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IN THE VOICES OF MEN, BEASTS, AND GODS:

UNMASKING THE ABJECT PERSONA

IN POSTWAR AND CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE WOMEN'S POETRY

by

Lee Evans Friederich

A dissertation presented to the  
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences  
of Washington University in  
partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

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2009

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

In the Voices of Men, Beasts and Gods:

Unmasking the Abject Persona

in Postwar and Contemporary Japanese Women's Poetry

by

Lee Evans Friederich

Doctor of Philosophy in Japanese and Comparative Literature

Washington University in St. Louis, 2009

Professor Rebecca Copeland, Chairperson

This dissertation examines the dramatic use of personae of abjection in the works of contemporary and postwar Japanese women poets Ishigaki Rin (1920-2004), Tomioka Taeko (b. 1935), Yoshihara Sachiko (1932-2002), Itô Hiromi (b. 1955), and Isaka Yokô (b. 1949). Recognizing the strong sense of abjection that permeates postwar and contemporary Japanese poetry in general, I explore the ways in which women poets embody the abject--the fantastically grotesque, the deviant and the mortally wounded--in their poetry. Turning away from the dictates of twentieth century critics that women poets write in a transparently autobiographical mode (primarily about their experiences as wives and mothers), these poets take up personae of abjection in order to both recognize the ways in which Japanese women have suffered through sexual slavery, for example, as well as to extend notions of "experience" to include acts of the imagination. The abject takes many shapes in this dissertation: the fantastic manifestation of female power within the home and the fallen postwar nation-state in Ishigaki Rin's poetry, the rebellious spirit

that refuses the notion of dichotomous gender identity in that of Tomioka Taeko's, and the abject wounds of love in Yoshihara Sachiko's poetry. The aesthetic considerations of the abject are taken up in this dissertation's examination of poetry by Itô Hiromi and Isaka Yôko, both of whom take a strongly experimental approach that so often ruptures the semiotic boundaries of language as a symbolic medium of thought. Making use of theories of abjection and horror put forth by Western feminists such as Julia Kristeva and Judith Butler, this dissertation also analyzes the poetry in relationship to recent scholarship by Japanese feminist critics such as Mizuta Noriko and Arai Toyomi as a means of discussing the aesthetic concerns of the poets as well as relationships between gender and power that their poetry describes. While Japanese originals are placed side-by-side with the author's forty-some translated poems in order to increase the accessibility of these works to non-Japanese readers, this dissertation stresses the innovative and nuanced ways in which these postwar and contemporary poets express their poetic sensibilities through the Japanese language.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**My Residence After Japan's Defeat**  
Spring 1947

On the torn shôji  
Soiled swans flap, flap.  
The mirror is covered with cracks,  
The rose in the vase thoroughly beaten.

Outside the window  
Everyone's soiled as soiled can be.

The earth, out of oil, is rickety-rackety.  
Isn't there a room for rent on some star?

Like a greedy crow I  
Bite into enormous sufferings...

Fukao Sumako  
(Japanese Women Poets, trans. Hiroaki Sato)

"I imagine, and the act of imagination revives me. I am not fossilized or paralyzed in the face of predators. I invent characters. Sometimes I feel as if I am digging people out of the ice in which reality has encased them. But perhaps, more than anything, the person I am digging out at the moment is myself."

David Grossman  
("Writing in the Dark," trans. Jessica Cohen)

## **Introduction**

### **In the Voices of Men, Beasts and Gods:**

#### **Unmasking the Abject Persona**

#### **in Postwar and Contemporary Japanese Women's Poetry**

In her 2003 *Nijū seiki no jōsei hyōgen* (Twentieth century women's expression), Mizuta Noriko situates contemporary Japanese women poets at the edges of what she calls "gender culture," as "foreigners" (*ihōjin*) or "refugee/defectors" (*hōmeisha*) (1). This dissertation on the dramatic use of persona in postwar and contemporary Japanese women's poetry will investigate the ways in which Ishigaki Rin (1920-2004), Tomioka Taeko (b. 1935), Yoshihara Sachiko (1932-2002), Itō Hiromi (b. 1955), and Isaka Yokō (b. 1949) display and explore, often quite painfully, their "refugee/defector" status through their use of personae of abjection. Flatly rejecting the autobiographical approach so often ascribed to women writers, these poets' inventive use of personae not only cuts deeply across the notion of a unitary identity, but also fulfills a visionary function, providing an imaginative space in which the ongoing liberation of Japanese women continues to be explored. Vividly embodying the abject--the fantastically grotesque, the deviant and the mortally wounded--these poets poignantly contribute to current discussions about the relationship between gender and power taking place among Japanese feminists (Kanai 9) and offer poetic means by which the power differentials between men and women can be subtly subverted.

