawadeshobōshinsha, 1998.

[109] Tawada Yoko, *Gottoharuto tetsudo* [The Gotthard Railroad], in *Gottoharuto no tetsudō*, Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005.

[110] Tawada,Yoko, "Chōkaku to shikaku no dobu wo nozoku – rōdoku to dansu no kyōen" [Peeking into the Gutter between Listening and Seeing], *Dansu Magajin* (March) 1993,186.

[111] Tawada's narratives that are comprised of numerous stops on rail journeys include both *Yōgisha no yakō ressha* [The Fugitive's Night Train]. Tokyo: Seidōsha, 2002, and *Henshin no tame no opiumu* [Opium for Transforming the Body]. Tokyo: Kodansha, 2001.

[112] Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix, *Kafka : Toward a Minor Literature*, Trans. Dana Polan, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, 3.

"I am not drawn," Tawada states, "to writers who do no more than write in multiple languages."[113] Her interest in rubbing up against the sensual limits of a given language shares much with that of the Puerto Rican writer Rosario Ferré, who writes that "only a writer who has experienced the historical fabric, the inventory of felt moral and cultural existence embedded in a given language, can be said to be a bilingual writer."[114] If the structural support of language is thoroughly intertwined with cultural and social histories, Tawada's fiction consistently asks how language can be loosened from that heft so that words can be grasped simply as words. Deploying words in the absence of their welcoming network of external structures -- shared histories, learned nuances, over-developed or under-developed sensibilities -- throws into relief the work that words are, implicitly, being asked to do. The gap between the image of the word and the work that the word is actually doing is precisely the space of paths-not-taken that Tawada mines. "If a wound or a scar is not produced when the word is forced up against its image," she writes," – well, then the writing isn't interesting or alive."[115] Clarifying the extra-linguistic support recruited into the process of language-creation often becomes a process of attuning oneself to the libidinal imprint left on words because investments of style and sensual economies are exposed.

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[113] Tawada, *Exophany*, 38.

[114] Ferré, Rosario, *The Youngest Doll*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991,155.

[115] Tawada, "Chōkaku to shikaku," 188.

Language, for Tawada, comprises a fantastic screen of reality[116] -- what Borges terms a "hallucinated reality" -- and she is seeking an engagement with the forces animating our relations to language found beyond that screen. Certainly language is not a false construct standing in the way of the "truth." Even Borges, who has written that language might be a "hallucinated reality," is careful to clarify that all hallucinations are by no means equal. [117] In Tawada's fictional world burrowing into language is necessary in order to gain access to previously non-represent-able embodied experience. The interstices between the experience of words and the images of words, - the "ditches" in which Tawada wants to "live" - may be evacuated of words, but they can only be reached via words.

Viewing Tawada as a "translational" writer makes obvious sense. Translation is a powerful tool in her project of heightening the sense of language as an embodied exchange. A postal clerk asks of the narrator in Tawada's *Transplanted Letters*, "How do

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[116] I am borrowing here from Slavoj Žižek's definition of fantasy as a necessary support for "reality": "If what we experience as 'reality' is structured by fantasy, and if fantasy serves as the screen that protects us from being directly overwhelmed by the raw Real, then reality itself can function as an escape from encountering the Real. *In the opposition between dream and reality, fantasy is at the side of reality*, and it is in dreams that we encounter the traumatic Real - it is not that dreams are for those who cannot endure reality, reality itself is for those who cannot endure (the Real that announces itself in) their dreams." Žižek, Slavoj, *How to Read Lacan*, "Lacan with Eyes Wide Shut," http://www.lacan.com/zizhowto.html., italics added.

[117] "It is hazardous to think that a coordination of words can have much resemblance to the universe. It is also hazardous to think that one of those famous coordinations does not resemble it a little more than others, *even in an infinitesimal way*…The greatest sorcerer would be one who bewitched himself to the point of taking his own phantasmagorias for autonomous apparitions. Would not this be true of us? I believe that it is. We have dreamed the world. We have dreamed it strong, mysterious, visible, ubiquitous in space and secure in time; but we have allowed tenuous, eternal interstices of injustice in its structure so we may know that it is false." Jorge Luis Borges, "Avatars of the Tortoise," in *Otras Inquisiciones*, 114, quoted in Robert Wicks "Literary Truth as Dreamlike Expression in Foucault's and Borges's 'Chinese Encyclopedia'," *Philosophy and Literature* 27.1 (2003), 80-97.

you know that something is a translation if the original no longer exists?" The narrator replies, "You know it is a translation if you get the sense of tumbling rocks." The sense of the tumbling rocks, the barely perceptible feeling that language has been unmoored from a transparent relation to "reality," is precisely what the narrator tries to follow. The perceived movement provides the live-wire impetus and the possibility of an opening being created. But the processes that make translation a productive tool in clarifying our particular libidinal investments are intrinsic to language itself: "Isn't language always an attempted translation of our amorphous, pre-linguistic thoughts?" Tawada asks in a *taidan* (literary discussion) with Ikezawa Natsuki.[118] "Moving outside one's native language is, therefore, not some aberration, but rather an extreme example of the usual situation." Tawada later elaborates.[119]

The Wounds of the Alphabet and Transplanted Letters

In *Moji Ishoku* [Transplanted Letters], a novella that I read as Tawada's translation manifesto, her narrator's exploration of the outer limits of codified meaning involves an intensive amount of movement; she is a Japanese translator of an inter-media experimental German text carrying out her task on a former Spanish colonial island with volcanic topography that threatens to crumble under the pressure of each footstep, downpour, or act of translation. The German-language essay that is being translated, *Der wunde Punkt im Alphabet* [The Wound of the Alphabet, 1995] [120] by the contemporary

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[118] Ikezawa Natsuki and Tawada Yoko, "Ikezawa Natsuki, Tawada Yoko taidan: Sakka no shishen, kotoba no omowaku"[A Literary Discussion between Ikezawa Natsuki and Tawada Yoko: A writer's line of vision, the expectations of words], *Subaru* 25 (June 2003),148.

[119] Tawada, *Exophany*, 114-115.

[120] Duden, Anne.*Der wunde Punkt im Alphabet* [The Wound of the Alphabet], Hamburg: Rotbuch Verlag, 1995.

German writer Anne Duden, is itself is a seven page reflection on the Italian painter Vittoire Carpaccio's 15th century painting "Saint George and the Dragon." Tawada's *Transplanted Letters* contains both excerpts of attempted translations of Duden's essay, as well as a frame-story in which the narrator, *watashi*, struggles to complete the translation. When *watashi*, in the frame story of *Transplanted Letters,* first pitched the translation of *Der wunde Punkt im Alphabet* [121] to her editor, she was disheartened by the editor's response. "Oh, the dragon-tale," the editor replied in a tone that showed little interest, "how did you happen to choose that particular tale? It's really quite a universal one isn't it? St. George appears, slays the dragon and saves the princess, right? Or is it some contemporary version in which the hero is really a coward, or the dragon was never there at all? Perhaps it is the princess who does the actual fighting? Doesn't is seem like we already have stories like that, I mean, we're living in a feminist era aren't we?" Insulted, the narrator snaps, "That is not it at all. I can't stand contemporary rewritings where writers just change a few things around to get a simple solution. That's precisely why I have chosen to translate, and not to rewrite." What then, the editor demands to know, makes her story so interesting. "Something *suddenly* appears," exclaims the now frustrated narrator.[122] The "something" that the narrator claims "appears" when the dragon and the order-imposing St. George struggle seems to be something that is only perceptible in the incomplete in-between of translation. Apprehension of this

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[121] Tawada initially titled her adaptation of Duden's work *Arufuabetto no kizuguchi* [The Wound of the Alphabet], a literal translation that well expressed the friction and combativeness that Tawada employs to clarify the disciplining physicality of language. For copyright reasons she later changed the tile to *Moji ishoku* [Transplanted Letters]. Duden's text *Der wunde Punkt im Alphabet* accentuates the high price paid by those who do not align themselves with the order-imposing St. George. While St. George appears shielded in armor and up high on a horse, his far more physically vulnerable victims are portrayed with gaping mouths, exposed anuses, and nicitating membranes. The abstract and signifying lines of the letters are violent blows that destroy a vast array of irrational beings and the orderly tidiness of the alphabet contrasts with the gore of the physical "wounds" it produces.

[122] Tawada Yoko, *Moji Ishoku* [Transplanted Letters], Tokyo: Kawade bunko, 1999. 40-41 (emphasis in the original).

"something" could, the reader is led to believe, allow *watashi* to both be the heterogeneous dragon before it is slain, and to wield enough homogeneity to potentially represent her experience to others. Straddling the conflicting needs of immediacy and comprehensibility, and unwilling to divorce abstract codes from their sensual reception, the translating narrator of *Transplanted Letters* is a representative Tawadian character.

Throughout *Transplanted Letters* the evaluation of various translational possibilities generates a linguistic agitation. This agitation produces rents in the fabric of representational possibilities, rents through which something new could appear. In Suga's notion of agitation the new openings provide the possibility of movement in the direction of the target language and in the direction of the original language, so that both languages are affected. In *Transplanted Letters* the agitation also shapes the corporeal contours of the narrator herself. Watashi's glimpses into the interstices between languages send transformative ripples in the direction of her own body. Notably, Duden's original German language text had already gone through a generic agitation in its "translation" from visual images to words before it was put to use as the Japanese narrator's object of translation. As Tawada likens the struggle between St. George and the dragon to the necessary sacrificing of possibilities involved in the process of translation, *Transplanted Letters* becomes a continuation of the endless decisions and choices made in any process of representation.

Reluctant to let any single group of words before her signify more than an other, *watashi* repeatedly refers to *Der wunde Punkt im Alphabet* as *moji no mure* (a cluster of letters) and translates Duden's already cross-genre and experimental piece into prose that ignores rules of Japanese grammar and closely mirrors the syntax of the German text. Translating word for word, she produces choppy, staccato sentences. Rather than beginning with the grammatical Japanese of the frame narrative, *Transplanted Letters* opens with a fragment of the unconventional translation:

> "….in, approximately, ninety percent, of the victims, almost all, always, on the ground, lying, shown as, desperately raising, heads, on display, are, attack weapons, or, the point of, in their throats, stuck, or…." [123]

A shared sense of imminent violence connects the first line of the frame story with the opening fragment of translation: "I gazed out the window" the narrator begins, "as I wielded the pen in my hand like a knife."[124] *Watashi*'s translation depicts a scene that is littered with sacrificed bodies, and as each death suggests a foreclosure of a potential experience, *watashi* herself begins to feel more and more besieged by the various "George"s who threaten her translating work. Bearing the same name as the logic-imposing St. George of the dragon-slaying myth, *watashi's* friend George consistently undermines her attempts at translation by ridiculing and questioning her efforts. *Watashi* therefore feels she must get the translation off of the island before George's imminent visit. In her frantic quest to relieve the island of her translation she encounters several other Georges, in various guises, who attempt to wrench the manuscript out of her hands.

Allergic to Translation: When Re-organization Alters the Bodily Envelope

But watashi has great difficulty completing translations: "For once," she laments, "I'd like to translate a story all the way through by myself. But, as in this story, I fear the

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[123] Tawada, *Moji Ishoku*, 7.

[124] *Ibid*., 8.

point of no return where I'll be forced into making unjust decisions. I am not St. George and do not want to be, though I feel in the end I will be the one to slay the dragon."[125]

Already very susceptible to the sensibilities found in the text, *watashi* bodily experiences the disjuncture she encounters between the language of the original text and the target language. In the fragment of translation that immediately follows her declaration that "something *suddenly* appears" the sentient sacrifices of Duden's text are "alone," "unprotected," and "bare," with stomachs "upturned" and "soft."[126] *Watashi*'s skin also becomes soft and malleable:

> From the momentary cloud gap in the busy skies above light flickers onto the tree next door – its leaves glint like swords in the sunlight. I am not particularly afraid of sharp things, but I have had the experience of the membranes in my mouth and eyelids feeling softer than necessary. And then other parts of my body start to feel like they are made of membranes as well and it becomes very difficult to remain close to anything, even something as innocent-seeming as the tips of leaves.[127]

When *watashi* translates a German word for "mouth" that refers only to the mouths of beasts, she realizes that the Japanese word she used earlier, *gisei-sha* (martyr), does not fit because *gisei-sha* implies human-ness. As she changes "martyr" to "living sacrifice or offering"[128] in order to avoid specifying a species existence, her own mouth becomes itchy and swollen as though it had been bitten by a mosquito. (The internist who owned the house she was staying in, however, had confidently told her that mosquitoes did not exist on the island.) [129] On one part of her lip she could feel the fuzzy hairs of a

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[125] *Ibid*., 68.

[126] *Ibid*., 41

[127] *Ibid*., 45.

[128] She changes *gisei-sha* to *ikenie*.

[129] The internist, with his implied mastery of the workings of the human body, is depicted as a bit of a know-it-all and *watashi* is routinely suspect of any information he passes along in his pat manner.

peach and taste its acidic juice, and the itchiness soon overwhelmed her. She wanted to tear that part of her lip off and send it --in an imported tea can -- to her undermining friend George. Sacrificing a soft bodily opening to a George-figure, *watashi*, momentarily occupies the subject position of the dragon. And like the dragon that ultimately disappears from cultural sight, the translator's body, at least slightly, dematerializes in response to a misalignment in categories. An absence of conceptual correspondence between the categories for expressing non-human sacrifices brought about a change in her corporeal integrity.

When designating the dragon's gender *watashi* again finds that she has to correct an understandable yet mistaken categorization. Though she initially identifies the dragon as male she later comes across a passage that shows the dragon to possess both male and female sexual attributes;

> …the claws of a wild cat, the fur of a bear, the skull of a crocodile, the tongue of a snake, the skin of a lizard, the tail of an American alligator, he, has, huge, bat wings, moveable, armor of an armadillo, and sometimes, also, three eyelids, a nictitating membrane, not at all, attempting to hide, his anus, above all, testicles, hanging out, overripe, between his legs, sticking out, at the same time, possessing, on the same body, occasionally, in addition, breasts, or, several, pointedly, wantonly hanging down, nipples, never before heard of, scandal, is this, leviathan…[130]

W*atashi* is again compelled to retroactively correct her mistaken categorization. Having assumed that the dragon was male she had used the pronoun *kare* (he), but now that she learned the dragon was hermaphroditic she goes back and crosses "he" out. The hole in the text left by the now crossed-out pronoun threatens to deepen, for not only does she not know what to replace it with, she also begins to recall the Japanese pronoun's rather arbitrary and unstable beginnings. *Watashi* recalls that the Chinese characters for *kare* 彼方could also be read *kanata* (the other side) and that they have a long history that precedes their use as *kare.* Applying a little more pressure to the derivation of the word,

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[130] Tawada, *Moji Ishoku*, 61.

as Margaret Mitsutani does in the afterward to her English translation, reveals that the pronoun itself was a relative newcomer to Japanese and had been created during the Meiji era when it became clear that Japanese had no system of direct pronouns to correspond with English.[131] When the Chinese characters *kanata* were first recruited into service as the singular pronoun *kare* at the end of the 19th century, they were used to refer to both men and women. Eventually, however, *kare* became an exclusively masculine pronoun. What is interesting to add to Mitsutani's etymological account is that though a direct correspondence between English and Japanese pronouns was attempted, both the masculine and feminine Japanese pronouns picked up a charge that they lack in English; the implication that the person being referred to is a lover. The English "he" and "she" are part of a greater semantic cluster in which "he" has historically stood in as the universal pronoun, and in which "man" has been connected to the "gender-free" terms of "mankind" or "humanity." Perhaps it is because of the lack of such an accompanying neutralizing framework in Japanese that the pronouns stand out more boldly as hyper-sexualized distinctions. *Watashi*'s confusion over what gender pronoun to assign the dragon who boasts both testicles and breasts, thus produces a textual chafing that reveals traces of a far more stark sexual focus than the seemingly inchoate distinction between "he" and "she" might lead one to imagine. Without equivalent linguistic scaffolding the attempt at rational equivalence -- in terms of finding a counterpart to English pronouns -- takes on a sexualized charge.

After *watashi* finishes blacking out all the masculine pronouns in her translation[132] – Tawada's narrators frequently emphasize the labor and literal fabrication involved in their editing efforts - she splits a tiger melon in half and eats it. The tiger

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[131] Mitsutani, Margartet, "Translator's Afterword," in Tawada, Yoko, *Facing the Bridge*. trans. Margaret Mitsutani,. New York: New Directions Books, 2007. 80-81.

[132] Tawada, *Moji Ishoku*, 113.

melon's juices turn her skin red and raw. "My skin," she says once she washes the juice off in the shower, "no longer seemed to be mine."[133] Translation, it seems, has always been hard on *watashi*'s skin. When the postal clerk asked her if translation was difficult, *watashi* directly responded, "Yes, it is, because my skin is so weak. I get allergies."[134] Allergies, a body's misrecognition of a harmless substance as a harmful one, seem to be triggered when *watashi* confronts the conceptual rearrangement of categories that take place in translation. When the species category for "mouth" is out of alignment her lip becomes overwhelmingly itchy, and when she can not find an appropriate category for the dragon's gender, her skin feels as though it is no longer hers. The narrator says that her skin is tender and that she suffers from allergies. But perhaps her skin, as the organ which interfaces most directly with the external environment and protects the body from disease-generating pathogens, is registering the threat against its established conduits between abstract concepts and sensitive matter.

The defining limits necessary for semantic categories are productive to certain sensibilities and destructive to others. In the necessary choices *watashi* made when first translating Duden's text the sensibility of gender as genitally-defined is heightened while the capacity to understand one body as possessing a group of differently-sexed attributes is lessened. In the case of switching from "martyr" to "sacrifice," because of the German word for "mouth" that is not used to refer to mouths of humans, a separate grouping of humans and beasts that does not exist in Japanese is lost. The sensibilities cultivated by these organizing categories participate in both bodily experience and abstract concepts. As the body's envelope, skin is the barrier that reflects this re-*organi*zation. For *watashi,* then, translation is re-organization played out on the skin's surface, and irritations and rawness are often the result.

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[133] *Ibid*., 117.

[134] *Ibid*., 82.

When *watashi* confronts language that can not align smoothly with what it is supposed to represent –a frequent occurrence in the process of translation - the imperfect fit creates friction, leading to "wounds" and "holes." At times confusing and destabilizing, these "mistakes" in categorizations and the hesitations they bring also generate an awareness of the vast quantities of potential categorizations. In *Transplanted Letters* it is the gaps in between the originating and the target languages that provide a means of accessing the sensibilities that exist on the barely perceptible margins of representation. As when a trapeze artist lets go of one bar to grab onto another, and the audience becomes momentarily more aware of the abyss over which the artist is suspended, the jump required to move from one linguistic system to another provides a fleetingly expansive scene of potential choices. Although the access points are more obvious when starkly differing languages need to be traversed, these "other paths" are present in supposedly single-language environments in the form of dialect, idiom, nuance, or register. When, in a recurring scene, *watashi* clambers after the older female author of the "original text" as they make their way between craters and dried-up lava beds, she, as a translator, may be in a less authoritative position, but they are *both* running along fault lines that threaten to crumble and break in unpredictable directions.

Friable Topography and Brittle Schemas

Neither capable of indefinite support, nor particularly welcoming, the volcanic and pock-marked topography of *Transplanted letters* mirrors the potential pitfalls and the lack of appropriate words encountered when moving between languages.[135] Watashi's intellectual project and her physical experience are paralleled in key elements of her environment on the island. Her house is a "jumble of volcanic rocks" frozen in place by

[135] Holes -- in the craters, in the author's face, in the form of the gaping mouths of St. Georges victims, in the form of the letter "o" which begins a German word for martyr -- all create the sense that chances of falling into the abyss of the non-represented is far more likely than surviving for long on the precarious ledge of language.

cement. Its apparent simplicity, however, is undermined by the fact that the absentee-owner of the house is an internist whose know-it-all attitude and condescension is a target of *watashi*'s subtle ridicule. When *watashi* cordons off certain sections and ignores the obvious functions of particular rooms, electing, for example, not to sleep in the bedroom nor to descend into the basement, she is indirectly challenging the orderliness of the owner who happens to be an internist trained in a conventional understanding of the body. The rearranging of the house is carried out, at least to a certain extent, with the owner in mind, for the narrator informs the reader that the main reason she hesitated for so long before accepting his offer to stay there was that she was embarrassed by the idea of him imagining her there alone. Fabricated from the by-product of the island's friable geography, and a possession of an internist, the house *watashi* stays in takes on the qualities of a corporeal morphology in flux. A conceptual schema, that is, in which her body lives.

Watashi tries to elude the internist's physical ordering,[136] just as she tries to disturb the "natural" appearance of language, not to get somewhere that exists beyond cultural mediation, but to be able to stand in awe of the array of possibilities for different mediations. Indeed, practices of aural and visual representation are precisely what she is interested in. Rather than the beautiful vista of the beach to which tourists flock, *watashi*'s favorite spot is the island's post office. The zone through which actively crafted letters must pass provides a far more compelling site than does that of the ocean's water rolling onto the sand. And while the beach, a liminal space between sea and land, might lend itself to Tawada's privileged motif of "membranes," the narrator's explicit preference identifies the post office as its own sort of orifice, enabling print circulation

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[136] The internist has an implied understanding of the human body but he is also interested in ordering *watashi*'s wanderings around the island, telling her she shouldn't go out alone and that there are lewd shows she should avoid. His attempted command over her body extends beyond biology.

between different human environments and enabling the circular economy of traces in which thinking, as Rosi Braidotti expresses it, is a process of "quoting unknown, unrecognizable authors, the better to adapt them, for the space of a sentence, a line, a page."[137] The post office takes on a singular communal identity, composed of "anonymes" to be sure, that experiences the trajectories and intensities of human communication. To pose thinking as "orificial" is to traverse the economies of biological bodies and abstract cognition, and to emphasize the interaction between the cognitive and corporeal logics that shape our daily experience.

Transplanted Letters concludes with *watashi*, manuscript in hand, fleeing another St. George and running desperately towards the ocean, even though she doesn't swim. Her desire to leap off the ledge of language into one of the many literal ditches in the story, in this instance the open sea, identifies *watashi* as one of Deleuze's nomads who roam the margins of meaning striving to convey the one-off instance of their experience.[138] When Tawada writes that she wants to live in the ditch between languages rather than cross the border between them, she is not referring to simply any ditch, but to the crevasse that directly abuts languages. And it is an engagement with language that she is hoping to do with her entire body.

Somatic-Linguistic Relations of Growing Girls

In Tawada's fiction the language development of young girls is often interwoven with their sexual development. The fitful struggles chronicled in *Seijo densetsu* [Tales of a Holy Girl. 1996] are those of a pubescent girl trying to maintain control of the

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[137] Braidotti, Rosi, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, 31.

[138] Braidotti writes that for Deleuze it is in the hinterlands where the nomads roam -- far from the system's dead center-- that dynamic events take place. See Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects, 113.

language she produces as well as the offspring she could potentially produce.[139] The young girl is unable to keep herself from blurting out didactic bible verses in the middle of class and tattoos the word "silence" on her arm in an attempt to keep herself quiet. The fear that she will be unable to keep supposedly holy things from coming out of her body extends to biological reproduction; the tale begins on Christmas Day, with the Virgin Mary's immaculate conception casting its pall, and the young girl expresses her ferverent hope that she not be made to bear a holy child. Tawada's *Museiran* [The Unfertilized Egg, 2005] features a protagonist equally disinterested in having a baby, but who wakes one morning to find a little girl in a yolk-colored hat waiting on her doorstep.[140] This daughter-like girl then proceeds, exclusively, to mimic the women's spoken words and to copy her written work so that she only ever writes or speaks language that the woman has already produced. In both narratives the involuntary biological process of reproduction is paralleled with the reproduction of language such that the uniqueness of either act, and the originality of their respective results, is not readily identifiable. While the texts suggest similarities between these two processes Tawada does not construct a tight analogy of fixed exchanges. Rather, she crafts "figural" scenes which target the experience of a sensation more than the understanding of a concept. In Tawada's tales of somatic-linguistic relations words take on a liminal materiality as they are placed in close proximity with the process of reproducing new beings with their own subjective agency (as when *kare*, deployed as a reproduction of the English "he" takes on its own life as a more racy paramour). Likewise, bodies take on a textual charge as the involuntary processes they carry out are not only biological but also

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[139] Tawada Yoko, *Seijo densetsu* [Tales of a Holy Girl], *Seijo densetsu* [Tales of a Holy Girl], Tokyo: Ooda Shuppan, 1996.

[140] Tawada, Yoko, *Museiran* [The Unfertilized Egg], in *Gottoharuto no tetsudō*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005.

linguistic, as in the holy girl's blurting out of biblical verse and the daughter-like character's inability to produce anything but her "mother's" words.

The inability of Tawada's characters to thoroughly control the language that they receive and produce is often depicted as an inability to control access to their sexualized bodies. In her German-language narrative *Ein Gast [A Guest,* 1993] Tawada's main character suffers abdominal pains suggestive of rape after she is unable to stop herself from being invaded by the sounds of a foreign language at a party.[141] Eventually she is granted her wish of being turned into stone so that nothing can penetrate her. When, in *Tales of a Holy Girl*, a family friend vents his humiliation upon the girl by masturbating in front of her, she temporarily turns into a *kokeshi* doll- made of impenetrable wood and speechless.[142] The family doctor focuses on her wooden state that no longer allows for "being filled up," rather than on her speechlessness, and diagnoses the now mute girl as suffering from a "hysterical pregnancy."[143] Questions of originality are raised when the girl ponders the history of the *kokeshi* doll and concludes that as a replacement for infant girls that have been killed, she is simply a replacement with no origins at all. After she is released from her *kokeshi* state she starts to shout out bible verses in class again, and this is when she tattoos the word "silence" on her arm in an initially successful attempt to

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[141] Tawada, Yoko, *Ein Gast* [A Guest],Tubingen, Germany: Konkursbuch Verlag, 1993. In Hiltrud Arens analysis "the rape stands for the conquest of the narrator's life by the new language and new environment, and her fight to reestablish her own identity and some clear vision of what to say and do." See Arens, Hiltrud, "Das kurze Leuchen unter dem Tor oder auf dem Weg nur geträumten Sprache: Poetological Reflections in Works by Tawada Yoko," in *Tawada Yoko: Voices From Everywhere*, 68.

[142] *Kokeshi* dolls are cylindrical wooden dolls with the appearance of traditional little girls. The historical origins are unclear, but Tawada picks up on the theory that the pronunciation of *kokeshi* comes from the dolls' use as replacement fetishes for female infants killed at birth during times of famine. The aural pronunciation, though not the Chinese characters, could be heard as the combination of *ko* (child) and *kesu (*erase).

[143] Tawada also invokes the condition of "hysterical pregnancy" in *Makuragi* [Railroad Ties, 1999] where she likens a male passenger's ability to smoke air after he has given up cigarettes as a hysterical pregnancy.

discipline her body. But when the tattoo begins to bleed, rumors spread that she has begun to menstruate and she begins to cite bible verses again. No longer able to stop her outbursts, involuntary words and the specter of an equally involuntary fertility become intertwined in the girl's mind.

Verbal intercourse and sexual intercourse are superimposed upon one another in Tawada's imaginary to the extent that "lewd" is an accusation likely to be heaped upon someone who is involved is in the throes of becoming literate. The young heroine of *Hikon* [Flying Spirits, 1998], Nashimizu, has her first sexual experience shortly after she dedicates herself to studying the writings held in her school's small library.[144] What she experiences as her first act of heterosexual intercourse turns out to be the somewhat forceful initiative of the "leg" radical of a Chinese character that had become possessed and appeared as a man. The only way that Nashimizu could be released from this phantom sexual union is for someone to trace the man/Chinese character from behind her with a brush.

Flying Spirits is, as Iida Yuko argues in her article "Tawada Yoko: Seijodensetsu to Hikon" [Tawada Yoko*: Tales of a Holy Girl* and *Flying Spirits*] is in many ways a sequel not to the plot, but to the thematic concerns of *Tales of a Holy Girl*.[145] Both stories feature a young female intent upon negotiating her particular somatic -linguistic concern and each quest is set in a narrative rich with references to legends and spiritual systems. The female students gathered at the ascetic mountain school in *Flying Spirits* follow the thoroughly undefined "way of the tiger." The impetus for Nashimizu leaving

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[144] Tawada Yoko, *Hikon* [Flying Spriits], Tokyo: Kodansha, 1998.

[145] Iida Yuko, "Tawada Yoko: Seijodensetsu to Hikon" [Tawada Yoko: *Tales of a Holy Girl* and *Flying Spirits*], in *Bungaku no yami / kindai no "chinmoku"* [Darkness of literature and the "silence" of the modern age], Nakayama Akihiko, ed, Yokohama: Seori Shobō, 2003, 12-25. The young girl, for example, in *Tales of a Holy Girl* who fears that she may be made to bear a holy son is constantly thinking of Hera, the Greek goddess of the marital bed, as well as images of St. Sebastian-like martyr figures.

home and heeding the call to pursue the "way of the tiger" was the result of an understanding of access to language being inextricably connected to sexuality. Nashimizu's employer found her reading when she was supposed to have been cleaning the library and immediately jumped to the conclusion that Nashimizu had gone and gotten herself pregnant. Seeing her maid pouring over the pages of a book, the illiterate mistress mistakes the article on philosophy as one that Nashimizu was reading for directions on how to abort a child.[146] The pleasure evinced in the image of Nashimizu avidly reading generated notions of apparently uncontrolled sexuality in the mind of the mistress of the house. Shortly after being scolded Nashimizu abandons her employment and heads out on her quest to understand the relations between her body and words.

Because engaging with language in Tawada's formulation is presented as necessarily involving an openness, or a vulnerability, towards touching and being shaped by others, her main characters, explorers of language that they are, are often viewed as lewd by the more peripheral characters in her narratives.[147] It is not the explicit content of their language that is seen to be sexual and therefore dangerous, rather it is their engagement with language itself that appears dangerous and potentially sexual. Language, that is, appears to have an inherently sexual current. [148] If we understand "sexual" to refer to the psychic shaping of our corporeal selves and our dynamic relations to others, and if the traces of others that we feel in the collective words that we use shape our sensory experience, then there is a sense in which words are sexual in the way they inform one's style, or posture, of being in the world. As the teacher Kamekagami

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[146] Tawada, *Hikon*, 92.

[147] The narrator-aligned female characters are suspected of unorthodox sexual activity in *The Bridegroom was a Dog*, *Railroad Ties*, *The Unfertilized Egg*, as well as the stories discussed above, *Transplanted Letters* and *Flying Spirits*. None of these plots, however, involve romantic developments or sexual relations.

[148] While definitions of sexual and sexuality tend to be extremely tautological, for my purposes here I will focus upon the impetus towards relationality and touching upon another that is involved in emotional and physical intimacy.

casually remarks at the beginning of *Flying Spirits* "Lewdness can be found anywhere."[149]

Learning to Stand in the Fray. or "Where Your Body Meets the Words' of Others"

The title *Flying Spirits* springs from the disciple Nashimizu's gift of attracting flying spirits. For Nashimizu, reciting the words of others, is a process of gathering other souls, or spirits, around her. When Nashimizu reads aloud she feels the words passing through her body and doesn't know whether she is herself or someone else; the use of words that have been generated and used by others produce a confusion that is both corporeal and cognitive. Applying her teacher's dictum to resist easy morality and "strive to move in six directions at once" to her own study of words, Nashimizu decides that she will stay at the school "until the writings are soaked with flesh and the flesh is soaked with writing."[150] It is obvious to Nashimizu that focusing on the abstract nature of language alone is insufficient; "When I try to comfort someone with reason," she notes, "I can feel wind blow in the gap between my skin and my flesh."[151] Without circuits of thought that traverse both the more specular economy of "skin" and the tactile economy of "flesh," Nashimizu's quest for "flesh soaked in writing" and "writing soaked in flesh" will not be satisfied. Though it is never explicitly articulated, I understand the "way of the tiger" that Nashimizu pursues to be the erotic workings of language production.[152]

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[149] Tawada, *Hikon,* 76.

[150] *Ibid*., 79.

[151] *Ibid*, 86.

[152] The Chinese character for "tiger" is also the ancient Daoist symbol for "yin" (of "yin/yang") and therefore female by extension.

Structuring both *Tales of a Holy Girl* and *Flying Spirits* is the quest for the ability to stay in the fray between the homogenizing center of language and its difference-seeking limits -- between that is, where words function as collective conveyors of meaning and where they allow for one-off and necessarily new expression. While the young girl in *Tales of a Holy Girl* attempts to silence herself altogether in order to prevent unwanted interference, Nashimizu is better able to remain in the vulnerable position where control over one's self is threatened. Through the practice of reading aloud already scripted passages she improves her ability to control the force of her bodily sensations as she remains open to the powers of a text: "I see if anything comes over from the shores of my memory and control myself so that I don't get too drunk with pleasure, but on the other hand I have to make sure that my cheeks don't get too hard, so I keep a slight smile on my face. Eventually my voice loses the flexibility of a fishing net and becomes a sturdy eagle."[153] *Ondoku*, the term Tawada employs for "reading aloud" is composed of the Chinese characters for "sound" and "reading." Describing the sounds of a particular voice articulating the words of a universalized lexicon, it is a word that nicely couples sensation and cognition.[154]

The ascetic mountain school, with its disinterest in material profit and social status exhibits a general resistance to systematicity. The "way of the tiger," for example, presents a different quest for each student. But while the school offers open-ended possibilities for following diverse ways of knowing the overwhelming pressure to become like the teacher Kamekagami creates it own internal dynamic of assimilation. One student succeeds at imitating the teacher so well that her wrinkles, when creased in

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[153] *Ibid*., 176.

[154] *Ondoku* 恩徳 is also a homonym for a relatively obscure word meaning blessing and compassion, a term which heightens the non-rational processes at play in the ascetic mountain school.

pain, are the exact shape of Kamekagami's wrinkles.[155] Nashimizu, mercifully weak at logic, articulates her resistance to such assimilation in terms of her cognitive and bodily experience: "Where does their skin begin and where does Kamekagami's end?" she asks, "And their smells? It is as though a smell breaks out of the teacher's skin and intentionally flows into the students who gather around her. Willfully, I turn my body in another direction, and think other thoughts."[156] In an ongoing dialectic, however, at the same time that Nashimizu resists becoming "like" her teacher she finds Kamekagami to be the force she must interact with in order to gain insight and to progress in terms of her own mission of "soaking" words and flesh into one another.

A Sensual Build-Up to a Language-Touch

The growing intimacy between Nashimizu and her teacher Kamekagami initially proceeds in terms of touch and then reaches it highest intensity through a shared moment in which they bring their intellectual and physical selves to bear upon a single iteration of a particular word, *oni* (devil). The figural scene of their culminating "touch," I contend, captures the bodily experience of words' motility.

Stirred by Nashimizu's voice when she reads aloud, the founder and sole teacher at the mountain school, Kamekagami, registers her presence immediately. The strange wavelengths of Nashimizu's voice, one student contends, penetrate to the inner organs and produce a sensation of lewdness that pleases their teacher. Bodies, the student goes on to explain, are made up of millions of pleats and folds that tremble when stimulated and the pitch and rhythm of Nashimizu's voice cause the pleats on the teacher's body to shiver.[157] The interaction between the wavelengths of her voice and the words she

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[155] *Ibid.*, 91.

[156] *Ibid.*, 169.

[157] Tawada's pleats, like Deleuze's "fold" and Grosz' mobius strip, is an image that undoes the binary of the inside and the outside; the inside and outside fold on to one another and become then, no longer inside or outside but constitutive of one another. It is a concept that

recites is part of the flux between cognition and corporeality that enables a libidinal imprint upon the history and usage of language.

Convinced that "the magic of *letters* is filled with flesh," Nashimizu is increasingly drawn to the library.[158] Her quest to makes spirits "fly" involves a parallel process of researching and reciting words as well as learning to touch the body of an other. As Nashimizu spends the bulk of her days alone in the library, her intense engagement with words subtly parallels her increasing physical engagement with Kamekagami. A progression of physical touches and near-physical touches lead, eventually, to Nashimizu's ability to "see the tiger."

The first touch catches Nashimizu completely off-guard. The teacher quickly reaches out and touches her shoulder "like a child reaches out to touch a beautiful insect," and "without transmitting anything," lets go almost immediately.[159] The touch was so brief it was almost imperceptible, but the straight path of desire drawn by the teacher's hand, we are told, "is the single most beautiful line." This speedy and efficient message-less line comprises a touch that is so pared down it could topple over into not being an interaction at all. On the outer limits of "communicating," this touch is enabled by its

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resists the depth of an interiority or a "self" in need of being uncovered, and the idea that the meaning of the "exterior" body is manifestly given. See *Deleuze, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993), and Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* (1994).

[158] *Ibid*., 86, italics added. Tawada frequently positions libraries as sites where one can access previously inaccessible physicality; In *Tales of a Holy Girl* the young girl's interest in the partially naked and pierced image of St. Sebastian draws her to the library and into the company of the soon-to-be-murdered librarian, Isabel. Similarly, in *Flying Spirits* the chamber in which the teacher's body lies sleeping, and so seemingly susceptible to harm, can only be accessed through the library. Libraries are also frequently portals to different modes of existence; in *Railroad Ties* the moving train through whose windows the outside world is turned into swathes of blurred colors constitutes the female narrator's library; in *The Unfertilized Egg* the library is the only room in the man's apartment that the woman on the second floor enters after his death, and, as seen above, it is Nashimizu's prolonged presence in her employee's library and the ensuing accusation of sexual impropriety, that led to her presence at the mountain school.

[159] Tawada, *Hikon*, 84.

very paucity. "It must be because Kamekagami's soul is empty," Nashimizu determines, "that she is able to find the most direct path to slake her thirst."[160] In Nashimizu's estimation it is Kamekagami's emptiness that allows her to satisfy her desire -- the clutter of accrued preconceptions and expectations does not get in the way of the Kamekagami's ability to feel someone different from herself. The tension here, ever-present in Tawada's writing, is between excising the heft of pre-determined meaning that can overwhelm difference, and yet remaining perceptible.

Again it is the teacher who claims control of the situation when the second touch occurs. Nashimizu and Kamekagami accidentally bump into one another and end up in an awkward embrace. As their chests and stomachs brush together Nashimizu shivers and her clothing becomes "as thin as membranes." Staring, now, at Nashimizu's body, Kamekagami first responds with a wordless laugh. "We really do have nothing in common," she then, mysteriously, observes.[161]

Whereas the first touch establishes desire as being articulated at the very brink of communication, the second touch grounds this liminal communication in the difference between two subjectivities. The third scene of near-touch, then, witnesses Nashimizu as an active agent in their dance of intimacy. In a vista that recalls what Bettina Brandt has termed "the tawadian labyrinthine ear"[162] Nashimizu pushes open the unlocked doors of the library and crawls through increasingly narrow and winding corridors as she seeks out Kamekagami's sleeping place. Proceeding further into the interior she notices the ceilings becoming lower and the walls feeling soft and damp to her touch. Shortly after she is forced to crawl on all fours the tunnel empties out into a vast open space in the middle of which is a bed upon which Kamekagami lies.

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[160] *Ibid*., 42.

[161] *Ibid*., 45.

[162] Brandt, "The Unknown Face," 113.

In this membrane-like space the trajectory of increasing intimacy between Nashimizu and her teacher undergoes a significant shift as Kamekagami's body is presented in excruciatingly vulnerable terms. The teacher's sleeping frame seems to be inviting harm; her "blue-veined wrists were raised upwards almost demanding to be cut open," "her mouth was open with the anticipation of poison being thrown down it," and her tilted chin emphasized the length of her neck "which was asking to be slit." [163] Having followed the circuitous path to the sleeping teacher Nashimizu senses her vulnerability, but unlike the teacher who had reached out and touched Nashimizu, Nahimizu does not touch the teacher. Instead, she lingers over the potential openings -- veins, neck, mouth -- that lend the teacher's body a mesh-like permeability. For Nashimizu -- though not necessarily for others -- the genuine touching of an other that will make her "fly" at least a little from what she has already experienced in herself, will occur when she can fleetingly grasp how "the flesh is soaked with writing." The heightened permeability of Kamekagami's flesh, therefore, establishes a significant ground of possibility. There is tremendous room for variation in terms of where a body, not as a biological mass, but as a threshold between corporeality and cognition, experiences touch. The points where Nashimizu experiences a singularity of touch on the shifting web of the body, are those in which the workings of language and physical sensibilities are felt to be mutually constitutive.

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[163] Tawada, *Hikon*, 82. Wounds, in Tawada's oeuvre, often indicate the possibility of new articulations, or tears in our perception of reality. The young girl in *Tales of the Holy Girl* who is fascinated with a St. Sebastian-like figure, for example, asks her optometrist father if "wounds can refract and see like eyes can." Underlying her question, in my analysis, is the hope that wounds will be able to convey the transformation of corporeal relations and conditions to which they have unique access.

The Devil in the 'Way of the Tiger'

The way of the tiger that Nashimizu pursues involves the ability to channel the universal and singular elements of language into the same current – to experience words as both abstract symbols and one-off utterances made by particular bodies. When Nashimizu ultimately "sees" the tiger what she sees is not a discrete figure, but rather an opening of circuits between words and bodies.

Nashimizu interrupts a school-wide debate on the nature of *tamashii* (the soul) in order to shift the focus of the discussion away from the meaning of the word and towards the composition of the Chinese character. "The character *tamashii*," Nashimizu states, "is the character that the devil has left." She is referring here to the Chinese character *tamashii* which is composed of the character for "devil" – which is also the radical for "spirit" - on the right side, and a character "to speak" which bears a resemblance to the character "to leave," on the left side (*oni* and *iu* respectively):

去 + 鬼 = 魂[164]

"You have a spirit if the devil has left you. Or, the devil that has left is always the spirit, and therefore the spirit is always a devil. So it follows the sound of my soul is always the devil talking."