Indeed, a strong sense of abjection underscores a great deal of postwar Japanese poetry and must be seen as a vital feature of the postwar poetic imaginary. Exploring

both physical and moral devastation to which the nation's citizens were subject during and after the war (Keene 367, Koriyama and Lueders 77), the *Arechi* (Wasteland) group gave expression to their generation's "feelings of desolation" (Selland 196) for the social chaos that ensued after the Pacific War.<sup>1</sup> Although the group dominated Japan's poetry scene through the 1950s, its membership did not include women poets. This does not mean, however, that women poets did not embrace the aesthetic of the abject, rebelling fiercely against a literary establishment that encouraged autobiographical writing, rather than the hyperbolic imagery of abjection that male writers since the Meiji period have employed.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the twentieth century, Japanese women writers have been strongly encouraged by the literary establishment to "write what they know," primarily as it relates to their experience as wives and mothers. In a statement made during a roundtable discussion in the May, 1908 issue of the journal *Shinchō* (New currents), five male writers explicitly express their sense of disappointment in women writers who fail to meet this expectation in their fiction:

Women are by nature performers. It's no surprise that the fiction they concoct is itself pretensions. Putting on airs is nothing short of lying. How would it be if they did not put on airs? If they behaved like the women they are--revealing their true thoughts, observations, and worries (should they have any) honestly? Is there

no woman writer today who will do this? I want to hear a real woman's voice, sounded by that woman herself. (1).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Publishing its first journal, also called *Arechi* in 1947, the group is named for T.S. Eliot's famous 1922 poem, "The Wasteland," see Keene 363-64.

<sup>2</sup> As will be discussed later in this introduction, Christine Marran, who explores the writings of Meiji era women writers, cites the ways in which male writers of that era such as Tayama Katai flout their experiences of abjection to valorize male sexuality.

<sup>3</sup> The participants in this discussion include Oguri Fûyô, Yanagawa Shun'yô, Tokûda Shûkô, Ikuta Chôkô, and Mayama Seika.

While poetry is not the primary focus of this discussion, these critics recommend that women fiction writers "write prose that resembles poetry," a lyrical prose that comes under the heading of "sentimental writing," which, for the participants of this discussion, is "essentially a woman's territory" (34).

Postwar women writers continued to struggle against these kinds of dictates as well. In the 1970s, poet and novelist Tomioka Taeko pointed out that "female poets were evaluated only...[to]... the extent to which they were able to express their experience as women" (qtd. in the on-line journal of experimental women's poetry *How2*).<sup>4</sup> In her book published in 1998 about contemporary author Kurahashi Yumiko, Atsuko Sakaki notes Kurahashi's bold unwillingness to write in an "apparently unmediated mode" (Sakaki xiv). This dissertation will explore the ways in which postwar women poets such as Ishigaki Rin, Tomioka Taeko and Yoshihara Sachiko adapt the voices of men, beasts and gods, for example, to challenge these expectations that women write in a transparently autobiographical mode. So doing, they set the stage for the highly experimental voices through which contemporary poets such as Itô and Isaka continue to write. Indeed, this dissertation takes up the poetry of women who are "bold enough" to reveal the "bald description" of the beastly, or "animalistic instinct," that the *Shinchô* critics mentioned above found so "bizarre" in some women's writing.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In this case, Tomioka is referring to the surrealist poet Sagawa Chika, whose innovations as a talented experimental poet were largely unnoticed by the male literary establishment: "Whereas Sagawa's talents were held in high esteem by male poets...there is not a single man who took note of the newness of her writing as a particular event in the history of poetry." These comments appeared in "Shijin no tanjô" (Birth of a poet) in *Samazama na uta: shijin to shi* (Various songs: poets and poetry), published in Bungeishunjû, 1979. The quote appears in *How2's* "Japanese Modernist Innovation," coordinated by Sawako Nakayasu and featuring translations of poetry by Sagawa Chika and Ema Shôka.

<sup>5</sup> The *Shinchô* writers assert, "these women who write literature nowadays are more than apt to engage in the most outrageous acts. We don't suppose women are bold enough to opt for the kind of

While the poets I discuss can in no way be affiliated with the Naturalist style these critics were in fact warning women writers against adopting, I propose that one of the main factors triggering the tendency toward the use of invented personae on the part of twentieth-century women writers revolves around the fact that the Naturalist School admitted primarily male, rather than female, novelists.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, as Tomi Suzuki points out, many women writers "disdained" the *shishōsetsu* (I-novel), the chief form of Japanese Naturalism. While Suzuki maintains that the movement was broad enough to encompass some women writers, the sense of "disdain" for *shishōsetsu* form on the part of women writers was no doubt connected to the fact that while the writing of the male-authored *shishōsetsu* was viewed as a transparent window onto reality, women's writing about the self was more often than not met with the devaluing claim that it was superfluously "subjective," and therefore dismissible ("Gender and Genre" 89).

I contend that postwar women poets have turned to personae who can in no way be mistaken for the writer herself *precisely* to contest the essentialist claim that writing can be "unmediated," a transparent window to "truth." Indeed, it is through their

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"bald description" that is now part and parcel of the Naturalist style...From an emotional point of view, we must say that we find writing by women that reveals this kind of animalistic instinct bizarre indeed," see Ikuta 36.

<sup>6</sup> The naturalist writers of *shishōsetsu* have been variously described by critics. On the one hand, Donald Keene argues that Naturalist writers, above all, embarked in their works on "a search for the individual," in a kind of happy "misunderstanding" or misinterpretation of French-style Naturalism promoted by writers such as Zola and Maupassant. In short, these French writers would not, for the most part, have recognized their brand of Naturalism in the highly-personalized writings of the Japanese who laid claim to the Naturalist tradition. Turning away from what the French would have seen as the highly *Romantic* quest of the individual, the French Naturalists examined the human being through an almost scientific, objectifying lens. On the other hand, in his book-length work on confessional writing in Japan, Edward Fowler approaches the question of the origin of this type of writing with an eye to earlier Japanese forms, claiming that the I-Novel, which he in fact defines much more broadly than Keene, would be seen as "a product of the native tradition...rather than simply a distortion of literary naturalism imported from the West." In this more classically-driven frame of reference then, the *shishōsetsu* uses "the techniques of essay, diary, confession, and other nonfictional forms to present the fiction of a faithfully chronicled experience," see Keene 221, and Fowler intro. xvii and xxviii.