When the audience erupts into laughter, Nashimizu sees their contorting mouths and reddening faces as "the small rocks at the bottom of the river that glimmer in the sunlight." As the writer Kuroi Senji has noted about Tawada's fictional topography,

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[164] The Chinese character *tamashii* 魂 is actually composed of the radicals 云 and 鬼. Naxhimizu is creating a fictitious etymology to suit her purposes.

tumbling rocks often indicate the crumbling of a representational system. [165] Nashimizu sees just such a process of unmooring underway when she scans the audience and locates the teacher. In the "flickering network of nerves" comprising the teacher's face the Chinese character for devil had found its own shape and was diving in. The devil's arrival loosened the taut mesh and created openings through which something "new" flowed out.[166] The teacher's expression mirrors this generative rupture as "her lips of surprise split open and turned to laughter." Morphing from perplexity to wild hilarity the teacher's expression makes Nashimizu imagine "tires rotating off their wheels." And in the final line of the narrative, in the *sounds* of the teacher's laughter, Nashimizu *sees* the tiger.[167]

In the momentary intersection between the different, but pliable, economies of sight and sound, Nashimizu sees the tiger in the sound of laughter and senses the previously imperceptible. Words, experienced here synesthetically by Nashimizu in the form of the character *tamashii*, finally fly with the hazy materiality of souls. After being nimbly toyed with and repeated, the word finds its way into a structure that shapes the teacher's body and produces pleasure in the form of laughter. The trajectory of increasing

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[165]Kuroi Senji, Miura Masashi, and Katō Kōichi, "Sōsaku gappyō 240: 'Gottoharuto tetsudō' Tawada Yoko" [Joint Review: Tawada Yoko's *Gotthard Railroad*], *Gunzō* 50 (December 1995), 374.

[166] Flying spirits enact the opposite movement of folding into oneself as a constant process of subjectification, and instead release part of oneself outwards; words here enable a momentary flight away from one's self. This is an example of inter-penetrated subjectivity that I discuss more below in the following chapter in terms of the representational possibilities that arise from images of bodily-confusion with another.

[167] Tawada, *Hikon*, 191.

physical intimacy between the teacher and Nashimizu, in the scenes detailed above, reaches its crescendo not in a climax of physical touch, but in the reception of a word.

The "tiger," then, is the temporary circuit forged by Nashimizu's iteration of *tamashii* that receives a simultaneously sensual and cognitive reception by the teacher. The motility of words and the openness of corporeal and psychic relations combined to produce the "flesh soaked in writing" which Nashimizu had been seeking. It is a coalescence that, as Iida points out, "spreads pleasure."[168] Simultaneously public, pleasurable and intimate, the "way of the tiger" occupies the category, as so much of Tawada's bodily reception of language does, of the "potentially lewd."

Inumukoiri [The Bridegroom was a Dog]

While in *Transplanted Letters* words take on the topographic qualities of a landscape that might crumble at any moment, and in *Flying Spirits* words form simultaneously cognitive and corporeal conduits between subjects, in Tawada's Akutagawa-prize winning *Inumukoiri* [The Bridegroom was a Dog, 1993] words are vessels of communication that carry with them their own sensual economies. Tinkering with terms that hail from a different historical paradigm, therefore, becomes a sensual engagement. As the housewives in *The Bridegroom was a Dog* are introduced to a long overshadowed medieval tale, Tawada's narrative becomes, I contend, an explication of how words are always both constituted by, and productive of, specific sensory economies. As new terminology invades their domestic space the housewives first attempt to stave off difference by "translating" the terms into ones with which they are comfortable and to excise the lewdness they find there. Ultimately, however, the

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[168] Iida, 13.

housewives adapt the logic of the tale as a means to interpret daily events in the *danchi* (housing estate).

The forgotten tale that Tawada resurrects is about an adopted husband who was, literally, a dog. The English title "The Bridegroom was a Dog"[169] is a faithful and effective rendering of the Japanese title "inumukoiri" – literally," the adoption of a dog-bridegroom." What does not come through in the translation, however, is the sense of *inumukoiri* belonging to a genre of myth -- *iruikon* and *iruinyōbō,* literally, "marriage to a male of another species" and "marriage to a female of another species" -- in which non-humans are accepted into families as brides or bridegrooms, usually as a repayment for kindnesses rendered.[170] The generic nature of Tawada's title places it in a larger cultural and literary context of inter-species tales in which "The Bridegroom was a Dog" is a minor tale in comparison to the well known and, far more patriarchal, tale *Tsuru Nyōbō* [The Crane Wife]. The crane-wife's self-sacrificing support of her human husband's industry is well known; she wove him sails from her feathers until the process led to her demise as a human.[171] The tale of the canine-bridegroom which revolves around the sensual pleasures of a young woman, however, is decidedly non-canonical. The generous service for which the dog is rewarded with entrance into the family is that of licking the little girl's bottom because she was too lazy to wipe it herself.

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[169] Translated by Margaret Mitsutani in Tawada, Yoko, *The Bridegroom was a Dog*, trans. Margaret Mitsutani, New York: Kodansha International, 1998.

[170] *Nihon Setsuwa Daijiten* [The Encyclopedia of Japanese Tales], Tokyo: Bensei shuppan, 2000, 76. Within *iruikon* there are, amongst others, tales of *inumuko*, *sarumuko*, and *hebimuko* (dog-bridegrooms, monkey bridgegrooms, and snake-bridegrooms). In Tawada's title the term *inumuko* would be recognized by many as belonging to the genre of the folktale.

[171] The tale is a common children's book and has been the subject of numerous dramatic adaptations, see Kinoshita Junji's *Yuzuru*, for example. When, in 2006, the visiting Mongolian prime minister asked that the Japanese prime minister present him with a folktale to include in a Mongolian textbook, Koizumi Jun'chiro presented a version of 'The Crane Wife" --*Tsuru no ongaishi* [The Crane Returns a Favor]. In 2006 the American music group The Decembrists put out their award-winning CD "The Crane Wife" based on a version of the legend.

Mitsuko Kitamura, one of Tawada's many unattached and wandering middle-aged single female characters, teaches this tale to the students at her *juku* (cram school). The housewives who send their children to Mitsuko's rather unorthodox *juku* had already worked hard to collectively cleanse the words their children brought home, changing, for example, "snotrag" to "tissue paper," "getting a man" to "having a boyfriend," and deciding that the teacher who applies poultices of chicken-shit in times of stress was best, though not perfectly, described as "unique."[172] But it is when the students repeat fragmented versions of the *inumukoiri* tale to their mothers that, as the critic Taneda Wakako points out,[173] the mothers' fantasies effectively commandeer the narrative.[174] What ensues is a story about Mitsuko's sexual relations with a dog-like human male lover who, in keeping with the convention of *iruikon*, offers his domestic and sexual services in return for the kindness that she showed his male-lover's unpopular child. The narrative that spins forth presents a wide range of romantic couplings involving inter-species, incestuous, and homosexual, relations. It is also a narrative that brims with bodily fluids and excreta.

Is *The Bridegroom was a Dog* so sensually exploratory because the tale it revives contains potentially erotic elements, or should its heightened sensuality be attributed to the inherently erotic nature, and potential lewdness, of manipulating language? For the

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[172] All three of these words are then rendered in *katakana*, the syllabary generally used for foreign words and special emphasis, and pronounced to mimic the English word.

[173] Taneda, Wakako, "Kankei – Tawada Yoko" [Relations -Tawada Yoko], *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kansho* 41 (August 1996), 60-61.

[174] Up until this point in the story, which starts deep inside the housewives' terrain of the *danchi*, Mitsuko is only ever present when a *danchi* member is also present. When the narrative takes on the quality of the housewives' full-fledged fantasy however, a *danchi* member is no longer needed to recount the events and Mitsuko is often present alone or with her human-dog lover, Taro. See Tierney, Robin, "How Housewives Shatter a Narrative: Tawada Yoko's The Bridegroom was a Dog," in *PAJLS* (Proceedings of the Association of Japanese Literary Studies) 5 (Summer 2004), 36-49.

housewives, who have just seized narrative control and share visions of a dog-like man solicitously licking Mitsuko's rectum, are also the ones who had been busy crafting new vocabulary with which to represent Mitsuko's world. The tales cause the language-interested housewives to directly reflect upon their quotidian sensual experience, unlike the young students who quickly forget the contents of Mistuko's instructive tales. When, for example, students relay to their mothers that "Miss Kitamura says that wiping your nose with snotpaper you've already used once is nice, because it is so soft and warm and wet, but when you use it a third time to wipe yourself when you go to the bathroom it feels even better,"[175] the students don't appear to think about it again. "It came back to many of the mothers," however, "every time they went to the toilet, and they found themselves wondering if there wasn't a softer, moister type of paper instead of this machine-made stuff which felt awfully dry and scratchy sometimes."[176] Changing "snotrag" to "tissue-paper," the housewives settle upon a term in order to seemingly deflect the visceral reaction it had produced. Their intellectual labor, however, rather than inserting a distance between physicality and language, seems to heighten their sensual experience of language. (It is as though Mitsuko is libidinally interacting with the community of housewives through her sharing of the *inumkoiri* tale with their children.)

The words and the sensibilities coming from the non-canonical medieval tale do not partake of the same economies that merge to create the mid-twentieth century housing complexes whose walls largely circumscribe the daily lives of the housewives.[177] The mothers' daydreams of something other than "the machine-made

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[175] Tawada, *Inumukoiri*, 11-12.

[176] Tawada, *Ibid*., 13.

[177] *Danchi*, enabled by the Public Housing Law of 1955 and the quickly industrializing post-war economy, are centrally planned to efficiently use a limited amount of space to serve residential, educational, health, and consumer needs. *Danchi* campaigns, such as "*furusato tsukur"i* (make your hometown), often encourage significant populations from different

stuff" underscore their position as nuclear-family housewives living in housing-estates developed to meet the post-war industrial economy's needs for a mobile and concentrated workforce. While Tawada opens *The Bridegroom was a Dog* with a description of the *danchi* housewives as those who do not deal with others' excreta [178] the *inumukoiri* tale is precisely about a non-family member's interest in a family member's excreta – the dog is welcomed into the family because he takes care of wiping the little girl's bottom. The tale, set in an extended family environment, involving non-reproductive sex, and boasting a clear interest in bodily waste, is driven with what the French philosopher-theorist George Bataille terms "heterogenizing" forces that, in contrast to the forces of production, are not geared towards a final result or appropriation.[179] *Danchi*, in contrast, are characterized by rational sensibilities of efficiency and productivity and are centrally planned to accommodate the newly nuclear families of a high-growth industrializing society. The socio-economic shifts in family structure that led to the development of *danchi* also led to the re-deployment of the word "*shufu*" for 'housewife."[180] Whereas *shufu* had earlier meant the head, and often oldest, woman of an extended family

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geographical origins and occupational backgrounds to form "hometown" bonds. *Nihon Minzoku Daijiten* [The Encyclopedia of Japanese Folklore], Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1999, 73.

[178] On the second page of the story the narrator describes "the tradition, firmly established in the thirty years since the complex has been built, of not worrying about how dirty things outside were as long as the area around your own apartment was clean, which meant that when a pigeon was hit by a car and lay splattered all over the street or some drunk left a pile of turds somewhere, people just waited for City Hall to clean it up…" Tawada, *Inumukoiri*, 10.

[179] Bataille sees excretion and appropriation as two polarized human impulses. The process of appropriation, he writes, is characterized by a homogeneity of the author of the appropriation, whereas *excretion* presents itself as the result of a heterogeneity, and can move in the direction of an even greater heterogeneity "liberating impulses whose ambivalence is more and more pronounced." Bataille, George, *Visions of Excess: selected writings, 1927-1939*, trans. Alan Stoekl, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, 372.

[180] Imai, Yasuko, "The Emergence of the Japanese *Shufu* - Why a *Shufu* Is More Than a "Housewife," trans Lili Iriye Selden, *U.S.-Japan Women´s Journal* 6 (1994), 45-65.

compound who typically performed no childcare,[181] in the postwar period it was used to denote the adult female in a nuclear family responsible for all the household work.[182] It was this new type of *shufu* who comprised, during the daylight hours, the overwhelming adult presence in Tawada's *danchi*.

At quite a remove from the dominant socio-economic values of the *danchi*, Mitsuko, an unmarried, childless thirty-nine year-old female who engages in non-reproductive sex does not live in the *danchi*, but in one of the few remaining farmhouses on its periphery. Adding to the sense of a parallel and different world, the children access Mitsuko's school through a hole in the *danchi*'s fence. The *inumukoiri* tale that she tells, resurrected from an era with different patterns of economic activity and family organization, takes on the palpable presence of a foreigner at large in the insular walls of the housing complex. Removed from its enabling economies and supporting sensibilities the myth appears very strange; Mitsuko's lover, Taro, sniffs far more than he talks, is awake all night, and is rumored to be a drop-out salaryman whose repulsion towards colleagues chewed-up pencil-tops factored into his disappearance from the office.

It is just such "strangeness" that Tawada wants to bring to commonplace words. "I want," Tawada writes "to make words as strange as magicians's words."[183] Distancing words from their political and emotional economies heightens their sounds, appearance, and their stark functionality. And while Tawada's project is often to "rip the

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[181] Childcare was relegated to females who were either not mature enough, or were too elderly to, join in the main economic enterprise. See Uno, Kathleen, *Passages to Modernity: Motherhood, Childhood and Social Reform in Early Twentieth Century Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999, 9-10.

[182] This paradigmatic shift in the woman's domestic responsibility was hotly debated in "The Housewife Debate"(1955) which included more than 30 essays and took place in several journals. See Imai, 51-52.

[183] Wada Tadahiko, "Tawada Yoko-ron – tokeru chizu matou kotoba" [Tawada Yoko – Maps that Melt, Words You Can Wear], *Bungakukai* 51 (February 1997), 212-213.

masks off of words," as Wada has described it,[184] here it is a myth that has had its mask ripped off when it appeared in an environment that provided no enabling economies or supporting sensibilities. The myth's functionality is suggested when one character states that Mitsuko perhaps shared *inumukoiri* with her students in order to get them to enjoy licking and slurping their ice cream more.[185] This point is promptly ignored however, and in an analogous process to the ways in which emotions associated with a given word alter the work carried out by that word, the housewives grant the myth far more shaping power over the perception of their daily lives than the slim medieval tale lays claim to. In an outpouring of excessive meaning, the tale's logic of payment for kindness rendered in the form of an inter-species sexual arrangement, becomes the interpretive logic for the mundane happenings in the modern housing complex.

It was a myth, removed from its supportive economies, which initially ricocheted around the walls of the *danchi*, in all its strangeness. But it could have been a word. Or, to borrow from Tawada's lexicon, it could have been a bird. In her German-language text *Verwandlungen* [Metamorphoses, 2002] Tawada describes the materiality that accrues to words spoken in an unfamiliar language.[186] The recruitment of different facial muscles and the new coding of the body in a foreign language's metaphors make words so material and active that they become like living creatures; "its as if you are not speaking words, but rather that you are spitting out birds."[187] So, when a suppressed tale, or an unseemly word, is released into a relatively closed environment, its accompanying sensibilities -- here the licking, wiping and salving -- palpably present

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184 Ibid., 214.

185 Tawada, *Inumukoiri*, 15.

186 Tawada, Yoko, *Verwandlungen* [Metamorphoses], Tübingen, Germany: Konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 2002, 10.

187 *Ibid*., 7.

themselves. Did the narrative become erotic because the inner-story was erotic, or did the narrative become erotic because the process that the housewives embarked upon was one of tinkering with words and can not be divorced from their supporting sensibilities? When the sensibilities released in the process partook of a different economy than that which governed the *danchi*, did the words, like a bikini- clad figure in a supermarket or a dead squirrel in a carpeted bedroom, acquire a heightened physicality?

No authoritative version of the *inumukoiri* tale is settled upon and the narrative ends with Taro, Mitsuko's doglike drop-out salary-man lover, running off with a single father, while on a parallel train platform a former boss and his rumor-mongering wife frantically try to flag them down. A train intercepts their vision and when the train has passed the fleeing couple is nowhere to be seen. Tawada's "bird" has flown.

In the commentary by the Akutagawa-prize selection committee Ōe Kenzaburo praises *The Bridegroom was a Dog* and Tawada's accomplishment of "rendering an abstraction concrete." [188] I understand the abstraction to which Ōe refers to be the sensory reception of language. From the hole in the *danchi*'s fence that accesses Mitsuko's cram school, to the net through which the Chinese character *oni* finally passes in *Flying Spirit*, to the friable earth around the translator's house in *Transplanted Letters*, Tawada depicts language as a porous screen that gives way to a glimpse of the possibilities not yet, or no longer, represented. While the nets and fences of Tawada's favored motifs possess significant tensile strength, they are also pliable and vulnerable to repeated pressure and modest daily burrowing. Her wandering narrators take us to the hinterlands of words' meanings in attempts to touch the outside of a given representational system. Here, words are inseparable from a sense of movement; they become the "flying spirits" that leap out of one self towards another, or they provide the

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[188] Ōe Kenzaburo, "Akutagawa shōsenshyō" [The Akutagawa Prize Selection Commentary], *Bungeishunjū* (March 1993), 419. Ōe won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1994.

brittle scaffolding that enables a fall. By heightening the sense that the words with which we describe our worlds are both flexible and real, and both slippery and strong, these figural border scenes encourage a psychic corporeality. Tawada's "touch" is the body's roll into the gutter between words; touch takes places when the beyond of words' -- arrived at by words -- is sensed. Rather than an escape from the intellect into the body, it is a playing with words to get to the body.

CHAPTER 2 BODIES THAT DISASSEMBLE: TAWADA YOKO'S CORPOREAL MORPHOLOGY

Expanding *The Pregnancy Novel* paradigm

In Saito Minako's work of literary history *ninshin shōsetsu* [The Pregnancy Novel, 1994] Saito tells us that the first ban against the sale of miscarriage-inducing medicine in Japan occurred on October 20 1868, three days prior to the Meiji Restoration and the official beginning of the modern Japanese state.[189] Writing in the 1990's, at a time of heightened anxiety about Japan's declining birth rate and silvering society,[190] Saito provocatively concludes that "Japan's modernity was not begun by restoring political power to the emperor, it was begun with systematizing the control of unwanted pregnancies."[191] Identifying the Meiji government's increased regulation of reproduction[192] as part of "*datsu*-A," its burgeoning imperialist project in which the new state sought to leave behind a "backward" Asia and establish its position as a modern international power,[193] Saito establishes a correlation between state ideology and the treatment of pregnancy in modern canonical, and predominantly male, Japanese

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[189] Saito, Minako. *ninshin shōsetsu* [The Pregnancy Novel], Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1994, 8-9. In 1868 the feudal Tokugawa reign came to an end and an oligarchy of leaders, acting in the name of the emperor, made structural changes which paved the way for Japan's industrialization and modernization.

[190] *Shōshika* (the declining birth rate) and *kōreika* (the aging of society) are significant concerns that garner much media attention and public concern in contemporary Japan.

[191] Saito, Minako, 9. Unless otherwise identified all translations are my own.

[192] The new Meiji state then continued to heighten the criminality of abortion, passing laws in 1880, and again in 1907, which instituted increasingly severe punishments for terminating unwanted pregnancies. See Saito 9-36.

[193] *Datsu-A ron*, translated as "Leaving Asia," or "Goodbye Asia," refers to the mentality that Japan needed to leave its Asian neighbors behind if they were not going to westernize as whole-heartedly as Japan hoped to. The name comes from an 1865 editorial thought to be penned by Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), the well-known political and social reformer who advocated westernization in many cultural fields, and whose portrait graces the ten thousand-yen note.

literature.[194] The literary history she constructs in *The Pregnancy Novel* is largely comprised of unwanted pregnancies, illicit abortions, and the social and physical sufferings of the women involved. Far from being the focus of the novels, the pregnancies are banished to the wings of the plot, generally portrayed as obstacles that, once overcome, are quickly forgotten. Placing reproductive capacity at the center of her argument, Saito's concern revolves around the representation of the particularly female predicament of finding oneself unintentionally pregnant and relatively alone.[195] The ways in which the woman's plight is diminished and repeatedly relegated to the "behind-the-scenes" of the novel are the focus of Saito's criticism.

The experimental works of the contemporary writer Tawada Yoko share Saito's focus upon reproductive capacities. But in Tawada's novellas reproductively-informed logic is applied to male and female bodily-schemas, and language that figures conventional understandings of reproduction is indiscriminately applied to numerous bodily functions. Saito's valuable initiative, I propose, can be even further expanded by an overlapping critical inquiry that focuses upon the representational possibilities that are banished along with the particular physical predicament. The connections between bodily experience and conscious thought that Tawada's narratives explore provide a rich framework with which to conduct an inquiry into the non-treatment of pregnancy within the "pregnancy novels." For what is disavowed in minimalizing the unwanted pregnancies is both the relevance of a woman's historically-conditioned experience, *as*

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[194] Saito decides to look at novels that sold well and received broad public attention, with the result being that she deals mostly with literature written by men.

[195] The "first boom" of the pregnancy novel that Saito identifies occurs in the last years of the nineteenth century and was exemplified by narratives such as Mori Ogai's *Maihime* [The Dancing Girl, 1890], which generally featured male characters of monetary means and social stature who became involved with women of a lower social standing, Typically, when the woman became pregnant the man left her, and while the woman's physical and social states were compromised, he went on to succeed in the world (10-16). In Ogai's story, the Japanese male protagonist leaves his pregnant German lover in order to better pursue his career at home.

well as the relations between corporeal and cognitive logics that shape and represent bodily experience in general. If we understand the body, as it is characterized by Elizabeth Grosz, as a simultaneously psychical and corporeal object possessing an "uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside,[196] then we recognize that the "rational" processes of logic and articulate thought are in constant interaction with sensate experience and other such "irrational" processes as emotion and intuition.[197] When scenes which could potentially examine the dynamics between sensation and rational analysis, or between voluntary and involuntary physical processes, are consistently obscured, unprecedented and varied relations of corporeal and conceptual logics fail to be articulated. At the same time, other relations are left foregrounded in an unproblematic free-standing way.

In Tawada's narratives reproduction becomes, as it seems it should, a quintessentially human affair. Reproductive processes are not sequestered in the "back-street, " but are recruited to shape our inter-subjective experience of the world; our experience, that is, of being both profoundly separate from and inter-connected to others *at the same time*. As Tasmin Lorraine observes in *Irigaray and Delueze: Experiments in Visceral Philosophy*, "Our initial interaction with an other, is not informed by subjectivity, but is rather one that occurs at a level beyond personal identity where elemental forces have not already been reduced to stabilizing conceptual and corporeal logics." [198] In our initial generation we have all shared the experience, at however pre-conscious a level, of bodily-confusion-with-an-other. We then continue to share the experience of involuntary bodily processes and a similar array of choices for voluntary

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[196] Grosz, Elizabeth, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, vii.

[197] Here I am referencing Tasmin Lorraine's definitions of "corporeal logics" and "conceptual logics." See Lorraine, 6-8.

[198] Lorraine, 80.

bodily processes. It is this transpersonal nature of having a body -- the collectivity and specificity of our experience -- that produces the psychic richness of what Gilles Deleuze terms the "pre-personal singularities that compose a body, but are not contained by a body."[199] A profound loss occurs when a corporeal experience as ripe with potential for the representation of inter-subjectivity as that of one body being created in and by an other(s) is effectively severed from further engagement. Luce Irigaray argues that a refusal to forge images that are rooted in our experience of bodily confusion, such as that of the placenta, keeps us in the constant "danger of retreating into the original matrix, of seeking refuge in any open body, and forever nestling into the body of another woman."[200] We will, that is, maintain the self/other dichotomy in so many of its oppressive instantiations.[201] While a society founded upon patriarchal principles may fix reproduction in the female body, Irigaray contends that the feminine is simultaneously

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[199] Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix, *The Logic of Sense*, Trans. Charles Stivale, New York: University of Columbia Press, 1990, 103. A goal of Deleuze's "schizoanalysis" is to liberate pre-personal singularities from the drive towards homogenization that occurs in establishing a fixed subject-identity. Deleuze seeks to undo aggregated "molar" identities and to allow for original, one-off "molecular" becomings: becomings being the new instances that result from numerous energy flows and disruptions that occur "well below the conditions of identity." See Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix, *A Thousand Plateaus : Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, London: Athlone Press, 1987, 114-115.

[200] Irigaray, 179. The need for non-derivative figurations with which to work our imagination is a fundamental tenet of Irigaray's; "Woman needs to develop words, images, and symbols to express her inter-subjective relationship with her mother, and then with other women, if she is to enter into a non-destructive relation with men." See Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, 31.

[201] Irigaray, Luce, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Trans. Gillian C. Gill, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985, 15. In her reading of Luce Irigaray, Rosi Braidotti identifies the goals of feminist practice as a doing away with the dialectical Self and Other: the aim is "to overthrow the pejorative, oppressive connotations that are built not only into the notion of difference, but also into the dialectics of Self and Other. This transmutation of values could lead to the re-assertion of the positivity of difference by enabling a collective re-appraisal of the singularity of each subject in his/her complexity… 'She' no longer coincides with the disempowered reflection of a dominant subject who casts his masculinity in a universalistic posture. She, in fact, may no longer be a she, but the subject of quite another story: a subject-in-process…" Rosi Braidotti, "Becoming Woman: Or Sexual Difference Revisited," *Theory, Culture, Society* 20.3 (2003), 45.

"castrated" of "the impregnating power" by a specular logic that denies the possibility of being interconnected and radically other at the same time .[202] What Saito has begun to trace is an example of just such a castration, and what Tawada's writing offers is the beginnings of an alternative that avails to all the conceptual and figurative potential born of a re-shaping of corporeal and cognitive logics.

With the heyday of *l'écriture féminine* and "writing the body" behind us,[203] such a speculative investigation of representational possibilities may seem already irrelevant. When Tawada Yoko herself was asked, in the mid-1990's, if she sees her writing as part of *l'écriture féminine*, her response was that it did not seem necessary to identify bodily-interested writing with one particular gender. Her response did not dismiss the insights and possibilities produced by the intensity of experimental writing about, and through, the specifically female body, but suggested that the benefits of such work could now be gleaned by both male and female writers. [204] Certainly, the relations between gender and corporeally-experimental writing have shifted and opened; Hoshino Tomoyuki's recent *Alkaloid Lovers* (*arukuroido rabazu* 2005) in which the erotic desire that drives the novel is that of having one's body buried in the dirt and tended to like a plant, comes immediately to mind as an example of a bodily-interested contemporary work by a male

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[202] Irigaray, *Speculuum*, 179. Specular logic, or a "masculinist specular economy" is a key term within Irigaray's philosophy which I discuss more fully below. The terms refer to a logic that privileges the sense of sight and the abstractions and clear divisions that the distance involved in sight, as opposed to touch, enables. In Irigaray's framework, specular logic creates a system of symmetry in which difference can only ever be figured as "the other of the same."

[203] *L'écriture feminine*, a French-inspired literary movement of the 1970's and early 1980's is characterized by writing that contests the universality of the male subject in terms of content and signifying practices, and seeks to express a site of difference in which women can express their sexuality for themselves. Its diverse representatives, not necessarily self- appointed, inlcude Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and Monique Wittig.

[204] Tawada Yoko, "Raising the Scales of the Dragon," 234. The practice in many Japanese bookstores is to divide all recent fiction, and often non-fiction as well, into men's and women's writing regardless of the style or subject matter of the works. At least in this regard, Tawada's work is positioned as that of a "woman writer."

writer.[205] The broadening, or universalizing, of such writing, however, does not lessen the feminist project at work, if anything it marks clear progress along those lines.

And lest it seem that such a thoroughly literary investigation lacks political relevance, or that machinations found in literary texts are not at work in the extra-textual world, let us take a look at the political and literary life of Ishihara Shintaro, one of the principal writers critiqued in *The Pregnancy Novel*. *Taiyō no kisetsu* [The Season of the Sun],[206] written by Ishihara, the current governor of Tokyo, is posited as the exemplar of the "real beginning of the pregnancy novel" within Saito's paradigm. Ishihara won both the prestigious Akutagawa Prize and *Bungaku Sekai* 's [Literary World] new writer's award for *The Season of the Sun*, which immediately sold out its first print run of 300,000 copies, and was quickly adapted for film.[207] Featuring a wealthy young woman, Eiko, who is seduced by a slightly younger and dashing high school boxer, Ryū, Ishihara's novel shares the key conventions of the post-war pregnancy stories; an initial narrative identification with the female character who becomes pregnant: a scene in which a *jutai-kokuchi* (announcement of pregnancy) takes place, a sermon-like narrative turn in which the wrongness of the female's conception is quite explicitly stated,[208] and finally,

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[205] The specific history of *lécriture feminine* does not, of course, obscure the long history of exploring the body by male writers in the West, as in the works of Marquis de Sade and George Bataille, and in Japan, in Inagaki Taruho's (1900-1977) philosophical reflections about the aesthetic appreciation of young men in *A-kankaku to V-kankaku* [The Anal Feeling and the Vaginal Feeling, 1954], *Shōnen'ai no bigaku* [The Aesthetics of the Love of Boys, 1966] and *Prostata-rectum kikaigaku* [A Study of Prostata-Rectum Mechanics, 1966], or the early postwar *nikutai bungaku* (literature of the flesh) in which writers such as Sakaguchi Angō (1906-1955) and Tamura Taijirō (1911-1983) recast the militaristic 'national body' as the personal and decadent one. For *nikutai bungaku* see Doug Slaymaker, *The Body in Post-War Japanese Fiction*, New York: Routledge, 2004

[206] Ishihara Shintaro, *Taiyō no kisetsu* [The Season of the Sun], Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1956.

[207] Saito, 33.

[208] The narrator of *The Season of the Sun* comments that "Like many women, Eiko made the mistake of falling in love with Ryū and trying to be with him even when they were not enjoying physical passion," quoted in Saito, 41. Saito likens the heavy-handedness of the "preachy narrator" to that of a "news caster" and places the *furigana* for " news caster" next to

physical pain and suffering on the part of the woman having an abortion. Notably, abortion is not problematized within the scope of the novel. Eiko's death is seen, by friends and family attending her funeral, as resulting from an infection she caught in the hospital after a pre-mature caesarian section. With its glamorous backdrop -- the obligatory confession of pregnancy takes place on a yacht -- *The Season of the Sun* was turned into a action movie for youths, without the specter of abortion issues clouding its aura of "adventure."[209]

While Ishihara's 1955 novel may have been largely forgotten within the collective imaginary of contemporary Japan,[210] his recent mayoral statements about women and their reproductive capacities certainly are not. In a December 2001 interview with *Josei shūkan* [Woman's Weekly], a full seven years after Saito published her critique of "pregnancy novels," Governor Ishihara quoted a theory that he had found convincing: "Old women," he recounted, "are the most evil and malignant beings that the civilization have produced. Old women who live after they have lost their reproductive function are useless and are committing a sin." Ishihara went on to reference what he had read, saying that while "men have reproductive functions even in their 80s and their 90s, women cannot bear children after they reach menopause" and "it is destructive for the world to have people live until the age of Kinsan and Ginsan (famous twin sisters over 100 years of age)..." "I agree with these ideas," Ishihara told the Women's Weekly interviewer, "but I can not say so as a politician (laughter)."[211] A multi-term LDP Diet member and

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the Chinese characters for "narrator," Saito, 39. In the Japanese convention of *rubi*, a writer is able to use a given Chinese character and then write alongside that character the phonetic pronunciation of their choice.

[209] Saito, 37-38.

[210] Until, that is, the 2002 television drama of the same name was produced with Ishihara's active participation.

[211] *Shūkan josei* [Woman's Weekly], 11 December 2001, 12. For the lawsuit filed against Ishihara in regard to his public statements see Nihon shadan hōnin jinkenkyō kai (Japan

former candidate for Prime minister, with two sons now in the Diet, Ishihara may cut a rakish and cavalier figure as the current governor of Tokyo but he is by no means politically irrelevant. His outspoken disdain for the term "gender-free" helps to sustain a public climate in which government officials do not fear expressing similar sentiments,[212] and under his direct leadership the Women's Foundation which created and ran the Tokyo Women's Plaza, was dissolved. The previously independent Women's Plaza,[213] a major resource and sizeable venue for political organizing and artistic collaboration whose construction Ishihara did not support, is now under the direct aegis of the Tokyo government.

In *The Pregnancy Novel* Saito observes a "three year lag in the novel-ization of pregnancy policy changes." About three years after a public opinion or policy shift regarding pregnancy occurs, Saito claims, those changes are evidenced in a flurry of related fiction. Governor Ishihara's recent controversial comments, obviously unforeseen at the time that Saito was writing her book, may suggest that what she terms "the three year novel-ization phenomenon" is not quite so limited in time-span nor directional flow; Ishihara's fiction preceded his impact on policy and several decades elapsed between his fiction and his political initiatives. Regardless of the specific parameters, however, her

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Civil Liberties Union), "Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, The Third Consideration of Japanese Governmental Report." http://www.jclu.org.katsudou/seimei_ikensho/20030127speech.html

[212] Ishihara claims that the term "gender-free" promotes "grotesque" forms of sex education and contends that it should not be used by public officials. The well-known Tokyo University sociologist Ueno Chizuko has claimed that she was prevented from delivering a public lecture she had been invited to give, because Ishirara's office put pressure on the local Kokubunji council to do so, fearing she would promote the term. Ishihara has denied the allegations. *Mainichi shinbun* [Daily News], 17 April, 2004.

[213] In an effort to stop the abolition of the Women's Foundation, forty-nine women's organizations jointly submitted a petition urging Ishihara to maintain the foundation in its current form. The Women's Plaza in Shibuya was opened in 1995 and offers counseling, research facilities, screening venues, and meeting rooms. Its services are used by about 220,000 people annually. http://www.tokyo-womens-plaza.metro.tokyo.jp

literary history certainly implies a correlation between artistic representation and social process, or even policy. The portion of modern Japanese literature that she includes within her genealogy of the "pregnancy novel" is by no means minimal; Saito identifies reproductivity as both an object of compulsion and a topic that is banished to the sidelines in the narratives of the most frequently read modern writers, from Nobel Prize winner Ōe Kenzaburo to *The New Yorker* star Murakami Haruki.[214] And as at least the case of Ishihara Shintaro suggests, this pattern is not always an incidental tick or meaningless stylistic device but rather a treatment of female corporeality that betrays a greater belief that women's bodies are meant to be in the service of others, devoid of their own significance. Devoid, that is, of their own participation in the process of *signifying* that shapes so much of our -- men's and women's -- means of apprehending and understanding the world.

In this chapter I investigate the ways in which our embodied experience is recruited into the creative processes of representation and imagination, and thus my focus is less on social policy than on creative possibility. I am not looking for the lock-step between a particular historical moment and its later incorporation into the pages of a novel, but certainly the case of Ishihara only bolsters the conviction that fiction and extra-textual reality are palpably connected.

With Saito's work as a point of departure, I examine three of Tawada Yoko's novellas -- *Museiran* [The Unfertilized Egg], *Makuragi* [Railroad Ties], and *Gottoharuto no tetsud**o*** [The Gotthard Railroad] -- in which bodily play is set against grand narratives of a beautiful national language and the heavy emotional presence of a, generally absent,

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214 \Ōe Kenzaburo figures prominently in Saito's genealogy with three "pregnancy novels" between 1957 and 1960; *Shisha no oguri* [Lavish are the Dead 1957], *Warera no jidai* ("Our Time"1959), and *Miru mae ni tobe* [The Leap before you Looked 1960), see Saito 253. In Murakami Haruki's first novel, *Kaze no uta wo kike* [Listen to the Sound of the Wind 1979], a parallel is suggested between the suicide of the protagonist's girlfriend and another women's abortion. In order to perceive this parallel, however, the reader needs to pay attention to the chronology of the 54 separate sections. See Saito 78-79.

male writer. One of Saito's more whimsical hopes is that the sub-genre of the *ninshin shōsetsu* (pregnancy-novel) will be recognized and codified so that, as with the labeling of "romance novels" and "detective stories," the reader will know that he or she is about to read one before they begin to do so. In Tawada Yoko's fictional world this wish would translate to a desire for bodily workings to be actively cast as an overt readerly and writerly schematic. The female body, I posit, is not the privileged object of scrutiny or celebration within Tawada's texts. The objects of fixation are the moorings between reproductive processes and bodily-maps. In the eyes of Tawada's narrators, maps of all sorts present highly suspect claims; "Even though things that are hard and fixed are always lies, hardening provides a feeling of security," says the narrator of *The Gotthard Railroad* as she examines a map of Europe, "as long as we have a map, we don't mind if we get lost. If we don't have a map, we find it hard to breathe even if we aren't lost." [215] In Tawada's texts, however, a preoccupation for making physical matter soft overrides the fear of that particular panic. As Muroi Mitsuhiro notes in "Ayashii no aruki miko" [The Strange Walking Shamaness], Tawada's narratives have the roads of Tokyo folding into soft wrinkles, the rock-face of a tunnel's interior turning into a gently sloping altar, and a large hurtling bus becoming something like an internal organ.

These softenings create a textual mood in which bodily probing and re-mapping become "sensible" in both the logical and sensate meaning of the term; language becomes a tactile affair that invites the engagement of bodily sensation and cognitive understanding. Swinging back and forth between axes of starkly different values, Tawada's texts generate a sort of narrative kneading that facilitates the porous openings between frame-narratives and inner-narratives. The seeping back and forth of energies

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[215] Tawada, *Gottoharuto no tetsudo,* 14. The title of her collection of stories *Where Europe Begins* reflects an interest in the cultural and physical nexus of cartography. The eponymous story reveals her sentiment that maps do not provide an adequate answer to the implied question of the book's title. Tawada Yoko, *Where Europe Begins*, trans. Susan Bernofsky and Yumi Selden, preface by Wim Wenders, New York: New Directions, 2007.

and motifs between different levels of the text produces an environment of interpenetration, an interpenetration which buoys the question these texts so often seem to ask: what happens when all of us, not just mothers, are seen as having shared the flesh of another and when we figure that creation process as universal? What is unmoored when the reproductive body as specifically female is disassembled?

Figuring the Body with Deleuze and Irigaray

The bodily re-mapping always underway in Tawada's texts implies a plasticity of the body and an understanding of the ways in which the emerging figures shape the reciprocal relations between experience and representation. The body, understood as neither a biological nor sociological category, but rather "a point of overlap between the physical, the symbolic and the material conditions,"[216] is simultaneously a cultural construction and a material entity. When Judith Butler writes, in the title essay to her book *Bodies That Matter*, that the "matter" of sex, and of bodies more generally, is the "repeated and violent circumscription of cultural intelligibility," she puts into play the multiple meanings of "matter" as *mattering* to us, and matter as *the tangible stuff of materiality*.[217] The body becomes an interface between cultural inscriptions and our heterogeneous and discontinuous natures. "Constructedness" and materiality should therefore, Butler argues, not be placed in opposition to one another because the body is constitutive of culture and physical being. Indeed, maintaining such a binary allows the matrix of power that presents that equation to remain "disarticulated." [218]

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[216] Braidotti, "Becoming Woman: Or Sexual Difference Revisited," 44.

[217] Butler, Judith, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* New York: Routledge, 1993, vii.

[218] Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 28. In *Bodies That Matter*, which Butler wrote partially in response to criticism that there was a dismissal altogether of the biological body in her earlier work *Gender Trouble* (1990), she emphasizes that in claiming that the process of making matter is one that is capable of being interrogated she is not suggesting that a successful discursive analysis will do away with the materiality of the body.

What remains disarticulated with the acceptance of such a binary is the ways in which language, rather than reflecting pre-existing systems such as "matter" or "the body," actively structures our understanding of the world. With countless sensations and preoccupations at any given moment, the body possesses potential for infinite inscriptions and movements which do not adhere to a set of static relations. Tawada's linguistic-somatic play exemplifies the ways in which language actively shapes, rather than reflects, subjective bodily relations. Gilles Deleuze's notion of "the figural" stresses a need for new images that enable an active and heterogeneous understanding of the subject position. Though they employ different representational strategies, the works of Deleuze and Irigaray underscore both the importance of symbolic subjectivity and the ways in which "man" is the standard-bearer of the norm.[219] Irigaray's approach is to repossess the images that have been assigned to the feminine as the "other" of a masculine order, and create a genuine difference through close repetitions.[220] Her repetitions generate an intensity, and a burrowing, that present pathways out of an often abstract and specular economy. Deleuze employs figurations that emphasize flux as opposed to stasis; rhizomes, lines of escape, flows, bodies without organs (bwo),[221] and becomings are the

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[219] Braidotti, "Becoming Woman: Or Sexual Difference Revisited," 52.

[220] Irigaray employs a strategy of mimesis in which her logical occupation of the "illogical" female subject-position both creates logical contradictions and a flippant affective making her repetitions necessarily different from that which she is imitating. The goal is to then create a space in which genuine difference from the universal male-subject position becomes articulate-able. This is the approach she uses in her treatment of Nietzsche and Heidegger in, respectively, *The Marine Lover* (1980) and *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* (1983). This is Butler's gloss of Irigaray's mimesis: "Fine, I don't want to be in your economy anyway... I will not be a poor copy in your system, but I will resemble you nevertheless by *miming* the textual passages through which you construct your system and showing that what cannot enter it is already inside it (as its necessary outside), and I will mime and repeat the gestures of your operation until this emergence of the outside within the system calls into question its systematic closure and its pretension to be self-grounding," Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 45.

[221] Deleuze's imagery resists the grand narratives of a self-same subject who continually returns to a "deep" and similar identity. Subjecthood is not so much a singular construct

images that shape Deleuze's imaginary. In his fluctuating economy of interconnectedness and dispersion, "becoming-woman" and following lines of escape away from "the dead heart of the system" is a necessary part of the process of becoming, for both sexes.

Irigaray's strategy of occupying the central images deployed by a specular economy, and Deleuze's generalized becoming-woman as a liberating movement away from fixed valuations, are both at play in Tawada's narratives. The novellas I discuss below manipulate the lexicon of "feminine" fertility and generalize them into modes of perception for all. When set against Tawada's project, the silent sequestering of reproduction in the behind-the scenes of literature that goes on in the pregnancy-novels critiqued by Saito present not simply a need for revisionism, and recognition for the unsung heroes, but a questioning of the sensibilities privileged in representation at large.

Railroad Ties: A Journey Away from National Aesthetics and Templates of Intelligibility

Tawada's 1999 novella *Makuragi* [Railroad Ties] features a first-person narrator, herself a writer, who sets off on a long train journey with no destination in mind, but full of anticipation for how interesting everything becomes while traveling. *Watashi* (I), as the narrator is called, opens the story with a rumination on the idyllic writer's setting, and notes that the figure of a kimono-clad writer sitting in a library gazing out at a Japanese garden is probably a male figure; "No woman," she observes," would ever say that a kimono is more comfortable." *Watashi*, in fact, does not even own a kimono – after all, "a kimono is not something that naturally grows on a host body the way mold does on a tree."[222] It isn't, we learn, that she has actively resisted kimono, it is more that one has

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encapsulated within the limits of an individual body as it is a constellation of factors that, like a galaxy, take on varying intensities and configurations.