powerful use of personae and experimentations in multivocality that these poets express their own authorial subjectivities. Through their use of personae, these poets remind us that the "self-images" they evoke are always incomplete renderings of the self. Further, the imaginative thrust of their poems exhibits the notion that the woman poet is not necessarily only shaped by experience; rather, the poet, through the use of personae, demonstrates, often quite powerfully, her own ability to "shape" her experience and life. Rather than defining who they have been in their poetry through a single-minded focus on their "experience," these poets approach a vision of what or whom they could become through their use of invented personae. So doing, they extend the definition of "experience" to include acts of the imagination as well.

Approaching postwar and contemporary women's poetry through personae of the abject that women poets since the Pacific War have come to commonly employ will not only allow me to illustrate the dramatic ways in which women's poetic expression has changed in the postwar era, but it will also provide a rich opportunity to explore how Japanese women poets continue to reinvent what it might mean to be a woman in twentieth- and twenty-first century Japan. Indeed, as Mizuta asserts, these poets are, in many ways, "defectors" from the culture as it is. Taking up their positions on the vanguard of culture, they explore the possibilities of what Japanese women can become. While it is true that the abject was very much a condition of the postwar environment, and a prominent feature of writings by male writers since the Meiji period, the term takes on special meaning when applied to postwar female poets who risked much to challenge the very prescribed ways in which male critics, such as the ones who presided over the

*Shinchô* round table discussion mentioned above, viewed the proper domain of women, and thus, the women writer.

While I will describe the abject from a variety of analytical viewpoints, my dissertation underscores Judith Butler's important assertion that the abject are not without agency. Indeed, abjection becomes a means of female empowerment in this poetry. While abjection is clearly a very strong marker for the ways Japanese women have suffered, within sexual slavery, for example, the imaginative force with which these poets express female abjection becomes a means of claiming ownership over this type of experience. Even as Itô Hiromi's three-year-old protagonist Anjuhimeko is brutally raped by the ubiquitous slave-masters that surround her, Itô makes clear that rape is one of the cruel means by which the child's *kami*hood (godhood) is tested. While the narrator in so many of Yoshihara Sachiko's poems is mortally marked by the wounds of love, these wounds become the very emblems that describe the extent to which she has embraced life. Making clear that her poetry cannot serve as a substitute for life, Yoshihara nonetheless portrays poetry as a vehicle that is essential for her survival.

Relying on Butler's, as well as Julia Kristeva's, theories of abjection, I do not employ a monolithic notion of the abject; rather, my discussions foreground these critics' notion of the abject as an ultimately unknowable entity, a defecting "identity in flux." Evocatively describing the abject as an "elusive clamminess," Kristeva further expounds upon the evasive qualities of the abject: "no sooner has it cropped up than it shades off like a mirage and permeates all words of the language with nonexistence, with a hallucinatory, ghostly glimmer." However evasive the abject may be, once detected by the poet, the presence of the abject persona cannot be ignored. Asserting the necessity to

"confront" the abject other that lurks within, Kristeva claims, "discourse will seem tenable only if it ceaselessly confront[s] that otherness, a burden both repellent and repelled, a deep well of memory that is unapproachable and intimate" (*Powers of Horror* 6).

Continuously transformed by "the deep well" of Japanese women's history, the abject is at once a fantastic manifestation of female power within the fallen postwar nation-state in Ishigaki' Rin's poetry, the rebellious spirit that so readily refuses the notion of dichotomous gender identity in that of Tomioka Taeko's, and even an occasion for murderous comic relief in Isaka Yôko's poetry. In each case, these poets "resist the historians' relentless valorization of the hermeneutic code," as Barthes put it, which "functions by making expectation...the basic condition for truth; truth...[historical] narratives tell us, is what is *at the end* of expectation" (qtd. in Orbaugh 16). Rather, for these poets, the evocation of the abject *is a process*, an on-going *defection*, that evokes no final analysis, "no end" to the ways in which its haunting images can be manifested, or embraced.

As noted above, critics who work with the notion of abjection in Meiji-era literature point to the ways in which male writers of that era embody and even celebrate their sexual aberrations in their confessional writings. However, female writers and characters who express their deviant impulses do so only at their own risk and must ultimately disavow the aberrant behaviors they confess. Comparing the ways in which female poison women (*dokufu*) confess their former abject status as a means of proving themselves as rehabilitated criminals, Christine Marran points to the unapologetic ways in which male writers such as Tayama Katai flout their abjection as a means of valorizing



male sexuality.<sup>7</sup> Also taking up the ways in which female abjection is depicted in Meiji-era literature, Leslie Winston asserts in her recent dissertation that characters in Shimizu Shikin's works who cross boundaries of "naturalized categories of sex and gender" must "ultimately reposition themselves in the system after challenging it" (3). Winston explains that Higuchi Ichihyô's female subjects "suffer deeply and unequivocally in their positions, whether they are on the edge of society or that edge looms as a specter of social psychosis for violating the law of the family" (3).