[222] Tawada, *Makuragi*, 10.

to spend much money and energy on purchasing, storing, and cleaning kimono, and she has not done that. Still, *watashi* realizes, passengers who see her sporting jeans will likely assume that she has a kimono somewhere at home.[223]

Quickly debunking assumptions about culture and gender and having established that, as a writer and as a woman, she is most comfortable when traveling on trains and wearing pants, *watashi* sits back and enjoys speeding past the scenery outside. Gazing through the window of the train out onto the fields of green passing by, she feels all the vegetation "mix together on the surface of the retina."[224] As her eyes become receptors of impressionistic input she comments on the greenery; "It was so soft and malleable," she notes, "nothing like the word 'leaf."[225] Similarly to Tawada's other writerly-narators, *watashi* works hard to foreground the imposing and unflappable presence that words, such as "leaf", accrue; in *The Gotthard Railroad* the notably unemployed narrator wryly comments that the Berlin Wall might collapse but the word "profession" will never budge,[226] and *The Unfertilized Egg* is narrated by a writer who, in an effort to prevent language from interfering with her corporeal perception, proceeds to retire particular words altogether. In *Railroad Ties* the traveling *watashi* finds it so strange that she and her dissimilar brother share a last name that she knew she "would have to journey away and leave her surname behind."[227] Pointedly, it is not the brother that she is traveling in order to leave behind, but the proper noun, the surname itself.

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[223] Ibid., 11.

[224] The Japanese word *mōmaku* (retina) is a compound-word composed of "net" and "membrane" – both of which are porous and privileged terms for Tawada.

[225] Tawada, *Makuragi*, 12.

[226] Tawada, *Gottuharuto tetsudō*, 22.

[227] Tawada, *Makuragi*, 31.

Railroad Ties is, arguably, the story of leaving that surname behind. Though the brother barely appears in the story it is his relation to the narrator that, when the meddlesome and menacing grey-suited officials question her about him, causes *watashi* to seemingly lose control of her own trip. "So, you are abandoning your responsibilities to your older brother?" accuse the two female officials after they ask the narrator if she has any siblings and learn that she has an older brother. And it is a metonymic slide of his name -- from *ani* (older brother), to *oni* (devil) -- that acts as a catalyst to what might loosely be termed the plot of the narrative's inner-story. Beginning as a leisurely and thoughtful reflection about the pleasures of traveling for a writer, *Railroad Ties* quickly becomes a frenzied tale, involving accusations and necessitating defenses, about the dubious events that the narrator becomes ensnared in while aboard the train. The interior story she composes about the older brother is a panicked attempt to assure the officials that the narrator really is an "interested" sister. As she rushes to appease the officials the tone of the entire narrative becomes breathless and agitated.

Watashi finds herself increasingly irritated with generalizations that do not apply to her. "Even though I've never once thought, 'I'd like to go to a train station'," she grumbles, "that is always where the train lets me off."[228] She describes stations as though they are cages containing captives bristling to escape:

> Hundreds of arms of metal, entwined, and nailed down tightly that is what a station is - a house with neither walls nor roof. There are ashtrays and vending machines. No cats, just pigeons. And people you don't know pacing restlessly back and forth, a newspaper in one hand, trying not to be left behind the times.[229]

In a narrative swing that parallels the movement from *watashi* as a carefree traveler to *watashi* as an interrogated suspect, nationally imbued markers of railroad

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[228] *Ibid.*, 13.

[229] *Ibid.*, 13..

infrastructure, grey-suited government officials, reputable kimono-clad male writers, and *watashi*'s patrilineal name, cluster together and create a gravitational pull towards systems of entrenched value. In tension with this homogenizing drive, and forming a different axis of open-ended play, is the "unaccountable" traveling narrator, and, as we shall soon see, disrobing conductors who swim in the sea, a body-inscribing little devil, and the untrammeled earth between the railroad ties. In the terms of Deleuze's framework for the stripping and re-filling of immanent meaning, Tawada's narrative moves back and forth across the dual axes of de-territorialization and re-territorialization, querying conventional assumptions about the physical body, language, and the nation-state.[230] The shifting of parameters that occurs in this process of re-valuation is experienced both cognitively and corporeally on the part of the narrator, *watashi*.

Much to *watashi*'s surprise, the train, which she had assumed was hurtling along from one station to another, stops in the middle of nowhere, next to a large unnamed body of water, with no station, or even tracks, in sight. Catching sight of a gangly young conductor who has just left his underwear atop his heap of clothing, running naked towards the water, *watashi* immediately takes off all of her clothes. Close by a female conductor is also undressing, and not only are her clothes dropping to the ground, but so are bits of her chest. As she undoes the buttons on her shirt, flesh that was previously bound up falls to the ground in pulsating *katamari* (lumps or masses). The conductor waits for the pulsations to stop before she unbuttons another button. Almost without realizing it *watashi* reaches out and touches the conductor's breast. The conductor receives the touch warmly, "like a handshake", and introduces herself.[231]

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[230] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka : Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986,16-17.

[231] Tawada, Makuragi, 14.

The rail system, as useful infrastructure, becomes temporarily undone with the train moving in unpredictable directions and the conductors losing their vestments of control. In this vista the train is, literally, off the tracks, the conductors are naked, and one of them has not only taken off her uniform, but parts of her flesh as well. Going off the grid, in Tawada's world, involves both the removal of patently fabricated objects such as train stations and uniforms, as well as the plausibly irreducible matter of human flesh. Once Tawada displaces the templates of intelligibility her bodies fall apart. The un-fleshing, so to speak, of the female body at precisely the moment when the train has run off the tracks, in a narrative that has already pondered the comfort and gender-fit of the national garb, takes the productive cultural templates of development, nationalism, and gender roles as the starting point of materialization. The ensuing *de*materialization is the complementary reverse of the materializing process that Judith Butler argues is "capable of being interrogated."[232] In her essay "Bodies that Matter," Butler examines definitions in which matter is configured as a site of generation and origination -- Aristotle saw matter as "potentiality" and Marx understood it as a principle of transformation [233] -- and argues for a redeployment of terminology in which matter is understood to only ever appear with its own schema intact, so that the principle of its intelligibility is inseparable from its constitution as matter.[234] When we see a body as both matter and mattering, in other words, we are also simultaneously interfacing with the myriad factors that have created its cultural profile. We can hear this legacy when we conversationally say that something "materializes," without necessarily referring to a tangible physical presence, but to a slice of reality that has been made "intelligible."

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[232] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 28.

[233] *Ibid*., 31.Butler notes that the Latin word *materia* denotes the "stuff out of which things are made" and also "whatever serves as nourishment for infants; nutrients that act as extensions of the mother's body" (32).

[234] *Ibid*., 33.

When Tawada's characters are no longer under surveillance, nor seen as significant or instrumental, they begin to lose materiality. This, then, begs the question of whether there can be a materiality that doesn't matter, or if relevance is a necessary condition of materiality? While Tawada's narrator fantasizes about matter's dissolution, Butler's focus is upon the forces recruiting matter into existence. Through her reading of Irigaray, Butler identifies gender-bias as inherent to the accepted notion of materiality and argues that what is produced as matter is masculine, and the feminine is that which is necessarily excluded. Irigaray's "feminine," however, is not a set of essential qualities belonging to a particular biological sex, but is rather, as Braidotti argues, a reference to displaced possibilities and schemas [235] that become incomprehensible and whose invocation as "feminine," Jane Gallop observes, is an act of rhetorical "linguistic impropriety" intended to jar the specular economy.[236] As a system of representation in which the sense of sight enhances the self-same subject's understanding of itself as an individuated being, the specular economy marks the material break with the other as a clean and complete one.[237] Sight is the sense around which discourse is formed, and through which abstractions -- born of sight-enabled distance -- gain their "systematicity"

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[235] Braidotti, "Becoming Woman: Or Sexual Difference Revisited," 48.

[236] Gallop, Jane, *Thinking Through the Body*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, 91.

[237] Butler cites Luce Irigaray's mission to identify "how the break with material contiguity is made (il faut repeèrer comment s'opère la coupure avec la contiguité materielle), how the system is put together, how the specular economy works." The "material contiguity" to which Irigaray refers is that between the biological mother and the fetus/baby, and it is the break with this material contiguity that Irigaray contends creates the conditions of possibility for representation as a means of communication between subjects. As the image of vaginal lips in the title to her book *The Sex which is not One* emphasizes, the distance from which the specular economy functions is not born of the" feminine," which is always in a state of touching, but is the bulwark of the "phallogocentric economy." So thoroughly is the feminine evacuated from the specular economy that the "other" within the specular economy is not the "feminine" but the masculine's other to itself; the feminine is precisely that what can not be figured.

and cohesion. Touch, Tawada's privileged sense, is an exemplary sensibility for exploring corporeality and inter-subjectivity, as one always touches and is touched at the same time. But it barely registers in a specular epistemology.

Butler produces her own linguistic impropriety when she asks such a seemingly absurd question as "What if the important point is not the materiality of sex, but the sex of materiality?" Yet, in the matrix of relations that Tawada puts into play, materializing does have its own historically-situated identity as a patriarchal and literate process. Immediately after the "natural" matter of the body has been tampered with, and lumps of flesh have casually fallen to the ground, the first act of writing occurs. The female conductor reaches out and writes the word "*kokoro*" on the writer's chest, not, we are told, with any sort of violent provocation, but more "in the mood of a child practicing her *kanji*." *Kokoro* is a culturally laden term that is often used to refer to an intangible value system which presumably governs the "Japanese heart and mind," and has been invoked in such moralistic and patriotic projects as the recent Kokoro Eduation Reform. [238] Tawada's usage of the term in reference to disciplining the body in early education is surely not incidental. *Kokoro* is also the title of a canonical Meiji-era novel by Natsume Soseki, an undisputed "father of modern Japanese literature" whose portrait graces the one thousand yen note. The novel centers on the relationship between two men, a student

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[238] Higashi, Julie, "The Kokoro education: landscaping the minds and hearts of Japanese," in *Social Education in Asia: Critical Issues and Multiple Perspectives*, Eds. David Grossman and Joe Tin-Yau Lo. Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing, 2008. *Kokoro no noto*, the *Kokoro* educaton notebook, which was created and distributed through a nationally legislated education agenda, contains titles to sections such as "You have been entrusted with the continuation of Japanese culture and tradition," "Cultivating a Love of Country," "Beautiful Language, Beautiful Seasons" and "Absence of duty is absence of bravery." Since the implementation of the new "Course of Study for Social Studies" in 2002 the government has expended considerable resources on distributing *Kokoro* notebooks and training *Kokoro* teachers. See "Japan's Education Law Reform and the Hearts of Children**,"** *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, Dec 23 2006.

and his older teacher, and concludes with the teacher committing suicide in an attempt to both atone for an earlier moral failing and to honor a military hero who had also committed suicide. The story, regardless of the author's intentions, frequently functions in high school and university curriculum to promote a patriarchal state-ethics by exalting suicide as a form of loyalty and respect to the emperor.[239] *Kokoro* is an interesting choice for a word to be written on an unclothed woman by another naked and slightly dematerialized woman: Soseki's novel is written in the form of letters between two men. While the procurement of the female character, the elder man's wife, is central to the conflict of the novel, she in fact rarely speaks.

The *kokoro* scene in "Railroad Ties," however, entails a woman-to-woman exchange of bodily touch and writing. The women playfully continue their initial exchange; "We were laughing and my breasts lightly brushed against the palms of her hands. It became warm as we touched the folds of our membranes and pressed our flesh together."[240] "Breast," "flesh," "palms," and "the folds of membranes," all figure in the description of these two women touching, but the totalizing notion of a "body" is not invoked. In this particular moment the body is not an organized and totalized whole. In Deleuzian terms the body is de-organized into a body without organs (bwo), in which the privileging of certain functions and parts has not already formed its subject-identity or bodily-map. Writing on such a deterritorialized body thus enables pathways between the

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[239] In high school and college curricula the third section of *Kokoro*, "The Sensei and his Testament" is often the only section of the novel excerpted. Komori Yōichi, the well-known University of Tokyo literary and political critic, argues that selective usage of this section, which contrasts sensei's moral failings with his beautiful death, supports the state's promotion of ethics, spirit and death as invaluable to the patriarchal order of post-Meiji restoration Japan, Komori Yōichi, *Kōzō toshite no katari* [The Structure of Narrative], Tokyo: Shin'yosha, 1988, 416.

[240] Tawada, *Makuragi*, 14.

body and language that are not necessarily cerebral.[241] *Kokoro* -- both a hefty and elusive concept of "spirit" and the title of a highly canonized novel which places that concept in a dialogue of imperial honor between two men -- is inscribed onto a female writer's de-organized body of "folds" and "membranes" by a woman whose very flesh has unremarkably fallen off. This scene suggests that the former power relations implied in the story produced a corporeality, and materiality, which was in fact not "irreducible."

The pace of the narrative accelerates as the text swings back and forth between the large fixed structures of the railroad and its officialdom, and fleeting, one-off moments of intense experience and bodily sensation. The acceleration seems to promise a loosening of the axes and the arrival of a new generative moment in which corporeal and cognitive logics renegotiate their relations. The exploratory space between these two writing women is quickly foreclosed, however, when *watashi* all of the sudden finds herself back in a train station standing in front of a ticket window. The only hint that the seaside scene actually occurred is the wet hair tucked behind the ears of the gangly young conductor. The narrator senses the scathing glance of a stout older official and feels the need to defend herself, muttering that "nothing indecent, or even sexual" transpired.[242] Interestingly, she uses the term "sexual" here as a repository for human interaction that is culturally non-intelligible: a catch-all for corporeal logics that don't really matter, rather than a term with a positive definition.

Momentarily released from the steely infrastructure of the train station and tracks, the narrative runs to the sea, only to be pulled back again into a ticket office by an

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[241] The narrator's body is written on again later in the story when *ani* or *oni* (her brother or a devil) repeatedly scratches her back; "He flipped me over and with his long fingernails repeatedly scratched the figure eight on my back. He drew it in big curves and in small ones, sometimes it tickled and at other times it felt as though my skin was being devoured. The force of his writing made me feel as though we were going to slide down a hill, it made my backsides shake so violently I thought a hole was about to be drilled in my back. To be this close to *oni* was really quite something." Tawada, *Makuragi,* 25.

[242] *Ibid*., 15-16.

accusing official. Tension between these de-territorializing and re-territorializing poles is again at play when *watashi* returns her gaze to the scenery beyond the train window. Her initial way of understanding the landscape is as a pastoral scene in which the harvested fields are bare except for the chaff of wheat. She then realizes that, having no experience whatsoever with wheat she has no idea what crops are actually in the field. [243] And as she questions the way in which she has been acculturated to see bucolic scenes, her own being loses its conventional shape and outline; to the world outside the window she is "neither man nor woman," but "just a forgotten lump of flesh hurtling by in a metal box."[244] Experiencing thought corporeally, *watashi*'s body also sheds its support structure and its history when the details attributed to the outside fields lose their validity; the effects of re-thinking, or un-thinking, are figured as a sensual softening of contours.

Watashi's body, however is again abruptly bought back to clear definition -- in socio-economic time and space -- as she is called to attention by still more train officials. A ruckus had broken out in another part of the train and as a prophylaxis against being incriminated in the scuffle *watashi* clings to two babies lying next to her that had been left behind by a passenger accused of not having paid her fare. "Whatever that argument was about," she declares, "I knew that if I continued to hold the babies I would escape all blame."[245] *Watashi*'s use of maternity as a strategy is surprisingly confounded when the two female officials who appear at her side prove to be more concerned about the narrator's relations to maternity than her involvement in the disorderly conduct spilling over from the other compartment. Finding herself covered in "red sticky stuff," and

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[243] *Ibid*., 11-12. "Nor do I know what rice looks like," she continues, distancing herself from the cultural symbol of rice as she had earlier done from kimono.

[244] *Ibid*., 11.

[245] *Ibid*., 19.

concerned about being caught "red-handed on this particular train," she dropped the babies back into their seats, and headed to the washroom:

> I was making my way to the restroom when two stocky grey-suited women appeared and blocked my path. They might not have been wearing uniforms, but really, with one glance you could tell that they belonged to a governmental organization and that their job had something to do with education. Their smile tried to convey that they were not here to interrogate or arrest me. But as they guided me away from the commotion, they grabbed hold of my wrist and raised it up high. "That's blood isn't it," they whispered looking at my palm. I thought I was about to get caught up in accusations of wrong-doing and murder and was not looking forward to the ensuing complications. But the words that came out of their mouths had to do with a completely different issue. "Looking at this blood you think to yourself, 'Excellent, I made it safely through this month as well without getting pregnant.' Would you please try telling us exactly what is going to become of you if you continue to carry on this way?" I tried to figure out where they were coming from, but I had no idea what they meant by "this month as well." Thinking that they would never suspect me of something like murder if they looked at the babies, I frantically started to cuddle both of them again.[246]

Her supposedly loose sexual conduct and lack of maternal instinct are criticized by the education officials, who proceed to further catch the narrator off guard by accusing her of forsaking her responsibility to her older brother.[247] In an attempt to prove to the officials just how dear her brother is to her, *watashi* immediately opens up her laptop to a file titled "Memories of my Brother."[248] She struggles to stay focused on her brother, of whom she knows very little, and the train of thought that captures her attention is her brother's feat of giving up smoking. (After the brother gives up smoking he marries a woman who Tawada names Tabako 束子which sounds like "tobacco" but is rendered in the form that many female names take with the diminutive suffix "ko."[249] The first

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[246] *Ibid*., 20-21.

[247] *Ibid*., 22.

[248] *Ibid*., 23.

[249] *Ibid*., 31.

Chinese character used in the name literally means “bound up” or “put in order” and would not be used as a given name.)

The focus of the inner-story seeps through to the frame-narrative and the narrator, continuing to flee the watchful eyes of others, heads to the stuffy and malodorous smoking car which she assumes no one, not even smokers, would be able to suffer. There, *watashi* finds a man who, unaided by any sort of smoking matter, naturally exhales smoke from his nose. The analogy she instantly conjures is that of a delusional pregnancy: “If a belly swells during an imagined pregnancy, then smoke is exhaled from a delusional smoker’s nose. Smoke was certainly very dear to this man.”[250] Desire not only causes the body to generate its own smoke, it can also, according to *watashi*, alter the body’s surface:

> Apparently the pores of your skin open up wide and devour all the particles of smoke that are hiding in the atmosphere - the particles left by last centuries smokers, for example. They sell band-aids specifically made to cover up the unsightly pores. The plasters contain a nasty and tenacious chemical agent. “That weird plaster,” I remember saying to somebody, “is more embarrassing than the pores themselves.”[251]

Opened wide and yearning, the skin’s pores create so much social discomfort that attempts are made to conceal them. But as the end of the narrative approaches, we learn that the concealment of the body’s plasticity is what is most discomfiting to *watashi*. [252]

From the first lines in the narrative where we are told that kimono are not particularly comfortable for women writers, and that they do not grow naturally onto the body like mold onto trees, female bodies are de-frocked of clothing, flesh, and hysterical delusions. After dropping lumps of pulsating flesh from her chest, the female conductor

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[250] *Ibid*., 30.

[251] *Ibid*., 30-31.

[252] Watashi’s discomfort with the covering-up of the body’s plasticity shares a similar point of view with Donna Harraway’s contention that expunging metaphoricity from our reference to “nature” is a conjurer’s trick.

sees breasts as a site of inscription upon which to (re)write the elusive ideal of mind and spirit, "kokoro." While the possibility of reproduction is disavowed in relation to *watashi*'s body, its conceptual framework is applied when describing a male body. *Watashi* sees the "red sticky stuff" as a more likely candidate for incrimination in a violent crime than as the menstrual blood resulting from not becoming pregnant. But desire, reaching a pitch so fierce it recruits bodily functions to its own ends, is found in a male body whose experience is immediately likened to a "hysterical pregnancy."

Railroad Ties, a narrative in which the psychological and cultural underpinnings that fasten body maps into stable shapes are jostled from fixed moorings, ends in the toilet. With her notepad flung open wide across her knees after her laptop's batteries lose their charge, *watashi* experiences the act of writing by hand as excessive exposure and flees to the train's lavatory. The potentially shameful, nature of the activity *watashi* is engaged in is emphasized by Tawada's rendering of "handwriting" as *nikuhitsu*肉筆, a compound word composed of the Chinese characters for "flesh" and "writing." A conflation thus occurs between habits that alter the body, such as washing, excreting, or grooming, and the physical creation of language, in that the appropriate place for all of the above to occur is behind the closed doors of the lavatory. As the narrator experiences a certain amount of relief in her newly-closed quarters, she is further heartened by the old-style toilets she finds within: "Luckily, it turns out that this train has the old-style toilets. You step on a peddle, and see all the railroad ties passing by, as the floor beneath you opens up."[253] In the last lines of *Railroad Ties*, once the initially liberating feeling in the train has turned into an oppressive atmosphere of officialdom and suspicion, the hole in the lavatory has become the only escape hatch. Watching the earth rush by below *watashi* sees what a fellow passenger had just told her was the "the last truly untrammeled and wild space left," the earth between the railroad ties. And as she gazes

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[253] *Ibid*., 35.

through the toilet's hole, the railroad ties -- *makuragi* 枕木, comprised of the characters for "pillow" and "wood" -- become the pillows that connect "last night's dreams with tomorrow night's dreams"; a place where neither soil nor imagination has been harnessed to productivity or subject to scrutiny.

The Gotthard Railroad: Entering the Male Body

In her 1995 novella *Gottoharuto tetsudo* [The Gotthard Railroad] Tawada creates yet another train-traveling female narrator who is even more keen on experimenting with the morphology of the male body.[254] "The Swiss say that the railroad cuts through the middle of St. Gotthard, which really means that as the train runs, it cuts through the body of a man," the narrator reflects in the opening passage. "I have never before been inside the body of a man," she notes in eager anticipation of her impending journey on the railroad, "Everyone once filled the belly of a woman we call mother, yet we go to the grave without knowing what a father's body is like inside."[255]

In *The Gotthard Railroad* the narrator, *watashi*, impersonating yet another Japanese female writer, goes on an assignment to ride the not-frequently traveled Gotthard railroad, an old two-track line that runs through Mt.Gotthard and cuts across two different language zones in Switzerland. [256] As in *Railroad Ties*, the narrative

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[254] I intentionally use the word "morphology" here to emphasize the focus on form rather than function. With such an emphasis, "morphology" keeps at bay the privileging of particular processes, a privileging which already assumes the "meaning" or "purpose" of a body.

[255] *Gottoharuto tetsudō* [The Gotthard Railroad], In *Gottoharuto no tetsudō*, Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005, 8. I translate this line slightly differently than Margaret Mitsutani does in her translation, "The Gotthard Railroad," in *The Bridegroom was a Dog*, New York: Kodansha International, 1998. Mitsutani's translation reads, "Everyone was once trapped inside the belly of a woman we call mother," while I translate the phrase as "Everyone once filled the belly of a woman we call mother." I do not find any negative associations with having been inside the belly of a woman within Tawada's text, and therefore I render *hamaru* as "filled" as opposed to "was trapped"

[256] The Japanese story "Gotthard Railroad" was created from a piece of reportage that Tawada wrote in German. While it is not a direct translation -- the Japanese story being fictional and far longer -- it is the result of Tawada's impulse to translate her account from German into Japanese.

begins with a challenge to the dominant national aesthetic; German intellectuals, *watashi* claims, feel compelled to follow Goethe in pining for the sun of the Italian countryside, but she herself has always been more drawn to the barren and cavernous environment of the mountains. Despite the pity she receives from her (boy)friend Reiner, and the general consensus of indifference to the dark and unpopulated mountainous region, *watashi* is looking forward to traveling through St.Gotthard. Contrasting her tastes against that of "German intellectuals" writ large, the narrator performs a similar intellectual disrobing of national aesthetics as the narrator of *Railroad Ties* who contests the assumption that a kimono and a Japanese garden create the most appropriate environment for all Japanese writers. This shedding of national aesthetic dogma creates a figurative and literal point of departure for Tawada's narrators as they take advantage of the movement away from sedimented ideas and customs that travel often provides.

The great expedition about to be undertaken at the beginning of *The Gotthard Railroad* is into the profound caverns and out-of-sight places of a male body. The ability to enter this tunnel, coded male, is a continued source of pleasure for the narrator. The names of the Italian cities that the railroad takes *watashi* through are filled with "o"s -- Lavorgo, Giornico, Bodio -- and she is convinced that the presence of the letter "o" s, and the sense they give of being able to dive into them, is connected to the presence, if only potential, of the tunnel. With the "o"s in the city names likened to the exit and entrances of the tunnel, the tunnel's openings take on a corporeal presence; as the train exits the tunnel she looks back and finds that "the tunnel was saying 'come back,' the exit wanted to turn into an entrance. The womb was saying 'come back!'" [257] Mt. Gotthard

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[257] Tawada, "The Gotthard Railroad," trans, Margaret Mitsutani, 154. I have chosen to go with Margaret Mitsutani's translation of "ohara" as "womb" though it could alternatively be read as "stomach." Within the context of this story where the narrator discusses the forgotten fetuses wasting away in men's bodies and where she likens the mountain the train cuts through to a male body, and declares that "a country couldn't be born out of a mountain" (Tawada, "Gottoharuto tetsudō," 12), I think the explicit discussion of reproductivity in relation to mountains and males justifies the choice of "womb."

is not the only male body that is opened to exploration in the narrative; the night before Reiner undergoes abdominal surgery *watashi* has a dream in which numerous penises "wrapped up like salami" are found in his belly. In his opened stomach the doctor places, alongside the penises, a single *kokeshi* doll. *Kokeshi* dolls are the notoriously phallic-shaped wooden figure of a little girl, whose possible historical origins include that of a commemoration of girl-infants killed during times of famine.[258] In the narrator's dream, then, a fetus-subsitute is slipped into Reiner's body. A close, symbiotic relation between male bodies and fetuses is again established when the narrator likens herself to the snake-like hordes of laborers who spent a decade creating the tunnel. "I too, am a serpent," *watashi* confesses. "A man's soft belly is more to my taste," she continues," a mound of flesh fed on fetuses that forgot to be born, decaying, in a dream."[259]

Watashi is clearly interested in dwelling inside the belly of a male body. Antithetical to the conventional description of the reproductive capacity as mysterious and necessarily female, her fantastic inclusion of both wombs and fetuses in men's bodies also confounds the notion that male sexuality is about entering and not being entered, that the male body has little to do with reproduction, and that masculinity is somehow both less corporeal *and* less mysterious at the same time. Indeed, *watashi*'s sense of adventure is heightened precisely because the internal male body is so unknown. "Perhaps the great mystery, the great unknown, of the body," Grosz writes, "comes not from the peculiarities and enigmas of female sexuality, but from the unspoken and generally unrepresented particularities of the male body."[260] Because it does not possess a history as an "object of mystification," Grosz contends, the male body is currently more of a

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[258] "ko" for child, and "kesu" for erasing, or wiping out, could be combined to pronounce "kokeshi."

[259] Tawada, "The Gotthard Railroad," trans, Margaret Mitsutani, 157.

[260] Grosz, 198.

mystery; the acceptance of the male body as the most natural and normative is perhaps the greatest mystification. Having conducted extensive research on the western philosophical understanding of sexual difference, Grosz came to this conclusion after realizing that there were barely any accounts of men's bodily fluids, whereas much has been written about female menstruation and menopause. Even a thinker like Julia Kristeva, who highlights the social construction of female abjection, Grosz notes, deems male sperm to be of a wholly different and far more functional nature than female fluids - somewhat of an "honorary solid."[261] Tawada shifts the sense of mystery that Grosz writes of onto the male form. When she describes male orifices as wombs, identifies forgotten fetuses fertilizing a male body, or tucks penises away in the abdominal cavity, it is toward the non-visible insides of the male body that *watashi*'s attention is drawn. This same curiosity is at work when she pushes her finger into Reiner's ear so far that, in pain, he makes her stop. If, as Grosz writes, cultures intervene into the constitution of the value of the body by privileging certain parts and functions while minimizing others,[262] Tawada is clearly making her own intervention and designating the male body as a mysterious object of tactile inquiry.[263]

"The name 'Gotthard' causes an inflammation of my mucous membranes," reads the sole line excerpted on the book-jacket of Kodansha's *bungei bunko* (literary paperbacks) publication of *The Gotthard Railroad*.[264] This excerpt reflects both the

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[261] *Ibid*., 199.

[262] *Ibid*., 181.

[263] Similar interventions have been made quite clearly in the art world with exhibits like Francois Liuvilles's "The Male Nude" (1985) and the political agitation of the Guerilla Girls who put into numbers the ratio of female to male nudes on display at prominent U.S. museums. The numbers are hugely skewed, and when images of Jesus are taken out of the equation, the ratio is staggering. A famous Guerilla Girls poster reads "Less than 3% of the artists at the Met. Museum are female, but 83% of the nudes are female." http://www.guerrillagirls.com/posters/getnakedshanghai.shtml

[264] Kodansha's relatively high-brow line of "*bungei bunko*" (literary paperbacks) is a limited selection of twentieth century texts marketed as being "modern classics."

intense level of excitement that *watashi* feels when contemplating a trip through Mt. Gotthard, and the body-rearranging quality of that excitement. Forming a border between a body and the outside, mucous membranes are also that which leaves the border half-open. While the construction of stable bodily contours relies upon fixed sites of corporeal permeability and impermeability,[265] mucous membranes potentially trouble the stability of any single corporeal logic because of their fluid and open interaction with the inside and outside of the body. Kodansha's decision to pull the only sentence about mucous membranes out of the more than the two hundred pages of text enclosed within the book-jacket indicates the editor's perception, at the very least, of the centrality of bodily reception in Tawada's train narratives. It is essential for her project that travel provokes not only intellectual openings, but also corporeal ones. If the focus of newness and difference found when encountering others were confined to the cognitive and the already represent-able, there would be a whole host of sensual experiences and uncanny, unformed connections that would be left out. The playing field, for Tawada, would already be too circumscribed.

Re-thinking the Schematics of Male and Female Sockets

While the gendered coupling of "entering" and "entered" is quickly scrambled with the figure of Mt.Gotthard's male womb, *The Gotthard Railroad* also explores the potentially gendered spectrum running from "filled" to "un-fill-able." The tension that is drawn between the axes of filled and empty, as in the unsettling of the exemplary feminine-filledness of pregnancy, creates a peculiar attunement. The promise that initiates the story is that the narrator might be able to experience what it is like to be inside a father's body, and the expression, itself, of this desire employs an image of an empty container being entered; while the published English translation reads "we go to

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[265] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1990, 132.

our graves without knowing what a father's body is like inside,"[266] a more literal translation of that phrase would read "*we get into our coffins* without knowing what a father's body is like inside."[267] Of the myriad ways to express dying in Japanese, "getting into our coffins" is by no means the most common. Her initial desire to travel on the railroad also revolves around being inside a cavernous enclosure; the narrator fantasizes about dwelling in the tunnel, subsisting on canned beans and being able to see her hand only when the passing train casts a light on her.[268] Rather than the isolated act of entry, it is the possibility of occupying a cavernous, but exit-able, space that is compelling to her. In a used bookstore in Germany *watashi* comes across a historical novel about the construction of the Gotthard tunnel entitled "something like *We Have Penetrated the Tunnel*." She buys the book and carries all 700 pages of it with her on her travels, though she expresses dissatisfaction with the title: "To penetrate the tunnel… I don't have good feelings towards this word 'penetrate.' 'Cavern' or 'blind alley' are far more beautiful words."[269] Notably both *dōketsu* (cavern) and *fukurokōji* (blind alley) contain Chinese characters for containers.[270]

The concept of containers that can either be full or empty cuts across all types of matter; the letter "O" of the Roman alphabet, the geographical feature of the mountain, and Reiner's human body, are all depicted as vessels from which things can be expelled or into which things can be crammed. The narrator's favored way of saying that a

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[266] Tawada, "The Gotthard Railroad," trans, Margaret Mitsutani, 154.

[267] Tawada, "Gottuharuto no tetsudō," 8-9 italics not in the original.

[268] *Ibid*., 11. When Tawada herself discusses the actual newspaper assignment that led to the writing of the short story "Gotthard Railroad" she says that rather than being intrigued by the railroad, it was the desire to be inside the tunnel that caught her interest, and while on assignment she ended up taking three back-to-back round trips through the tunnel.

[269] *Ibid*., 11.

[270] "cavern" or "den" 洞穴is a combination of "cave" and "hole", while "blind alley" 袋小路is comprised of "bag" and "small road."

character "said" something, "*kuchi ni suru,*" would literally be translated as "put into their mouths" and its rendering necessarily involves the Chinese character for "exit" and "entrance," -- 口 -- which is also the character for "mouth." Heightening her already clear preference for this particular construction the narrator uses a similar, but far less common, phrasing when she says "I took the words that were occupying my head and put them outside my mouth."[271] She also figures her body as a container when she distances herself from the German intellectual "duty" to drink copious amounts of red wine by saying: "it was much too troublesome to pour wine into my body."[272] When *watashi* wants to create access to a receptacle where none is represented she chooses the writing system, however idiosyncratically employed, that will achieve her goal. *Watashi* does this, for example, when she imagines herself in the tunnel trying to look not in the direction in front of her eyes, but in the direction behind her head. Every time she turns herself around, the back of her "escapes to the backside" and the entrance to the tunnel keeps on becoming the exit. When the narrator writes the "in-back-of" that she is seeking she spells it out in *katakana*, a phonetic syllabary commonly used for loan-words or exclamation, and in doing so includes a phonetic symbol that resembles the Chinese character 口 (mouth or exit),[273] thus creating an exit out of the back of her head with letters. The reader sees ウシロ instead of the conventional Chinese character for "behind," 後.[274]

Employing the images of enter-able and exit-able containers at multiple textual levels Tawada resists the gendering of the fill-able/un-fill-able axis of which, for

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[271] "… jibun no atama wo senryo shiteiru kotoba wo kuchi kara soto ni dashita," Tawada, "gottoharuto tetsudō," 18.

[272] *Ibid*., 10.

[273] *Ibid*., 32.

[274] *Ibid*., 32. Elsewhere in the text the conventional usage for "behind" (後) is employed. Only in this particular struggle to be in the back of herself is the *katakana* used.

example, the colloquial term "*o-fukuro*" or "bag," for "mother" certainly partakes.[275] The idea that a woman's body is a vessel for carrying babies "fill"s it with a predetermined meaning and a fixed relation to the processes of reproduction. This is a notion that has received particular attention by women writers in Japan, and around the world.[276] Murata Kiyoko's 2004 story "Karada" [Body] [277] is a striking treatment of the equation in which reproduction is fixed and contained to mean nothing more than the simple "carrying" of a baby; in this story a son likens his mother to a television set, a machine with no connection to the intelligible content it mechanically projects. "Body" concludes with the telling of a story, seen on television, about an adopted son who finds his biological mother in another country. She has just died, but her body is being kept intact for medical experimentation. The son, then, can still meet the literal body that carried him. In Tsushima Yuko's *Chōji* [Child of Fortune][278] a mother's belly swells with a delusional pregnancy, even though she isn't consciously hoping for another child, and she fears she is in the process of losing her only child to her sister's household which appears more warm and "family-like." The mother's desire for fulfillment is confined to expressing itself as a desire to reproduce, even though that is clearly not what her inarticulate longing is about. Both *Child of Fortune* and "Body" problematize the ways

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[275] The term "fukuro" is said to derive from a story in which a young girl is able to support and heal her ailing mother by making and selling owl figures. "Owl" is also pronounced "fukuro," but while "owl" and "bag" are homophones in Japanese, the Chinese character that denotes the meaning of "fukuro" as "mother" is not the character for "owl," but the character for "bag" - お袋

[276] Fatou Diome's *La Preference Nationale* (2002) in which the narrator states that her relevance to the French government, as an African woman, expands in relation to the size of her uterus, is one such treatment in French literature, for example.

[277] Murata Kiyoko, "Karada" [Body], In *Bungaku 2004* [Literature 2004], Ed. Nihonbungeikakyōkai. Tokyo: Kodansha, 2004. Murata Kyoko is a contemporary Japanese writer whose Akutagawa prize-winning story *Nabe no naka* [In the Middle of the Bowl] was adapted by the film-maker Akira Kurosawa for his 1991 film "Rhapsody in August."

[278] Tsushima Yuko, *Chōji* [Child of Fortune], Tokyo: Kawade shobōshinsha, 1978.

in which the maternal body is physically and emotionally construed as a simple vessel to carry children, or the longing for children. In a less topical manner, Tawada's later and more formally experimental writing contests a similar paradigm. In her writings the concept of a bodily receptacle is applied to so many varied corporeal experiences -- speaking, dying, drinking, and seeing -- that its stranglehold as a metaphor for reproduction is loosened. When the male body is figured as being filled -- with longed-for smoke, or a *kokeshi* doll, or the narrator herself in the case of Mt. Gotthard -- the particular understanding of reproduction as a process of swelling and carrying is further demystified. What emerges from this redeployment and general dispersal of the image of bodies as vessels is the sense that both male bodies and female bodies can be filled with, or emptied of, meaning.

The scattering of what we conventionally term "female reproductive capacities" in logically improbable ways is a feature found in much of Tawada's fiction; her characters include a little girl created from an egg that was never fertilized, an anus-exposing male beast with female breasts, and a high school boy whose nosebleed is termed "male menses." [279] Neither sexual nor power relations between men and women are a focus of Tawada's literary experimentation in the same way that they are, for example, in Matsuura Rieko's *Oya yubi P no shūgyō jidai* [The Apprenticeship Period of Big Toe Penis] in which a woman's big toe becomes a penis as well as the catalyst for heterosexual sex with two penis-ed mates. [280] While in Tawada's texts penises might

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[279] From *Museiran* [The Unfertilized Egg"], M*oji ishoku* [Transplanted Letters] and S*eijo densetsu* [Tales of the Holy Girl], respectively.

[280] Matsuura Rieko, *Oya yubi P no shūgyō jidai* [The Apprenticeship Period of Big Toe P], Tokyo: Kawade shobōshinsha, 1993. Matsuura Rieko is a contemporary of Tawada Yoko's whose writing is often described as experimental and avant-garde. Matsuura Rieko, Shono Yoriko, and Tawada Yoko have all received critical attention, and are sometimes grouped together, as contemporary women writers doing provocative work in the areas of gender and sexuality. See, for example, Hasumi Shigehiko and Watanabe Natsumi. "Hajirai no sekushuariti--Matsuura Rieko, Shono Yoriko, Tawada Yoko, soshite Yoshimoto Banana" [Shy Sexuality:

lack the gravity they elsewhere receive -- sticking out, for example, like a little tower in the sand when the narrator playfully spins Reiner around [281] -- it is unlikely that they would be cast onto an identifiably female character in an attempt to redress perceived power imbalances. The tactile bodily-probing and re-mapping that goes on in Tawada's narratives rarely injects pathos into the privileged foci of normative heterosexuality, or of any sexuality between two fully constituted subjects. If the "quilting pin" of meaning,[282] in regards to the body, has fixed a binding stitch between the individuated subject and a specular notion of the corporeal body, Tawada's exploration of the transpersonal nature of having a body participates in unbinding that closure.

The sensibilities of touch and the ability to rest in indeterminate realms -- key indices for a transpersonal relationality -- are underdeveloped within a specular economy of representation in which the fully separate and autonomous physical body perfectly overlaps with a free and independent subject. In order for a relationality of touch and indeterminacy to "be figured" it is not enough that a new symbol is generated, but that a system in which the figuration can be made intelligible is simultaneously fabricated. Without such fabrication, conventional vessel-like depictions of reproductivity, such as those within the pages of the Japanese "pregnancy novels," easily register while schemas of corporeal interpenetration remain displaced.

When Tawada incorporates wombs, and menses, and relations to fetuses into her writing of the male body, she displaces a masculine reproductive logic back onto male

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Matsuura Rieko, Shono Yoriko, Tawada Yoko, and then Yoshimoto Banana]. *Bungei* 32 (April 1993): 77-91.

[281] Tawada, "Gottuharuto no tetsudō," 19.

[282] In Lacan's writing "le point de caption" – the quilting point of meaning – is the point at which a particular meaning is made out of the mass of meanings that circulate: "It's the point of convergence that enables everything that happens in this discourse to be situated retroactively and prospectively. Lacan, *Seminar III*, 267-8

bodies, theoretically (perhaps) its more proper domain. And when she applies notions of filled and empty to as many figurations as possible she is expropriating a masculine reproductive logic that understands reproduction as the activity of a womb, or a vessel, and not that of a subject with the corporeal experience of bodily confusion with another, or a subject who has matured with both psychical and involuntary physical preparation for reproduction. While, as mentioned above, a society founded and structured upon patriarchal principles may fix reproduction in the female body, that reproduction occurs, "through the feminine, but with no assistance from her." "Woman," Irigaray asserts, "is castrated of the impregnating power which belongs only to the unchangeably masculine."[283] Marking the female as reproductive, then, is not the same as recognizing the figural and conceptual potential involved in the process of reproduction, a process in which the female body obviously plays an integral role.

Tawada identifies the contradictions inherent in the representation of female reproductivity within a masculinist economy, or what Irigaray terms "a phallic fantasy of a fully self-constituted patrilineality."[284] Pondering the placement of mountains in the middle of an old map of Switzerland, the narrator of *The Gotthard Railroad* determines that "it is a lie that Switzerland was born from those mountains." "A country can't be born from a mountain," she reasons, because "there is no uterus that can give birth to a country."[285] She then goes on to identify a critical disconnect between the patent content of an image and the enabling representational logic:

> Mountains are thought of as mothers, but even when you say it is a mother, they are still believed to be male. And for whatever reason, most people are quite comfortable with that. It's the same way with Mt. Fuji. Why does that mountain appear in the middle of

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[283] Irigaray, Luce, "Une mere de glace," in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Trans. Gillian C. Gill, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985, 179.

[284] *Ibid.*, 179-180.

[285] Tawada, "Gottoharuto no tetsudō," 12.

> postcards that have "Japan" written across them? It creates that illusion that Japan was born from the middle of Mt. Fuji in a single stroke.[286]

Inscribed in a predominantly male-centered power schema -- the "birth" of a modern nation state -- the figurative language that ascribes the feminine gender to mountains quickly buckles. The seeming contradiction is something that "most people are comfortable with" because it is not really a contradiction at all. Specular images of birth in which, for example, Japan is assumed to be born "in a single stroke," and with immediate autonomy, already partake of a representational logos that occludes the inter-subjective elements of reproduction. A relationality of bodily-confusion-with-another simply does not materialize within such a framework.

Tawada's scattering of reproductive images away from the conventionally female maternal body does not simply displace a masculine reproductive logic back onto male bodies, it begins to generalize a reproductively-informed corporeal logic that applies to all bodies. Instead of women's bodies remaining a site of inscription for a masculinist logic, they become a source of innumerable schematics for representational economies and figures that take seriously the interaction between corporeal and cognitive logics.

Ovulating Meaning: Glimpsing the Imperceptible in *The Unfertilized Egg*

> What can be represented, in other words, is not all that there is. And furthermore, what can be represented often diverts us from the living moment of imperceptible becomings. That is, because of the organizing hierarchies of our conscious experience, we miss the singularities that continually transgress the categories we set up and confuse the representations that we would give.
>
> -Tasmin Lorraine, *Experiments in Visceral Philosophy*

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[286] *Ibid*., 13.

Sono hi soko de ugoita mono ga atta: That day there was something there that moved. [287] Or, "There, that day, something moved." This spare line, containing only two basic kanji and the word *mono* rendered in katakana, the least florid of Japanese writing systems, comprises not just the opening line, but the opening section of Tawada Yoko's one hundred and twenty six-page novella *Museiran* [The Unfertilized Egg, 2005].

"That day, there, a moving thing, was." Particularities are stripped from this scene in which no introduction of the speaking subject is given, and yet, there is an almost tangible sense of trying to pin down a specific movement, or locate a significant shift, in the environment. A tension exists between the universal and the particular, between clutter-absented and vision-enabling matter. The reader quickly learns more specific details; the site "there" is a garden, the person perceiving the "moving thing" is a woman whose main occupation is writing down random ideas and filing them away without a second thought, and "that day" was one of unusually piercing sunlight. The "moving thing," however, never gains the same clarity as the scene's other components. As the general impression of the opening line comes into clearer focus, the element that remains undefined, visually and conceptually, is the "moving thing." The day the woman's vision was first able to capture the thing moving was the same day that rays of light bouncing off the trees had suddenly become much sharper. "Like a dentist's steel tool that finds impossible gaps between teeth," the penetrating rays wrenched open gaps in the atmosphere.[288] And while the word *jumoku* (trees and shrubs) had, up until then,

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[287] Tawada, *Museiran* [The Unfertilized Egg], in *Gottoharuto no tetsudō*, Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005, 42.

[288] *Ibid*., 42.

carried with it a genuine sensation, unlike "poplar" and "fir" that had lost there flesh due to lack of use, the woman ceased using *jumoku* from that day onwards.[289] The word had been shot through with holes by the infinite rays of the autumnal sun.

The opening line establishes a connection between words, flesh, and attunement to previously imperceptible movement. The trees formed a veil which occluded a specific type of movement, and on this day, with her sight no longer organizing itself around the word *jumoku* she is able to sense a new movement. There is a slippage between the word *jumoku* and the trees themselves; which is the veil, the organizing concept, or the material trees? And this begins, I contend, a line of inquiry into how the experience of materiality is always informed by the images and grammar with which we understand our corporeality. Retiring the word tree, the woman hopes to bring alive the relationships that were truncated in such a definition, the elements of tree-ness that were under-emphasized, the relations of trees that she could never hope to understand.

The scene which follows the opening line mimics ovum launching through the fallopian tubes to the uterus, for possible fertilization. The "woman," as she is consistently referred to in the narrative, senses a movement in a lush, sun-bathed garden. When she chases down the agent of the movement, she catches a glimpse of a tiny person wearing a yolk-colored hat.[290] The chase and struggle to articulate the representational networks engaged in the process of ovulation animates the ensuing narrative. Changing corporeal perceptions constantly inform the woman's language; as she develops new sensibilities with which to listen to the movement of her body the woman begins to retire

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289 *Ibid*., 43.

290 *Ibid*., 55-56.

more and more words and to replace them with others. The following morning she introduces "telegraph tower" into her vocabulary in lieu of "trees" and she continues to replace particular words with similarly non-sentimental substitutes;[291] leaves eventually get changed to "receipts"[292] and garden to "four-cornered patch of land."[293] Her reasons for retiring them vary. Sometimes it is a sense of unease and a desire to "cool her brow," and at others it is due to a remorseful feeling of having used a word too lightly -- "leaves" for example -- without ever having tried to understand the experience it was attempting to represent. As a child, the woman had a history of forging a personal vocabulary, but she ceased cultivating it because she was ridiculed when her made-up words would slip out in conversation. The only other reason for which she was ridiculed as a child, the reader later learns, was masturbating.[294] Such a parallel narrows the space between experience and representation and tightens the connection between words and flesh. Creating one's own language becomes somehow akin to touching oneself.

The suggestion of ovulation grows heavier as the narrative proceeds. One day a little girl wearing a yellow hat shows up at the door of the house the woman shared with a man with whom, significantly, she had never been sexually involved.[295] This little girl, presumably the unfertilized egg of the title, is bathed by the woman in water that comes

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[291] *Ibid*., 43.

[292] *Ibid*., 93.

[293] *Ibid*., 47.

[294] *Ibid*., 46.

[295] *Ibid*., 64.

to resemble amniotic fluid.[296] The girl generates moods and acts of her own doing, but the only articulations she produces are imitations of the woman's.[297] She does not speak except for the infrequent instances where she uncannily mimics something the woman has said,[298] and her drawings are all imitations of the women's own writing.[299] The little girl exerts a strong and frequently violent physical presence upon the woman. She insists on sleeping with her and bathing with her, often inserting her hands between the woman's legs and forcing the woman to do the same to her.[300] In her most physically overwhelming moment she ties the woman up and refuses to unbind her for so long the woman loses control of her bowels.[301] When the woman, in the last lines of the story, is ultimately arrested and her writings destroyed, the authorities are unaware that the little girl has run away with her own copies of the woman's writings.[302]

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[296] *Ibid*., 68.

[297] Yonaha Keiko's interpretation of the title – *Museiran* – ignores the meaning of the Chinese characters and instead uses the sounds to conjure a word that doesn't exist, "musei," as the negative of *seisei* (produce). "Mu" 無as in the "mu" of the story title, can function as a negative. Yonaha sees the non-production of meaning as the representational aim of the narrative. See Yonaha Keiko, "Tawada Yoko no gengo sekai: e-teru-teki shintai-ron [The discursive world of Tawada Yoko: The Theory of an Ether-like Body], *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kansho bessatsu* (March 2004): 197-199.

[298] *Ibid*., 75.

[299] *Ibid*., 77.

[300] *Ibid*., 67.

[301] Tawada, *Museiran*, 138. Muroi Mitsuhiro reads this scene as exemplifying the libido of writing in "Sōsaku gappyo: 'Museiran" Tawada Yoko" [Joint Critique: Tawada Yoko's 'The Unfertilized Egg], *Gunzo* 50.2 (1995), 418.

[302] *Ibid*., 166.

In these scenes Tawada taps into the involuntary, or what Gilles Deleuze terms the "pre-personal" process of ovulation -- a process that goes on in many bodies and is not recruited into constituting the identity of a particular historical subject. In doing so, she imagines a mode of feeling radically singular and permeable at the same time. Clearly, there is a high degree of bodily confusion with another; the girl's existence is not known to the outside world, the two share physical and reciprocal physical intimacies, and the girl only produces sounds and pictures that come directly from the women's initial physical production. Irigaray contends that instances of bodily confusion, such as the engagement with the placenta, are rarely symbolized and whatever fascination we may have with them generally remains veiled. But it is this elemental state of bodily confusion with another, an other who might not even become an other, just the potentiality of an other, that is precisely the zone that the woman in *Museiran* is finding her self in and which she is striving to describe. Repeatedly, parts of her body quiver and feel as though they are about to leave just as she is trying to identify a movement elsewhere:

> Sometimes when the woman waited at the bus stop along the highway she had the feeling that she was waiting for that small, soft "thing" rather than the bus itself. Moving towards her from far away wasn't the bus, but something that used to be part of her, something she felt very close to. After a while she would realize that it wasn't something coming from far away, but rather it was moving inside her own flesh. It felt as though part of her stomach was beginning to shake with a will of its own. Someday it would tear itself away from her altogether. "Perhaps the reason that people want to get pregnant, or adopt," thought the woman, "is so that they can attach a tangible shape to this sensation.[303]

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303 *Ibid*., 48. The passage continues, "The woman had heard of a store where you could purchase a child with cash. Maybe if you were to own a little girl, and she hugged you around the waist, and pulled at your breasts, you would also experience the same convulsions. But as she was pondering this she realized that what was approaching her was really no more than a bus."

Here, she is trying to experience the state of being both other and not-other at the same time, and to craft words and images in order to clarify her experience.[304] Tawada's writing hovers over the lines where the corporeal shapes the parameters of the thinkable, and representation informs the experience of corporeality; the relationship between biological processes and representation is made open and labile. The bus approaching the woman might be "a not recognized or barely recognized perception," one of the infinite "pre-personal singularities that compose a body" but "are not contained by a body."[305] Straining to articulate a corporeal instigation of language, Tawada struggles towards, and revels in, the process of bringing a corporeal grounding of language into language itself.

Seeking its charge from a realm where elemental forces have not already been reduced to stabilizing corporeal and cognitive logics, the language of *The Unfertilized Egg* foregrounds a lack of subjective inscription; *mono* (thing) is the only word used to refer to what the reader comes to assume is an ovulating egg, and the girl that illogically emerges from the unfertilized egg is frequently called *katamari* (mass or lump).[306] As the woman extends herself to the hinterlands of what she can perceive, the barely perceptible movement in the brush – what Braidotti might term a place of "dynamic marginality" – she expands her range of thinking and feeling. The power of the as-of-yet unrepresented corporeal experience lay in its potential to re-define thinking into an embodied experience, or a differently embodied experience, and to provide images that

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[304] An even more explicit example of the woman's efforts to craft words out of her experience occurs several pages later: "When hers is the only field of vision that encompasses that garden, and it is as though the garden *is* her line of vision, one part of it begins to move on its own. And it is just at the same time that her cheek begins to convulse as though it is about to become an independent living thing. She couldn't put it into words." The scene that follows involves similarly imperceptible, or barely perceptible, environmental changes: "something came rolling in from some unexpected part of the garden as though it were about to fall, although sometimes it doesn't fall at all…" Tawada, *Museiran*, 52-54.

[305] Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix, *The Logic of Sense*, 103.

[306] Tawada, *Museiran*, 71.

shape our subjective experiences of thinking, creating, and representing. Ovulation is a particularly fertile process from which to create images of inter-subjectivity because it concerns the initial generation of one being within another separate being. Tawada, however, is willing to mine various bodily functions and parts for their contribution to new logics of representation.

For both Tawada, as for Irigaray, the relationship between body and thought is slippery and reciprocal. Irigaray attributes a specifically bodily quality to the process of language formation when she defines "mucous" as the "unthought moving towards representation."[307] In Tawada's writings there is a clear preoccupation with the mucous membranes themselves -- *nenmaku* -- that create porous borders to the beyond of sensate bodily experience. As in the circuitous course of the ear, or the hidden lips of the vagina, these mucous membranes are far more accessible by touch than by sight:

> The woman imagined herself in the brush, crouching down like a squirrel about to munch on a breadcrumb, the tips of the leaves prickling her bare bottom… There was no place on her small naked body that her hands could not reach. From her toes, past her knees, her hand went in between her thighs and entered the thickness of her crotch. She was about to touch the membrane there when her hand already emerged out of the valley of her ass onto her backside. Whenever she imagined touching her own body, that place would always get smaller and smaller. When did it happen – she wasn't yet going to school - that her stepmother scolded her harshly for touching herself? Usually her stepmother was so tired she didn't have the energy to scold the children about anything, but in this case her eyes flew open wide and the woman remembered being given a serious lecture that was really hard to follow.[308]

The abstractness of the moral lecture is set in stark contrast against the immediacy of the young girl touching herself. The physical experience of touch is not impervious to the influence of language; the woman's body-map was restructured by the scolding

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[307] Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, 64.

[308] Tawada, *Museiran*, 46.

sermon she received. Ever since she was rebuked for touching herself, her vagina appeared increasingly small in her mind's eye.

Invoking mucous membranes heightens the plastic sense of one's body-map because membranes form the porous opening and closings that determine what is internal and external to the body. When Irigaray casts the tangible bodily fluid of mucous as "the unthought moving towards representation" she generates a soft and porous distinction between a physical sensation and a thought. The body, as Lorraine points out, is always touching upon new ground: "it can not help but be continually feeling and losing itself in the immediacy of experience that it has never already had."[309] These infinitely new experiences and desires can not possibly fully coincide with objects of desire represented in codified categories of thought. In these unarticulated realms no distinction yet exists between sensation and thought and the lines between voluntary and involuntary bodily functions are blurred. They produce zones of intensity which defy representation at the same time that they intensify the enabling conditions of representation, what Lorraine describes as the "background processes informing perceptual awareness."

The intersection of involuntary bodily processes and sexuality is explored in the works of other Japanese women writers published from the same period as Tawada's 1995 *Museiran*. Involuntary bodily processes – perceived to varying degrees - drive both Murata Kiyoko's short story "Tosaka" [Cockscomb, 1995][310] and Takagi Nobuko's novel *Burakku Nodei ga sumu ki* [The Tree of the Black Noddy, 1990].[311] In Murata's "Cockscomb" school children are given an assignment to draw pictures of a chicken during their summer vacation, and when young Yoko draws the underside of a chicken,

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[309] Lorraine, 46.

[310] Murata Kyoko, Tosaka" [Cockscomb], in *12 no toire* [12 Toilets], Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1995.

[311] Takagi Nobuko, *Burakkunodei ga sumu ki* [The Tree of the Black Noddy], Tokyo: Bungeishunju, 1990.

from which an egg may or may not be emerging, the boy classmate who was with her while she was drawing the picture mocks her by writing "Yoko's vagina (*menko*)" on the blackboard when school reconvenes.[312] Another Murata story, "100 Toilets,"[313] features a little girl who is chastised by her mother for crouching in public, with pleasure, as though she was going to urinate. Whether this behavior is sexual or not is hotly debated by her mother and her aunt. Takagi Nobuko's *The Tree of the Black Noddy* takes place on a tiny island in the middle of the ocean where, despite the thousands of rare bird species such as the black noddy, the "real stars" are the huge sea tortoises who come in on pounding legs to lay their eggs under the moonlit sky. On the night of the full moon the female narrator and the male dive-leader are inexplicably drawn to the spot on the island where the tortoises are laying their eggs. Though they weren't attracted to one another before, and it didn't seem "right or wrong," they have sex. It was, the narrator states, about "being open to the convulsions (*keiren*)."[314] The night her mother died, the narrator had had a similar type of sexual experience with her cousin. In all of these narratives a slippage occurs between the involuntary and the sexual. Though the cerebral and comic tone of Tawada's writing, and the utter lack of sentimentality and earnestness

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312 Describing Murata as an "ovulation worshipper," Sengoku Hideo relates "Tosaka" to Higuchi Ichiyo's *Takekurabe* [Growing Up, 1896], a highly-acclaimed coming-of-age story about a young girl who abruptly transitions from playing in the neighborhood like a child to being made up as a young courtesan. Referring to Murata's birthplace, Sengoku writes that "Tosaka" is the "*takekurabe* of northern-kyushu." See Sengoku Hideo, *Isei bungakuron: ai ga aru no ni* [Theorizing the Opposite Sex: even though there is love], Kyoto: Mineruva Shobō, 2004, 277-279. The parallel, it would seem, is that the exploratory interest of young Yoko in Murata's story is, in one very public moment, fixed as being sexual in nature. The literal meaning of the word takekurabe is "comparing heights by standing back-to-back."

313 Murata Kyoko,"Hyaku no toire" [One Hundred Toilets], in *Shiroi yama* [The White Mountain], Tokyo: Bungeishunju, 1990.

314 Takagi, 185.

found there, sets her work apart from the above stories, [315] there is clearly a common interest in querying the demarcation of conscious desire and physical reflex.[316] In Tawada's narratives, however, these demarcations are not depicted as querying the nature of sexuality, but rather as querying ways to represent having a body in general, and whence, surprisingly, our available language might just lead us in such a query.

In terms of investigatory intensity *Museiran* is more interested in tracking the transition from physical sensation to representation than it is in articulating a new understanding of sexuality. In an unapologetic positioning of a corporeal process as a way of experiencing thinking, ovulation is presented as a physiological process that occurs in female bodies and a universal image for the making of meaning. Within a schema of potential meaning and ascribed meaning, ovulation represents the blurring of lines between involuntary and voluntary physical acts, and the movement from the unthought to the thought. Just as ovulation involves a part of a body breaking away from

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[315] Biological family members are often completely absent from Tawada's work and nature is rarely resorted to as a device with which to parallel or intensify emotion. Her writerly stance, even when dealing with something as "private" as a gynecological exam, for example, is generally one of marvel at the absurdity of the way things work in the world: "As though they were leafing through every receipt in an account budget convinced that some as-of-yet unaccounted for pleasure was hidden there, from one fold of her body to another, they kept splitting her open and entering, penetrating farther and farther inside. But she wasn't hiding anything in her uterus; even if she wanted to there weren't any drawers in there," Tawada, *Museiran*, 112.

[316] Tawada translated Tomioka Taeko's short story "*Torikakomu ekitai*" [The Fluids that Surround] into German a few years prior to writing *Museiran*. And while I have not come across any indication on the part of Tawada, or other critics, that this translation influenced *Museiran*, the similarities between the two works are quite strong. In Tomioka's story the main character has to slowly trudge through swampy waters to visit an old friend, only to find a young girl there who says her mother has died. Upon the next visit, however, it is the old friend that denies the existence of her "daughter," Tomioka Taeko, "Torikakomu ekitai" [The Fluids that Surround] in *Torikakomu ekitai*, Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1989. Tawada's later novella shares both the membrane-like topos and the *possibility* of a daughter being created there. This is the only instance that I am aware of in which Tawada has undertaken a translation of a contemporary Japanese writer's work (though she has incorporated attempts at translation into her own creative work as in *Transplanted Letters*, and she has participated in the series that translates Higuchi Ichiyo's works into modern Japanese).

itself and potentially becoming radically other and unique, the generation of meaning involves a corporeal sensation merging into thought and becoming capable of being publicly represented.[317] It is a process involving both otherness and interpenetration; the representation takes on an existence of its own and as such is separate from sensate experience, but it is also born of, and shot through with, sensate experience. In relation to pregnancy, ovulation brings to the fore the sensations that do not get "fertilized" into meaning, that which is, as the scholar Yonaha Keiko, terms it "the unfertilized material of expression."[318] From this perspective *museiran* – an unfertilized egg – is the zero-level of expression before it is pinned down to meaning, a zero-ness that is not emptiness, but a vibrant state of pulsation. The 'thing' that the woman is seeing, once she frees it from its connection to a meaning-constrained word is both connected to her, and separate from her.

Conclusions

Saito opened her 1994 study of the pregnancy-novel with the following warning: "Knowledge acquired from the 'Japanese history' and 'literary history' that you studied in school will not be at all useful to you here. The history of unwanted pregnancies plays a major role in the development of the pregnancy novel; but you won't find that mentioned in your school lessons."[319] The plot content, I argue, is not the only element of female corporeality that went missing. While Saito promises to uncover the pivotal role that abandonment and abortion played within the emerging national literature of a newly modern state, Tawada's fiction investigates the unwanted representational possibilities that could be born of closer attention to corporeality and inter-subjective

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317 "Thinking," Braidotti writes, "is the means of grasping the fluid mass of the affects which animate the body as a libidinal space. All semiology is impregnated with corporeal fluids."

318 Yonaha, 198.

319 Saito, 8.

relations. Tawada's narrators take as their material the representational networks which organ-ize bodily experience, and is so doing they participate in what Lorraine describes as "symbolizing the activity by which embodied subjects maintain their corporeal and cognitive forms of organization," an activity that would hopefully lead to a stronger sense of inter-subjectivity within and across individuals.[320] In *I Love to You*, the title of which reflects a humble stance of only partial knowledge rather than an assumption of full comprehension, Irigaray provides a possible gloss of the "woman"s project in *The Unfertilized Egg*; we need, Irigaray writes, "words and ways which bring together while distancing, elevate while incarnating, individualize while universalizing."[321]

Tawada's efforts to represent that which is still imperceptible foregrounds the sentient instigation of thought. The tunnels, orifices, membranes, O's, and ovulating movements that occupy her narratives all allow for passage between different states and work to blur the distinction between corporeality and non-human materiality. As the distinction between corporeality and materiality intermittently loses clarity, the body's relations to privileged schemas and images becomes increasingly material. Performing and un-performing bodily schematizations, Tawada makes the coding itself a physical affair. She is constantly exploring to see when and how a newly experienced sensation will coalesce with a newly fabricated attempt at representation, and, in a never-ending process, how that representation informs her bodily experience.

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[320] Lorraine, 233.

[321] Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 148.

CHAPTER 3 A LITERARY ASSAULT ON NEO-LIBERALISM: SHONO YORIKO'S "DON QUIXOTE'S DEBATE."

In April 1998 Shono Yoriko, a contemporary Japanese writer and then recent recipient of Japan's top prize for serious literature, was outraged when she read the article "Fading expectations for Pure Literature – Ivory tower inaccessibility beckons a crisis of representation"[322] on the pages of the one of Japan's most well read newspapers. While Shono, whose combination of fantasy and social criticism might best be termed "fantastic criticism" or "critical fantasy,"[323] vehemently disagreed with the points of view expressed in the article, her anger was directed more at the fact that the *Yomiuri shinbun* was participating in what she terms "*jun-bungaku tatakai*" (pure-literature bashing) and actively generating the anti-serious-literature sentiment that it was reporting upon.[324] Though printed in the "Bungei no-to"[Notes on Art and Literature] column, a potentially safe space for non-revenue generating creative work, the article was

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[322]"Junbungaku tozakaru kitai heisoku jōkyō ga hyogen no kiki wo maneku" [Fading Expectations for Pure Literature – Ivory Tower Inaccessibility Beckons a Crisis of Representation]. *Yomiuri shinbun*, April 16 1998, evening edition, 23.

[323] Shono has most often been identified as a writer of science fiction. With her 1995 publication of "Taiyō no miko" [Shamaness of the Sun] Shono introduced an exploration of the power shifts within the history of Japanese mythology which she continues to weave into much of her writing through the present ("Taiyō no miko" [Shamaness of the Sun], *Bungakkukai* (October 1995), 54-84. Her fiction often merges historiographic analysis with explicit criticism of contemporary socio-economic dynamics, making much of her work a hybrid of criticism and fantastic fiction. With the exception of her Akutagawa prize-winning *Taimu surippu konbinatto* [Time-Slip Complex, 1994] Shono's writing, to my knowledge, has not been translated into English. All translations here are my own.

[324] An analysis of such circular logic in which the increasing proliferation of organs of mass media heightens, rather than lessens, ideological homogeneity is performed by Patrick Champagne in his *Faire l'opinion: le nouvel espace politique* [Making Opinion: The New Political Space], Paris, Editions de minuit, 1979. Champagne, a close colleague of the French sociologist and anti-globalization activist Pierre Bourdieu whom Shono frequently references, argues that media often create "public issues" by focusing their attention on the interests of the growing "journalistic-political field."

roundly critical of literature that "was hard to understand," had "no story line," and, furthermore, did not sell. From former literary prize judges who said they did not want to "waste the remaining time they had left" reading works that they no longer derived any pleasure from, to popular writers who were not able to follow a word and could only ask "what the hell is this?"[325], none of the parties quoted had a single positive thing to say about the role of serious literature. Since 1935 the literary journal *bungeishunjū* had sponsored Japan's two most well-recognized literary prizes -- the Akutagawa prize for pure-literature and the Naoki prize for popular literature --, but in some quarters of the publishing world the lack of sales and the perceived insularity of pure-literature were contributing to the sentiment that the two prizes would best be collapsed into one. [326] "The number of people troubled by that would be very few indeed," the writer of the above mentioned column, Ukai Tetsuo, opined, "if there were no longer any distinction between popular and serious literature and the separate prizes were to become one." Given the anti-pure literature sentiment behind collapsing the two prizes, the potentially consolidated prize would almost certainly be dominated by high-grossing commercial literature.

Even before articulating his support for the removal of an award that provided structural support for serious literature -- in the form of media publicity, re-printing, prize money, and bookstore showcasing[327] -- the very position of Ukai Tetsuo, the *Yomiuri*

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[325] This quote, not cited within the newspaper article in which it is quoted, was taken from a literary discussion between three popular literature writers Akida Jirō, Dekune Tatsurō, and Hayashi Mariko,"Naoki-sho sakka Akutagawa-sho wo gataru" [Three Naoki-Prize Winners Talk about the Akutagawa Prize], *Bungeishunjū* 76 (March 1998), 370-379.

[326] In 1999, Hanamura Mangetsu, an "entertainment" writer, won the Akutagawa prize and a pure-literature writer, Kurumatani Chōkitsu, won the Naoki prize. These events led to an increased sentiment that the distinction between pure literature and popular literature was no longer necessary.

[327] The works selected for the Akutagawa-prize are re-printed in the journal *Bungeishunjū* along with critical reviews and statements from the literary judges. Press conferences and bookstore advertising also ensure prize-winners a certain degree of public attention.

reporter, was already symptomatic of the greater shift away from valuing the contributions of serious literature; he was a non-expert in the field in charge of a dwindling "arts and literature" section in the Yomiuri newspaper which took up less than half the space than it had a decade earlier.[328] The casual assignment of an editor with little interest in non-commercial literature to the arts and literature section of the newspaper meant that the millions of *Yomiuri* subscribers were being subtly pushed away from serious literature even before they might decide for themselves that they were not interested.[329] Keenly aware of the mass media's ability to reach such great numbers and concerned about the collusion between the mass media and the increasingly profit-driven publishing industry Shono re-committed herself to a public debate about the merits of maintaining a place for serious literature within the literary establishment. She titled her one-woman campaign, already underway, "Don Kihote no ronsō" (The Don Quixote Debate).

Shono met with uneven success in her early writing career. After winning the literary journal *Gunzō*'s new writer's prize in 1981 she published in journals throughout the eighties and early nineties without seeing a single book of her own in print. [330] In 1994, when Shono won the Akutagawa prize for her novella *Taimu suripu kanbinatto* [The Time-Slip Complex], she began to receive significantly more critical attention. Despite her hard-won success, however, Shono was still unsuccessful in drumming up

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[328] Shono observes that the reduced allocation of space for arts and literature is not particular to the *Yomiuri* newspaper but has been a general trend in Japanese newspapers since the early 1990's, Shono Yoriko, *Don Kihote no ronsō* [The Don Quixote Debate], Tokyo: Kodansha, 1999, 23.

[329] The Yomiuri Newspaper has a circulation of ten million copies and a readership of twenty six million, making it the widest read morning newspaper in the world (http://adv.yomiuri.co.jp).

[330] In the Japanese literary establishment individual books of non-commercial literature generally follow at least partial publication in literary journals. A writer could therefore have many stories published, as well have won literary prizes, without seeing a book go to print.

any parties interested in publicly debating the merits of serious literature. Here, I hope to trace the forces that produced this failure, as well as the currents in Shono's analysis that were intensified by her inability to launch a public debate. What I find to be illuminated by Shono's literary and critical campaign are the hazy connections between, on the one hand, the economic practices of subjecting all forms of cultural production to the same profit-generating requirements and, on the other hand, the incapacity to value mature female creativity and sexuality. In the course of her Don Quixote debate Shono encounters editors and critics whose disdain for serious literature is coupled with their history of having either worked in the niche-industry of *loli-kon manga* (Lolita-themed manga), edited "young girl" magazines that encourage their teen-aged readers to present themselves as pre-teens, or wrongly accused a woman writer of having affixed her name to her husband's work.[331] Taking the expansion of market-based logic to more and more sectors of life as my operating definition of neo-liberalism, I argue that Shono's polemical fiction encourages us to ask questions about the "common sense" that neo-liberalism promotes.[332] To phrase it somewhat rhetorically, how does neo-liberalism feel? What sensibilities and corporeal investments does it engender? Despite the

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[331] These editors and critics are, respectively, Otsuka Eiji, the subculture critic and past editor of the "lolikon manga" *Burikko*, Ishizaki Hideyuki, editor of the short-lived kodansha magazine *X+ekusutasu*, and Yamagata Hiroo, the writer who was found guilty of libel and fined by the Tokyo courts. Each individual is discussed in greater detail below.

[332] For my purposes here neo-liberalism can initially also be understood as the priority of global capital fluidity, and the belief that government support within any sector of the economy is a barrier to such fluidity. Most primers on neo-liberalism, from David Harvey's well-read *A Brief History of Neo-Liberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 to Shiraishi Yoshiharu and Oono Hideshi's more Japan-specific *Neo-ribe gendai seikatsu: hihan josetsu* [The Contemporary Neo-Liberal Lifestyle: A Critical Introduction], Tokyo: Shinhyōron, 2005, identify free trade, capital fluidity, and a small but militarily powerful government as the political-economic underpinnings of neo-liberalism. Both accounts locate the theoretical beginnings of neo-liberalism in the 1970's with the University of Chicago's School of Economics, and its practical beginnings in the Reagan-Thatcher alliance of the 1980's. Pinochet's Chile is widely understood as the first large-scale application of a transnational, or globalizing, neo-liberalism in which foreign military and economic aid was tied to domestic policies of privatization and de-nationalizing.

ostensible neutrality of policies that prioritize capital fluidity towards understandings of inter-subjective relations, how do those priorities affect productions of, for example, bodily-images through which we understand ourselves and others?

In my reading, Shono's polemical fiction imagines ways of shrinking the distance between universally transferable principles, such as market-based economics or state propagated religion, and individual sentient experience. I am certainly not alone in reading Shono's work this way – the 2007 special issue of *Gendaishisō* [Review of Contemporary Thought] "Shono Yoriko: Neoriberarizumu wo koeru sōzōryoku" [Shono Yoriko: The Imagination to Overcome Neo-Liberalism][333] gathers together activists and academics from a wide range of disciplines who find her writing to provide both a incisive critique of neo-liberalism and productive ways of envisioning resistance. What I attempt here is a more comprehensive introduction to her literary project --especially for English readers -- and a schematization that foregrounds the role of bodily-imaging in her resistance against a single-value system.[334]

The body, in Shono's imaginary is envisioned as a receptor of values that is capable of both experiencing humiliation and of resisting homogenization. In her dystopic *Suishōnaiseido* [The World of the Crystals, 2003] for example, the goods industry of video games, *manga* and figurines, that grows out of the Lolita-complex relies upon real data from warm-blooded girls which includes such specifics as "the grain of skin, the tint of the complexion, bodily temperature, and x-rays of internal organs." [335] It is important, the reader is told, that at some level the consumer of loli-kon goods be

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[333] "Tokushū Shono Yoriko: neoriberarizumu wo koeru sōzōryoku" [Special Edition Shono Yoriko: The Imagination to Overcome Neoliberalism], *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007).

[334] The following chapter will provide a closer reading of her literary texts, with particular emphasis on Shono's 2004 "masterpiece" *Kompira*.

[335] Shono Yoriko, *Suishōnaiseido* [The World of the Crystals], Tokyo: Kodansha, 2003, 211.

assured that someone is feeling the insult.[336] (If the characteristics were simply drawn from a database of imagined types the consumer would not be able to "enjoy" the knowledge that a real person's privacy had been compromised.) This potentially painful receptivity, however, is also what enables the experience of multiple sensibilities; in *Dai Nihon! Ontako no meiwaku-shi* [*Great Japan: The Troublesome History of the Ontako* 2006] the impending cooptation of the fictional religious group, the mitako, is predicted by the narrator when she observes that the mitako have lost their powers of *gongen* – the spiritual embodiment of their avatar or values. [337] In Shono's critical framework *kyokushi* (the hyper-personal) – an idiosyncratic combination of the Chinese characters for "extreme" and "I" 極私 – always partakes of the corporeal and exists in tension with the seemingly limitless transferability of capital. But the hyper-personal, rather than being a point of static or reactive locality, is defined by the lived experience of the one-off individual body; it is in a constant state of change, experiencing multiple systems of value at the same time, and radically open to its environment. Shono's polemics help clarify the ways in which neo-liberalism is a single-value system.[338] The target of Shono's critique is specifically neo-liberalism rather than capitalism, because while neo-liberalism is clearly a form of capitalism, neo-liberalism marks the unprecedented expansion of market principles to all areas of life. The way in which this expansion of the market principle is globalized is exemplified by the current guidelines for the new signatories to the General Agreement on Taxes and Tariffs (GATT) which state that

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336 Shono, *Suishōnaiseido*, 213.

337 *Dai-nihhon, ontako meiwaku-shi* [Great Japan, The Troublesome History of the Ontako], Tokyo: Kodansha, 2006, 19.

338 In Pierre Bourdieu's analysis neo-liberalism brings about the erosion of autonomous zones with operating logics different that that of the marketplace, such as literature, or science. He argues that the expansion of market based principles brings about and "abdication of politics" in which all other value systems are eroded and money becomes the sole arbiter of value. Bourdieu, *Contre-feux 2: Pour un mouvement européen* [Counterfire 2: Towards a European Movement], Paris: Editions Raisons d'Agir, 2001, 17-18.

nations must commit to working towards making all cultural institutions, such as zoos, arboretums and libraries, free of state subsidy.[339]

The silences and the pressures that Shono met with in the course of her campaign to support serious literature sharpened her critique of the market-place's incursion into the intellectual world. The three strands of analysis that I identify in the resulting framework all involve a single value which threatens to blot out differing valuations and perceptive capacities within their respective spheres: in the realm of romance and inter-subjective relations the Lolita complex (*lolikon*) becomes the structuring dynamic of sexual relations; in terms of a sense of self, the monotheistic-predicated western individual looms as the universal from of subjectivity; and as the reigning economic paradigm neo-liberalism threatens to become the common-sense formula for allocating resources. This tripartite matrix of somewhat unlikely bedfellow exemplifies the hyper-personal nature of Shono's project, it is both a critique that brings to the fore perceptive capacities in the process of becoming obsolete, and a model for the development of the reader's own individual and equally hyper-personal critique. Naming her campaign after Don Quixote, a passionate fighter who holds nothing back as he is ridiculed by the world around him and who sees enemies where there are only windmills, Shono recognizes the potentially excessive individuality of her critique. "I am Don Quixote," she announces, "I am a small town player in this big field, I don't think about the future, and I am fat."[340] In this call-to-arms for the struggle to preserve a space for pure-literature, the centripetal forces of Shono's thinking all appear; her interest in the local, her full-fledged reckless passion, and her insistence on articulating the body-images implicit in our thinking.

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[339] *Ibid*., 58.

[340] Shono, *Don Kihote no Ronsō*, 19.

In *Kompira* [Kompira, 2004][341] -- a novel about the untangling of competing strands within Japan's foundational myths -- Shono explicity announces her intent "to make visible what has been made invisible." This same intent can also be seen in her dedication to a public debate on pure literature. If the reduction of print space, the hiring of non-specialists, highly selective quoting, and the removal of structural support in the form of a specific literary award, was necessary in order for the mass media to convince the public that pure literature was no longer relevant nor necessary, then a struggle was certainly taking place. Shono was committed to recording that struggle and preventing those events from being seen as the "inevitable" turns of "common sense." Certainly, the above-cited actions could be inversely interpreted as the media following, as opposed to creating, public opinion. What Shono's struggle makes clear, however, is that when seeking to establish the desired level of homogeneity, the media exerted significant pressure. Shono has claimed that on at least two occasions journalists who framed their articles with the assumption that the irrelevance of pure-literature was a foregone conclusion, have contacted her to say that the articles did not reflect their opinion, which was actually much closer to hers, but that they did not feel they had the freedom to print that.[342]

Shono's reclusiveness is well known and certainly a plausible factor in her stalled debate. Her acerbic tone and willingness to name names makes Shono a far more caustic

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[341] Shono Yoriko, *Kompira* [Kompira], Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2004.

[342] One of these incidents involved the above mentioned journalist Ukai Tetsuo, in events that transpired before the printing of the above cited "Fading Expectations for Pure Literature." The second incident involved a reporter who covered a three-way literary talk between a popular writer Takamaru Kaoru, Shono, and one other pure-literature writer. This reporter chose to write the article from the perspective of the popular writer whose "cops and crime" novel *Maakusu no yama* [Mark's Mountains) won the 1993 Naoki prize. See "Shosetsu kara kiete yuku shakai ningen kigoka danpenka susumi nankai ni" [Fragmentation Continues and Human Communication Dissappears from difficult-to-read novels], *Asahi shinbun* 10 October 1994, 21. Afterwards, he contacted the two pure-literature writers and promised to write a future article from their perspective. See Shono, *Don Kihote no Ronsō,* 51.

and directly confrontational critic than the average literary writer. In her critique of a literary discussion in which three popular Naoki-prize winning writers were gathered together by the literary journal *bungeishunju* to discuss the state of the Akutagawa prize, for example, Shono uses the term "monkey" in a pejorative sense no less than three times on the first page. First she titles the article "Saru ni mo wakaru ka Akutagawa-sho?" [Wouldn't even a Monkey Understand the Akutagawa-Prize?].[343] Then she likens the format of the discussion to that of a "monkey mountain," a not uncommon type of theme park in Japan where monkeys are collected and live in faux-nature for the amusement of on-lookers. Lastly she calls the event a "monkey-show" and wonders why the administrators of the Naoki-prize are not angered by their awardees poor conduct. She also refers to students of the internationally acclaimed literary theorist Karatani Kojin as "Karatani's puppies" and to her arch-nemesis, the *manga* editor and public intellectual Otsuka Eiji as "a louse on the loincloth of pure-literature." When Otsuka and his fellow discussants conclude that they "can no longer see a place for literature"[344] Shono retorts, in writing, "Before you invest in glasses, just ask a women." [345]

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[343] Shono, Yoriko,"Saru ni mo wakaru ka Akutagawa-sho" [Wouldn't even a Monkey Understand the Akutagawa-Prize?], *Bungakukai* (October 1998), 124-127.

[344] Otsuka Eiji and Watanabe Naomi, "Kotoba no genzai" [The Current State of Words], *Gunzo* 57 (March 2002), 138-164.

[345] Shono Yoriko,"Onna, SF, shinwa, junbungaku – atarashii joseibungaku wo tatakai-toru tame ni" [Woman, SF, Myths, Pure-Literature – Fighting for a New Women's Literature], *Mita bungaku* 83.77 (Spring 2004), 244. Here Shono contends that the gendered conventions in which writing fiction, as opposed to criticism, is seen as the more appropriate activity for female writers, plays a role in the lack of response to her critiques. She notes that other women writers, Kanai Mieko and Yu Miri in particular, have also tried to spark debates with male writers to no avail, even while writers such as Shimada Masahiko lament the fact that the *bundan* (literary establishment) no longer serves the role of debating and critiquing cultural trends. Elsewhere Shono expresses the belief that women writers are pushed to write fiction and that criticism is only considered suitable for male writers, with the phrase "*hyōron ikoru otoko*" (criticism equals men). She observes that it took almost twelve years for her pure-literature debate to be recognized within overviews of Japanese literature, and when it did, in volume four of Iwanami Shoten's "The Structure of 21st Century Japanese Literature" it was done so by a female editor, Saito Minako, with clear feminist interests, "Onna no sakka no i nashi" [No Place for a Woman Writer"], *Gunzō 57* (February 2002), 202.

The well-springs, however, that produce her acerbic tone are likely responsible for the doggedness of her research and the tenacity of her vision. Shono frequently refers to herself as *hikkikomori*, or *tojikomori* (recluse or shut-in), and the article announcing her selection for the Akutagawa-award in the weekly arts and literature magazine *bunshun-shi* was titled "Akutagawa-sho sakka Shono Yoriko san wa 'tojikomori sedai' no kashu" [The new Akutagawa-prize winner Shono Yoriko is the flag-bearer of the shut-in generation].[346] Saito Tamaki, the psychologist who coined the now popular term "*hikkikomori*" to describe people who, for psychological reasons, are unable to leave their homes, places the rather reclusive Shono on a broad spectrum of "*hikkikomori*-ness."[347] Saito has particularly high expectations for the power of Shono's vision. In his professional experience Saito has found that while women comprise but a small minority of *hikkikomori*, they are the ones that are hardest to cure because once they have severed social ties they are generally far more willing than their male counterparts to give up the promise of an ideal, or idealized sexual partner. He hypothesizes therefore that women have more potential to become "true *hikkikomori*." "It isn't yet clear what is made visible from a true *hikkikomor*i'position," Saito continues, "but I have no doubt that Shono Yoriko will forge new circuits of thinking in her battle as she pushes the connections between feminism and *hikkikomori*."[348] He notes that Shono has opted out of conventional employment, does not heed social pressure to present herself as "attractive," and professes no interest in a domestic world that would contain anyone but herself (and

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346 "Akutagawa-sho sakka Shono Yoriko san wa 'tojikomori sedai' no kashu" [The new Akutagawa-prize winner Shono Yoriko is the flag-bearer of the shut-in generation], bunshun-shi 14 April 1994, 4 (cited in Saito Tamaki, *Bungaku no chōkō* [Literature's Symptoms], Tokyo: *Bungeishunju*, 2004, 246.

347 Saito Tamaki, 246-247. *Hikkikomori* is not a direct equivalent term to the English "shut-in" – it does not refer to the elderly and it carries the suggestion, though not certainty, of male-ness.

348 *Ibid*., 250.

her cats). Saito is not alone in contending that Shono's particular remove from societal expectations affords her a valuable perspective; in the special 2007 issue of the highly regarded *Gendaishisō* journal dedicated to Shono's vision there is a general consensus that the period in which her work failed to receive critical attention overlapped with the period in which most intellectuals were still unconcerned about the rising tide of neo-liberalism already at work in Japan.[349]

Shono Yoriko's Unilateral "Pure-Literature Debate"

> That which is unorthodox or heretical has the power to walk in rays of illuminating light… What is pure literature? It is the struggle to protect private worlds of language, and the will to push writing forward. It is the freedom to allow multiple value systems.
>
> Shono, Yoriko, *Mori no bunshi* [Writers in the Woods]

In response to Ukai Tetsuo's above-mentioned "Arts and Literature" column in the *Yomiuri* newspaper which suggested that structural support for serious-literature be abolished, Shono re-dedicated her energy to what she conflictedly termed the "pure-literature" debate and published an article in the literary journal *Gunzō* titled "Mie-ken no hito ga okoru toki" [When Someone from Mie gets Angry, July 1998]. The article opens with the statement that she is not writing in the *Yomiuri* Newspaper due to the "extraordinary limits" that reporter U (in this first rebuttal Shono refrained from using Ukai Tetsuo's name and instead referred to him as "reporter U") wanted to place upon her writing, and concludes with a request that readers publish more of her writings on this topic: "I have a hundred more pages about all of this – Won't you find someplace to carry it?"[350] Despite finding no direct interlocutors Shono does manage to publish her

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[349] Sato Izumi. "Shisha wa "kawari ni omoidashite kudasai" to yobikaketa" [The Dead Called Out, "Please Think of us for a Change"], *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007), 110-121.