That abjection did not become a means of celebrating female sexuality in Meiji-era women's fiction writing is hardly surprising, given the very narrow ways in which women's sexuality was bounded and socially policed under the Meiji's government's campaign of *ryôsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother), for instance. In Akiko Yosano's poetry, especially her free-verse, we begin to see an interest in the abject, the criminality of a persona wishes to kill her lover, the man she hates, in her poem "Man's Chest," for instance: "The instant the gleaming blade/ Touches the chest of the man I hate/ Blood drips down my sleeve,/ Splatters on my fingers, scarlet,/ Thinking of it I smile to myself, Even my body trembles pleasantly" (trans. Sato, *Japanese Women Poets: An Anthology* 270). For many of the early twentieth-century Japanese women writers that Marran and Winston describe, however, abjection remained, as Butler puts it, an "uninhabitable zone" (*Bodies that Matter* 3). While public attitudes toward women's life choices had relaxed by the 1920s, the government's strict wartime policy of *kazoku kokkakan* (family-state ideology), which promoted motherhood as a means of expanding Japan's population of

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<sup>7</sup> Marran put forth these ideas in a talk entitled "Confessions of a Poison Woman: Reading Self Narrative in Meiji Japan" on April 13, 2007 at Washington University in St. Louis.

"soldiers and colonists for imperialist expansion," came to further restrict the roles of women (Miyake 268) outside of their "function" as mothers.

In his study of postwar male literature of the body, Douglas Slaymaker argues that male postwar writers such as Tamura Taijirô, Noma Hiroshi, and Sakaguchi Ango's "celebration of the carnal body (*nikutai*)...suggests a punning contrast to the national polity (*kokutai*)," which in fact becomes the "focus of their desecration." As Slaymaker asserts, this "carnal hedonism as a corrective to the political ideology of wartime" (2) depends on the "othering" of female bodies within the works of the male writers that he describes. Indeed, the maternal body becomes the "paradisiacal locale where the quest for comfort, solace, nurture, and peace culminates, a place of [male] liberation" (5). I find Slaymaker's examination of the abject male body compelling, and yet must challenge his assertion that "the liberating desire reflected in men's writing is largely absent in women writers" (131).

While I must leave the task of testing Slaymakers' assertions to scholars of contemporary women's fiction, Rebecca Copeland suggests in her essay "Mythical Bad Girls: The Corpse, the Crone, and the Snake" that many postwar and contemporary fiction writers are in fact reinvigorating old topoi of female abjection with renewed energy. In her focus on the ways in which women have been demonized through mythology, Copeland points out, for example, that Kurahashi Yumiko, Ohba Minako, and Tsushima Yûko have "availed themselves of the female demonic, drawing a new and positive power from the formerly abject image of the *yamanba*" (28).

This "quest for unfettered *jouissance*" has been explored not only in fiction, but in dance and visual art, as Copeland mentions; nevertheless, the reemergence of *yamanba* (mountain witch) and *onibaba* (ogress) in contemporary Japanese women's poetry as a

regenerative source of female desire rather than as an "archetype...of evil...by which female power was controlled" (Copeland 24) has thus far remained largely unexplored in recent criticism. Devouring her father through "bestly tears," the narrator of Ishigaki's "*Kurashi*" (Living) poignantly displays the pain with which women assume the power of the fallen *ie* (household) in a culture that has so often defined female assumption of power as evil.

While all of the postwar and contemporary poets I discuss take up the subversive positions of the abject, they define their relationship to abjection aesthetically as well, through their strong sense of linguistic experimentation. Indeed, Japanese women writers have played an active role in experimental poetry throughout the last century. Recently critics such as Joan Ericson, Seiji Lippit, and William Gardner, for example, have reexamined Hayashi Fumiko's *Hôrôki* (Diary of a vagabond) as an important work that makes use of a variety of female voices and subject positions, allowing Hayashi to "explore...the ambivalent and marginal spaces of modern culture, spaces characterized by both desire and destitution" (Lippit 194). Hayashi's admixture of prose diary entries, poetry, popular and traditional song, and shopping lists no less in *Hôrôki*, marks her as an excellent example of a prewar woman writer working within the fold of poetic avant-garde experimentation (Gardner 11).<sup>8</sup>

Embracing the current generation's penchant for experimental language, as opposed to the earlier *Arechi* generation's explicit embrace of social criticism, the poets

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<sup>8</sup> For additional studies that recognize the many ways in which women writers have contributed to experimental writing in Japan, see "*Kuttaku no nasa to fushigi no jiyûkan*," in her 2000 *Joseishi o yomu* (Reading women's poetry), in which Arai Toyomi outlines the contributions of poets such as Sagawa Chika, Ema Shôko and Nakamura Chio to the surrealist movement spearheaded by Kitasono Katue in the 1920s and 30s. (Arai's essay was translated as "Spontaneity and a strange sense of freedom: early modernist women poets and Kitasono Katue" by Janine Beichman in the issue of *How2* mentioned in note 4.)

discussed in this dissertation continue the experimentation among women poets noted above by pushing even harder against the boundaries of language as a symbolic system.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the works of the women poets discussed here share many of the same aesthetic concerns with the male poets of their generation. The poetry of postwar writers Tomioka Taeko and Yoshihara Sachiko, for example, very much exemplifies the current generation's long-standing affinity with nonsense, or absurdism, a "counter-strategy" to poetry as "conceptual art," which, according to poet Tanikawa Shuntarô, had "become too intellectual, too sterile" (qtd. in Morton, *Modern Japanese Culture*, 182). In her poem, "*Mudai*," which is glossed with the *katakana* word "*Nansensu*" (Nonsense), Yoshihara Sachiko takes up the unlikely persona of a slug that is carried away by the tiny bubbles of a midnight shower.<sup>10</sup> In this much-anthologized poem, the poet invents a persona that bravely faces down her pain with the exhilarating sense of play that Yoshihara's poetry so often evokes.