[350] Shono Yoriko,"Mie-ken no hito ga okoru toki" [When Someone from Mie gets Angry], *Gunzo* (July 1998), 95.

prolific writing and has generated enough articles to fill two volumes of criticism containing over 400 pages each; *Don Kihote no ronsō* [The Don Quixote Debate, 1999] and *Tettei kōsen! Bunshi no mori* [Fight to the End! Writers in the Woods, 2005].[351]

Invoking Cervante's novel in the naming of her debate emphasizes the ways in which popular literature and "pure-literature" exist in relationship with one another; *Don-Quixote* is a classic that has spawned much popular cultural production but how many consumers of that popular culture have actually read the epic-novel itself? Although Shono actively chose the term "pure-literature" to designate the type of literature she is striving to protect, she does not argue that pure-literature should exist at the expense of other types of literature. Most often categorized as a science-fiction writer, Shono continues to feel that there are possibilities and stimulations available in popular literature which are not available in serious literature. By no means does Shono -- a fan of horror *manga* for over thirty years and an avid reader of crime novels[352] -- advocate the supremacy of pure-literature over popular literature. Her struggle is fundamentally an anti-totalitarian one on the literary level. She wants literature that asks difficult questions and demands a certain type of attention span to be able to co-exist and cross-fertilize with a wide array of other literatures. "At its core, pure-literature is both responsible and free," she writes, "it respects and protects the diversity of form and thought"[353]

Measuring cultural value through quantity of sales -- which is how Shono defines one of her key terms *uri-age bungaku* (for-profit literature) -- is a practice that exemplifies the hegemony of a single value-system. It is an approach to cultural production that

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[351] Shono Yoriko,*Don Kihote no ronsō* [The Don Quixote Debate], Tokyo: Kodansha, 1999 and *Tettei kōsen! Bunshi no mori* [Fight to the End! Writers in the Woods], Tokyo: Kawadeshobōsha, 2005.

[352] Shono, *Don Kihote no ronsō*, 33.

[353] *Ibid*., 27.

ignores the history of what Bourdieu refers to as "atutonomous fields of culture"; fields which obey laws proper to themselves, and that are distinct from the laws of the surrounding world, and actually at odds with the workings of the financial world. [354] While the neo-liberal discourse of freedom and liberalizing may make it seem as though force would not be needed to convince the public of its obvious benefits and appeal, Shono frequently found herself bumping up against the strong-arm of the mass media. Within the course of her campaign to preserve a space for serious literature she had her galleys leaked to a potential debate opponent, was told to tone down her criticism and then, in February 2002, asked to leave the literary journal *Gunzō*. She had at least two arts columns reporters privately apologize to her for taking quotes out of context, citing pressure to present the "popular vs. pure literature" debate in a way that favors popular literature. It may be doubtful that a nefarious conspiracy is afoot, but it is probable that the increasing spread of market-principles creates a vortex in which the above-cited practices and pressures make sense within their own circular logic. Within this logic Shono is constantly pitted against "the people." In an analysis that brings to mind Antonio Gramsci's concepts of "common sense" and "good sense," Shono questions the accuracy of calling something that is vast, like market principles, necessarily "public." "Instead of being seen as an individual's pursuit of profit," she notes," the power of consumption and the unknowable workings of the economy get called the 'will of the people."[355] In Gramsci's framework common sense is akin to Shono's "will of the people"; both are characterized by fragmented and

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[354] Bourdieu, 66-67. The autonomous fields of culture that Bourdieu identifies are the scientific, the artistic, and the literary. He takes care to point out that the etymological meaning of the word "autonomous" is "proper to itself."

[355] Shono, *Ontako no meiwaku-shi*, 219.

uncritical thought that often cloaks a support of the status quo. "Good sense," is dialectically connected to common sense, in that it engages common sense in a process of reflection.[356] Striving to understand the terms of a circular logic in which one is caught is precisely the type of situation in which serious literature and its protection of "diversity of thought and form" might be able to provide some needed perspective and produce "good sense."

The question remains, however, as to why Shono chooses to designate the cultural form she is trying to protect with the now staid and elitist-sounding name "pure-literature" when youthful irreverence, immediate gratification, and popular comprehension are the positive attributes of the current that she is working against? The answers are multifold and incomplete. Firstly, she would not define herself as working against any specific value, but rather the dominance of that value. Nonetheless, the particularly neo-liberal values she is rallying against do boast of the potential to overturn inefficient and un-democratic practices by ignoring established systems of privilege and subjecting all literature, equally, to the will of the marketplace. The several generation-old notion of "pure-literature" seems a likely candidate for a practice in need of such liberalizing and re-vamping. Indeed in the 1961-1962 "Changing nature of pure-literature" debate that was sparked by Hirano Ken's reflections on the role of literary journals in the fifteen years after the war, one commentator calls the protection of pure literature the literary establishment's peculiar form of nationalism.[357] But Shono's

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[356] Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks,*Trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, New York: The International Publishers, 1971, 221.

[357] Komatsu Hirō, "Bungaku to taishu" [Literature and the Public], *Yomiuri shinbun*, 16 January 1962.

project is clearly not one of maintaining an elitist or fossilized institution of high-brow literature -- her own akutagawa-award-winning *Taimu-suripu kanbinatto* [Time Slip Complex, 1994] was keenly influenced by *manga* and fantasy, and she has noted on several occasions that had the judges on the selection committee been any older she would likely not have received the award. Indeed when she first met the editor of *Gunzō* in 1981, after winning that journal's new writer's award, she emphasized how steeped she was in *manga* and science-fiction and said, "I do not really see myself as a pure-literature writer."[358] Eighteen years later, with full awareness that the popular image of pure-literature writers was "that they were non-computer using. kimono-clad superior people,"[359] Shono searches for an appropriate term and, in the absence of any better-fitting one, opts for the historically strong resonance of "pure-literature," despite its anachronistic ring.

On one level "pure-literature" is an unapologetic championing of entrenched literary idealism and therefore a direct provocation against the practitioners of "for-profit literature" or "measuring cultural value through quantity of sales." Whereas one marketing trend of the 1990's was to label serious literature "*j-bungaku*" (j-literature), hoping to borrow from the popularity and youthfulness of the music industry's "j-pop" and soccer's "J-League," and package it in attractive and catchy covers, Shono's tactics are far more combative.[360] Using the banner of "pure-literature" she is setting herself up

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[358] Shono, *Don Kihote no ronsō*, 34.

[359] *Ibid.*, 78.

[360] When one of Shono's works, *Haha no hatten* [The Development of my Mother], was published in a "j-bungaku" series by Kawade shobōshinsha in 1996 she insisted that the words "pure literature" appeared on the book cover as well.

as an easy target and opening herself up to accusations of insularity, privilege, and irrelevance. To a certain extent, Shono is picking a fight. As she struggles against the imperialism of the market place, where profit margins are so manifestly clear that other logics can often appear opaque in comparison, a public argument at least provides a forum in which different value-systems can be articulated. Determined to prevent the complete conflation of market principles with common sense writ large, for example, Shono resists importing market-oriented English words into Japanese – a practice which she feels makes words seem oddly meaningful and instead intentionally coins corresponding new terms in Japanese. [361] This practice defamiliarizes language that might otherwise instantly appear "normal," and provides an opportunity to explain the logic implicitly at work in the words. "Marketing," for example, instead of "ma-ke-chi-n-gu" becomes "*uri-age-kata-bungaku-ron*," literally "the way of selling literature for profit." In order for such strategies to be effective, however, Shono needs a venue in which to deploy them.

So, provocation to a fight is one rationale for choosing the term "pure-literature." Another, and more complex, way in which the term functions is as a historical agent of fusion. Interestingly, Shono's concept of intellectual and spiritual fusion is not explicitly developed until well after she launches "Don Quixote's Debate." Growing out of her increasing interest in Japan's history of merging relatively localized and nativistic cosmologies (collectively referred to as Shintō) with a more universal, and imported, Buddhism, Shono's notion of fusion is one that extends far back in history and refuses a separation between intellectual, spiritual, and economic drives. A narrator in *Konpira*,

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[361] Shono, *Don Kihote no ronsō,* 47.

bearing strong similarities to Shono herself, realizes at the age of forty that she is actually an incarnation of the protector of the sea, the alligator-like deity Konpira, and that she has been alive for over 400 years. The difference in perspective this provides, both in terms of historical longevity and privileged sensibilities, creates a very different daily consciousness for the narrator. In both *Konpira* and its separately published introduction "Hangyaku suru eien no gongen tamashii: Kompira bungakuron josetsu" [The Eternally Treasonous Spirit of Embodiment: An Introduction to *Kompira* Literature][362] the fusion of differing systems of thinking and feeling require a corporeal presence. The fusion that Shono theorizes in her fiction is one that forces, or allows, the sensation of place, historical time, and personal embodiment to merge together in a temporary zone of intensity. Shono defines it as constitutively treasonous and one way of understanding this treasonous quality is that the fusion is always hybrid, with a hybrid-ity that reaches beyond any one single historical framework (i.e. modernity) and therefore necessarily shoots that framework through with difference. This difference is not fully reducible to rational discourse because it has a charge in a constantly changing and unique body. While the term "pure-literature" may lack the bodily component of the fusion that Shono later theorizes, it partakes of several key components; the co-existence of differing systems of value, the inextricability of culture and economic production, and a broadened historical framework. As a precursor to the embodied fusion that Shono later develops, her invoking of the notion of pure-literature seeks to both provoke an emotional response and to keep a fuller range of historical value systems alive.

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[362] Shono Yoriko, "Hangyaku suru eien no gongen tamashii: Kompira bungakuron josetsu" [The Eternally Treasonous Spirit of Embodiment: An Introduction to *Kompira* Literature], *Waseda bungaku* 30 (January 2005), 89-99.

Shono's *The Time-Slip Complex* features a dreamscape telephone call with an unnamed tuna, and her published dialogue with fellow writer Matstuura Rieko is labeled *Futari no onna no janku-tokku* (Two women's junk-talk).[363] When such a writer advocates the high-brow category of "pure-literature" her reiteration necessarily jostles the term itself. While the term *junbungaku* (pure-literature) has often revolved around a confessional and lyrical quality such as typified by Shiga Naoya's "I-novel"s, it has always been a contested category whose shifting definitions might sometimes seem to exclude some of the most canonical of Japanese literature.[364] Shono's idiosyncratic reference is directed at a supple network of ideas, not a hard monolithic fact. And as she cuts her own path through this network of future mergings and possibilities, one of the currents she taps into is that of literature being taken seriously as a vehicle of social criticism and public debate.

A Hyper-Personal Framework of Neo-Liberalism

Shono's personal investment in maintaining a space for serious literature is significant. After winning *Gunzō*'s prize for new writers in 1981, she wrote for literary journals for more than a decade before she saw a book of her own in print. By the mid-nineties, however, Shono's work began to receive more attention and several of her full-

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363 Shono Yoriko and Matsuura Rieko, *Okaruto dokumi teishoku* [An Occult Poisonous Set-Meal], Tokyo: Kawade shobōsha, 1994, book-jacket.

364 As Edward Seidensticker points out, Murasaki Shikibu's sometimes lurid *Tales of Genji* fit less well into established definitions of *jun-bungaku* than does Sei Shonagon's *Pillow Book*, and Tanizaki' Junchiro's complicated plots distance him from some of the confessional definitions of *jun-bungaku* despite his prominent position in the Japanese literary canon. Seidensticker,"The "Pure" and the "In-Between" in Modern Japanese Theories of the Novel," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (1966),174-186**.**

length novels were published. [365] Having finally reached a critical audience after so many years of feeling overlooked, Shono was not eager to see her hard-fought publishing power eroded by an increase in survival-of-the-fittest marketplace competition. But Shono's personal interest should not diminish the value of her critique. Indeed, the spiritual and folkloric concept of *onnen* (personal grudge or resentment) is a strong motif in, and energy-source for, Shono's writing. Typically, *onnen* is the resentment felt by a deceased person which prevents them from being fully released from the living world and often has them haunting the place in which they were done wrong.[366] The clarity of motive that comes from the investment of an individual located in a specific place and time is a welcome occurrence within Shono's conceptual framework. Both *onnen* and *mokusatsu* - a strong word for "indifference" which is composed of the Chinese characters for "silence" and "murder" 黙殺 - figure prominently in Shono's understanding of socio-political relations. Her attacks on the literary world are often targeted at specific individuals and, as noted above, her vitriol often surpasses what would be considered proper critical etiquette. Distrusting the gross terms of cost-benefits analysis and fearing the mass media's ability to create and perpetuate generalizations, Shono values a tenacious voice with personal or local claims. While Shono's writing has often featured a fictional narrator whose characteristics and perspective significantly

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[365] While the reasons for this dramatic shift in her reception remain somewhat unclear, Shono herself attributes it to the bursting of the economic bubble: "During the bubble years almost all experimental literature was banished from the bookstores and holed up in the libraries," Shono,*Don Kihote no ronsō*, 78. The surge in economic affluence, she reasons, distracted people from issues of structural change and the narrowing possibilities for cultural expression. Some critics have attributed the delay in Shono's reception to her uncanny prescience. "Not many of us in Japan were as quick to perceive the changes that Shono was so scathingly critical of," writes Izumi Sato. See Sato, 111.

[366] *Onnen* might be familiar to U.S. movie goers from the 2002 American re-makes of "The Ring" and the much less successful 2004 "The Grudge," starring Naomi Watts and Sarah Michelle Gellar, respectively. Both movies feature a child that was killed who haunts the place in which they were killed. The original title of "The Grudge" - whose Japanese name "Juon" (呪怨) contains the "on" (怨) of *onnen* (怨念).

overlap with those of the historical Shono Yoriko herself, her recent writings have self-consciously poised her own doggedly individual voice as an antidote to neo-liberalism's encroachment into the collective imaginary of contemporary Japan. Shono's lonely struggle against profit-based literature is part of her larger battle against the eradication of multiple value systems and the establishment of money as the medium through which all value must be determined. In contrast to the possibility of a globally enforced economic system, Shono defines her sensibility as "hyper-personal" and devotes her attention to the intricacies of individual, local, and forgotten histories.

Neo-liberal practices that stand out in the context of Japan include the privatization of previously national industries -- the railroad system, the postal services, and public universities, in particular[367] -- and a major shift in *shin-jidai no nihonteki keiei* (new-era Japanese management practices) which prioritizes flexibility and has re-organized broad swathes of the workforce into" non-permanent worker" categories. [368]

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[367] One of Prime Minister Koizumi major commitments was to privatizing the very large and capital-heavy postal ministry, and the diet – after having first been dissolved when the bill was first voted down –passed a ten-year plan to privatize the postal ministry in 2005. Considered to be one of the world's largest banks with over 3 trillion dollars in secure and low-interest personal savings accounts, Japan's postal savings have long been the target of, particularly American, pressure to make their funds internationally accessible. The savings had been used to purchase low-interest government bonds which were then used to finance what most critics – from the left and the right – see as the at best inefficient, and at worst corrupt, development projects of "pork-barrel" politics. While the restructuring of the postal savings currently underway grants access to a far wider (and international) array of financial investors, critics of the reform are concerned that certain connections to government bonds and the above practices will remain intact, see McCormack, Gavan (2007) *Client State: Japan in the American Embrace*, Verso, p.40. In December 2009 plans for privatizing the industry were put on hold for the upcoming year, "Japan Shifts Course in Halting Postal Sale," *The Wall Street Journal*, 5 December 2009.

[368] In 1995 the *Nihon keiei-sha dantai renmei (nikeiren* (Union of Japanese Management) announced the *shin-jidai no nihonteki keiei* (Japanese-style management) for the "new era"; labor was divided into three groups, only one of which was long-term securely employed. This announcement clarified the concept of labor as a commodity of which "flexibility" was a high premium. While "re-structuring" had already been causing a steady loss of employment for middle-aged long term workers since the late 1980's, now the youngest category of labor was faced with a 20% chance of temporary employment and 10% of unemployment. This new management practice was announced in 1995, a year when the profits of the top-tier businesses surpassed those of the bubble's peak. See Shiraishi Yoshiharu and Oono

What makes the anti-liberal framework that Shono has constructed peculiarly personal is the inclusion of the *loli-kon* industry, which sells the image of young girls as simultaneously sexy and innocent in a large variety of media, as well as the specifically literary mobilization of the western "self" in her understanding of Japanese neo-liberalism. She frames both literary critics, who focus predominantly on the modernization of the Meiji-era, and consumers of *loli-kon* as advocates of single-value systems who can provide little resistance to neo-liberal changes. This idea is depicted in a scene of bodily-birthing where gullible people are immersed in an aquarium-like vessel filled with amniotic fluid. Their necks soon sprout tentacles that can only wriggle in response to numerical figures, *loli*-language, and the vocabulary of western philosophy.[369] Thereafter, the converted have no sense of history and can only comprehend the world through these inter-connected neo-liberal forces on the rise.

Hyper-Personal Neo-Liberal Pillar #1: *Lolikon*

Lolikon is a term derived from the English "Lolita Complex" and can denote either the phenomena of older men desiring and objectifying adolescent and pre-adolescent girls, or the desiring-men themselves.[370] The term bears specific connections to, though is not limited by, popular consumer culture, or "subculture," and the sexy images of girls found within *anime, manga*, and the world of *figyua* (figurines).[371]

Hideshi,*Neo-ribe gendai seikatsu: hihan josetsu*[The Contemporary Neo-Liberal Lifestyle: A Critical Introduction], Tokyo: shinhyōron, 2005, 33-34.

[369] Shono, *Ontako no meiwaku-shi*, 43.

[370] Understandings of why lolikon has become such a prominent niche culture are quite diverse. Some see it as a response by men against the strengthening of the wife's domestic control of purse-strings in post-war era, for such a point of view see Buruma, Ian, *A Japanese Mirror*, London; Random House, 1984, 57-63. A slightly different interpretation is that lolikon is a man's way of opting out of being taken care of and controlled, for such a perspective see Lebra, Takie Sugiyama, *Japanese Patterns of Behavior*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. 1976, 63.

[371] The ways in which *Loliikon* invokes consumption, rather than prolonged interaction is exemplified by the mid-1990's peak of *enjokōsai* -- one-off paid dating performed by mainly

While there is variance in the definition of *lolikon*, most definitions accept the premise that *lolikon* applies to a specialized "subculture" with a relatively limited audience. Shono, however, effectively jettisons the "sub" of "subculture"; her creative criticism implies that modern Japanese culture as a whole is steeped in *lolikon* and that the public understanding of female creative and sexual potential is arrested at the stage of about twelve years old. Shono's particular resistance against this arrested development often takes the fictional form of a self-avowedly *busu* (ugly) and frequently maligned mature female character, usually with a large degree of biographical overlap with Shono herself.[372]

In her 2003 novel *Suishōnaiseido* [The World of the Crystals], however, Shono chooses a different approach and instead depicts Japan as a nation that is economically dependent upon the *loli-guzu* (Lolita-goods). The impetus, Shono claims, to begin writing *Suishōnaiseido* came from the desire to "see what it would look like if women were really seen as human beings." What emerges is a dystopia in which a women's-only world -- Uramizumo[373] -- is fundamentally a colony of Japan located in the

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teenage girls-- which further emblazoned the sailor-derived high school girl's uniform as a symbol of budding and purchase-able sexuality within the public eye. For more on 1990's teen-aged prostitution see Miydai Shinji, "Terekura no minzokushi" [The Folklore of Telephone Clubs], In Ueno Chizuko ed., *Iro to Yoko* [Desire and Sex], Tokyo: Shogakkan, 1996, 123-166.

[372] Shono has written that her decision to buy a house – the purchase of which spurred the reflections that led to the writing of *Kompira* – was born of the need to accommodate the adult cats that she found in her apartment complex's garbage once they were no longer cute nor exchangeable for money. Here she implies a homology between *lolikon* and the logic that led to the abandonment of the grown cats.

[373] The country name "uramizumo" references a historic region of Japan, Izumo, that was powerful prior to the consolidation of the Japanese archipelago that began with the Yamato clan's rise to power. Books of mythology that eventually became canonical – namely the *kojiki* and *nihon-shoki* - downplay the historic position of Izumo, but accounts – regional *fudo-ki* - that challenge such genealogies also exist. The "ura" of Uramizumo means beyond, so the female-country in *Suishōnaiseido* references a mythical place that could exist in a space before the current accepted history of Japanese origination was consolidated.

contaminated land of Ibaraki.[374] Despite the careful crafting of a domestic society that imposes no barriers upon women, the economic structure of Uramizumo reflects an ineradicable self-contamination and hopelessness; Uramizumo's economic livelihood is based upon its role as Japan's supplier of both nuclear power and the biographical data upon which to base *lolikon* goods and images. Apparently, the production of *lolikon* goods had come under harsh international criticism and Japan officially had ceased all production itself and therefore could not engage in collection of critical data upon which to base the images. As mentioned above, the data that the young girl's of Uramizumo send out to help Japan's industry through a loophole is very detailed and includes such qualities as "grain of skin" and bodily temperature.[375] Characters assembled from this data are then deployed in games that are played, the narrator is careful to specify, not by the true kindergarten-loving perverts, but by the general public. For the narrator, the special term *"lolikon"* is but a red herring used to distract attention away from the general reality of "love" in Japan. "In Japan," she explains, "*lolikon* is used to justify the average male's twisted fantasy of love and sexual discrimination."[376]

This particular scene, in which the narrator elaborates upon Japan as a *lolikon* state, takes place at the graduation ceremony of the most elite school in Uramizumo. During their first year of school each class is assigned a male *lolikon* from the stockyard where the only men in Uramizumo are kept – these men are mostly *lolikon* convicts sent over from Japan. The class observes, interrogates, and experiments with their very own *lolikon* specimen throughout all of their years of schooling, and their graduation ceremony is comprised of the presentation of that research. Immediately before the

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[374] Japan's worst nuclear accident to-date took place at the Tokaimura nuclear power plant in Ibaraki prefecture in September 1999. 119 people were exposed to neutron radiation doses and two workers died.

[375] Shono, *Suishōnaiseido*, 211.

[376] *Ibid*., 217.

ceremony the girls, and only the girls, decide what to do with the man now that he is no longer suitable for further research. In this scene the girls decide to execute him in a multi-media spectacle which begins with his body being swaddled in baby clothes and pushed around in a baby carriage and ends with their eating red ice-cones purportedly not dyed with his heart's blood.[377] The male *lolikon* is himself infantilized and then symbolically cannibalized as the potential young female victims eat the very food -- ice cream cones -- that are conventionally used in *lolikon manga* to entice them. This re-mapping of *lolikon* symbols might slake a thirst for revenge were it not looked upon with such disdain by the writer-narrator who is saddened to see such haughty young girls here in Uramizumo, and who, looking back upon the girls from a temporal distance can "only think of the words 'sturdy' and 'mannish'." "If this nuclear-plant colony were really strong enough to rise up in revolt," the narrator reflects, "these 'special exports' wouldn't be necessary. But because it is so unstable this, apparently, is all Uramizumo can manage."[378] She realizes "that most Japanese men would find the women of Uramizumo stupid" and that their colony is being tolerated only because Uramizumo is willing to give Japan what it wants, freedom from the perception of environmental and moral contamination. Not only has no external recognition been demanded for the righteousness of Uramizumo's mission, but no real change has occurred in the *lolikon* power dynamic between the "old country" and the colony. Indeed, the lack of change is exemplified by the narrator's awareness of the fact that when Uramizumo is mentioned at all in the Japanese press it is on the pages of the lurid "sports papers." Seen from this perspective, Uramizumo is but one new incarnation of *lolikon*; an infantilized and sexualized entire country of women.

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[377] When the *lolikon* is killed it is imperative that the girls themselves push the appropriate buttons and pull the appropriate switches – there is not supposed to be any distance between their decision and their action. This physical immediacy is an important element of Shono's embodied poetics.

[378] Shono, *Suishōnaiseido,* 223.

Excerpted from a much longer and more complicated narrative in which a female writer from Japan is taken to Uramizumo, possibly against her will, in order to write its founding myth, the above scene captures the key elements of Shono's *lolikon* critique; it is a structural power relationship that produces vast amounts of anger and resentment, and not even the most anonymous of images exist outside an economy of actual warm-blooded living beings. As part of an international commodities market, *lolikon* is also communicable and difficult to eradicate.

Complicated, or concealed, economic transactions and the inertia of resignation – as in the case of the willing consent given by the girls themselves to sell their own data - make effective action exceedingly difficult (Shono is particularly fond of the joke that in the neo-liberal paradigm it is really hard to know just who stole your cow). Though the fury that surfaces in the violent execution of the *lolikon* is ineffectual in terms of immediately changing the political economy of Uramizumo, it is at least palpable and therefore not forgotten. Felt by those who are ignored or commodified, *onnen* is an invaluable resource for combating the silencing that accompanies the consolidation of power.

Hyper-Personal Neo-Liberal Pillar #2: For-Profit Literature

Shono's critique of neo-liberalism is intensely personal not only because of the originality with which she delineates its borders, but also because of her line of attack which relentlessly follows some rather unexpected suspects. In the case of her arch-nemesis Otsuka Eiji, a former editor of a *lolikon manga* and current cultural critic, [379] Shono's own resentment propelled her furiously forward from a rebuttal of his views, to criticism of the editor who allowed those views to be published in *Gunzō*, to an argument

[379] Otsuka has published numerous books on the topics of "otaku" and *sabucarucha* (subculture) His notion of "narrative consumption" plays a key role in the formulation of Azuma Hiroki's "database consumption." See Azuma Hiroki, *Otaku:Japan's Database Animals* , trans. Jonathan Abel and Shion Kono, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

with that editor that ended with Shono herself being asked to cease writing for *Gunzō*. Combining a market-place analysis of literature with a self-proclaimed *otaku* love of *lolikon* figures,[380] Otsuka is certainly not the most unlikely of Shono's suspects. Particularly alarming to Shono is the way that Otsuka applies the same criteria for success to literature as he does to *lolikon manga* or subculture novels, despite his self-confessed lack of background in literature. In terms of his lack of expertise and his comparatively easy access to mass media, Otsuka stands in the same position as the above mentioned reporter U. They are both players in the mass media which, as it becomes more omni-present, requires less expertise.

In a 2002 literary discussion for *Gunzō*'s regular column "Kotoba no genzai"[The Current State of Words] Otsuka, then a relative new-comer to the literary world from the world of *manga*, demanded literature that sells and revolved his critique around bottom-lines sales figures.[381] Literary journals, the maintenance of which are a necessary criterion for Bourdieu's "autonomous zones," were the target of his attack. "For years," Otsuka claimed, "literary journals have not been enjoying an audience of more than three

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[380] The term *otaku* is used in increasingly diffuse ways, both in Japan and, particularly, abroad. While the term is now often used to refer to someone who is obsessed about something and whose obsession provides them with pleasure, *otaku* originates from a particular interest in the subculture worlds of anime, manga and video games. The avid *otaku* fan is often a hybrid of consumer and producer, and the particular production that ensues from an *otaku* base has been theorized as resistant to easy marketing and profit-making strategies, see Thomas Lamarre for a criticism of such theory, "Otaku Movement," in *Japan after Japan: Rethinking the Nation in an Age of Recession,*. Eds. Tomika Yoda and H.D. Haratoonian. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. While many female fans meet the above criteria, the stereotypical image of *otaku* has largely been that of a male fan/producer who is often physically out-of-shape and who may lack a certain amount of social skills. The self-proclaimed "Ota-King" and co-founder of the successful anime production company Gainax, Toshio Okada, has written several books on otaku including one titled *Itsu Made Mo Debu To Omou Na Yo* [Don't Think you have to be Fat Forever] Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2007. In contrast to the image of the male *otaku* consumer/producer, the image of females found within the anime and manga world are often extremely buxom and hyper-sexualized ones. Shono questions whether this dynamic belongs to a particular subculture, or whether it, instead, structures mainstream concepts of gender and sexuality.

[381] Otsuka Eiji and Watanabe Naomi, "Kotoba no genzai" [The Current State of Words]. *Gunzo* 57 (March 2002), 138-164.

hundred readers -- and even those three hundred readers only partially read the journals." If a sub-culture book is expected to be purchased by 100,000 readers at the very least, Otsuka reasoned, why should a literary journal with such a small readership be allowed to continue at all. "The likes of literary magazines such as *Gunzō* and *Subaru*," Otsuka argued, "are really no more than family journals financed by the dregs left over from the high-selling sub-culture magazines such as '*Janpu*' and '*Magajin*'." In June of the same year Otsuka further elaborates his theory of literature, again in *Gunzō*, in "Literature's Bad Credit." [382]

Otsuka's accounts drew a detailed rebuttal from Shono. Since he provided no statistical sources, she asks, did he just throw out a figure that "felt" right to him? (He later wrote that he had probably been too lenient in his estimation.[383]) While doubting the accuracy of Otsuka's projections Shono also takes issue with the idea that numbers -- even were they to be carefully arrived at -- can determine whether a book has been "read." This is an important point for the over-all critique of neo-liberalism that Shono puts forth, because the lived experience of reading a book, unique and intense to varying degrees for various readers, is not something that can be readily translated onto an accounts ledger. Is a book that is read intently and produces a rich experience for a small number of readers more "read," one might ask, than a book read by many with less intellectual or sensory impact?

Shono was also irritated and impatient with Otsuka's repeated use of the term "literature's bad credit." She carefully points out the false analogy that he is drawing between poor financial planning and subsidized art and culture. "'Bad credit' occurs," Shono explains, "when a loan is not properly repaid or a sale does not follow through

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[382] Otsuka, Eiji, "Furyō no saiken toshite no bungaku" [Literature's Bad Credit], *Gunzo* (June 2002), 172-184.

[383] Shono Yoriko, *Tettei kōsen! Bunshi no mori* [Fight to the End! Writers in the Woods], Tokyo: Kawadeshobōsha, 2005, 312.

with what it had promised." The literary journal *Gunzō*, which Otsuka uses as the most glaring example of bad credit, never failed to meet its original profit projections.[384] Belonging to the Kodansha publishing empire, *Gunzō* was set up to be subsidized by other Kodansha assets and run as a not-for-profit literary journal. *Gunzō* was actually established in order to preserve a space for pure-literature within the changing publishing industry of the early post-war years where socio-economic changes were generating a greater demand for popular or "middle-brow" novels.[385] The element of failure or fraud that comes with "bad credit" does not pertain to *Gunzō*'s original financial structuring. Shono demands to know why *Gunzō*'s editor at that time, Ishizaka Hideyuki, would allow such sloppy accounting knowing full well that by sheer dint of its being published his made-up statistics and false parallels would gain credibility.

In "Don kihote no henshin bakudan"[Don Quixote's Return Bomb], an article whose original version was rejected by *Gunzō* and eventually published in the literary journal *Waseda bungaku* in 2005, Shono seriously questions Otsuka's motivation for extending his analysis from *manga* to literature -- a medum he repeatedly claims he "doesn't get."[386] Peppered with some of Shono's favorite terms -- *funuke* (fool), *chaban* (farce), and above all, *inchiki* (bogus) -- the tone of "Don Quixote's Return Bomb" is fed-up and irreverent. She recounts how Otsuka and his discussants in "The Current State of Words" ponder the value of literature and decide to agree that they "just can't see any." Otsuka claims that he has entered the literary world to "overturn the system," but, Shono notes," all he has done is said that he doesn't get literature, and then used the literary

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[384] Shono, "Onna, SF,shinwa, junbungaku," 248.

[385] *Nihon Bnugaku Daijten*, Ed. Fujimura Tsukuru. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1947, 333. *Gunzō* established a regular criticism column "Sōsaku gappyou" (critical joint-review) as well as a new writer's prize for literature, in order to provide structural support for the criticism and production of pure literature.

[386] Shono, Yoriko,"Don kihote no henshin bakudan"[Don Quixote's Return Bomb], *Waseda bungaku* 30.1 ,November 2005, 313.

system to get published and recognized." She expresses concern that with the passing of time people will forget that Otsuka has no background in literature and will perceive him as someone who is actually qualified to make grand, and negative, judgments about literature (Shono's fears turn out to be quite justified when Otuska begins a series in *Waseda bungaku* called "Kōshin-ki no bungaku" [Literature's Renewal Period, 2004-2005] .

Not only is Shono's article rejected by *Gunzō*, she is also asked by *Gunzō*'s relatively new editor, Ishizaka, to cease her criticism of Otsuka. Indignantly Shono demands to know why her voice is being censored while Otsuka's articles, that at "best belong on a garbage-heap or someone's home-page," are being published? [387] "They seemed interesting to me," was the response she received. Asking why she needed to stop criticizing Otsuka when he was the one who had just written that a copy of *Gunzō* "was worth only 20 *sen*," Shono was told by the same editor that it felt "unpleasant" to him. Excerpting from their interaction only two sentences, both which begin with the relatively gruff and strongly masculine personal pronoun "ore," Shono highlights her own gendered exclusion from the editor's support of Otsuka. In clipped sentences citing subjective and vague responses - "interesting" and "unpleasant" - the editor protects Otsuka from further criticism and dismisses Shono from a journal she had published in for over two decades. While Shono references this event in several pieces of fiction and critical essays in addition to "Don Quixote's Return Bomb," the precise details of her departure from *Gunzō* are still unclear. At times it seems as though she refused to acquiesce to what she perceived as an unfair demand and stopped writing as the only justifiable reaction to looming censorship.[388] At other times, when Shono and other

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[387] This is a reference to what Otsuka has repeated about literature in general and *shōsetsu* (novels) in particular.

[388] Shono, "Onna, SF, shinwa, junbungaku," 251.

critics use the words "expelled" or "purged", [389] or when the well-known playwright Kinoshita Junji stops writing for *Gunzō* in solidarity with her, [390] for example, it seems as though she was told to leave point-blank. Shono did attempt to broker the terms of her own exile from *Gunzō,* and she was able to write one final criticism of Otsuka and to say goodbye to her readers, letting them know that she would continue publishing in other literary journals.

But Shono did not have as much control over her farewell as she had hoped. When what she assumed was to be her final piece in *Gunzō* "Onna no sakka no i nashi?" [No Place for a Woman Writer? Don Kihote's Cold Winter] appeared she was shocked to find that an article by Otsuka appeared alongside it. [391] It was clear from the information in Otuska's article, titled "Boku wa mo 'bungaku' wo hikiukeru koto tamerai shimasen" [I will not hesitate to join the literary field], that he had access to her galleys prior to his writing. In what Shono likens to unfair prior knowledge of an opponents *shogi* move, [*392*] Otsuka is able to refer to her departure from *Gunzō* and asks her to join him in a one-to-one published literary discussion.[393] Otsuka does not include the fact that Shono had been asking to engage Otsuka in joint dialogue for years. And so she concludes in "Don Quixote's Return Bomb," published in *Waseda bungaku*, "I was right in calling him the louse on the loin-cloth of pure-literature."[394] Not ceding the battle

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[389] Sato, 111.

[390] *Gendaishis*ō, 38. Kinoshita Junji (1914-2007) is a playwright best known for his 1949 play "Yuzuru" [Twilight Crane] that came under attack in the early 1980's from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) which claimed that Kinoshita's re-telling of "The Crane's Wife" tale was anti-capitalist and should be removed from school textbooks. *Jiyu Shinpō* [Freedom News], 10 June 1980.

[391] Shono, Yoriko, "Onna no sakka no i nashi" [No Place for a Woman Writer? Don Quixote's Cold Winter"], *Gunzo* (February 2002), 205.

[392] *Shogi*, literally "general's boardgame," is a chess-like Japanese board game.

[393] Otsuka, Eiji, "Boku wa mo 'bungaku' wo hikiukeru koto tamerai shimasen" [I will not hesitate to join the literary field], *Gunzo* (February 2002), 212-231.

altogether, Shono directly addresses the *Gunzō*'s editor Ichikawa in the essay's final paragraph and asks him to reprint "Don Quixote's Return Bomb" on the pages of *Gunzō* where her half of the dialogue with Otsuka would have been printed.

"For-Profit Literature"'s Strange Bedfellows

Shono employs a wide range of tactics in her efforts to debunk Otsuka's premise that what is worthy and relevant will sell, and that which is unworthy and irrelevant will not.[395] She calls Otsuka personally to task with uncensored vitriol, she refuses to stay silent about the "purging" and "leaking" incidents and writes about it in several different pieces,[396] and she investigates the background of the editor who, at the same time that he dismissed Shono, granted Otsuka so much print-space. She uncovers a striking parallel between Otsuka Eiji and the editor Ishizaka; they both have come to their current sympathy for "for-sale literature" from a history of engagement in publications that feature adolescent, or pre-adolescent, girls as the height of sexual desirability. Otsuka began his publishing career as editor of the "lolikon manga" *burikko*, whose name refers to a type of coquetry made famous by the female entertainer Matsuda Seiko (b. 1962), and Ichikawa came to *Gunzō* from another Kodansha entity, *X+ ekusutasu* [X+ Ecstasy], a so-called *shojo* (young girl) magazine that featured Burberry and Ralph Lauren ads.[397]

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394 Shono, "Don kihote no henshin bakudan," 158.

395 Bourdieu attacks the same premise; "How could one not see that the logic of profit, particularly short-term profit, is the very negation of culture, which presupposes investment for no financial return or for uncertain and often posthumous returns?" (70).

396 As well as the non-fiction essays mentioned above Shono brings these events up in her fiction. See, for example her "nankai-sugi karuku nagashite ne busu no isakai onna yo" [Just Ignore this Too-Difficult-to-Read Quarrelsome Woman Writer], *Gunzo* (July 1999), 104-133.

397 The magazine's title is written both to approximate the English word "ecstasy" and as the symbol X with the symbol "+" (pronounced "tasu" in Japanese). Burberry scarves and, to a lesser extent, the Ralph Lauren brand, occupy a particularly glamorous position in young women's fashion in Japan, and over the past few decades have been worn by younger and younger girls.

According to Shono, during Ishizaka's tenure at the short-lived magazine *X+ ekusutasu* targeted a younger and younger audience until it became a magazine for elementary school girls with very young models, and much *kamatoto* (feigned innocence). When Shono asks to know the reason for having instituted these changes Ishizaka responds that sales was the main factor and that money issues are never far from an editor's mind.[398]

The next to last issue of *X+ekusutasu* features an article titled "Yōchien ni kaerō – Back to the Kindergarten" [Let's Return to Kindergarten] with a picture of young teen-age girls on a wistful journey back to their apparently idyllic kindergarten days. What is striking here is the attempt to get young girls, only eleven or twelve themselves, to believe in their own earlier innocence as a desirable quality.[399] A similar process is at work in a series of pictures of a four or five year-old Caucasian girl in a swimsuit – the pictures are off-centered and blurry like those in a non-professional family album. The sensuality of the little girl is that of a gleeful, and partially wet, un-self-conscious toddler, and the placement of the series in between pages of fashion and love advice to be consumed by young girls makes it clear that this is a look that they are being encouraged to replicate.[400]

In an interview in *Waseda bungaku* Ishizaka states that *X+ekusutasu* was created to be a space where girls could be free to enjoy their girlhood, but Shono generally sees this support of "girl power" or "*shojo* feminism" as a wily way of getting around dealing with mature women. Otsuka has written much about *shojo* culture and posits that the consumer capacity of young girls has placed them in a powerful position in which they

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398 Shono, "Women, SF, Myth and Pure Literature" 246.

399 "Yōchien ni kaerō – Back to the Kindergarten" [Let's Return to Kindergarten], *X+ ekusutasu* 5 (September 2002), 14-17.

400 *X+ ekusutasu* (July 2002), 23-24.

can successfully exert their own agency.[401] When Otsuka was asked by Japan's premier feminist academic, Ueno Chizuko, for a contribution to a pop-culture anthology, Shono recalls, he promised her an article that would champion the empowerment of the *shojo* over the intellectual and *erai obaasan* (older women who think highly of themselves).[402] Adult males, such as Otsuka and Ishizaka, Shono contends, should not fool anyone into thinking they are championing women's liberation while they preserve, if not strengthen, the image of innocent girlhood as the apex of both female sexuality and power.

Shono almost accidentally comes across the same dual characteristics of suspicion towards mature female creativity and support of for-profit literature in a critic at quite a far remove from her pursuit of Otsuka and his editor. A fellow science fiction writer, Kotani Mari, was suing Yamagata Hiroo for having written, in the reference book *Orutakarucha: media wakusu* [Alternative Culture: Media Works], that her popular and well-received fiction was actually written by her academic husband. "Kotani Mari," Yamagata Hiroo wrote, "is the pen name of Tatsumi Takayuki. The real writer is a man."[403] Yamagata was found guilty and fined almost thirty thousand dollars by the Tokyo courts. Shono, along with many other writers, was a public supporter of Kotani's and joined the group "The Association to Defend Female Authorship" that grew out of the case. Several years after the case had concluded Shono comes across the defendant's name again; this time as a passionate proponent of for-profit literature. The critic who concluded that an engaged and active female author was incapable of writing the text to which her name was affixed, turns out to also be antagonistic to literature that does not turn a good profit. In "Shōsetsu no kōyō bunseki to sono mirai wo kangaeru" [Thoughts

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[401] See for example, Otsuka Eiji, *Eto Jun to shojo feminizumu-teki sengo* [Eto Jun and a girl-power like post-war], Tokyo: Chikuma, 2001.

[402] Shono,"Women, SF, Myth and Pure Literature," 248.

[403] *Orutakarucha: media wakusu* [Alternative Culture: Media Works], Tokyo: Shufu-no-tomo, 1997.

on the Benefit-Analysis of Novels and its Future] Yamagata suggests a way to evaluate the financial worth of literature based on inflation, the pleasure produced by other emerging mediums, and the benefit derived from the particular novel at hand. Literature, he surmises, has not maintained its value when compared to the rising per-capita income and expanding technological possibilities such as film and video games. [404]

While Shono herself does not draw an explicit connection between Yamagata, Otsuka, and Ishizaka, her creative criticism begs the question of why a disdain for subsidized art and a disdain for sexually or artistically mature women share such similar conditions of possibility. "Loli-libe," a term that Shono coined using the *loli* of *loli-kon* (Lolita complex) and the *libe* of *neo-liberaru* (neo-liberal), demonstrates the implicit connections she makes between a certain infantalization of women with the dominance of neo-liberal values. Certainly, neo-liberal theory and the phenomena of *lolikon* are logically consistent in that they both share the premise that commodification can extend to vast areas of life with little relevant human cost. In contrast to the influx of spaces in which consumption can take place, the places from which criticism can occur are seriously eroded when politics and culture are abdicated to "the wilds of the market place."[405] Shono takes the minute machinations -- the apologies, the banning, the leaking, the false accusation -- that ultimately create consensus and "common sense" as the topic of her writing, and seeks to clarify the content, and the process, of the changes underway. But will her complex project produce the 100,000 sales that Otsuka claims are expected of any manga book.