Bringing new intensity to this "festival of sensibility" that Ôoka Makoto explains characterizes the postwar generation (Morton, *Modern Japanese Culture* 171), both Itô and Isaka perform acts of "semiotic violence" toward language, "ruptur[ing]" the "symbolic order," "splitting it open, changing vocabulary, syntax, the word itself" (Kristeva, *Revolution* 79). In Itô's poetry, the aesthetic rupture of the language of the poem mirrors the aesthetic rupture of the body. Indeed, examining what she sees as the "beauty" of her sexual organs, mutilated in rape, Anjuhimeko, the three-year-old speaker of Itô's

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<sup>9</sup> Leading Japanese poet Tanikawa Shuntarô claims in a 1977 interview that while the "Wasteland" group occupied a very powerful position, his own generation of poets "were opposed to the notion that poetry should be constructed as a critique of society or follow a particular ideology," see Morton's *Modern Japanese Culture* 171.

<sup>10</sup> *Katakana* is the Japanese syllabary reserved primarily for foreign words (such as nonsense). The use of *katakana* as an experimental element of very recent Japanese women's poetry will be discussed in the conclusion.

"*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*" (I am Anjuhimeko) mentioned above, undermines her classification as only a rape victim. Rather, embodying the position of rape *survivor*, she ensures the success of her journey on to *kamihood*. Isaka, on the other hand, so often animates the abject with the unexpected comedy of surrealism, allowing us to enter the "uninhabitable" zones of abjection to which Butler refers. I do not echo the Kristevan notion that abjection is necessarily a property of "the maternal," as Nina Cornyetz does in her study of Izumi Kyôka, Enchi Fumiko, and Nakagami Kenji. While Cornyetz's juxtaposition of the abjection and *jouissance* of the desiring maternal woman does provide an interesting counterpoint to the many other personae through which women have come to define themselves as speaking subjects in Japanese women's poetry, this dissertation attempts to provide examples that free these personae from the theoretical chains in which they are typically ensnared.

In an effort to make this dissertation accessible to as wide an audience as possible, I have presented all of the poetry that I discuss here in both its original Japanese and English translation. While my analyses tend to center around the translations, as a poet who comes to this dissertation with a love of language, I have made considerable effort to describe as well the innovative and nuanced ways in which these postwar and contemporary poets express their poetic sensibilities through the Japanese language. As the late translator of the *Genji monogatari* (*Tale of Genji*) Edward Seidensticker wrote in his modestly titled essay "On Trying to Translate Japanese," however, translators of Japanese are guilty at times of translating with too much literalism. Facing "puns and honorifics with grim determination," we can spare ourselves "none of the problems" and, especially, become more than a little perturbed by the "problem of what's to be done

about the literary quality of the original" (142). Embracing Jacques Derrida's notion that reading, too, is an act of translation, I have attempted to bring my skills as a reader and poet to the task of translation, providing creative solutions when possible, to make the poems not only readable in English, but, when I have succeeded, pleasurable for the reader as well. As Lori Chamberlain so elegantly puts it, the "original" text, too, is, after all, bound "to an impossible but necessary contract with the translation...making each the debtor of the other" (317).<sup>11</sup>

Proceeding chronologically, I will begin with "Through Beastly Tears: Devouring the Dead in the Poetry of Ishigaki Rin," which considers the intertwined aspects of personal and political abjection in the postwar nation-state through Ishigaki's image of the daughter who is forced to support her defeated father. Chapter One describes Ishigaki's use of the fantastic in poems that portray the abject nation through atomic destruction as well as through the plight of the common worker, so often sacrificed by the state in the name of "economic progress." Examining Ishigaki's doubly-abject status as a "female foot soldier" during a time in which women were encouraged to bear children for the war effort under *kazoku kokkakan*, rather than pursue economic viability outside the home, the chapter explores the range of fantastic personae through which Ishigaki is "consumed" by her tireless support of her debilitated father, stepmothers, and brothers. Becoming a human octopus who struggles to hold up the family home with her eight wobbly legs in her poem "*Haete kuru*" (Ready to sprout),

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<sup>11</sup> Referring to the ways in which Jacques Derrida's project of "subvert[ing] the very concept of difference which produces the binary opposition between an original and its reproduction," Chamberlain suggests that "translation is governed by a double bind typified by the command, 'Do not read me': the text both requires and forbids its translation." To state Chamberlain's explanation of Derrida's discoveries about the relationship between "original" text and "translated text" in another way--that is, to interpret or "read" this difficult statement--reading in and of itself is an act of "impossible" translation, or interpretation, that must be undertaken *if* a work is to be read in the first place, much less translated into a foreign language, see Chamberlain 317.

Ishigaki's use of the fantastic challenges the notion of Japan as "a homogeneous middle-class nation, supported by traditional and uniquely Japanese values founded on a harmonious nuclear family" (Napier 54).

Ishigaki's poetry can be constructively analyzed in relationship to the male poets who participated in the postwar group *Arechi*, mentioned above, such as Tamura Ryûichi and Kitamura Tarô, whose works depicting the ravages and aftermath of war so often approach the grotesque as well. In Ishigaki's poetry, however, the abject other is more often than not passionately embraced, a gesture the abject subject is apt to return in poems such as "*Kurashi*," mentioned above, in which the narrator's "devouring" of the dead can be seen as a painful expression of her love for the family she so ambivalently supported. Indeed, the beastly personae that emerge in the forms of "*onibaba*" in "*Shijimi*" (Clams) and "*kemono*" (beast) in "*Kurashi*" both participate in the eating of the dead, a trope that typifies these later works.

This consumption of the dead becomes the highly ironic principle around which postwar society is organized in Ishigaki's "*Oni no shokuji*" (A meal for ogres), which examines the common Buddhist ritual of "passing bones" as a grisly act that borders on the cannibalistic in the context of postwar mourning. While this chapter will analyze the trope of "corpse-eating" as a reflection of the ways in which, as Kristeva suggests, art, rather than religion, is more likely to serve as the antidote to the morally abject status of the society at large (qtd. in Creed 14), I will also look at the very personal implications of "devouring the dead" in Ishigaki's poetry. In "*Kurashi*," for instance, only by painfully consuming her father can the narrator finally accept the ways in which she assumed his authority in the household.

Tomioka Taeko, on the other hand, adamantly refuses the domestic sphere that Ishigaki's personae so often struggle within. Tomioka's refusal to adopt fixed or "naturalized" gender categories, "feminine" voice, a clearly discernable sexual identity, standardized Japanese, and, as Shiraishi Kazuko points out, decorative description ("*80 nendai to joseishi*," Women poets of the 80s 64), clearly marks her as a poet well ahead of her own time. Chapter Two, "In the Voice of Amano jaku: Tomioka Taeko's Poetry of Refusal" will foreground this strong sense of refusal (*kyohi*) that permeates the poetry of Tomioka, whose meteoric poetic career, though short-lived, would dramatically alter the landscape of Japanese women's poetry to come.<sup>12</sup> The appearance of the traditional trickster Amano jaku in the opening poem of Tomioka's first collection, *Okaeshi* (Return gift), "*Mi no ue banashi*" (Story of my life) illuminates this notion of refusal. Refusing linguistic, gender and identity categorization throughout, Tomioka ironically positions Amano jaku, who embodies the perverse in contemporary parlance, on the vanguard of intellectual pursuits.

This subversive valorization, or naturalization, of deviancy can be productively illuminated by Butler's notion of the abject, insofar as the narrative voice that defines Tomioka's poetic world defies any notion of unitary identity, the stringent categorization that so often accompanies gay and lesbian identity politics. In this context, I reexamine Shiraishi Kazuko's complaint that Tomioka's work, especially her 1964 *Onna tomodachi* (Women friends), has been too readily categorized by Western critics as "lesbian poetry"

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<sup>12</sup> Despite her brilliance as a poet, Tomioka stopped writing poetry after the publication of her collected works in 1973 (Morton, *Modernism in Practice* 101), and has gone on to publish several acclaimed novels, collections of short fiction, film scripts/screenplays and essays. Situating Tomioka's poetry within a chronology of postwar and contemporary poetry is a fraught enterprise, inasmuch as she published her first collection *Okaeshi* (*Return Gift* 1957) two years *before* Ishigaki's first book. Because I view Tomioka as a poet "well ahead of her time," I have placed my chapter on her after Ishigaki, who presents such a compelling image of the immediate postwar era.



("80 *nendai to joseishi*" 65). Indeed, Tomioka prophesies the deconstruction of these categories of "lesbian identity" even before they had begun to take root in either the United States or Japan, for instance, some thirty-five years before Butler had begun to challenge the monolithic ways in which these sexualities are categorized. In this way, we are reminded that Butler's arguments about the instability of gender categories are not necessarily new in the Japanese context, especially when we also consider the gender theory that accompanied the *onnagata* in the development of kabuki theater.<sup>13</sup>

My chapter on Tomioka also calls attention to the many ways in which she subverts stylistic conventions, so often adopting a rough-speaking "masculine" voice, in stark contrast to the "gentle *hiragana*" that she so often employs (Shiraishi, "80 *nendai to joseishi*" 65). Characterized by its playful, conversational tone, which is occasionally reflected in Tomioka's native Osaka dialect, Tomioka's poetry nonetheless demarcates the limits and limitations of speech, with its logical leaps, gaps, and non-sequiturs, at times making use of the verbal cubism championed by Gertrude Stein, whose works she has translated. As suggested above, Tomioka's challenges to the norms of "women's writing" (as defined by the male literary establishment) parallel those of her contemporary Kurahashi Yumiko. Not only do both writers subvert the notion of gender identity in

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<sup>13</sup> The *onnagata* is a "gender specialist," a male who specializes in female roles in kabuki plays, beginning in the seventeenth century. Early kabuki actor Yoshizawa's experience in the role of the *onnagata* led him to theorize that "sex and gender were not naturally aligned in the body." In her essay "The Gender of the *Onnagata* as the Imitating Imitated: Its Historicity, Performativity, and Involvement in the Circulation of Femininity," Maki Morinaga offers insight into the interdisciplinary functions of the *onnagata* in women's studies and gender studies: "*Onnagata* are regarded as having played the role of the 'paragons' of womanhood in seventeenth through nineteenth-century Japan, not only theatrically but also socially. For women's studies, therefore, *onnagata* can provide an intriguing case study in which their gender amounts to a specific element to help explain femininity. For gender studies, *onnagata*'s gender dramatically visualizes some aspects of the current theoretical understanding of gender: performativity and contingency. Furthermore, the gender of *onnagata* is beneficial to gender studies because it can problematize some elements of gender that are customarily naturalized and made invisible," see Robertson 493 and Morinaga 2.

their works, but they both refuse to win approval as women writers by "writing of their own emotional and physical experiences...without foregrounding the art of narration" (Sakaki xiv).