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[404] Yamagata Hiroo,"Shōsetsu no kōyō bunseki to sono mirai wo kangaeru" [Thoughts on the Benefit-Analysis of Novels and its Future], *Gunzo* (October 2003), 312.

[405] Bourdieu, 8.

An Example of Shono's Pure-Literature: The History of Japan's Troublesome Ontako

Exemplary of the complexity with which Shono tracks the process of producing a discourse is her 2006 *Dai-nihhon ontako no meiwaku-shi* [Great Japan: The History of Japan's Troublesome *Ontako*]. *Japan's Troublesome Ontako* is a novel that weaves together a fictional narrative with explicit critiques. The fictional narrative concerns the impending demise of a spiritual group, the *mitako*. The *mitako* are about to collude in their own erasure at the hands of the newly powerful and progressive-seeming *ontako,*[406] and the extent to which they are willfully joining the *ontako,* or to which they have been left with no other alternative, is left somewhat ambivalent. In the critiques directed at the reader, the narrator breaks out of the fictional diegesis and exhorts the reader not to fall prey to the chicanery of the *ontako* -- a challenge which is made all the more cumbersome by the fact the same Chinese characters can be read as both "ontako" and "mitako." As the fictional narrative charts the *ontako*'s consolidation of political and cultural power, the extra-diegetic critiques become more and more interested in the quality of "ugliness." Midway through the book there is a brief essay titled "The Half-life of the Ugly-Writer Shono Yoriko," and the epilogue is titled "What is Ugly in Terms of Discourse?" The narrator counters the *ontako*'s increasing and smooth consolidation with a focus on ugliness, both as a receptacle for that which has been excised and as an emphasis on lived sentient experience.

The density of word-play and allusion in *Japan's Troublesome Ontako* begins with the title and the epigraph and continues throughout the entirety of the novel. The

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406 The processes of political consolidation in which a newly and more "enlightened" government takes over control of diverse spiritual and folk practices are also the subject of Shono's novel *Kompira* (2004) in which she traces the early Meiji states's project of standardizing diverse spiritual beliefs under the aegis of State Shinto. *Kompira* is discussed in further detail in the chapter that follows.

"*Ontako*" of the title is already a "deformation"[407] of *otaku,* members of a subculture that can be broadly defined by its highly specialized consumption and production of cultural products along the lines of anime, manga, and *figyuā* (figurines). [408] These specialized tastes not infrequently involve caricatured figures of young or buxom women. In terms of social status and conformity *otaku* would usually be placed at a great distance from the elite cadre of government bureaucrats that Shono dubs the "*ontako*." Her iteration of the "counter-cultural" *otaku*, "*ontako*", however, draws attention to the historical and structural parallels that Shono perceives between these two ostensibly apposite demographics; they both have a myopic notion of how to be anti- authoritarian or "enlightened," they do not question their own investment in the *loli-kon* industy, and they have no sense whatsoever of history prior to Japan's Meiji-restoration.[409]

What comes into focus through the lens that Shono fabricates are the gender-relations and notions of sexuality that are plausibly shared by both elite politicians and subcultural *otaku*: the overwhelming male dominance of the government ministries; the practice of employing young females as promoters, or "cheerleaders," in otherwise

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[407] *Deforume* (deformation) is a type of stylization from the world of manga in which a character's proportions are altered to make them look different but still recognizable – a further caricaturization of a caricature. I read *ontako* as an aural and visual deformation of the word *otaku*.

[408] For my purposes here the popular image of *otaku* as a sub-cultural and (largely) male category is relevant. The SF writer and literary critic Shimizu Yoshinori, a frequent reviewer of Shono Yoriko's work, posits *otaku* culture and *lolikon* as mutually constitutive, see Shimizu Yoshinori "'Nai' mono-tachi no saishū sensō: Shono Yoriko wa nani to tatakatte-iru no ka?" [The Final War of those with Nothing: What is Shono Yoriko Fighting Against?], *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007), 130. For an analysis of how *otaku* cultural consumption focuses on smaller and smaller units (individual characters as opposed to overall narratives, for example) , and how the three generations of *otaku* differ, see Azuma Hiroki, *Otaku:Japan's Database Animals*. Trans. Jonathan Abel and Shion Kono, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009. Readers involved with undergraduate Japan studies, in particular, will be aware of how often this term is invoked and identified with amongst western fans of anime and manga. As several scholars have clearly noted, the American usage of the term tends to be more celebratory and casual than its use in Japan might be (Lamarre, Azuma).

[409] The 1868 Meiji restoration officially marked the end to the Tokugawa shogunate and feudal Japan, and the official beginning of a modern Republic.

predominantly male political campaigns;[410] and the discrepancy between the record speed with which the Diet legalized Viagra, and its decades-long resistance to making the birth-control pill widely accessible.[411] *Ontako* is a crucial Shono term for those who believe themselves to be fighting the powers-that-be despite the fact that they subscribe to the same notions of gender and sexuality as that of the ruling class. The neologism "ontako" both frames the subculture of *otaku* as mainstream, and positions elite government bureaucrats as belonging to a subculture with a particular sexual fetish.

The epigraph of *Japan's Troublesome Ontako* fastens onto one particular reading of the homophone "tako" from *ontako*, meaning "octopus." "The generous god that promises a great catch of octopii," begins the epigraph, "is a peerless deity." "This god sadly appears in front of humans," the epigraph concludes," and this is the oracle of that sadness."[412] History, the epigraph implies, have not been kind to promises of a lucrative harvest. The suggestion of windfall material profits is made stronger by the presence of the character for octopus within the word *takohaitou* – a bogus dividend that shows profit where there is none. Read via these textual and extra-textual connections (*takohaitou*

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410 *Uguisujo*, a combination of *uguisu* (bush warbler) and *jo* (young woman), denotes paid participants in a candidate's campaign whose job it is to ride along in the campaign car with the candidate and drum up voter support by smiling, waving and repeating set phrases, *Kodansha's Dictionary of Basic Japanese Idioms*, Eds. Jeff Garrison et al, Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd, 2002, 602-603.

411 In January 1999 the Japanese Minister of Health and Welfare (MHW) gave final approval for Pfizer Inc.'s Viagra, an oral therapy for erectile dysfunction. Viagra received an expedited review by the MHW and was cleared for marketing within six months. In stark contrast, the Ministry had been considering the legalization of the low-dosage birth control pill for 34 year**s.** Approval of 16 low-hormone dosage pills came later that same year (June 1999) after several months of public criticism of the speedy manner in which Viagra was approved for use. **Ja**pan was the last United Nations member to permit the use of oral contraceptives, "UCLA Research on Asia," http://www.international.ucla.edu/eas/thisweek/06-02.htm (accessed October 4 2009).

412 Nuances of the word *tako* for "octopus" also shoot through the semantically dissimilar *ontako*, whose power, within the narrative, is rapidly growing. Octopi appear, for example, as creatures who have been made to wiggle their tentacles in response to pre-determined discourses, and as examples of bounty with crippling blessings. Shono, *Ontako no meiwaku-shi*, 43 and 1, respectively.

does not appear in the text) the epigraph can be interpreted as a warning about the havoc wreaked, not by phony promises of wealth, but by promises of phony wealth. Criticism of neo-liberalism's interest in short-term financial profit becomes apparent when retroactively unpacking the epigraph but it seems quite unlikely that it would be gleaned from a first reading.

Overwhelming density and cross-circuitry makes the reader work hard, and forces the reader's attention onto the myriad structures of support involved in building a discourse. This can make for an impenetrable reading experience, or an excessively porous one where the reader chases after multiple leads and feels as though they are going down so many rabbit holes and away from the possibility of a connected narrative. "To you who get angry when you find there is no story… this novel was written to make the reader conscious of how confusing the world is," the narrator holds forth at the end of the novel, "Please know that I did not write this with the intention of making it easy for the reader to understand."[413] The didactic tone of the narrator is diminished to a certain degree by her singularity -- she makes up words that do not exist, employs an idiosyncratic usage of other words, and hints at historical connections that she later explicitly denies. Is the narrator attempting to dismantle an old discourse or construct a new one? The very "tricks" of sound similarity that she implicitly accuses the *ontako* of employing to render invisible the history of the *mitako,* the narrator uses to cast aspersions on the *ontako*. The narrator is intent, it seems, on both exposing and engaging in the machinations -- the pressures, the accidents, and the habits -- that produce a given discourse.

The first page of the narrative involves *mitako*'s flag that will no longer "swim in the wind like a kite." [414] The head of *mitako* is preparing to burn the *mitako* flag,

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[413] Shono, *Ontako no meiwaku-shi,* 220.

[414] The Chinese character used for "kite" 凧 is a homonym for "octopus" 蛸, "tako" (1).

thereby disbanding their religion. The announcement of the *mitako*'s "democratic" decision and "voluntary" dissolution will take place at a press conference, a positioning that throws doubt on whether the "free" media are capable of stepping outside the ideological homogeneity and circular-logic of the "journalistic-political field."[415] The narrator chides the reader not to mistakenly pronounce *mitako "ontako*," because, she reasons, although some people know it is incorrect when they do so, pretty soon they will lose the feeling that it is incorrect. We learn about the *mitako* flag, which should not be called *tako-maru* because that would indirectly reference the Japanese national flag which shares the suffix "*maru*" and is called the *hi-no-maru*. Rather, it should be called *mitako-hata* which precludes a metonymic slippage between the two institutions.[416]

The threat of having historical origins rendered invisible is further intensified by the suggestion that *mitako* are actually *kakure-kurisuchian*, Japanese Christians who, during Japan's more than two century long period of seclusion between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, were compelled to hide their faith or face torture and death. The first word of the novel, a combination of the Chinese characters for "church" and for "temple" that Shono herself creates, as well as the presence of a "Maria" in *mitako*'s mythology suggest, falsely apparently, Christian influence. Should the reader not have picked up on these suggestions, the epilogue makes these hints explicit when the narrator denies that *mitako* are hidden Christians. Regardless of this explicit denial, however, the suggestion of the *kakure kurisuchian* highlights the possibility of covering up a history of belief to the extent that successive generations could not be aware of the specific origins of the values and conduct that continued to shape their communities.

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[415] Champagne, 21.

[416] "hata" is a literal rendering of "flag," while the suffix "maru" is used, in addition to the national flag, in ship names and has embedded within it claims to autonomy and might.

Reading *Japan's Troublesome Ontako* is a taxing process. But it is also one that allows the reader to encounter a palimpsest of conflicting historical "common senses" and the processes by which they change and evolve. It would be difficult to put a price tag on the "good sense" reached for in such a Gramscian project of critically engaging with chaotic and often obfuscating "common sense," but in short-term sales it would likely be quite low. The thought and reflection generated by close readings of such now classical texts as Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji* or James Joyce's *Ulysses* – both of which benefited from differing but significant systems of patronage - is certainly less connected to the amount of copies sold than it is to the labor and time spent on them.

Hyper-Personal Neo-Liberal Pillar #3: Western Philosophy
and the Modern Self

Shono mobilizes her criticism around the ability to recognize myriad value systems which extend beyond both free-market principles and the understanding of the individual as a construction of the modern state.[417] Her analysis is not that of a political scientist nor economist -- her writerly intent is less to convince the reader with a persuasive air-tight and factually supported argument, than it is to provoke the imagination to conceive of multiple modes of being with market-logic as but one of them.[418] Within Shono's world-view the history of local customs and specific locales is

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417 That these dominant economic and academic ideas are intertwined with the dominance of the West is significant for Shono, but that significance does not stem from a paradigm of Western cultural imperialism as much as from any monopolizing power's ability -- the nation-state of Japan for example -- to eradicate local distinction as well as people's non-monetary relations to space and history.

418 "Even when I make mistakes (and tackle problems that are too large) I still plan on continuing writing," Shono writes, "Why? It's not that my mistakes themselves are good lessons to learn, but because they could provide stimulation that allows individual readers to spin their own versions of the "truth" of their own experiences," Shono Yoriko, ""Yoru no kawa wo keshite koenu tame ni" [Don't Cross over the River of Night], *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007), 87.

a rich source for the imagination. Myths of the supernatural, having circulated for generations and shaped and reflected relationships of both proximity and of power, provide productive material for Shono's writing. Developing the sensitivity to attune oneself to those specificities is what, for Shono, produces a resistance to the authoritarian spread of any one given value system.[419] Lacking the Christian elements of confession or singular allegiance, "prayer", in Shono's vernacular, is a process of self-reflection and a way of connecting to one's environs. One of the organizing ideas in her experiments in critical-literature is that the power of fantasy and prayer within the individual is greater when no one god or state is in complete control of a dominant spirituality. Christianity's belief in an ultimate intelligence -- God -- and State Shintō's control of "proper" Shintō beliefs[420] both strive to create limits to the individual's spiritual imagination and promote a tendency to understand individuals as having a high degree of similarity to one another, as brethren, or as products of an already-defined system. Shono's project of shaping an imaginary capable of maintaining difference involves extending one's imagination beyond the Meiji era, in which State Shintō was established and monotheist-predicated western philosophy was adopted.

The "self" and its construction via the objectives of the modernizing and westernizing Meiji state is a dominant preoccupation within the study of modern Japanese literature, both in Japan and in the United States. From issues of linguistic standardization, to the I-novels interiorized "self," to depictions of interaction between "old" and modernizing Japan - as in Soseki's *Kokoro* or Kawabata's *Snow Country* -

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[419] This point is well made by Shiraishi Yoshiharu in his article "'Kompira' no mirai, arui wa neoriberizumu no awari wo ikiru tame ni" [*Kompira*'s Future, or "To Live Beyond the End of Neo-liberalism"], *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007), 105.

[420] State Shinto is a program of institutionalizing local nativist beliefs into an over-arching and hierarchical belief-system that was initiated in the early years of the Meiji period. State Shinto is aligned with an imperially-derived cosmology and seeks, as much as possible, to separate domestic beliefs from "imported" Buddhism. The statist project of separating Shinto and Buddhsim – *shinbutsu bunri* – will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

contemporary scholarship often focuses on the ways in which modern literature reflected, or helped produce, a subjectivity appropriate to the needs of the modern state.[421] Yet, for Shono, this particular interest in the machinations of disciplined modern self-hood is but one part of a much longer history which includes sensibilities and relations that are not privileged within the self/nation construct. Using the diminutive word-ending attached to children's names, Shono calls the literary adherents to the primacy of the modern-state *Meiji-seifu-chan*, literally "children of the Meiji government," but also child-like in their singular attachment. Her critique of the importance attributed to the role of the modern state in terms of the constitution of the "Self" is not one that many ascribe to, and certainly makes her critique an unusual one.

Shono's definition of pure-literature is organized around the ability to maintain a plurality of value-systems. This logic sometimes leads to surprising conclusions because regardless of how enlightened or progressive any given idea is, if that idea acquires a monopolistic position its' contributions to enhancing the fullness of lived experience are undercut. Thus in Shono's schema the conventionally distant poles inhabited by leftist-academis and advocates of free-market economics, are positioned much closer together. As they are reshuffled along this unique axis important cultural figures often find themselves coming under hitherto unexpected criticism. The targets of Shono's copious critiques would certainly define themselves as progressive.[422] Karatani Kojin, the most

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421 Significant examples of this focus on the modern state's role in shaping subjectivity include Karatani Kojin's *The Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* Trans. Brett de Bary, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, and Komori Yoichi, Kono Kenusuke, Takahashi Osamu's edited volume *Medeia, hyōshō, ideorogi: Meiji sanjūnendai no bunka kenkyū* [Media, Representation and Ideology: Cultural Studies of the third decade of Meiji], Tokyo: Azawa shoten, 1998.

422 Otsuka, for example, is not a conventional conservative by any means. He has repeatedly taken anti-war positions and has positioned himself as a cultural critic who both personally identifies with, and publicly champions, the *otaku* "subculture." So while Shono sees Otsuka as a late-comer opportunist who supports the currency of *loli-kon* and who seeks to install the market as the sole arbiter of value, Otsuka most likely sees himself as a champion of the new against the old, and the anti-authoritarian against the authoritarian.

well-known Japanese literary theorist of the 1990's and an intellectual with a strong international reputation, for example, is generally thought of as a Marxist-leaning progressive thinker.[423] Very much in the legacy of Michel Foucault, Karatani's understanding of the productive power of discipline to create subjectivity generated a critical and suspicious stance toward Japan's modern-state apparatus.[424] In Shono's framework, however, the ways in which Karatani has placed the Meiji-state at the heart of the discussion of the self makes him a quintessential *ontako* and *meiji-seifu-chan*. Those of the literary establishment who fall sway to Karatani's enornmous influence are then *ontako, meiji-seifu-chan,* and *karatani-koinu* – Karatani's puppies. Karatani's public image, however, like that of the above-mentioned subculture critic, Otsuka Eiji, is that of an intellectual activist and agitator, certainly not one of an intransigent conservative.

Shono's criticism is aimed at the wide acceptance of Karatani's framework – which she dubs "the karatani method"[425] - by the modern literary establishment, rather than at the individual Karatani Kojin himself. In the introduction to *Tettei kōsen! Bunshi no mori* [Fight to the End! Writers in the Woods], a sprawling almost four hundred-page collection of her criticism, Shono enumerates her points of contention with Karatani and his "puppies." Her list reads as follows:

1. They can only see the nation-state.

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[423] In the 1990's Karatani's fame was unique amongst Japanese academics – he even appears as a character in two contemporary novels. In the twenty-first century, however, a paradigm shift has occurred in which (often) younger critics, such as Asada Akira and Azuma Hiroki, with significantly more interest in subculture and consumption theory have become more popular public intellectuals. This is a broad schematic, however, and not at all meant to suggest a precise rift; Asada and Kojin, for example, co-edited an important literary journal *Critical Space* (*hihyou kuukan*) through 2002

[424] See, for example, his seminal work *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, Trans. Brett de Bary, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993

[425] Shono, *Ontako no meiwaku-shi*, 220.

2. They only understand the modern era.
3. They believe that there is only one standard by which everything should be judged.
4. They only give the model example and ignore everything else.
5. They think that white people and men are the only humans.
6. They have neither common sense nor the ability to perceive reality.
7. They think that they are exceptions in being able to understand people other than themselves.
8. They ignore history and they ignore geography.
9. Even though western philosophy is premised upon a Christian world-view they ignore Japan's history of religion and import western philosophy wholesale.
10. Without even reading any pure-literature or avant-pop, they focus completely on the marketed and well-selling popular literature. They carefully review popular literature while turning a blind eye to pure-literature.
11. Oddly, even as they praise the mass-produced literature they try to claim that there is no more literature.
12. Anyway, they don't have the ability to engage and analyze writing. And these are the intellectuals of Japan. [426]

"What seems to make one an intellectual," Shono then concludes, "is ignoring religion, removing oneself from public sentiment, and then depriving oneself of the body's ability to imagine."[427] She quickly hastens to add that the reader is not about to be subjected to some sort of religious sermon. She has little truck for specific religions, but is concerned that what she sees as literature's potential for capturing and engaging the imagination is going to be lost if the depths of history and customs are covered over by a

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[426] Shono, *Tettei kōsen! Bunshi no mori*, 6.

[427] *Ibid.*, 8.

one-size-fits-all type of sensibility.[428] The severing off of the past – especially the less politically and religiously consolidated medieval era - is one of the "imperceptible enemies" that Shono seeks to make visible. She is not advocating her own variation of *nihonjinron*[429] and seeking an ahistorical Japanese "uniqueness," but rather using literature as a means of perpetual agitation: "The righteous path of literatures, I believe, is resistance as a mode of existence."[430]

Focus upon an "interiority" resulting from changes in state and capital superstructure leaves little room for non-materialist conceptions of history,[431] and the

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[428] *Ibid*., 9.

[429] *Nihonjinron*, literally "theories of the Japanese, or Japanese-ness" is a term that refers to a genre of writing which explores the unique characteristics of the Japanese race or Japanese culture. The term came into usage in the post World War II period when defeat generated a certain amount of anxiety over Japan's cultural identity, but much earlier writings would be included in the category.

Interestingly, reflection upon Shono's work has raised a degree of skepticism towards the strong criticism of the *nihonjinron* apologists of the emperor system of recent decades. Some critics are now arguing that *nihonjinron* was a writerly activity that never impacted socio-economic reality which, at the same time, was quickly making neo-liberal and culturally neutral advancements. Was such critical attention turned towards culturalist writing, Sato Izumi asks, not only in order to deflect attention away from neo-liberal changes, but to actually generate support for them as an antidote to the archaic cultural separatism of *nihonjinron*? Sato Izumi, "Shisha wa "kawari ni omoidashite kudasai" to yobikaketa" [The Dead Called Out, "Please Think of us for a Change"], *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007), 114. Similarly, Shono's critical advocates have found common ground in the recent Japanese translation of *Shisō kūkan toshite no gendai chūgoku* [Modern China as a Space for Thinking) by the scholar Wang Hui. Wang's writing has been instrumental in re-evaluating the analysis of the Tianamen Square protests as a popular movement characterized by the demand for free-market reforms. Wang, a participant himself, argues that the demands of the protest movement were hardly ones for free-market reform; there was actually considerable anger at the growing economic gap and a call for greater – not less - public infrastructural support for people's needs. The struggle against elitist corruption, he clarifies, did not go hand in hand with the goals of market liberalization and privatization as it seems to have been widely interpreted abroad, Wang Hui, *Shisō kūkan toshite no gendai chūgoku* [Modern China as a Space for Thinking], Translated by Murata Yujiro, Nasuyama Yukio, and Onodera Shiro, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2006.

[430] Shono Yoriko, "Hangyaku suru eien no gongen tamashii: Kompira bungakuron josetsu" [The Eternally Treasonous Spirit of Embodiment: An Introduction to *Kompira* Literature], *Waseda Bungaku* 30 (January 2005),89.

[431] Shono is not completely alone in feeling sidelined by the focus upon the modern "self" that has dominated the study of Japanese modern literature for the past century. Other writers, such as Kaga Otohiko, author of *zabieru to sono teshi* [Zabieru and his Student] (2004),

most celebrated intellectual championing this analytic framework in recent decades is indisputably Karatani Kojin. Karatani's stature in Japan is inextricably connected to his international stature. In a 1995 special edition of *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kansho* [National Literature: Analysis and Appreciation] devoted to his writings Karatani is introduced as representing the "essence of Japanese intellectual life." His reputation abroad plays no small part in this distinction – it is mentioned three times in the ten-sentence blurb covering an entire page at the beginning of the journal.[432] Karatani's international success is certainly a tribute to the broad applicability of his ideas. It is this very applicability, however, that Shono finds so disturbing. (Number four on her list of complaints against the intellectual climate that she holds Karatani somewhat responsible for reads "They only give the model example and ignore everything else.") While Shono recognizes the necessity and helpfulness of what she terms "the generalizability of western philosophy,"[433] she is mistrusting of the circular logic that makes one of Japan's biggest intellectual exports a scholar who already champions a western philosophical framework.

But this is a very general claim and to quite a large extent it would be difficult to imagine an international intellectual who did not adhere to what Shono vaguely terms

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have expressed frustration that their work is continually analyzed via the lens of the individual when their interest is in a greater cosmology. Kaga also identifies this practice as reflecting the influence of the Meiji-era when, "under the modern gaze of Kobayashi Hideo, the spirituality of even Dostovesky's writing was silenced." A pivotal scene in *Zabieru*, where the main character experiences an illusion right before his death, was analyzed as a breakdown of the self in *Gunzo*, much to the surprise and consternation of Kaga whose own feelings about the scene revolved around the 600 year old Noh scene that comprised the illusion, cited in Shono Yoriko, *Fight to the End! Writers in the Woods*, 317.

[432] The page reads as follows: "Karatani Kojin's criticism represents the essence of Japan's intellectual life. He has been recognized not only in Japan, but also overseas, where has earned a strong reputation. His work has been influential in both the West and in South-Eastern Asia. Japan has never had an intellectual like Karatani before. In this issue we re-visit Karatani's work from multiple perspectives from all over the world. We want to emphasize the ways in which this unique man has continued his search for the conditions of intellectual development."

[433] Shono, "The Eternally Treasonous Spirit of Embodiment", 92.

"western philosophy". More specifically, the connection between, on the one hand, Karatani's identification of the relationship between the self and the modern state, and on the other hand, his contention that literature is over, is the framework with which Shono takes issue. Karatani's focus upon the role of the state in the experience of the "self" springs from his understanding of literature as being one of the significant sites in which historical changes are reflected and produced. Both as a tool for grappling with the changing constitution of self, and as a venue for reflecting this understanding to a broad audience, literature's role in engaging with history is a key premise of Karatani's early criticism. By the late seventies, however, Karatani was no longer convinced that contemporary literature was continuing to engage meaningfully with history. In a compilation entitled *Hanbungakuron* [Against Literature] Karatani wrote that his years of judging the works of new writers were over and that "in all honesty, I am fed up with the writing of the 'brats."[434] In *Shūen wo megute* [On the 'End'] Karatani is particularly critical of the internationally acclaimed writer Murakami Haruki. " While it may seem as though Murakami Haruki undoes "interiority" and "background" in his stories," Karatani argues, "He has actually only added a new dimension to it, a solipsistic world view that most young writers nowadays take to be the normative style."[435] Convinced that contemporary literature avoids confronting historical shifts and instead provides a reassuring salve for the self, Karatani no longer sees it as a force of change.

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[434] Karatani Kojin, *Hanbungakuron* [Against Literature],Tokyo: Dōjusha, 1979, 95.

[435] Karatani Kojin, *Shūen wo megute* [*On the 'End'*], Tokyo: Fukutake shoten, For Karatani, Murakami Haruki's narrator, the forever- jean-clad beer drinking "boku," is symptomatic of a literature that, rather than grappling with the advent of a new type of "self," is obsessed with overcoming the burden of having a self. Stories with young, innocent narrators that appear one after another, are, Karatami contends, being "consumed" by readers who easily identify with the characters and are somehow "soothed" by doing so. Kawamura Minato, "Karatani Kojin to gendaibungaku" [Karatani Kojin and Contemporary Literature], *Kokubungaku to kansho, bessatsu* (1995),98.

Conclusion: Shono's Praxis of Embodiment

Shono self-consciously presents her writing as an agent of agitation. It would be hard to imagine her work being seen as a means of numbing oneself to the world, and indeed, she shares with Karatani a mistrust of what she calls "ureuru akutagawa-saku,' literally, akutagawa-prize novels that sell, and, implicity, serious literature-lite. But with a scholar who "represents the essence of Japan's intellectual life" announcing the end of literature, the newspaper with the largest distribution in Japan participating in "pure-literature bashing," and a transfer from the highly-lucrative *manga* world. Otsuka Eiji, publishing numerous articles advocating for-profit-only literature in the journal of her own literary debut, Shono's chances at succeeding in her efforts to carry on experimental, historically-informed, largely plot-less fiction that sells only moderately well, are hardly promising. Recently, however, activists and academics interested in challenging the increasingly acceptable commodification of labor, land, and people, have found resonance in Shono's particular and critical perspective. The March 2007 issue of *Gendaishisō*, discussed more below, is a striking example of how Shono's voice is being heard despite such odds.

The title of the dedicated issue -- "Shono Yoriko: Neoriberarizumu wo koeru sōzōryoku" [The Imagination to Overcome Neo-Liberalism] -- reflects an understanding of the imagination's central role in keeping the complications of history alive and producing an otherwise unobtainable clarity. Neo-liberal practices and rhetoric often blur conventional distinctions between the left and the right on the political spectrum, making them a less effective distinction from which to understand the changing realities of economic globalization. Former prime minister, and leader of the conservative LDP party, Koizumi Junchiro[436] was frequently referred to in the press as a "maverick"

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[436] A guitar player with a 'lion's mane coif, Koizumi is an avid fan of the music group X-Japan which pioneered "visual-kei," a form of "Glam-rock" that features elaborate and often androgynous aesthetics. Since retiring he has, amongst other endeavors, done voice acting for the popular television series "Ultraman." His relative openness to youth culture could be understood

reformer interested in bringing about dramatic social change. His oft-repeated priority was the privatization of the postal services, whose more than three trillion dollars worth of personal savings accounts and insurance policies has long had foreign speculators keenly interested. Did Koizumi's interest in re-structuring an inefficient, allegedly corrupt, system and his zeal for swift change and youth culture make him a liberal, or did his position at the head of the long-entrenched ruling party, the LDP, and his desire to bring Japan's financial paradigm in line with the wishes of the world's super-power make him a conservative? In the US arena, the shared priority of capital fluidity also has the effect of blurring identity as both the democratic and republican parties have overseen major neo-liberal changes. While the neo-liberal disdain for regulations and taxation is perhaps more visible in the actions of George W. Bush, with his willingness to flout international environmental agreements such as the Kyoto Accords and to reduce taxes on corporations and high-income earners, Bill Clinton also put in place many neo-liberal policies that were beneficial to those with accumulated capital. As Joseph Stiglitz, former chair of Clinton's Council of Economic Advisors, admitted in his book *The Roaring Nineties*, "We did manage to tighten the belts on the poor as we loosened those on the rich."[437] Stiglitz, recipient of the Nobel Memorial Prize of Economic Sciences in 2001 is well known for his criticism of World Bank policy and what he sees as its "free-market fundamentalism" - a term that throws the neo-liberal criticism of ideological investments back onto itself.

The distinction which Shono introduces suggests a new possibility for understanding contemporary social change because it involves that which is currently

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as going hand-n-hand with his willingness to reform the fiscally conservative and closed institution of the postal ministry. In Shono's analysis, however, his intent to further the priorities of capital fluidity and international speculators lands him firmly in the camp of those who pose as anti-authoritarian when they really are not.

[437] Stiglitz, Joseph, *TheRoaring Nineties: A New History of the World's Most Prosperous Decade*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003, 108.

occluded by the liberal-conservative binary, namely the extent to which one sees the needs of capital as the necessary priority. Shono's terms *sa-chiku* (left-beast) and *u-chiku* (right beast) mock the viability of a political spectrum in which one's political position remains fixed regardless of one's position on the priority of capital fluidity and accumulation.[438] The Narita shrine, one of the sites of the Narita farmers' struggle against the government's decision to erect the new Tokyo-area airport on their land in the 1970's, figures large in Shono's landscape as a place that is met with equal indifference from the right and the left. In her 2002 visit to the shrine -- which led to the writing of *Let's Live Today! Narita Worship, 1,2,3,4* (with the Chinese character for "four" being written with a homonym meaning "Death") -- Shono found that the shrine was fenced in by the runway and noted that one of the pair of stone dogs was missing and that there was not another soul in sight. While once a locus of heated political struggle, the shrine has now been forgotten all across the political spectrum; Shono describes the place as "a run-down shrine that even nationalists find too difficult to get to," and the critic Yoshinori Shimizu describes it as "forgotten by history, forgotten even by the left."[439] Shono, however, gained insight and clarity from her visit to Narita and the exposure it provided to the principles that arose out of the farmer's protest.

The principles that arose out of the farmers' struggle helped to clarify Shono's own notion of *onnen*. Three decades after the struggle began, with the passage of time and little prospect for success, several farmers still resist their land being taken away. The in-exchangeability of land is a significant premise of the farmer's resistance. One of the remaining farmers expresses the sentiment that value is not something that can always

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[438] *Sa-chiku* and *u-chiku* are composed with the character for "beast" also used in a common expletive.

[439] Shimizu, "'Nai' mono-tachi no saishū sensō: Shono Yoriko wa nani to tatakatte-iru no ka?" [The Final War of those with Nothing: What is Shono Yoriko Fighting Against?], *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007), 135.

be abstracted from the original matter and then reproduced in other matter without qualitative differences occurring; "Farming isn't just the land and the soil, it is also the wind that blows through these fields. I can't take that with me and that is why I am not moving."[440] There are properties specific to one's labor – be it agricultural or cultural – which defy conversion, and when these non-convertible realities are forced into a position of conversion, they produce a resentment – in Shono's terminology *onnen*, or the more specifically personal *shinen* – that take on a presence that will not dissipate until they find their proper expression. In Shono's analysis, the organic farming movement that grew out of the Narita farmers struggles, is an example of *onnen* that has found its own expression. Out of direct conflict and prolonged years of struggle came a politicization and heightened environmental awareness which grew into an organic farming movement that may not have developed had the farmers not needed to resist authority in the first place. In this form, resistance to commodification of land lives on. Which is not to say that everything somehow works itself out in the end, but rather that the effects of taking the land are still palpably alive in places where the present day is no longer shining the spotlight. Conduits to emotional resources from another time and a different relationship to place have not all been foreclosed.

It is in this aspect of *onnen* finding its autonomous expression that the sociologist and worker's rights advocate Kurihara Yasushi finds Shono's writing valuable. In his contribution to the *Gendaishisō* issue on Shono, "Labour's Resentment: The Treason of the 'Self-Sellers' who Drift around the City," Kurihara discusses the surprise he felt when he saw how little outrage the temporary systems engineers he interviewed expressed toward the employment system they work within. These workers belong to the third tier

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440 Yanagawa Hideo, "Chikyū-teki kadai no jikken mura" to wa "hara hachibu no shisō" [The experimental village in global terms "eats moderately"], members2/home.com.ne.jp/jikken-mura/index.htm (accessed October 23 2008).

of the new Japan-style management system[441] mentioned above in the discussion of neo-liberal policies in Japan. They have poor working conditions with no benefits, security, nor emergency provisions. They are also routinely forced to put in overtime for which their contracts do not allow them to be compensated. One of the interviewed workers recounted an incident in which a fellow worker collapsed and was taken to the hospital, never to be seen again. None of the project members knew his name or the company for which he worked; "When I look back on that I realize that none of us knew one another -- we all worked for different dispatch companies -- we would have remained indifferent no matter what took place."[442] Kurihara attributes the lack of anger over these conditions to the internalization of "self-responsibility" and "self-decision making" that the new employment system invokes. The "free" workers knowingly enter into these employment conditions which are becoming more and more common and therefore more naturalized. Kurihara appreciates Shono's methodology of foregrounding the human cost of labor with such terms as "time-seller" for dispatch workers, and "self-seller" for dangerous work without any protection. [443] Borrowing from Shono's analysis of the Narita farmers outrage eventually taking on the form of organic farming, Kurihara does not see the termporary worker's silence as evidence that there is no outrage. Shono's criticism encourages a channeling of attention towards forgotten or seemingly resolved acts of injustice, and counters that resignation with the expectation that rebellious energy will

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[441] See page 21 on how the new-style management introduced in 1995 prioritizes flexibility..

[442] Kurihara Yasushi, "Onnen no rōdō: toshi wo tadayō 'se-fu sera-' no hangayku ni mukete" [Labour's Resentment: The Treason of the 'Self-Sellers' who Drift around the City], *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007), 225.

[443] Instead of the word *furita*, a (partially)German-derived word which, at least initially in the late 1980's, had the nuance of freely choosing temporary employment and an alternative life-style, Shono suggests that the word "time-seller" might more accurately depict the situation of dispatch workers. "For dangerous work without any protection," Shono writes," 'self-seller' may be more appropriate." Shono Yoriko, *Dai-nihhon ronchiku ogeretsuki* [Great Japan: Chronicles of the Vulgar Ronchiku], Tokyo: Kodansha, 2006, 16.

not altogether disappear. Kurihara is therefore confident that the *onnen* of the dispatch IT workers will eventually manifest itself in a resilient and living manner. "Shono's experiment," he concludes, "is not limited to the realm of literature, it shows a consciousness from which all of us can better recognize and resist neo-liberal 'common sense'."[444]

Sex-work activist and researcher Mizushima Nozomi, is also encouraged by Shono's writing. In her article Mizushima Nozomi. "Uramizumo no uraji" [Uramizumo's Lining]. Mizushima describes her experience of reading Shono's *Ontako no meiwaku-shi* after having working for eight years as an aids educator and health-care provider for sex-workers. Shono's narrator in *Ontako no meiwaku-shi* is explicitly uncomfortable with the representational possibilities when it comes to narrating the world of the "licensed quarters." Will she be able, the narrator wonders, to avoid either idealizing or victimizing those who work there, and how should she term their labor? In a move that is similar to Shono's re-casting *furita* as "time-seller," her narrator asks, "Is 'sex-work' really a severe enough term for the conditions- the continuous lack of sleep and paltry food, amongst other things - these people endure in the course of their labor?"[445] Mizushima herself, in the beginning of her work in the field, intentionally used the word "sex-worker" because of positive connections it forged with other valued labor, but after witnessing the physical vulnerability and maltreatment of the particular prostitutes she was working with she no longer felt that the "sex-worker" was an adequate term. "This is quite personal of me," Mizushima recounts," but as I was reading the novel I kept on thinking that I only realized these things after I became actively involved in the world of prostitution."[446]

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[444] Kurihara, 226.

[445] Mizushima Nozomi, "Uramizumo no uraji" [Uramizumo's Lining], *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007), 178.

[446] Ibid., 179.

Mizushima notes Shono's attention to "ugly," a word which, like "prostitute," is brimming with physicality and potential humiliation. Shono refuses to countenance the silencing of the discomfiting word "ugly" and repeatedly invokes it in reference to both herself and her methodology, as in the titles to her 1999 novella *Koko nankai-sugi karuku nagashite ne busu no isakai onna yo* [Just Ignore this Too-Difficult-to-Read Quarrelsome Ugly Woman Writer][447] and the epilogue to *Great Japan! The Troublesome History of the Ontako*, "gengo ni totte busu to wa nanni ka" [What is 'ugly' in terms of language?"],[448] respectively. What is elided in the phrase "sex work" or made inaccessible with the bracketing off of "ugly," is the lived experience of those either involved in such labor or implicated by the possibly hushed but still powerful word "ugly." "I want to trace the work that words have been made to do," Shono writes, "I want to learn what words have been made to carry on their backs and run with."[449] As noted by Kurihara and Mizushima, Shono's metaphorical use of word's bodies does not preclude attention to actual bodies themselves. Her attunement to the relationships between discourse and physicality is apparent when she questions the applicability of the respectful term "sex work," or introduces the draconian term "self-seller," or brings the loathsome descriptor "ugly" to the fore.

What is the praxis that Shono is modeling? An almost excessive pushing on the pressure points of key words within a discourse that seem to be ahistorical, and that, when displaced, may yield access to plural value systems. Sato Izumi., in her article "Shisha wa "kawari ni omoidashite kudasai" to yobikaketa" [The Dead Called Out, "Please Think of us for a Change"], describes the steps in Shono's writing process as follows: "Standing

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[447] Shono Yoriko, *Koko nankai-sugi karuku nagashite ne busu no isakai onna yo* [Just Ignore this Too-Difficult-to-Read Quarrelsome Woman Writer], *Gunzō* (July 1999), 104-133.

[448] Shono, *The Troublesome History of the Ontako*, 212-223.

[449] Shono Yoriko and Machida Kō,"Kotoba no Kongen" [The Origin of Words], *Gunzo* (July 2001),120-149.

still as the confounding power relations whirl around, you resist the correctness that makes things invisible, you explode against the formula that ignores details." Shono employs this stance of full-out rage, on a literary level, as a means of coming into direct opposition with words that "sound as though they are coming from outside of history,"[450] words such as "freedom," or the modern "self." This is also the position that Shono occupies as she painstakingly takes the reader through the details of her highly personal struggles to debate pure-literature. She uses the details, and her personal experience, to stave off the possibility of being lost beneath a generalization. In order to combat words and ideas that sound as though they would find no resonance in the human body, Shono poses the constitutively historical experience of her own living, breathing self. In distinction from the inheritors of Karatani's modern-state paradigm who, Shono contends, have deprived themselves of "the body's ability to imagine," she begins to develop a vocabulary that encourages the user to imagine physical vulnerability. The vocabulary she deploys -- *loli-libe* (Lolita-neo-liberal), *serufu-sera* (self-seller), *ontako*(which poses sub-cultural *otaku* sexual caricatures of women as mainstream), *uri-age bungaku* (for-profit-literature), and *busu* (ugly) -- fosters a sense of connectedness between structuring economic relations and the production of ideal bodily-images. The corporeal logics at work here propel an "eternally treasonous spirit of embodiment" with which Shono resists the consolidating forces of history and power.

Shono's dogged pursuit of social rectification left undone reaches from long-forgotten righteous causes to the veneer of political-correctness, to the erosion of space for social criticism done in the name of the popular will of the market place. The tenacity she allows herself creates connections between unlikely figures and ideas and in so doing she creates texture and historical depth for a discourse that might otherwise appear flat and inevitable. In her struggle against the rising tide of neo-liberalism she borrows *onnen*

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[450] Sato, 117.

from a non-rational discourse of “self,” sets it screaming across the parallel zones of increased commodification, the singularly modern individual, and the world of *lolikon* , and comes up demanding to know why, in her experience, the freedoms promised within economic liberalization curtail the possibilities of mature female expression and authority.

CHAPTER 4 GETTING MEDIEVAL: *KOMPIRA*'S ETERNALLY TREASONOUS EMBODIMENT

> The body without organs is not a dead body but a living body all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organization…The full body without organs is a body populated by multiplicities.
>
> - Gilles Delueze, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

In Shono Yoriko's oeuvre embodiment and hybridity – of temporality, gender, culture, and ideological construct - are integrally connected. Together, the openness towards multiple modes of lived experience and the ceaseless changes of the body, generate a resistance towards a single-value system. Closely attending to the simultaneously cognizant and sentient one-off human body, Shono traverses the currents of public foundational myths and singular private experience to craft "hyper-personal myths" and family gods "without any collectivity."[451] The hope is for a far-reaching grasp of cosmic machinations that loses none of its individual specificity – a contradictory combination that defines Shono's peculiar notion of literature; "that largeness that spreads from my small self."[452] Numbers, in particular, are abstractions that are anathema to Shono's myth-writing narrators, both because they are generalizations of particular instances and because they have taken on a power of persuasion that runs roughshod over all other non-quantifiable argumentation. "In terms of proof," the narrator of *Kompira* mocks, "three is the magic number that will convince

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[451] Shono Yoriko, *Kompira* [Kompira],Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2004, 29.

[452] Shono, *Kompira*, 32.

a modern audience."[453] Especially in the guise of rationale for neo-liberal economic policies, the reader quickly realizes, numbers shut down the multiple circuits of feeling and understanding that Shono's writing strives to forge.

Motivated by her first purchase of a house at the age of forty-seven, Shono's 2004 *Kompira* is one woman's effort to experience diverse value systems after she has been initiated into the financial system of capital-accumulation. Rather than adopting a posture of justification or accommodation, *Kompira* frames the potential threat of ceding to a single system of value as an opportunity to generate an imaginary powerful enough to refuse a one-dimensional framework. Often referred to as Shono's masterpiece, [454] *Kompira* is a narrative about one particular incarnation of the alligator-like *kami*,[455] kompira, at the same time that it is a book about a process of fusion and embodiment that could also be termed the 'Kompira-praxis." Simultaneously system and particular instance, *Kompira* is narrated by a middle-aged female writer who bears striking similarities to the historical Shono herself. Chronicling the many unique attributes of a given individual, this patently "hyper-personal" text suggests the fluid relations, between

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[453] *Ibid.*, 21.

[454] Kuroi Senji, Hoshino Tomoyuki and Tsushima Yūko, "Sōsaku gappyō – 'Kompira' Shono Yoriko" [Joint Literary Review: Shono Yoriko's *Kompira*]. *Gunzō* 59 (May 2004),398-415.

[455] *Kami* are gods and spirits of Japanese folklore and Shinto, the loosely conglomerated set of local and indigenous practices and beliefs. *Kami* can be human-like or they can be the spirits of particular geographic structures such as mountains or trees. Kompira, introduced here, is one type of *kami.* So while the narrator calls itself "kompira," there are also many other kompira *kami*.

self, environment, and world-view.[456] While one narrative possibility would be for the narrator to have a mid-life epiphany and begin worshipping kompira, Shono chooses to ignore such a human/nature divide and instead shapes an animistically-infused self by having her narrator actually embody kompira. The novel opens with the writer-narrator coming to the realization that she is both a mature woman living in the 20th century and the four hundred-year old ocean floor-dwelling deity of sea-farers, kompira.

The unique characteristics of kompira(s), that the narrator now also possesses, are their ability to physically merge with other spirits and to use this ability to bring over-looked and forgotten *kami* back to life. Kompira are bourn and sustained by the vengeful spirits *onnen* and gain their identity from the change of relations that they bring about. Not simply a "hyper-personal story," the narrator terms her project a "hyper-personal myth," and the origin that the myth is hoping to establish is that of her far-ranging anger and discomfort[457] with society at large. Kompira's writer-narrator and the real-life Shono Yoriko intersect in so many ways it is as though the reader is being begged to confuse the two. Like Shono herself, in her adolescence the narrator distanced herself from the over-gendered category of "girl" and assumed that she was a boy, and, again like Shono, she later feels she is unjustly maligned by the literary establishment largely as a result of her gender and her physical appearance. With her newfound identity as a kompira, Shono's narrator finally understands why her life has been so difficult; she is a

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[456] I intentionally use the term "world-view" where spirituality might be more expected, in order not to create a distinction between spirituality and ideology as ways of understanding the world.

[457] Shono uses the term *iwakan* 違和感 which can be translated as "dysphoria," "being ill-at-ease," or "feeling out of place."

kami who thrives in an environment of vengeance and who wants to make that which has been made imperceptible, visible once again.

At times lapsing into intricate histories of the gods, and at times tapping into her visceral rage, the text seems to move in and out of the narrator's body. As the writer-narrator begins to experience the intertwined relations and mercurial emotions involved in generating the "largeness that flows from this small self" the reader is left to contemplate whether this "small self" is the virus-like kompira who swims against the tide and rearranges the relations of historical figures and concepts, or if the "small self" is the writer-narrator who refuses to understand herself as just one of many rationally quantifiable modern citizens? How are we to understand the overlap between one amongst many millions of documented citizens, and an individual who, out of far-ranging spiritual and political histories, crafts and occupies a vast imaginary landscape for experiencing difference?

Untangling Consolidation: Kompira-as-Praxis

Though the narration, at times, feels more closely aligned with the narrator's human-writer self, and at other times, more closely aligned with the narrator's kompira-*kami* self, the answer to the question of which "self" the reader should assume the narrator to be is, of course, both. The virus-like kompira and the writer-narrator are, for the duration of the novel, the same being. Rearranging the relations of mythical figures, as kompira does, and refusing to understand one's self purely in terms of rational principles, as the "ugly" and enraged female writer does, turn out to be quite similar projects against assumed redundancy. The relations being revised by kompira are those which were propagated by a state-forming initiative to remove "foreign" elements from an imperially derived spiritual system. This program of *Shinbutsu-bunri*, the separation

of Shintō and Buddhism that became official policy during the first years of the Meiji Restoration[458] is seen by the notably Buddhist-derived kompira-narrator as a concerted attempt to eviscerate the power of syncretic and local spiritualities by excising the "imported" Buddhist elements from a "pure" indigenous cosmology. At the same time that the narrator is exploring the vested interests behind *shinbutsu bunri* she is carrying out a parallel investigation of the ancient domestic struggles for power that culminated in the dominance of the Yamato clan. As a result of their political victories, the books of the Yamato, the *kojiki* and the *nihon shoki*,[459] have come to be seen as receptacles of the earliest extant Japanese culture. Millennia later, *shinbutsu bunri* subjects an already consolidated body of beliefs and histories to another purging of difference by seeking to separate "native" Shintō from an "imported" Buddhism. Shono unpacks this process of consolidation on dual tracks by granting narrative control to the Buddhist-derived deity kompira, and having the writer-narrator then forge a strong personal relationship with a forgotten *kami*, sukunahikona, from the vanquished Izumo kingdom that had posed the last threat to the Yamato.[460]

The writer-narrator's allegiance to the small statured side-kick *kami* sukunahikona[461] partakes of a mythical perversion that structures central pairings in

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458 In April 1868 – the year of the Meiji Restoration - the new government ordered the *Shinbutsu Hanzenrei* (Shinto and Buddhism Separation Order). More details of this policy and its direct impact upon the legacy of kompira follow below.

459 Dating from the early 8th century the *kojiki* -- the "Record of Ancient Matters" -- is a collection of myths about the origins of Japan, and is the oldest existing chronicle of Japan. The *Nihon Shoki* --"Chronicles of Japan" -- is a slightly later and more elaborate historical record of ancient Japan. Together, these two books are generally seen to be the inspiration for the myths and rituals of Shinto, itself an amalgamation of diverse and local spiritual practices.

460 In 1984 archeological evidence was found in present-day Shimane prefecture that verified the existence of the Izumo dynasty, see Piggott, Joan R, "Sacral Kinship and Confederacy in Early Izumo," *Monumenta Nipponica* 44.1 (Spring 1989), 45-74. The chronicles -- *fudo-ki* -- of Izumo, have survived more intact than those of any other non-Yamato region.

461 Sukunahikona worked closely, for a limited time, with the "founder of the land," ōkuninushi. Sukunahikona then disappears and ōkuninushi goes down on record as the major

several of Shono's recent narratives. The opening passage of the *kojiki* tells the tale of Izanagi and Izanami, the husband and wife duo who create both the islands and the founding deities of Japan. Because the woman, Izanami, speaks first during their initial sexual union they produce a leech child, Hiruko. In the *kojiki* this early glitch is corrected and largely forgotten; the couple begins again, with the male Izanagi speaking first, and produces a string of competent and fully-formed *kami*. In Shono's creative world, however, this early scene comprises a site of compulsion, and the intense connection between a powerful older female figure and a younger, physically diminutive, male figure structures her passionate relationships. *Kompira* and *Suishōnaiseidō* [The World of the Crystals],[462] published a few years earlier, conclude their lengthy narratives with a lyrical and passionate scene featuring a writer-narrator and a young, and somewhat vulnerable, male deity. This coupling opens up potential restructurings that are constantly at play within Shono's later texts; an inversion of the Lolita complex,[463] an adjustment to the power-balance of normative heterosexuality, and, when the two mythical figures are seen as comprising a single consciousness, the figuration of plural genders within one individual.

As *Kompira*'s narrator traverses the many threads of ancient chronicles and early modern histories the intensity of her alignment shifts back and forth between her 47 year

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kami of Izumo and enjoys a strong position within the Yamato constellation of deities. The most cynical reading of the *kuni-yuzuri* – ceding of the kingdom – carried out in ōkuninushi's name would be that he sold his people's sovereignty to preserve his own privileged position. The machinations that lead up to this, and the skepticism regarding the justness of the agreement are featured more in the *Izumo-fudoki* than in the canonized *kojiki* and *nihon-shoki*.

462 Shono Yoriko, *Suishōnaiseidō* [The World of the Crystals], Tokyo: Kodansha, 2003. This novel features a female writer who has possibly been coerced into writing the foundational myths – post-apriorii - of a recently created woman's country, uramizumo. Whether uramizumo is a colony duped into thinking it is a sovereign nation, or the result of a successful liberation, is a question the narrator is unable to clearly answer.

463 Shono understands Lolita-like relations, in which infantilized women are the most desired, to be socially normative rather than aberrant.

old writer-self and her more than 400 year old alligator-deity kompira-self. Indeed the novel rarely calms the levels of flux surrounding the content -- who is the *real* narrator?-- or the register -- *are* we to be taking this story and its arguments seriously? At times the reader is addressed with conspiratorial chuckles -- Shono's signature "he-he-he" --while in other instances the laughs are embedded in apparently serious language. Kompira's mother, for example, is introduced to the reader with the title "kompira-haha" which is composed of the Chinese character for "Kompira" and the character for "mother," pronounced "haha" in Japanese; 金比羅母. Visually we see four relatively complex kanji strung together which would usually indicate an idea with significant cultural weight, either a classical Chinese phrase or a broad modern concept. In Shono's coinage however, the sounds pronounce laughter: "kompira, haha!"

This impertinent reading of a possibly lofty term is further encouraged by the mother's actions, actions which form a central organizing image for the reading of the novel. Kompira-haha decides to go to the annual meeting of the *kami* in Izumo even though kompira have been long banned for their unruly behavior. On the one day of the year that kompira-haha ovulates, she licks her eggs with her tongue, stakes her tail to her home, and travels the thousand kilometers to Izumo. Once she enters the meeting hall, her body is both at home and at the tense, because exclusive, political congress. Though she is soon ordered out, kompira-haha writhes about wildly expressing her rage at being excluded, all the while firmly connected to the personal space of her home.[464] Here the marginalized kompira expresses herself on her own terms, however fleetingly, because of a physical connection that remains unbroken. Her body becomes a temporary circuit that enables her experience of two worlds at once.

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[464] Tsushima Yuko, a celebrated contemporary novelist, sees this image as a depiction of Shono's own source of creative energy. See Kuroi, Hoshino and Tsushima, 405.

Shūgō: Fusion through Singing, Chatting, and Raging

The praxis that *Kompira* presents, in the image of the thrashing kompira-haha and in the unsettled allegiance of the "real" narrator, is the maintaining of multiple circuits so that embodied thought is not collapsed into a singular and flat telos. In Shono's difference-enabling lexicon the term *shūgō,* though conventionally used to describe the syncretic merging of religious systems,[465] takes on the qualities of a simultaneously bodily and intellectual fusion. *Nottoru* (hijack) is a feistier word that, when a kompira merges with another being, Shono sometimes substitutes for *shūgō*. Together *shūgō* and *nottoru* form one side of an axis, with *matomeru* ("tidy-up" or "consolidate") at the other, and for Shono, far more sinister end.

The essence of kompira is to merge with others. So when a posse of kompira transports the newborn kompira-narrator to its second place of birth,[466] they must take precautions against unintentionally merging with other beings and they do this by protectively placing hemp on their backs. The place to which they are ferrying the newborn kompira on this rather treacherous journey is the body of a human infant in the process of dying. While kompira have no gender, the human body about to be inhabited is female, and while kompira exist at a far divide from the state-sanctioned originary myths of the sun-goddess amaterasu,[467] the possession is taking place very near her sacred shrine at Ise. The narrator-kompira is entering into a world in which its physical existence as a girl and its physical presence in the ideologically saturated land of Ise will shape key elements of its identity.

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[465] *Shinbutsu shūgō*, for example, can be translated as "the fusion of Buddha and *kami*," or "the combinatory system of Shinto and Buddhism."

[466] According to the narrator it is customary for mother-kompira to leave their offspring as soon as they give birth.

[467] Amaterasu , the daughter of Izanami and Izanagi, is the highest deity of Japan within imperially-derived state-sanctioned Shinto. Accordingly, her shrine at Ise, and the region of Ise, occupies a privileged position.

Many years after the newly born kompira entered the body of a dying female baby the writer- narrator, simultaneously a non-sexed kompira and a grown woman, shouts out in frustration "The humiliation that has been poured into my self that is a woman will not go away, it just won't go away!"[468] And the powerful influence that living in Ise exerted over the narrator becomes clear as she moves away steadily eastward and her spiritual perspective widens as she is exposed to increasingly more diverse and local practices: "If I hadn't moved to Chiba," the narrator reflects, " I would still think that the *kami* sarutahiko was naturally worshipped all over Japan. But really, local *kami* everywhere have just been consolidated into sarutahiko".[469] This physical merging with ideological constructs of gender and state-sanctioned religion that kompira experiences is an embodied fusion – *shūgō* - that is overdetermining, but not overweening. *Kompira* does not forget its *kompira*-identity. At forty-something years old the human-narrator summons up her feelings of resentment and remembers that, in addition to being human, she is *kompira*.

Grace of her move to Chiba, which is "dripping with *tengu* spirits,"[470] the narrator is finally able to employ *shūgō* in developing her hyper-personal mythology. Far from Ise and the aura generated by institutional Shintō, the narrator feels empowered to perform her own spiritual fusion; she takes a taxi to the nearest stone mason, purchases a stone prepared in the style of her new local shrine, and asks for both "kompira daigongen" and "sukunahikona" to be carved onto it. In combining her Buddhist-derived identity of kompira with the overlooked *kami* from the Shintō, she conducts her personal

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[468] Shono, *Kompira*, 67.

[469] *Ibid.*, 183.The narrator's progression of residence, moving away from Ise to Hachioji, a western suburb of Tokyo, to Chiba, the prefecture directly east of Tokyo, exactly mirrors Shono's own residential moves.

[470] *Tengu* are spirits that, while they can simultaneously be *kami*, have a more local, and troublesome, and less reverent inflection.

shūgō. "It was when I moved to Chiba," the narrator reflects," that I began realizing that *shūgō* could be just this sort of thing."[471]

Shūgō, then, becomes an accessible conceptual tool for figuring an often neglected difference. It is a conceptual tool that locates its energy-sources in visceral feelings of indignation and resentment. Without "the feelings of anger that have been belittled" and "the people that have been made invisible," such as the narrator's beloved sukunahikona, kompiras' fusion could never take place. The *onnen* immanent to a given physical structure or natural object must be perceptible to the conductor of *shūgō*. Akin to a radio signal that can be picked up, the process relies upon both the strength of the specific signal as well as the fine-tuned calibration of the receptor. In the case of asakuma-yama, the mountain that borders the inner-shrine at Ise, for example, the land had been so overrun with requests for pragmatic wishes of safety and financial success that "there was no space left into which the vengeful spirits of conquered gods could fit."[472] Indeed, kompira-haha had never been to asakuma-yama because all vestiges of historical conflict had seemingly been erased. Kompira-narrator, however, has so exercised her powers of experimentation since she left Ise that she is now able to rouse a silenced spirit on the mountain even though her mother before her could not. Drawing upon the rage she feels about being placed in the body of a woman, kompira-narrator gathers up her powers of concentration and says "I am really a man."[473] Her attempt to communicate by making her anger palpable to others is such a physical process that her entire body is covered with scales and she sprouts "a tail of rage" and "the wings of indignation." In response to the narrator's "noblest extinct resentment" from the tomb of a historically famous woman issues a male voice: "I was buried as a man but history has

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[471] Shono, *Kompira*, 153.

[472] *Ibid.*,, 289.

[473] *Ibid*., 290.

made me into a woman," says the voice, "History has treated me unjustly. Please, bring me to the sea and let me return to *tokoyo* as a man."[474]

The narrator heeds the wishes of the wronged spirit, and as she carries him over the mountains the two beings merge. "That which marked him as a god was left on my body and he," the narrator recalls, "He became the patron god of humans whose gender causes them pain." "Or at least," she clarifies, "he became that for me." "What was left in me," the narrator observes, "was the resentment that was strong enough to raise his voice even on this oppressed land, and the ability to turn that resentment into will and power."[475]

The above scene, the reader later learns, is taking place at the same time that the writer-narrator is, on the verge of realizing that she is kompira, entering her new home in Chiba. In a move that mirrors kompira-haha's simultaneous presence at the meeting of the gods and at her home a thousand kilometers away, the narrator is in her own domestic space at the same time that she, as kompira, is merging with a wronged male spirit in Ise. The multiple poles of opposition, however temporary, between male and female and between purified Ise and popular Chiba, are productive of the fusion process.

Whether it is the wild thrashing of the mother-kompira, or the intense channeling of rage that produces scales all over the kompira-narrator's body, Shono's fusion is always in some way corporeal. In her notion of *shūgō* the body provides plastic circuits with which to apprehend hitherto unknown experience, or difference. Shono and the science-fiction critic Larry McCaffery [476] offer up Bruce Springsteen's 2002 song

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[474] In the *kojiki* and *nihon shoki*, *tokoyo* is presented as both a dark subterranean land of the dead *(yomi no kuni*), as well as a land of everlasting life across the sea to which those with impurities are ritually expelled. See Cuevas, 285-287. Shono fixes on this latter definition in her own cosmology and identifies *toyoko* as a land where heretics thrive.

[475] Shono, *Kompira*, 291.

[476] Larry McCaffrey, a critic of contemporary American literature and professor of English and Comparative Literature at San Diego State University, is credited with coining the

"Worlds Apart", in which the Western and the Muslim world comprise opposing poles,[477] as a successful example of embodied fusion opening up new representational possibilities. Shono and McCaffrey argue that, in contrast to many folk protest songs where the topical lyrics change but the format and the target audience remain the same, Springsteen's incorporation of middle-eastern musical strains, and the use of a sufi choir in a rock concert, generate an imaginary that is alive and open to difference.[478] Rather than singing "about" others with his pre-established tools of representation, Springsteen enters a distinctly new musical world -- an embodied *habitus* -- that allows for the opening up of new circuits with which to both experience and represent difference.

As in her depiction of characters with bodies in two places at once, Shono's fiction suggests that the multiple roots of acculturation are best traversed and galvanized through a sensate engagement. In response to criticism that her writing is convoluted and difficult to understand, Shono emphasizes the role of sensual experience in the reading process:

> You say that my logic and my sentences just go on in any which way? Well that might be a problem if you were reading the instruction manual for a home appliance. But is thought simply something that pushes out "conclusions"? Don't get annoyed at writing that may appear meaningless. Rhythm exists for those situations. If you are somewhere where you can not read out loud create a space in your head where you can imagine that you are reading out loud. Your brain will be changed by your reading. The connections of the sentences are the hints of a new world. Or rather, this is the world of chat-criture, not écriture". …Try and

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literary term "avant-pop." Avant-pop defines a genre that is both intellectually challenging --as in avant-garde -- and engaged with popular culture.

[477] Certainly in terms of much uncritical rhetoric that has been produced in political discourse, especially but not limited to, post- 9/11, the Western world and the Muslim world are placed in opposition.

[478] Shono Yoriko, Larry McCaffrey, and Tatsumi Takayuki, "Waga wa Kompira, haiburiddo kami nishite abuanpopu" [I am Kompira, the avant-pop hybrid god], *Subaru* 29 (October 2007), 228-245. "World's Apart" is a single on Springsteen's 2002 album "The Rising," about a relationship between an American and a Middle Eastener. The album is largely comprised of responses to 9/11 told from multiple perspectives.

> touch with your tongue the strange, even dirty, words that you haven't used before. That leaps over logic? Fine, then leap. In ten years time you might reach the bottom of your heart.[479]

The terms "écriture" and "chat-criture"[480] are contrasted against one another both in terms of meaning and by the material letters used to write them. *Ekuricharu* (Écriture) is written, as one would expect, in *katakana* used for foreign words, but *shabekuricharu* (chat-criture) is written in *hiragana* despite the obvious foreign suffix "-criture." Writing the verb "chatting" in *hiragana* lends it an aura of humility and popular accessibility, while translating *écriture* into *katakana* maintains its image of cosmopolitan sophistication. Transformative thinking is portrayed here as necessarily unique experience in time and place, an active engagement that requires the voice of a single individual. The figuration of a circuit between the word on the page and the sounds in a person's mouth draws emphasis away from the text and toward the constantly changing body that, un-self-consciously, chats.

The Complicated History of Kompira Daigongen

Many of Shono's fellow writers have commented - and my own experience would certainly corroborate their observations -- that the density of historical allusions and geographical references in her writing have sent them looking for background information in the pages of religion and history books.[481] The knowledge that her readers are creating their own networks with plural sources would almost certainly please Shono. Her exploration of the multiple roots of fusing religious systems and her

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[479] Shono, *The Troublesome History of the Ontako*, 126.

[480] "Chat-criture" is written "shabekurichu-ru" and is composed with the Japanese verb "shaberu," a less formal word for "to speak." In written Japanese, generally, one syllabary – hiragana – is used for Japanese words and another syllabary – katakana – is used for foreign-loan words and exclamation.

[481] Kuroi et al, 400-412.

experiment of wresting the stranglehold of the self from a modern set of parameters by merging her narrator with a "medieval" kompira, both partake of a rhizomatic framework in which knowledge is understood to have multiple origins and conflicting sources. [482]

Readers might understandably be led to wonder whether interrogating any random historical precept or figure would uncover a similarly high degree of syncretism, or whether kompira was carefully chosen to support Shono's pre-conceived ideas. In the minds of many Japanese people today the name kompira would most likely conjure up the official shrine and major pilgrimage destination of the Kompira-daigongen shrine on Mt. Zozu in Shikoku.[483] The historic position of Kompira-daigongen, literally the avatar or embodiment of kompira, lends itself well to a meditation upon the combinatory nature of Japanese belief systems. Kompira is both a trans-cultural deity that migrated from the Indian sub-continent to the archipelago of Japan, and a localized *kami* who is the patron deity of Mt. Zozu on the island of Shikoku. The first known instance of kompira is as the fierce crocodile Hindu-deva khumbira, worshipped in a specific mountain range of northern India, who purportedly led followers to listen to Buddha preach and henceforth became part of the Buddhist grand narrative as one of the twelve warriors protecting the Medicine Buddha (yakushi nyorai). Bundled within the stories that comprise the Buddhist cosmology when Buddhism was actively imported into Japan in the 6th century, the Hindu khumbira was transformed into the Japanese "kompira." With roots in the

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[482] The literary, as opposed to botanical, term "rhizome" is associated with the 20th French thinker Gilles Deleuze and can be defined as the quality of having multiple roots or origins. Shono is familiar with the works of many 20th century French thinkers; she cites Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty, and to a greater extent Pierre Bourdieu, for example. While Deleuze's deployment of the term rhizome dovetails nicely with Shono's thinking, I have not come across a specific citing of it in her writing.

[483] And at least through to the first generation born after the war "kompira" would likely bring to mind the folksong "kompira fune fune" that evokes the sound of sails being raised with its opening lines "shura-shu-shu-shu." Kompira is a *kami* of the sea and protector of sea-farers.

northern India, Kompira daigongen is a Japanese *kami* whose name, with the suffix "gongen," bears the mark of a distinctly Chinese Buddhism.[484]

Comprising part of the intertwining systems of local, imperial, and Chinese spiritual frameworks,[485] *kami* as a type of supernatural being, resists easy definition. Notoriously difficult to translate into English, the category "*kami*" is already rich with fusing possibilities because *kami* can change into and enter close associations with countless other types of spiritual beings -- *mononoke*, *tengu*, and *tanuki*, figure largely amongst these spirits -- and because of the startling frequency with which their stories, their powers, and their supposed dates of existence, change.[486] In apparent contradiction to their supple mutability *kami* possess a high degree of particularity; it is generally as a particular tree, a particular mountain, or a particular fox, that a *kami* is worshipped.[487]

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[484] The term *gongen* is usually derived from Chinese sutras where it figures not as a noun, but as the combination of a verb and adverb meaning "to take on temporary appearances." In Japan, however, it seems that *gongen* constituted yet another category of deities, associated with Buddhist centers of *shosan* (mountain practice). Many *gongen* were neither native *kami* nor buddhas, but virtuous beings from foreign lands who had traveled to Japan to bring benefits to its people, and to promote the cause of Buddhism. See *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm,* eds., Mark Teeuwen and Fabio Rambelli, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, 12.

[485] In pre-modern Japan localized folk practices co-existed with imperially supported *kami* worship, and the major Chinese imports of Taoism and Buddhism. Contemporary scholars take pains to emphasize that these multiple spiritual practices did not co-exist in their respective "purity," as much as the diversity itself comprised the system. It was commonplace, for example, to find Buddhist temples or statues within "Shinto" shrines. Shinto, or "the way of the *kami*," is a term that has been retro-actively applied to a wide variety of native belief systems, The imperial role in defining Shinto has always been strong, but certainly the Meiji restoration of 1868 and its creation of "State Shinto" fixed a previously more fluid and heterogeneous set of beliefs and practices into a defined doctrine.

[486] Thal, Sarah, *Rearranging the landscape of the god: the politics of a pilgrimage site in Japan, 1573-1912*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005,6.

[487] *Ibid*., 2. *Kami* are most often worshipped in their distinct places. Thus, the *kami* ameterasu, often revered from afar, is inseparable from her shrine at Ise. "To ignore the specificity of a *kami*'s place – both its geographic location and its social context, Thal writes, "blinds us to the role of that *kami* in the thoughts and actions of its worshippers."

Geographically and socially situated, *kami* partake of the radical singularity of a physical body, one-off in its existence and necessarily compromised away from the abstract by its own struggle for physical and social survival.[488]

The distance at which clear traces of foreignness place kompira from the founding mythology and attendant *kami* of the Japanese imperial family invests Shono's kompira-allied narrator with an outsider status and potentially treasonous character. The combinatory identity of Kompira daigongen as both a *kami* and an embodiment of Buddha [489] made the temple-shrine complex on Mt. Zosu an ideal home to spiritual mountain ascetics called *yamabushi*.[490] Practicing *shugendō* - a blend of Buddhism and Shintō – *yamabushi* believed that physical experience brought spiritual results and strived "to become Buddha in this very body."[491] Emphasis on the physical elements of their spiritual quest led to expertise in dance and other performing arts which then facilitated the spread of Buddhsim to remote areas as the *yamabushi* moved about deep in the mountains. Kompira daigongen, then, at least from its inception in the mid -1500's to the beginnings of political pressures in the early 1700's,[492] was a center for practitioners

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[488] *Ibid*., 36.The fact that Kompira daigongen rivaled the Shrine of Ise in importance as a site of pilgrimage during much of the Edo period illustrates the importance of geographic locale to its identity as a *kami*.

[489] *Honji suijaku* (traces of real essence) is the term generally used to describe this combinatory identity of a spirit that is both a *kami* and an embodiment of Buddha. Current scholarship has been troubling the implicit hierarchy of this term, which privileges Buddha, as opposed to the *kami*, as the "real essence." See for example Teeuwen and Rambelli, 18..

[490] It was not unusual for religious complexes with "gongen" in their name to have allegiance, to various degrees, with *yamabushi*.

[491] Teeuwen and Rambelli, 149.

[492] In 1719 the ruling *bakufu* (government of the shogun) of the Takamatsu region supported a more imperially aligned Shinto-ism and commissioned a new history to be written in which imperial figures are presented as patrons of Mt. Zozu, and kompira is ignored altogether. From this time on pressures increased to lessen the connection between the Shrine-temple and *shugendō*. Thal, 91.

of an intensely physical spiritual discipline whose focus was attuned more towards village commoners than institutional or temple clerics.

Although *Kompira*'s narrator repeats that she is not affiliated with the official kompira institution on Mt.Zozu, but is instead a "wild" kompira, the mechanisms of change at play in the history of Kompira-daigongen resonate with many of the novel's premises. By selecting kompira as the irrational and historical spirit that propels her narrative, Shono selected a spiritual being that is highly invested in the relationship between physicality and consciousness, whose foreign identity locates it on the margins of the modern and initially state-supported Japanese cosmology, and whose allegiance is with the popular as opposed to the official. Due precisely to the above characteristics the *kami* and the religious structure of kompira daigongen did not fare well during the early years of the nation-forming Meiji-restoration. The policy of *shinbutsu-bunri* (separation of Shintō and Buddhism) that the new government put into place called for priests to give up their Buddhist affiliation in order to maintain government support as clerics of Shintō institutions. In an attempt to clarify the structure of State Shintō shrines were officially ranked, with the shrine at Ise presiding solely above all of the ranks, and the shrine at Mt. Zozu being assigned to the lowest rank. The mountain-roaming, category-disrupting *yamabushi*, as well as the combinatory term "gongen," were officially banned.

In 1868 the head priest of Kompira-daigongen, in an attempt to curry favor with the Shintō sympathizers in Tokyo, selected a new name from the nativist [493] Hirata Atsutane's "Tamadasuki" and renamed the shrine Kotohira. [494] In this name change,

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493 *Kokugaku* is usually defined as "nativist studies" and is a 18th century philological and philosophical movement that strove to fix native Japanese, as opposed to Chinese and Buddhist, texts and ideas at the origins of Japanese culture.

494 In Hirata's writings Kotohira was the joint *kami* of ōmononushi (also known as okuninushi) and the spirit of the retired emperor Sutoku. The *kami* ōmononushi, a significant character within the Yamato foundational myths, had long been associated with Mt. Zozu, and in the account written in 1719 eclipses altogether the presence of kompira. See Thal, 129.

however, we may catch a glimpse of what Shono Yoriko more than a century later terms kompira's "eternally treasonous spirit of embodiment." The head priest adopted the new and nativist name Kotohira but did not use the Chinese characters that Hirata used for kotohira (琴平). Instead, he maintained almost in its entirety the Chinese characters used for kompira (the rendering of the new kotohira金刀比羅 bears a striking resemblance to the original kompira 金比羅).[495] In a move that creates a certain bifurcation, the same priest initiated both the change in name and the maintenance of the largely similar Chinese characters. A continuity is thereby created at the visual level, and because both renderings began with the same character for gold 金- which, significantly, Hirata's rendering did not – the symbol for the religious complex remained what it had been for centuries; the character for gold enclosed in a circle. Despite official efforts to the contrary "Kompira" managed to survive in the popular imaginary and is still the name by which the shrine is generally referred to today. Because kompira survives at the level of writing and vocal articulation, the roots of the Buddhist inflected and embodied kompira-- already with roots "elsewhere" -- are continued at the same time that the new top-down Kotohira is established. Coterminous, but by no means collapsed into the same, these strands of Kompira continue on in the world.

Kompira: A Dialogic Writing Form

Kompira's narrator works hard to undo the "top-down fusion" of politically convenient consolidation by merging with currently neglected *kami,* such as sukunahikona and the wronged spirit buried at Ise on Asakuma-yama, and bringing them back to life. Shono's challenge, however, to the silencing involved in consolidation, exceeds the subject-matter of her writing and is also at play in the forms into which she

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[495] Kotohira is written with the same first and third Chinese character but the middle character is expanded into two and resembles a simplified version of the second character in the original "konpira. "**金比羅**– kompira became **金刀比羅**– kotohira, see Thal, 135.

shapes her fiction and non-fiction. In her prose readers constantly find themselves being referred to articles written by Shono's critics, or to other articles she has written, and being pointed back to an early place in the text they are currently reading. As a reader you do not enter into a particular article written by Shono Yoriko as much as you enter into an inter-textual conversation with its criss-crossing pathways and energy charges exposed and held on the pages of a range of journals and books. "If you want to know more about the tragic events that befell me," ends "Don kihote no henshin bakudan"[Don Quixote's Return Bomb] "you can find the details in "Onna, SF, shinwa, junbungaku – atarashii joseibungaku wo tatakaitoru tame ni" [Woman, SF, Myths, Pure-Literature – Fighting for a New Women's Literature] and "Onna no sakka no i nashi" [No Place for a Woman Writer"]."[496] The essay "Woman, SF, Myths, Pure-Literature – Fighting for a New Women's Literature" ends with a web address that contains the same text with a far longer conclusion, and places the reader, now browser, in the middle of a website created by a network of women writers supporting a "sexual-textual harassment" lawsuit.[497] Shono's critical articles rarely come to a discreet conclusion but rather form part of a dialogue that she clearly expects to be continued, if not by the target of her criticism, then by the active reader seeking more information. The postscript to *Kompira*, for example, is not published at the end of the novel itself, nor in the journal *Subaru* where the novel was first serialized, but in a different literary journal, *Waseda Bungaku*. "The Eternally

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[496] Shono, Yoriko, "Don kihote no henshin bakudan"[Don Quixote's Return Bomb], *Waseda bungaku* 30.11 (2005), 152-161, "Onna, SF, shinwa, junbungaku – atarashii joseibungaku wo tatakaitoru tame ni" [Woman, SF, Myths, Pure-Literature – Fighting for a New Women's Literature], *Mita bungaku* 83.77 (2004), 242-264, and "Onna no sakka no i nashi" [No Place for a Woman Writer"], *Gunzō* (February 2002), 200-211, respectively.

[497] This lawsuit is the one in which the SF writer and feminist critic, Kotani Mari, accused Yamagata Hiroo (proponent of developing a financial equation for pricing literature) of wrongfully claiming that her name had been used as a pen-name by her husband in the reference book *Orutakarucha: media wakusu* [Alternative Culture: Media Works] published by Shufu-no-tomo. She was proven to have been the genuine author of the article and Yamagata was fined the equivalent of thirty thousand dollars by the Tokyo courts.

Treasonous Spirit of Embodiment: An Introduction to *Kompira* Literature" concludes "*Kompira* literature, or the spirit of *gongen*, is what I call the medieval and Buddhist forces that, having gained reason as they passed through the doctrine of modernity, are turning to face our chaotic world. For more, please read the novel itself."[498] Already published in a different literary space from the novel, an endnote placed after the body of the text creates further links to more literary spaces by encouraging the reader to get hold of additional articles: "Afternote: For those of you who expected more of what I usually write, please see the column in this issue 'Only Looking at the Characters: The Critics Way of Creating and Destroying.' This would be read well alongside the *taidan* (literary discussion) in the December issues of both *Subaru* and *Shinchō*." Final passages do not "conclude" in any conventional sense but instead serve as opportunities to open up multiple pathways or craft loops back to the text at hand.[499] Her volume of collected criticism, *Don Quixote's Debate*, contains no less than three afterwards, and the epilogue to *Great Japan! The Troublesome History of the Ontako* concludes with a sentence exhorting the reader to return with her to the first page of the dense 223 page novel.

In instances where Shono could have, perhaps, just as easily quoted an outside source, she shows a distinct preference for referring readers to the article and recommending that they get hold of it themselves. Once the text is tracked down, the reference to Shono is often surprisingly brief. As in a conversation when a darting glance can be fleeting but effective, no trace, it seems, is too minor to be left unchecked.

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[498] Shono Yoriko, "Eien no gongen tamashii: Kompira bungakuron josetsu" [The Eternally Treasonous Spirit of Embodiment: An Introduction to *Kompira* Literature], *Waseda Bungaku* 30 (January 2005), 99.

[499] At the end of her article "When someone from Mie gets angry" Shono implores the reader to help find venues for publication; "I have a hundred pages just like this – won't you find somewhere to publish them?" In the last line of "Don Quixote's Return Bomb," she directly addresses the editor and asks him, "Please print this on the page where my response to Otsuka would have gone (had he approached the literary debate with me ethically)?"(This debate refers to Shono's campaign for support of serious literature -- discussed at length in the preceding chapter -- in which the popular culture critic Otsuka Eiji was a significant nemesis).

Referring readers to connections both large and small, Shono generates seemingly infinite points of potential departure, and opens up valves between texts through which her own textual energy can charge. The subject matter of untangling overly-tidied myths already fosters a necessarily high degree of inter-textuality within Shono's texts. Asking the reader to follow a given argument in a separate text, knowing that she can not control what part of the target text he or she will or will not read, then further opens the texts to aleatory mergings.

As Shono encourages a relatively labor-intensive manner of tracking down references, she also mocks the method of substantiating a claim by citing a supporting source in parentheses. One parenthetical citation in "Just Ignore this Difficult to Read Quarrelsome Ugly Woman Writer" reads "Some greatly respected expert," and is followed on the next page with another parenthetical citation: "It's true – Shono." Rather than supporting the point at hand by reference to a "higher" authority and putting an end to questions of veracity, the parentheses of formal citation appear like so many physical holes in Shono's texts.

The reader is rarely allowed to forget the existence of parallel worlds of meaning-making; Shono's skeptical tone towards authoritative claims and the way she encourages readers to pursue the references themselves reminds readers of the many possible perspectives at play in knowledge-formation. Inner frames and outer frames constantly bump up against each other in her fictional narratives,[500] and characters from earlier pieces of fiction wander into her later pieces, not as one of the current cast of characters, but as a fictional character from another story.[501] When discussing venerated religious

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[500] For an indepth discussion of Shono's use of frame and inner-narrative see Ebihara, Ekiko, "Onna no miru yume: Shono Yoriko 'Suishoseinaido' ni okeru kyokushi teki shinwa sekai (sono 1)[female Dreams: Reading Shono Yoriko's "Super-Private Myth" Depicted in Her Novel Suischo-nai seido], *Kiyo* 37 (St. Margaret's Bulletin) (2005), 23. Ebihara suggests that Shono sometimes uses this device as a way to engage in the critique of her own writing.

[501] This occurs for example, in her novellas "Koko nankai-sugi karuku nagashite ne busu no isakai onna yo" [Just Ignore this Too-Difficult-to-Read Quarrelsome Woman Writer],

figures, in particular, Shono varies her tone and in so doing sharpens the awareness of multiple knowledge systems in which these figures are taken seriously to varying degrees. “From the boddhisatva to Maria to Amaterasu, there on the completely merged altar was the Japanese, Western, and Chinese, oh forgive my rudeness, I mean the Shintō, Buddhist, and Christian all-star cast.”[502] Rendering “all-star cast” (オールスターキャスト) in *katakana* to approximate the English pronunciation of “all-star cast,” Shono invokes a far more informal and less reverent register than she does elsewhere in the text when she adheres to the socially expected respect for that which major religions consider sacred. Using foreign-loan words, which are spelled out phonetically, in close proximity with ideographic compound-words has the effect of demystifying the organic claim of the religious terms by presenting competing, or simply plural, systems of meaning-making. When Shono places Chinese characters for religious terms alongside phonetically spelled-out foreign-loan words she does so most often with words that share a sense of economic expediency and obvious fabrication, as in “Shintō-manufacturer” 神道メーカ, or “recycled *kami*” 神リサイクル, and “downsized – *kami*” 神リストラ.[503]

Gunzō (July 1999),104-133, and *Sekkyōshi Kanibatto* [Preacher Kanibatto] in *Sekkyōshi Kanibatto to Hyakku-nin no abunai bijo* [Preacher Kanibatto and One Hundred Dangerous Beauties], Tokyo: Kawadeshoboshinsha. The practice of having characters show up in stories *as* characters from other narratives is also used in *manga*.

[502] Shono, *Kompira*, 129.

[503] Shono, *Kompira*, 81, 64, and 234, respectively. The foreign-loan word “maker” (rendered above in *katakana*) takes on the meaning of “manufacturer” in its Japanese usage, and the foreign loan word “restructure” (also rendered above in *katakana*) takes on the meaning of “downsized” in its Japanese usage.

When "Eternally Treasonous" is the Subject of Eternal Treason…

Kompira marks a departure from Shono's earlier fictional attempts at unraveling Japan's canonical foundational myths. Her earlier, and equally fantastic, works were narrated by characters whose minds and bodies seemed to exist in a relation of rupture. The narrator, for example, of the 2003 *Suishōnaiseido* [The World of the Crystals] was possibly drugged and coerced into her role of writing foundational myths for the new women's country. *Kompira*, however, is a whole-hearted visceral acceptance of the constantly changing nature of political resistance and embodiment. Fluid identities are a necessary part of kompiras' challenge to consolidating practices. The ability to shift subject position is a defining quality of, rather than a threat to, kompira. While in the dystopic women's country of *The World of the Crystals*, gender is a firm fact into which society can literally be divided, in *Kompira* the random nature of gender assignation, and the work that goes into making one's body and spirit coalesce into the same gender, is emphasized. Shortly after being carried away from its mother, kompira enters the body of an infant that "happens" - *tama tama* - to be a girl.[504] Indeed, both the narrator, who thought herself a boy until puberty and later fuses with male-deities, and the leader of the vanquished Izumo, ōkuninushi, into whom the identity of a female god onanji had been collapsed, could arguably be seen as trans-gendered.[505] And though the narrators of

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[504] *Ibid.*, 9.

[505] The narrator's beloved and diminutive sukunahikona is traditionally portrayed as the side-kick of ōkuninushi. Upon further investigation, however, the narrator learns that ōkuninushi is himself a conglomerate god, and one of the gods that has been subsumed into his modern identity is a female god onanji. For more on transgender in *Kompira* see Utsumi Noriko, "Tekusuto ni okeru kurosu=jendādo pafuo-mansu(2): Shono Yoriko 'Kompira' wo chūshin ni" [Cross-gendered performances in texts (2): Shono Yoriko's *Kompira*], *F-Gens Frontiers of Gender Studies janaru* no. 5 (March 2006),386-393. In *Kompira* sukunahikona and onanji have an emotionally intense relationship. They form one of the several couples of older, powerful women, and younger, beautiful men that figure frequently in Shono's writing. In *suishōseinaido* Mary and Jesus briefly appear as one of these couples.

both *The World of the Crystals* and *Kompira* are engaged in revisionist myth-making, the establishment of the women's country "uramizumo" in *The World of the Crystals* is an attempt on the part of the less powerful to consolidate their own power into the hopefully stable form of a nation-state, while kompira is a *kami* who is constitutively antagonistic to any form of consolidated power. Kompira spread far and near, merging with obsolete and extinguished *kami*, but this merging does not produce a cohesive block, or the prospects of political aggrandizement. Despite the presence of various kompira in far-flung locations, the narrator tells us, they are always "bara-bara" – random and one-off.