In contrast to Tomioka's poetry, the abject wounds that manifest themselves in Yoshihara Sachiko's works refuse nothing. Absorbing the pain of the world, these are the wounds of love, and as such, represent the human "condition" of lovers painfully held apart in solitary confinement even as they are drawn together. Chapter Three, "In the Voice of a Human God: (Ad)dressing the Open Wound in Yoshihara Sachiko's Poetry," traces the image of the wound in Yoshihara's works, with special emphasis given to her 1973 *Hirugao* (Dayflowers), for, as Arai suggests, *Hirugao* is the collection in which Yoshihara most conspicuously displays the imagery of the wound (*Joseishi Jijô*, The situation of women's poetry 28). Indeed, while the wound is always a sign of our deepest humanity in Yoshihara's poetry, the personae who bear these wounds so often transcend their human bounds. Nowhere specifying the kind of god or gods whose voices the narrator invokes in the opening lines of "*Kyôhan*" (Complicity), Yoshihara writes that she intentionally adopted larger-than-life personae that "cross the borders of the self." Taking on such an existence, Yoshihara tells us, these personae take the form of human "gods" (*kami*) (*Chidoriashi, Reeling Poems* 88).

In many works, Yoshihara does not explicitly identify the gender of her characters, and lest we are tempted to read the wound as the bleeding wound/womb of female sex, this image of woman as a castrated man is by no means a constant in

her work, especially when we consider Yoshihara's poem "*Otoko--'ai no koriida' ni*," (Man--In *The Realm of the Senses*), spoken in the voice of Abe Sada.<sup>14</sup> Poignantly turning to the lover she will castrate, the narrator reminds him, "the heart and the body are the same" (Mizuta, *Nijû seiki no josei hyôgen* 318). Her poem "*Kyori*" (Distance) is in fact written in the voice of a man who is undergoing the painful process of being castrated by his lover. As these poems so vividly show, the sense of "sin" that Yoshihara suggests throughout her poetry is deeply imbued with the criminality that the term (*tsumi*) implies, since the term can be translated as either "sin" or "crime," depending on its context. As Mizuta asserts, the image of the wound in Yoshihara's poetry represents the "aftermath of love" (*Nijû seiki no josei hyôgen* 311), dramas that are so deeply internalized they all but vanish, leaving the reader with their emotional weight if not their origins.

Yoshihara's dramatic use of the "confessional" mode will be analyzed in parallel with the poetry of her international contemporaries, confessional American women poets Sylvia Plath, whose work Yoshihara read and about which she wrote, and Anne Sexton, especially in relation to all three poets' ironic use of larger-than-life personae to "confess" their most private dilemmas. In addition to providing "connective tissue" among poems that address the open wounds of love, I will also explore the profound longing for wholeness that emerges in Yoshihara's poems as well. Despite the fatalistic stance of so many of her narrators, some of these speakers also possess a keen awareness that it is ultimately their own choice whether to "live or die," to borrow the

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<sup>14</sup> This title refers to Ôshima Nagisa's 1976 film "*Ai no koriida' ni* (In the realm of the senses). The poem takes up the subject of Abe Sada's castration of her lover, Yoshida Kichizô, in 1936. As Marran explains in her essay "So Bad She's Good: The Masochist's Heroine in Postwar Japan, Abe Sada," Sada's actions have been interpreted in various forms and media, including plays, films, novels, images and articles, see Marran 83.

title of Anne Sexton's collection, to survive or surrender to their wounds. Indeed, as this chapter shows, this choice is very much bound to the role that the imagination plays in the life of a poet. Addressing these choices becomes a way of applying a protective dressing, a form of healing the open wounds out of which Yoshihara's poetry flourishes.

In the poetry of Itô Hiromi, the sensations of abjection are more often than not inextricably linked with the pleasures of *jouissance*. Chapter Four, "Pain and Beauty, Pleasure and Horror: The Aesthetics of Abjection in the Poetry of Itô Hiromi," will take into consideration Itô's portrayal of the female body, as well as her experimental use of language, form, myth, multi-media and multivocal performance to describe the semiotic pressures that underlie the expression of pain and pleasure, beauty and horror in some of her most innovative works. As Tsuboi Hideto writes in his important 1989 article on the poet, Itô's poetry embraces a new form of women's expression that asserts itself well outside of the purview of the male gaze and, so doing, "tears through the membrane" of traditional song (25). Itô's tendency to line the underbelly of pain with pleasurable sensuality is most evocatively illustrated in her epic performance poem "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*" (I am Anjuhimeko), in which, as mentioned above, the raped girl Anjuhimeko, admires the beauty of her own sexual organs as they slide from her body.