Written three years after the completion of *The World of the Crystals*, *Kompira* is a far more optimistic critique of what Shono terms the "occult-lolita complex," the infantilizing of women supported by both the superstitious nationalist myths and the liberalizing forces of the contemporary market place. Gone are the fixity of gender and the corresponding idea of a women-only land. Gone also is the suspicion that the narrator always had towards her own project in *The World of the Crystals*; was she kidnapped away from old Japan to write these new founding myths? Is complete gender neutrality really desirable? The nameless narrators of both *Kompira* and *The World of the Crystals* are intertwined with a fate not of their own making; one with the possible abduction and drugging by those who have assigned her the task of writing the foundational myths of a new state, the other by being, at the same time, both the first and female human child of a young couple, and a 400 year old kompira. But while the former narrator feels constrained by the oppressive relations she finds herself caught up within, the narrator of *Kompira* finds her world greatly widened by the revelation that she shares an existence that spans both vast amounts of time and physical distance. The narrator of *The World of the Crystals* is faced with a formerly rebellious movement that is now in the process of

conserving its political gains,[506] whereas *Kompira*'s narrator is coming to terms with the fact that she has embodied a "perpetually treasonous" spirit that helps re-energize obsolete *kami,* but never participates in the consolidation of a new system of power.

Shono is a notoriously prolific writer who has explicitly stated that she is more interested in seeing where her writing takes her than in the consistency of her arguments and the tightness of her logic. In *The World of the Crystals* she seems to have found that she had written herself into some creative dead-ends and, benefiting from that process, altered her points of departure to begin *Kompira*. Like the narrator she creates for *Kompira*, she is not interested in the protected stances and willful blindness that the consolidation of even her own hyper-personal myths would entail. "What emerges from this critical work," Hoshino Tomyuki concludes, "is surprisingly non-tragic, rather what one feels when reading *Kompira* is a sense of freedom and pleasure from the thoroughness of a new vision." A vision that, "could help you get hold of your own *kami*."[507]

Gohei: The Crisscrossing Currents of Ownership and Embodiment

Currency, Shono has frequently stated," brings one immediately to the present." Possessing a manifest value and immediate relevance, currency has a charge that shoots through the many overlapping fabrics of everyday life. In *Kompira* currency also takes on the less tangible role of a portal to irrational dimensions of being and embodiment. The registered symbol for Kompira-daigongen, the institution with which the narrator of *Kompira* claims to share no affiliation, is the Chinese character for gold, which is the

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[506] This is a theme that Shono frequently re-works, in *Great Japan! The Troublesome History of the Ontako* the previously anti-establishment *ontako* claim the title of dissidents for themselves and themselves alone as they consolidate their political victory.

[507] Hoshino Tomoyuki, "'Kanibatto' kara bōfu" [The Storm from *Kanibatto*], *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007), 95.

same as the character for "money", enclosed in a circle. The shorthand, so to speak, for Kompira daigongen, is the character for money encircled. The symbol for the purportedly "wild" and non-institutionalized kompira of the novel is a subtle riff off of the official symbol; a golden *gohei* perched on a cloud.[508] Literally rendered "holy hemp," with hemp being a historic unit of exchange, *gohei* are the zig-zagged lightning shaped offerings to the gods found in neighborhood shrines throughout Japan. Made of cut and folded white paper affixed to a wooden wand, and given in hopes of a worldly wish being fulfilled, the offerings share with the official symbol of kompira daigongen the history of having been an actual currency.[509]

The channels that currency opens up seem to move in multiple directions. Shono, as we shall see, was brought "to the present" in the process of financing a mortgage for the first time – the process of which motivated her writing of *Kompira*. Within *Kompira*, *gohei* play a pivotal role in bringing the young narrator to an awareness of supernatural dimensions. As a ten-year old girl living in Ise she had a dream in which a *tengu*,[510] a spirit often associated with the mountain-roaming ascetics *yamabushi*, appears in the back of her family's house. Shortly thereafter, a traveling pilgrim trespasses into her backyard and places *gohei* in the exact same spot on which the *tengu* had appeared in her dream. While the father, in a rare fit of emotion, grabs the girl away and runs the pilgrim out of the yard, the young girl is left amazed by the coincidence. The narrator uses this coincidence to build up suspense as she promises the reader that "I will explain how this

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[508] Shono, *Kompira*, 163.

[509] Hemp, the material from which gohei were originally made, was used as a form of currency in Japan from the 8th to 10th centuries. Hemp was later was later strung through the holes in coins to keep them together, and was also the most common material used for making wallets.

[510] *Tengu*, literally "heavenly dogs," are one variety of *yōkai* (monster-spirits) in Japanese folklore. They have the reputation of being disruptive protectors of the mountains and forests and are often associated with *shugendō* and depicted in the garb of its followers, *yamabushi*. *Yamabushi*, mentioned above, are the ascetic practitioners who were outlawed in the process of separating Shinto and Buddhism in the 19th century.

happened in the next chapter." The explanation provided -- thirty novel-years later -- in the first lines of the next section is quite simple; in the course of the narrator's move to Chiba[511] she learns that the world is so crowded with spirits that it is not surprising that two -- the *tengu* in the dream and the *gohei*-toting pilgrim in the yard -- should happen to bump up against one another. The scene in Ise where the father yanks the awe-struck narrator away from the spot on which her personal vision and the alms-giving pilgrim converge, is a far cry from a subsequent scene in Chiba where the narrator hops into a cab and casually orders her own cosmology written onto a religious stone.[512] When she lived in an area "subjected, in the extreme, to *shinbutsu bunri*"[513] she did not feel the freedom to be so religiously creative. In Chiba, the narrator feels no disciplinary divide between economics and religion; she hails a taxi, goes to the commercial district, and gets a receipt for her purchase.

Frequently referring to Prince Gautama Siddhartha's turn to spirituality on the eve of inheriting a kingdom, and the subsequent Buddhist tenet that "ownership is pain," Shono emphasizes that the connection between ownership and selfhood is potentially a spiritually rich nexus. Indeed, it was her first experience of ownership that compelled Shono to write *Kompira*:

> Fully owning something – with no qualifications - is jolting to your soul. It produces a strain on your consciousness and that strain is the origin of your self. Japanese people have always been in the system of property accumulation ever since the breakdown of the imperial tax system in the 8th century. You can't escape it whether you are an owner or not -- the possibility of becoming an owner is always there. Because it operates at the base of your self

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[511] Chiba, a prefecture to the east of Tokyo, is far less historically connected to the imperial family mythology than is the narrator's original home of Ise.

[512] The narrator asks for a Shinto *kami*, sukunahikona, and a Buddhist derived *kami*, kompira, to be carved into a stone tablet that had the official crest of her new local shrine in Chiba. Here, she is performing the opposite of *shinbutsu bunri* (separation of Shinto and Buddhism) with the *kami* for which she has personal affection.

[513] Shono, *Kompira*, 123.

> it necessarily has religious connections. I read, in a book on religious history, that people even became priests in order to escape the agony that ownership presents to the self. This resonated with parts of my life and I wrote *Kompira* in response to that resonance. I wrote *Kompira* as a personal biography after I "owned" my mortgage and my relationship to my cats. The structure of my personal biography grew out of ownership and religious history."[514]

The original impetus for buying the house were the cats that Shono found discarded in the dumpster outside of her apartment building, and decided to take in to her small apartment. Assuming that they were abandoned when they ceased being "cute and cuddly" kittens, Shono began feeding them and ended up moving to an area in which she could afford to buy a house in which to better care for them. Shono's definition of ownership is not a definitive one of exclusive rights, but rather one that emphasizes the relationships into which ownership implicates the owner. She owns not the house, but the mortgage, and not the cats, but her relationship to the cats. Shono uses the term ironically to show how ownership, whether inherited, purchased, or plundered, brings about a perversion of social relations. Stray cats, clearly, already exist outside any legally protected claim to ownership. But the cats are full-bodied beings whose whereabouts she now controls and this relation profoundly affects her.[515] Never does she couch the profundity of her relation in terms of love or affection, or even moral responsibility. It is simply a redefinition of the parameters of her self -- without sentiment -- which she experiences in ownership.

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[514] Shono Yoriko, *Ichi, ni, san, shi, kyō wo ikiyou! Narita sanbai* [1,2,3,4, Let's Live Today! Narita Worship], Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2006, 88.

[515] Interestingly, Shono has stated that she is not partial to cats nor does she feel she is particularly good with cats. Yet their deaths are frequently cited, along with publications and residential moves, as significant events in her life. See, for example, the biographical sketch in *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (March 2007), 242-245.

ceaseless intersections across economic and spiritual systems that generate an electric charge. Historical accounts of *gohei* describe a tendency towards proliferation and embodiment; people often took *gohei* to be embodiments of *kami* and therefore worthy of worship themselves, much to the chagrin of 19th century nativists who were attempting to delineate a centralized Japanese belief system.[516] The writer-narrator implicates *gohei* at the nexus of politics, economics and spirituality when she describes a major political and economic shift in the 8th century away from the imperial tributary system to a more regional economic order; [517] couching this paradigm shift in terms of the spiritual independence that the newly imported Buddhism provides for lesser nobility, the writer-narrator sums up the change by quoting a dissenting noble who says, "We don't need your imperially disbursed *gohei* to ensure a good harvest anymore."[518]

The importance of *gohei* as a symbol reaches a crescendo in *Kompira*'s concluding scene. Here, just three pages after the narrator has conducted her most important spiritual fusion with a male *kami* on Mt. Asakuma, the golden hue of kompira's *gohei* follows her into her new house in Chiba:

> The last image that I had in my mind – as a human – were the golden rays of *gohei* from the shrine that I had just visited. Their shape burned irritatingly behind my eyelids and became the only image I saw whenever I closed my eyes. On top of that, my memories were all in gold, there was nothing I could do about it – even if I told myself that this wasn't really real. Then I was hit by the hard mass of my thoughts, I was knocked down by certainty. At the bottom of the stairs I saw a golden light. It had followed me

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[516] Lowell, Percival, *Occult Japan: Shinto, Shamanism, and the Way of the Gods,* Vermont: Inner Traditions International, c1990, 23. Apparently this is not an unusual phenomenon with objects of religious worship.

[517] The *ritsuryo-sei* was a legal system introduced in the late 6th century which was based upon the far-reaching political administration of Tang Dynasty China. There were many standardizing elements of this system, from legal codes and punitive measures, to delineating official ranks and classes, and, most importantly for Shono's purposes, the establishment of an imperially-controlled taxation system. By the late 8th century the system had largely broken down.

[518] Shono, *Kompira*, 89.

> from the shrine. Burning with gold, it passed through the wall. That lightning-form, that zig-zag shape of cut and folded paper, it passed through the hall just where the altar was. I saw it, the golden *gohei*, and I felt welcomed and relieved... According to humans there are no gods, but I am kompira. A golden *gohei* followed me into my house, it is a sign that I am kompira"[519]

Following her into her own personal space are *gohei*, simultaneously the symbol of her wild kompira-self, an offering that tended towards proliferation and embodiment, and an economic unit of exchange that had previously held people captive to imperial dictates. The multiple charges of the *gohei* enter her home in the same flood of light, and do not cancel each other out. As the restructuring "virus" that is kompira courses through her body, the narrator can not keep herself from shouting out loud, "Its kompira- I am kompira!" (This revelation she observes, occurs for her at the level of "folk customs.") Reflectively, she compares her exclamation that she is kompira to similarly provocative statements she made as a young girl and recognizes that she is able to occupy multiple zones of feelings at the same time: "The calm analysis of my childhood and that ecstatic vision of *gohei* existed side by side in my mind with no problem at all."[520]

Experiencing the jolt of being brought into the present with the purchasing of a house and the possibility of accruing capital, Shono creates a hybrid narrator who is both a mythical *kami* and a contemporary writer modeled largely after her own self. Enlisting kompira to perform its "eternally treasonous embodiment," she attempts to maintain different conceptual systems of value in her own moment of amalgamating socio-economic power. Kompira becomes her family-god with no collectivity, and her very own "hyper-personal myth." This is the praxis that *Kompira* models for the modern reader – to reach through the dominant barometer of value, as one would a portal, to a vast web of historical and spiritual systems.

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[519] Shono, *Kompira*, 294-295.

[520] Shono, *Kompira*, 295.

The Power of Resentment and the Charge of "ugly"

Onnen, spiritually-inflected resentment that palpably lives on long after the implicated individuals have passed away, is the energizing force of the processes set in motion by *Kompira*. Whether in addressing unjust historic relations, or in forging open circuits for parallel values systems in contemporary experience, *onnen* helps generate the imagination, and required motivation, to single-mindedly articulate one's unique critique. The visceral responses that Shono and her narrators evince to being seen as "ugly" function as a type of *onnen* and lead to an obsessive focus upon the term "ugly." The excessive burrowing, in turn, creates a narrative space in which the presence and power of that term can be illuminated.

Kompira's writer-narrator and the real-life Shono Yoriko are linked by their preoccupation with why it is that they are so angry all the time,[521] and by the way their similar moves away from the Shintō-saturated land of Ise to the far less religiously manicured area of Chiba enabled their spiritually creative license. The most electric charge, however, that runs back and forth across the divide separating her fictional characters and her historical self is the claim of being ugly. Shono's practice of describing herself as "ugly" in interviews and critical essays creates a clear overlap with the routinely thick-legged, oily-skinned, and pimply, first person female narrators of her hyper-personal I-novels. This largely literary process, hitherto self-referential, was injected with a jolt of extra-literary support when Shono's publisher Kawade Shobō included a photo of her in their newspaper advertisements for Shono's *busu mono* ("ugly" stories). The novel being advertised,"Sekkyoushi Kanibatto" [Preacher Kanibatto], involves an ugly I-novel writer who gets harassed by women who had been followers of a

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[521] Readers familiar with Shono's voluminous non-fiction criticism will recognize this as a question that Shono herself grapples with in essays like "When Someone from Mie gets Angry" or "Don Kihote's Return Bomb."

certain preacher Kanibatto.[522] Largely basing his preaching on the writing of the neo-Confucian philosopher Kaibara Ekiken's "Onna Daigaku" [Greater Learning for Women],[523] Kanibatto instructed his followers to embrace their gendered role in the familial hierarchy. But some of the women who followed his preaching nonetheless failed to secure a marriage. These "leftover" women turn into vengeful zombies that target women who are unattractive and single, yet nevertheless lead happy and satisfied lives. The "leftover" zombies send assaulting faxes to their targets and then proceed to invade their dreams. The publisher of the novel *Preacher Kanibatto*, Kawade shobō, selected a passage in which the narrator reflects upon her life-long identity as an ugly person to put in their blurb on the book jacket: " 'What is this? A beauty? How did *I* get to be that? I am the world's only beautiful ugly person. Just what is the connection between looks and marriage?' The pure literature masterpiece of an Akutagawa-prize winning writer." Such a citation makes it easy to elide the distinction between the narrator and the author. In Kawade shobō's newspaper ad for the book the wording is kept the same but the first three questions -- "What is this? A beauty? How did *I* get to be that?" -- are superimposed in bold lettering over a photo of Shono herself. Two years later another publishing company, Shinchō-sha, even more directly links Shono and *busu* when they introduce her as "the non-photogenic and ugly akutagawa prize- winning writer" in their newspaper ad for her 2001 novel *Shibuya shoku asagawa* [A Shibuya-colored Shallow River]. [524] It seems very likely that these advertising strategies were implemented with Shono's active encouragement. Given her willingness to name names

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[522] Shono Yoriko. *Sekkyōshi Kanibatto to Hyakku-nin no abunai bijo* [Preacher Kanibatto and One Hundred Dangerous Beauties], Tokyo: Kawade shobōshinsha, 1999.

[523] *Onna daigaku* [Greater Learning for Women] is commonly attributed to Kaibara Ekiken (1630-1714), a Japanese botanist and Neo-Confucian philosopher.

[524] Shono Yoriko, *Shibuya shoku asagawa* [A Shibuya-colored Shallow River], Tokyo: Shinchō-sha, 2001.

and hold writers and publishers accountable to their words, the fact that she does not criticize Kawade shobō or Shinchō-sha in her polemical essays alone is strong support for the assumption that Shono was either willingly engaged in, or approving of, the advertising process. Certainly, Shono's own habit of consistently describing herself and her characters as mealy and unattractive flirts with the very public declaration that the publishing companies make.

In the advertisements, however, a line is crossed where socially acceptable self-deprecation turns into the taboo-ed act of publicly declaring -- and owning that claim as opposed to whispering it anonymously -- someone's "ugliness." As the writer and critic Yoshinori Shimizu notes in his discussion of these advertisements, "There is no more venomous word to have applied to oneself than 'ugly.' It is an aggressive word that reveals a hidden prejudice and spreads fear and smirks and laughter."[525] Gone underground, at least within adult decorum, but nonetheless deeply structuring of social relations, "ugly" is a word that Shono invites back into public usage. (Kompira, remember, are only capable of merging with and bringing forgotten spirits back to life if there is still sufficient resentment remaining for them to detect).

Far more than producing an insult, the triangular relationship between author, narrator, and marketing strategies, provides Shono with an opportunity to break out of the fictional world in which the announcement of her own ugliness can be maddeningly undercut. The narrator in *Preacher Kanibatto* -- yet another narrator who bears striking resemblance to Shono -- expresses her frustration with the conundrum of having her stories of ugliness being desired without her herself ever feeling desired:

> I was the writer of ugly-I novels, and this was my art. Writing provocatively about the duress experienced by woman blessed with only plain looks, my novels earned sympathy from a certain slice of well-heeled intellectual women. Interestingly, the,

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[525]Shimizu Yoshinori, *Shono Yoriko: Kokū no senshi* [Shono Yoriko: Warrior of the Air], Tokyo:Kawadeshobōshinsha, 2002, 55.

> shall we say "mature," female readers that came to see me were to the very last woman all beauties. My novels took shape from the ugliness that I would frankly describe. But the effect wasn't as though I was breaking a taboo, it came off more like black humor. The more I focused on the discrimination against ugliness, the more my books sold. That didn't mean, however, that I was therefore able to enter in the world of love or marriage. It seemed that there was still a big difference between an ugly person in print and a real-life ugly person.[526]

The biographical details that the narrator of this clearly fictional novel shares with Shono are significant. They both won a prize for new writers in 1981, they both suffered a ten-year period of obscurity, they both left the journal of their literary debut, and they are both over forty, single, and without children. The moments of humiliation that the narrator describes, and the private knowledge that accrues from those moments, would fit seamlessly into the many biographical accounts that Shono weaves into her non-fictional essays; the memory of the look of horror on a young boy's face when she, at twelve years old, gave him a valentine; how young male awardees of literary prizes would try to get away as soon as possible when introduced to her; and how she feels she confounds a certain Japanese literary convention that women writers are also desirable beauties.

Shono's creativity and worldview are inseparable from the experience of living in her specific body. Removing the category "ugly" because of its discriminatory and unkind deployment would deny the use of an analytical tool that is crucial to understanding her experience in the world. Shono's repetitive use of *busu* is an instance of the strategy she proffers in *Kompira* – to bring back to life a historical figure or concept that has been silenced by gathering up all of one's resentment, and to thrash wildly about at a point of pressure, be it geographic or intellectual. Just like the visceral process that *Kompira*'s narrator engages in when she summons up as much righteous anger as she possibly can in order to be able to hear the *kami* that had been institutionally cleansed from Mt. Asakuma in the heart of Ise, Shono bandies about the word "ugly" in

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[526] Shono, *Preacher Kanibatto,* 13.

hopes of taunting interlocutors into participating in tracing the current power of the word. The expression of her *onnen* in writing is rooted in the ways her corporeal being shapes her experience in the social world. It is a similarly unbroken connection between social expression and embodied experience that allows the writer-narrator of *Kompira* to come to terms with her lidless rage through that act of becoming an incarnation of the wild and heretical kompira. It was not enough for the narrator to simply worship the hybrid *kami* closely associated with practitioners who strove to "be Buddha in this body," she became kompira in her body.

The narrator of *Hyakkunin no abunai bijo* [One Hundred Dangerous Beauties],[527] the sequel to *Preacher Kanbinatto*, relentlessly recounts the ways in which a woman's ugliness stamps out all other personal characteristics. "Even an unemployed, unskilled man suffering under the weight of unpaid loans with gastro-intestinal issues so bad that he can't take a step without passing gas," the narrator contends, "even if he walks by a successful systems engineer with ten years of experience under her belt who happens to be unattractive, even he gets to call her 'ugly'." "Or, if for example," the narrator elaborates, "a woman walking home after nursing the elderly goes straight to an early morning market to run her errands and has a tired face, some man will say she is ugly." The reflex to feel negative towards an 'ugly' woman, she explains, cuts across demographics and is carried out unchecked: "There is no logic or thought required to understand 'ugly'. Whether you are a moderate, a Marxist revolutionary, a neo-conservative, or simply a professional, all men hate ugly women."[528]

Riffing off of the literary critic Yoshimoto Takaki's well known, and far loftier, article "What is Beauty in terms of language?" Shono titles a section in the epilogue to

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[527] This title is a send-up of the tradition of grouping together one hundred woodblock prints under the same rubric, such as "One hundred views of Mt. Fuji."

[528] Shono, *Preacher Kanbinatto, 153.*

one of her later novels *"gengo ni totte busu wa nani ka?"* [What is ugliness in terms of language?]. Here, the narrator of Shono's *The Troublesome History of the Ontako* makes a critical distinction between the treatment of language and the treatment of a face. "First, let me say that in terms of a face," the narrator begins," ugliness is not something that gets corrected - no matter how much assistance I receive at the beauty parlor, I will always be ugly…" "The claim of a piece of writing can be evaluated or responded to," the narrator then concludes, "but the claim of a face, well, there is no obligation to re-evaluate that." [529] While these ruminations take place in the epilogue, an earlier chapter teasingly titled "Shōsetsu nai shōsetsu: Shono Yoriko no kōhan sei" [The novel within the novel: the latter stage of Shono Yoriko's life] again connects the author's name with ugliness and form; "For the first fifty years of her life there was no one as ugly as she was…Her ugliness was in the frame of her body, in the way her body widened from the top to the bottom, in the way her chin stuck up and the hair shot funnily out of her head."[530] The indelible stain of ugliness is a notion that is ruminated upon by several of Shono's first-person narrators, and the reverie is often preceded by questions of marriage. When reporters grill the narrator of *Preacher Kanibatto* about being single after forty she immediately reflects upon her appearance; "My looks haven't changed since I was a young girl of 10 or so…which isn't to say that I have kept up a youthful appearance. I don't really take charge of my appearance in an aggressive way, my hair is getting whiter and I am gaining weight as I age. But whether I am fat or thin, or look older or younger, I am still ugly. Nothing about that ugliness really budges.[531]

Zombie number 38 in *Preacher Kanibatto* makes a similar connection between looks and marriage when she beseeches the "unattractive phlegmy-looking writer" to

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[529] Shono, *The Troublesome History of the Ontako*, 214.

[530] *Ibid*., 128-129.

[531] Shono, *Preacher Kanibatto,* 12.

recognize her despicable position in society as a single, aging woman.[532] "Your cats won't take care of you when you grow old you know, they won't work to support you," chides the vengeful zombie, "You have to make an effort, a fat woman has no use in this world. Stop writing and direct your energies towards making an appropriate marriage."[533]

The coupling of "unattractive" with "spinster" is hardly a novel invention. But Shono's writing does not stop with the depiction of the stock "hag" character. Her fiction creates webs of reference between looks, desirability, and creative potential. She deploys terms such as "literary stalker" in which words from the discourse of artistic creation and the discourse of romantic desire, however twisted, are combined. When, in the story "Just Ignore this Too-Difficult-to-Read Quarrelsome Woman Writer," the narrator is followed by a literature stalker that is trying to get her out of pure-literature and into commercial literature,[534] a parallel is drawn between making oneself physically attractive enough to be able to gain a position within the marriage system and the pressure to make one's writing marketable. Both marriage and literature are depicted as systems of exchange in which comprehensibility and attractive appearances make for a high degree of transferability. The literary stalker is not trying to force her into previously unrequited love with a person, but (rather) into writing in a manner that she expressly resists. Shono again scrambles the discourse of romance and the discourse of literary value when her narrator in "The Novel within a Novel: The Latter Stage of Shono Yoriko's Life" ruminates on the causes for Shono's belated literary success. While her fortunes languished within the literary world for most of her twenties and thirties,[535] the narrator

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[532] *Ibid*., 60.

[533] *Ibid*., 66.

[534] Shono, "Quarrelsome Woman Writer," 110.

[535] As discussed in the previous chapter, Shono Yoriko was unsuccessful in getting a book of hers published for ten years after she won the literary journal *Gunzō*'s new writer's prize.

contends that her writerly success after age forty is due to the fact that society no longer expects a woman in her forties to be sexually useful.[536] With her sexual uselessness no longer relevant, or dominating her aura, her writing is able to be attended to.

In the world of Shono Yoriko, ugliness is about creative potential, incisive critique, the inability to be heard, *and* physical repulsiveness. "Ugly" is not an abstraction of that which is excised in order to lend definition to a given system, along the theoretical lines of Mary Douglas' "dangerously impure", Kristeva's "abject", or George Bataille's "heterogeneous",[537] it is also a lived experience of physical and social rejection. The language Shono employs is unflinching in its focus on the narrator's body, down to the size of the skin's pores. "It was a fat face," explains the first person narrator of *Preacher Kanibatto*, " with a grain so rough that the pores seems as though they were going to tear apart…A face that made people feel as though they are being accosted by a lump of flesh."[538] That neither feminism nor liberal democracy nor radical leftist

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[536] Shono, *The Troublesome History of the Ontako*, 129.

[537] In *Purity and Danger*, a work significant to Julia Kristeva's notion of the "abject," Mary Douglas identifies that which has been excised from order and value as bearing the potential for re-ordering, and therefore being both dangerous and powerful: "Granted that disorder spoils patterns; it also provides the materials for patterns. Order implies restriction; from all possible materials a selection has been made, and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is limitless…it has potentiality. It symbolizes both danger and power," *Purity and Danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*, New York: Praeger, 1966, 154. The concept of the abject that Julia Kristeva develops in *Powers of Horror* builds upon this notion that that which is excised from ordering systems is threatening to systems of meaning and therefore has the power to produce feelings of horror; "the abject is radically excluded and," Kristeva explains, "draws me toward the place where meaning collapses," *Powers of Horror: an essay on abjection*, trans. Leon Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press, 1982, 2. The work of Georges Bataille can be seen as a precursor to these later works. In his notion of "heterology" Bataille posits that all systems of thought and representation have heterogeneous elements that are necessarily excised. 'Heterology' he argues, liberates these "excremental elements" and in doing so bears the potential of freeing us from homogeneous systems of representation whose purpose is to "create a servile human species," *Visions of Excess: selected writings, 1927-1939*, Trans. Alan Stoekl. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, 97. Shono's writing shares with this lineage of thought the premise that the abject has liberatory potential, but she places more emphasis on the lived experience of the ahjected.

[538] Shono, *Preacher Kanibatto*, 16.

movements have come close to unearthing the power contained within the word "ugly" is a marvel that Shono's characters constantly re-discover. By consistently bringing up her own self -- whether in creating first person-narrators whose biographical detail undeniably overlaps with Shono's own history, or by her willingness to see a photo of herself superimposed with the word "ugly" in an advertising campaign -- Shono refuses to make a complete abstraction of the term "ugly." Unearthing and tapping into the anger felt as a result of the still-present power of the category "ugly" represents far too great of an energy source to leave behind. As Shimizu Yoshinori notes when he describes *Preacher Kanibatto* and *One Hundred Dangerous Beauties* as "an unprecedented and triumphant attack upon the role that "beauty" plays in the institutions of marriage and family," ugly still lurks within the systems of sex and romance in ways that are often considered to be simply beyond critique.[539]

Refusing the tools of deconstruction, Shono instead chooses to return the anger caused by the insult "ten-million fold" in her writing. While the title of her fictional essay "Just Ignore this Too-Difficult-to-Read Quarrelsome Woman Writer" is already assaulting, the dynamic that propels the narrative produces an even more graphic interrogation of unattractive appearances. At her brother's "gorgeous" wedding[540] the narrator, Sawano, considers herself as if from a distance, as "that woman with a fat shining face who blames everyone…and to whom no one would feel attracted." "It is so gross," the narrator continues, "that that menopausal woman still has pimples on her back – I am certain her legs are fat." [541] Explicitly engaged in questioning the nature of the relationship between the narrator and the author that Shono, the author, compulsively

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[539] Shimizu, 2002, 56.

[540] In Japanese the English-loan word "gorgeous" bears the connotation of luxurious and high-class.

[541] Shono,"Quarrelsome Woman Writer," 106.

invites, Sawano is a character from an earlier Shono novel. Sawano resents being brought back to literary life and seeks out the writer Shono Yoriko in order to clarify who she is and why she is still being used. After being trapped in various elevators and coffee shops that seem to represent the literary establishment, and after being hounded by characters who rehearse the complaints against pure-literature and its poor sales, the narrator finally arrives at an old-fashioned *koban* [542] (police box) and reaches Shono when she picks up the phone found there.

The character Shono, it turns out, is trying to take a rest from both her writing and the anger that propels her writing, so she is quite perturbed that the irate Sawano is breaking her respite. During the heated exchange that ensues, Sawano agrees to leave Shono alone if she can just ask one question: "Who am I?" "You," Shono replies, "are a quarrelsome woman, an ugly quarrelsome woman." "Oh, at some point," the narrator then realizes, "I stopped being Sawano and became just another quarrelsome woman. I hung up the phone."[543]

The phone in the *koban* rings and it is Shono calling back with some advice for the narrator. "Try not to be so sensitive," she says, "you are making us look pathetic." This upbraiding from Shono causes Sawano's thoughts to spiral downward, literally, as she wonders about the coffee shop's dirty toilets and the itchy long underwear she was made to wear as a youngster. Sawano remembers how she had thought everyone was being forced into the same long-underwear even when her classmates had long ceased wearing them. This was about the time that a boy classmate called her an "ape-like,

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[542] Police boxes -- *koban* -- are local urban outposts of larger police stations found frequently in train stations and neighborhood centers in Japan. They are far more accessible and generally less intimidating than larger police stations might be, but they are still part of a greater system of social surveillance and, at times, moral education. A *koban* typically services 0. Leishman, F, "Koban: Neighbourhood Policing in Contemporary Japan," *Policing* 1 (2007), 196-202

[543] Shono, "Quarrelsome Woman Writer,"132.

hang-mouthed girl who gives off cooties" and her mother would make comments like "you have a thick neck, so lift up your chin and put this on." [544]

"Just Ignore this too Difficult-to-Read Quarrelsome Ugly Woman Writers" begins with the narrator chiding herself about always being angry -- "what, you're angry once again?" reads the opening line – and concludes with reflections about bodily discomfort, physical rejection, and having one's individuality overwhelmed by the distinction of being quarrelsome and ugly. Shaping both their personal histories and their relationship with each other, it is ugliness that animates the discussion between the narrator and the fictional character of the author. Ugliness and the charged emotions of resentment that it foments propel their dialogue and equip them with the narrative tools to describe the worlds that they inhabit.

Conclusion

Shono's texts suggest that channels to multiple metaphysical and ontological realities are kept open by the ways we imagine and experience our bodies. There is an animism at play in her peculiar combinatory framework that locates its power in the implicit knowledge of experience and everyday relations to the surrounding environment. The terms that Shono employs to describe embodiment have a distinctly spiritual valence; *gongen* and the *kami* kompira, share a lineage in the Buddhist-Shintō combinatory matrix. *Onnen,* the vengefulness that exceeds the limits of an individual life and takes on its own physical presence, and the fusion of *shūgō,* which is also simultaneously corporeal and exceeds the corporeal, partake of a similar spiritual discourse.

Shono's narrators respond to the tone of their spiritual and economic environment and resist abstracting the "self" away from diverse modes of relationality. This is why the state promulgated separation of Buddhism and Shino was such an effective policy for

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[544] *Ibid*., 129.

the *Kompira's* writer-narrator to critique; it was a transparent attempt to tame individual conceptions of the cosmos, and to shape citizens who can be best be understood and categorized via their state-defined commonalities. Whereas the premise of a sociological category is that a composite is made up of multiple similar units, Shono's definition of literature --"the largeness which flows from the small 'me'"-- identifies difference as the compelling point of departure. The radical individuality of Shono's ideal is inherently contradictory, as is apparent in her stated goal of a "family god without any collectivity." But how is a "hyper-personal" construct of universal interconnectedness less important, or more redundant, than a one-off singular body that shares most of its involuntary processes and corporeal limits with all other bodies? Why, that is, should we not somehow culturally account for, or understand, the vast array of personal imaginaries in the ways that we do recognize the individual claims to a body? *Kompira*'s writer-narrator feels *iwakan* (uneasiness) in Japan because she experiences her lack of inclusion and assimilation into various social institutions physically as well as emotionally – her body feels much more at ease once she explores the experience of a *kami* whose relations to the imperial logic of Japanese mythology involves a similar lack of consolidation. Literature, here, becomes a site where moments of lived experience are splayed open to find the multiple histories and heterogeneous bodies found there-in. In the last line of the novel the narrator experiences a moment of clarity and gratitude and yells, "To Kumpira, the protector deity of Indian Buddhism, and to all of the small and wild gods that merged with kumpira, and to all the old and extinct gods, I say thank you!"[545]

[545] Shono, *Kompira*, 331.

AFTERWORD

Shono and Tawada have been repeatedly grouped together as contemporary Japanese writers who "battle against language," and occupy the "language trance zone" on a schematic map of J-literature, and who strive to "provoke a new relationship to language."[546] This is an accurate initial identification of the similar drives within their disparate projects. The commonalities of their projects, however, extend beyond the crafting of new relations to language to the heightening the corporeal logics at work in language production and reception, and an impetus towards a trans-cultural tracing of historical processes of homogenization. Perhaps it is the development of their projects in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries -- when more and more of the world is subject to similar and interconnected economic frameworks and when there seems to be no end in sight to the acceleration of World English -- that necessarily leads the exploration of somatic-linguistic relations into dialogue with the economic and linguistic elements of globalization. Certainly, Tawada and Shono's writing is exemplary of the newly invigorated category of world literature; a literature that takes the greater world into account, questions how we apprehend our worlds, and generates dialogue on various facets of globalization.

The types of scholarly work required to engage with Tawada and Shono's respective oeuvres, as well as with the analyses of their writings, have helped clarify the differences in their projects. Contextualizing Shono's writing involves tracking down numerous leads into past and current cultural debates, and tracing historic events as diverse as 19th century religious programs and the rise of *anime* and *manga* in postwar Japan. Shono has created a sprawling literary imaginary comprised of the multiple

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546 I am referencing the categorizations made in the special issue of *Kokubungaku* "The Current State of Women Writers," the special issue of B*ungei* "1990s J-Literature," and *An Introduction to Women's Literature*, respectively, cited in the introduction.

genres of science fiction, fantasy, autobiography, and non-fiction critique. Not only are the targets of her critique many and varied, but she also pitches her tone somewhere between non-fictional critique and fantasy: as the reader scrambles to follow her vast network of connections, they must also wonder just how literally to take the accounts she provides. Shono is not, after all, a historian -- not even a revisionist one hoping to set records straight. She is a developer of a personal imaginary. What I find in Shono's writing is an invitation to develop as complex and personal a world-view as she has, and a model for how to sustain such an all-encompassing process.

Familiarizing oneself with Tawada's creative world, in certain respects, has been a far more tidy process. Her stories can be more easily read as discrete units that do not require significant topical knowledge, though an understanding of colonialism and current tourism practices is generally assumed. Tawada does not directly criticize individuals nor does she express outrage in a trasnparent manner. She maintains a consistent focus upon the body's relationship to language. Indeed, some have referred to Tawada's writing as "mono-logic."[547] Throughout her fiction there is the sense of awe that we, as language-users, have only accessed a tiny fraction of the vast array of possibilities for organizing our sensory reception of the world. Tawada's writing strives to bring a visceral experience of that awe into our daily language-use. In reading her fiction one gets the distinct sense that this goal might best be achieved through travel, in all of its varied geographic, temporal and cultural forms.

The repeated drawing inwards towards a space of marvel that occurs in Tawada's texts, pulls the reader in a different direction than does the imperative to keep abreast of current political and cultural machinations found in Shono's texts. The array of homogenizing processes that Shono interrogates is wider; economics, state initiatives and

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[547] Personal conversation with Tim Van Camperole and Mamiko Suzuki, Takadanobaba, Tokyo, August 16, 2007.

specific acts of male-collusion are the forces against which she deploys her "eternally treasonous spirit of embodiment." The embodied subjectivities, or psychic corporealities, that are encouraged by these two writers, then, necessarily differ. Shono emphasizes the role of the body as a conduit through which to feel and express one's own particular resentment, and through which to craft an individual world view. Tawada poses the body that which allows us to break away from tired conventions, to glimpse new possibilities, and to maintain a sense of humility and perspective.

Both writers, however, invoke the body as the site that can sustain a fluid experience of disparate thoughts and feelings at the same time. In their writings it is the nexus of the body and language – where the body is understood as the flux between our corporeal and cognitive selves – that sustains diverse value systems, and the imaging of this nexus bears a tendency towards trans-cultural movement. Tawada's bodily schemas are often motivated by train travel and linguistic crossings, as in her image of a female Japanese narrator eagerly entering the "male body" of Switzerland's Mt. Gotthard. Shono's body-figurations gravitate similarly towards significant geographic or temporal movement; she depicts the kompira-mother staking her tail to her home while forcing her way into an unfriendly congress in a region far away, and creates the kompira-narrator who physically merges with spirits that history has long forgotten. The body, the peculiar object that Grosz defines by its "uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside, and the outside into the inside,"[548] seems remarkably well-suited for, and inclined towards, figuring difference in a globalizing world.

This re-inscription of libidinal energies into language and a concomitant engagement with global currents is a similar combination to that which I find at play in the works of several, slightly younger, Japanese writers. While perhaps not quite yet a significant trend in terms of quantity, these works do comprise a current in the directional

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[548] Grosz, 21.

stream of contemporary Japanese literature. It is a current that, along with the expanding recognition of *nihongo-bungaku* -- literature written in Japanese by non-Japanese writers -- moves Japanese literature in a transnational, or trans-cultural, direction. Hoshino Tomoyuki (b. 1966) and Sekiguchi Ryoko (b. 1970), the two younger writers that I will briefly introduce here, have, interestingly, directly engaged with the works of Tawada and Shono. Hoshino is an avid admirer of Shono's writing and has reviewed her fiction in literary journals as well as contributed an article to the special *gendaishisō* issue "Shono Yoriko: The Imaginary to Overcome Neo-Liberalism."[549] His own writing weaves together a critique of the Japanese emperor system, a radically open posture towards other cultures, and a re-casting of the erotic life of the individual away from the confines of permanent-couplings, or even of other people. Hoshino's experience of living in Mexico for three years, and working there as a journalist, clearly informs his imaginary. His 2005 *Alkaloid Lovers*[550] features a narrator whose desire to be planted in the ground and tended to like a plant grew out of his interest in the surrealist movement in Mexico, and, in particular, to a visit to a museum in Mexico where he was entranced by the vegetation he found there.[551] Though Hoshino himself has said that his experimental fiction and his fiction that critiques Japanese nationalism -- as in the recently translated *Lonely Hearts Killer* [552]-- form to two separate and discrete projects,

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[549] Hoshino, Tomoyuki, "Kanibatto kara no bofū" [The Storm from Kanibatto], *Gendaishisō* 35.4 (2007), 94-97. Hoshino is placed in the same "language trance zone" as Shono and Tawada in the schematic map of J-literature mentioned above.

[550] Hoshino, Tomoyuki. *Arukaroido ravāzu* [Alkaloid Lovers], Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2005.

[551] Hoshino explores other structures of intimacy, including, for example, the choice of permanent single-hood in *Dokushin Onsen* [Singles' Hotsprings], Tokyo: Kodansha, 2002.

[552] Hoshino, Tomoyuki. *Lonely Hearts Killer*, trans. Adrienne Hurley, Oakland: PM Press, 2009.

placing his works within the group of investments that I find connecting Tawada and Shono's writing might foreground their inter-connectedness.

Sekiguchi Ryoko writes free verse poetry in both French and Japanese and her narrators, much like Tawada's, are frequently travelers fascinated by the strangeness of communicating in a new language. A particular attunement that Sekiguchi shares with Tawada is what she terms "the bilingualism of the latecomer."[553] Sekiguchi's *Futatsu no ichijo, futatabi* [554] [Two Markets, Once Again, 2001] begins with a mistake in reading providing access to a "market" of words and symbols. It is a market that exists in the gap between what you say and what you mean, and it is possible to come to it again and again, for the first time:

> Pages the letters fling themselves against which
> could have been traced directly by this firm
> hand, chapters unaware of changes in line or
> punctuation, the act of reading that engenders
> space, that surrounds us.
>
> The exceptional
> intensity in pronouncing the time clause at that
> very moment caused us to whiten immediately,
> alerting us to the error in reading it, but too late,
> this intensity creates here a market instantly, a
> market that had always existed, where we had
> always lived. [555]

Sekiguchi's coming anew to language occurs in the sensual space of the reader-traveler who explores the sights, smells and sensations of a foreign land. She draws a

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[553] Sekiguchi, Ryoko, " Self-Translation: Or the Artifice of Constraint," in *Four From Japan:Contemporary Poetry and Essays by Women*, trans. Sawako Nakayasu, New York: Litmus Press, 2006, 71-72.

[554] Sekiguchi, Ryoko,. *Futatsu no ichijo, futatabi* [Two Markets, Once Again], Tokyo: Shoshi yamada, 2001 and Sekiguchi, Ryoko, *Deux marches, de niveau*, Paris, P.O.L., 2005.

[555] Ryoko Sekiguchi: *Two Markets, Once Again*, trans. Sarah Riggs (from the French), Sausalito, California, 2008.

connection between an unidentifiable sense of place, and the gap between what one meant, and what one said. As the poem proceeds, all of the five senses are recruited to flesh out the experience of coming to a new language With such a similar focus on the intersections of physical travel and language-exploration, it seems fitting that Sekiguchi chose to translate into French one of Tawada's lengthy train-travel narratives, *Yōgisha no yakō ressha* [A Fugitive's Night-Time Railway][556]. Sekiguchi, who has lived in Paris since 1997, also studies and translates Dari, the type of Persian spoken in contemporary Afghanistan.

Depictions of the body are integral to Hoshino and Sekiguchi's writing, as are there exploration of different cultures and different languages. Their cultural exploration is less about an anthropological inquiry into different cultures than it is a process of cultivating imaginaries capable of sustaining difference of many sorts. Such imaginaries must necessarily have their own eros, in that they must remain open to the chaos of difference. Tawada and Shono, and Hoshino and Sekiguchi, are writing a world literature that neither reifies a stereotype of Japanese-ness, nor fits into a colonial/postcolonial matrix, nor implicitly argues for a mini-canon of great works. They are writing literature that seeks to understand how both the borders and the lack of borders shape who we are in the world today.

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[556] Translated into French as *Train De Nuit Avec Suspects*, Paris: Verdier, 2005.

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