Itô's masterful use of multivocal personae is an important facet of her experimentation that further contributes to the sense of semiotic rupture so prevalent in her works. Itô's acclaimed tale-poem is based on anthropological transcriptions of *Oiwaki sama ichidaiki* (The biography of Oiwaki-sama), a myth recited by spiritual mediums (*itako*) on the Tsugaru Peninsula in northern Japan. *Oiwaki sama ichidaiki* is a strain of the better-known *Sanshō Dayū* myth (often translated as "Sansho, the Bailiff"), a vital story from the *sekkyō* tradition of Buddhist preaching, re-popularized for modern audiences by

Mori Ôgai's 1915 short story of the same title. Itô's poem represents a significant rewriting of the Oiwiki-sama myth insofar as Anjuhimeko not only suffers physical hardship from the nearly-impossible tasks she must perform along the way to *kamihood*, but she is repeatedly raped by her task masters. Itô's profound interest in myth and persona will also be examined in her 2004 *Nihon no fushigi na hanashi* (Wondrous Stories of Japan), a collection of erotic tales based on the eighth century priest Kyôkai's *Nihon ryôiki* (Miraculous tales of Japan), the earliest known collection of *setsuwa* (Buddhist legends) in Japan (Nakamura 1).

Taking up the persona not only of Anjuhimeko, but of her mother and father as well in her epic telling of "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*," Itô simultaneously presents what appears to be two very separate narrative lines in her performance of "*Kanoko goroshi*" (Killing Kanoko). That is, conceiving this poem, the poet envisioned herself reading the main narrative of a mother who struggles to take care of her demanding newborn daughter while at the same time playing a recording of herself reading the second narrative, which describes another woman's suicide (Morton, *Modernism in Practice* 106). In this way, Itô creates a cacophony of voices that betrays the rupture of *jouissance*, as well as the multi-vocal approach of the *miko* alluded to above in this quintessentially contemporary setting.

The semiotic thrust of Itô's poetry is further extended by her collaborations with the acclaimed avant-garde photographer Araki Nobuyoshi, who offers a visual reading of Itô's explorations in abjection, the fine line between beauty and horror her works negotiate. Itô's 1987 collaborative effort with Araki Nobuyoshi and Kikuchi Nobuyoshi, *Teritotii ron 1* (1987) will be drawn into juxtaposition with Itô's collaboration with photographer Ishiuchi Miyako in her 1995 *Ashi, te, niku, karada* (Feet, hands, flesh, body), a collection of poetic essays that feature an array of poetic personae, including a

tone-deaf cocoon turned butterfly fed up with her pimply-faced (human) boyfriend, for instance, a sheepdog, or a hunting retriever. While the brutally straight-forward nude photographs of Itô that accompany these essays--replete with her wrinkles, stretch marks and stubby fingers and toes--as well as repeated reference to a main character called "the poet," might invite an autobiographical reading, Itô's playful use of voice challenges the ways in which we read the signs of "personal writing," and simultaneously offers an attractive alternative.

In Chapter Five, "Strangling the House: Semiotic Displacement and the Animation of Abjection in Isaka Yôko's Poetry," I delve further into the spirit of experimentation that defines some of the most recent women's poetry in Japan.<sup>15</sup> Contextualized within the aesthetics of L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E poetry that has swept the current generation's international poetry scene, Isaka's is a "poetry of dislocation" in which "meaning is not produced by the sign, but by the contents we bring to the potentials of language" (qtd. in Morton, *Anthology* xx-xxi). This chapter analyzes the shifting specter of the abject as it is transformed by the animating processes of surrealism and the fantastic in Isaka's poetry. I also explore Isaka's collaborative efforts with *manga* artist Yamada Murasaki, as well as the ways in which her use of the fantastic overlaps with the narrative properties of *anime*. In many ways, Isaka's incorporation of these popular forms can be seen as a means of incorporating the concerns of the displaced youth that her works so often describe. Isaka does not turn away from some of the

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<sup>15</sup> The Spring, 2005 edition of the on-line journal *How2* includes as special feature on current experimental women's poetry in Japan. Coordinated by poet and editor Sawako Nakayasu, the issue contains translations of Isaka's poetry, along with translations of poems by Akiko Fujiwara, Koike Masayo, Kyong-Mi Park, Hirata Toshiko, Abe Hinako, and Takarabe Toriko. Nakayasu's translations of Park, Arai Takako and Minashita Kiriu in her 2006 *Four from Japan* will be discussed in the conclusion of this dissertation.

darkest problems plaguing youth culture in poems that explore child abuse, social isolation, suicide, and even child murder.

Despite the darkness of these themes, some of Isaka's poems are disarmingly comic: the ghastliness of the object is displaced by her playful, surrealistic "animation" of the inanimate, or by observation so microscopic that the reader is sometimes lulled into forgetting the larger scene of horror in which the poem is situated. Isaka subverts the domestic scene through the rapid transformation of the most innocuous domestic objects. In "*Randana beruto*" (Idle belt), from her award-winning *Baiorin zoku* (Violin tribe, 1987), a belt becomes a snake "ringing its buckle, hoping to coil around something" (19). Suddenly cinching a waist--whose waist, we cannot be sure--by the end of the poem, the belt has bestowed its transformational powers onto the narrator, who completely identifies with the belt that "strangles the one a.m. house," noting that "the further you look up, the redder it becomes" (18).

In "*Arashi*" (Storm), which appears in Isaka's 1994 *Chijô ga manbennaku akarunde* (Thoroughly brightened earth), the "rough sea" the narrator wishes to gaze into becomes a metaphor for the ever-expansive language of desire that continuously unfolds in Isaka's works. The underlying force of Isaka's poetry is the readiness with which language instigates desire, while at the same time calling the existence of identity itself into question: Larger-than-life, the narrator of "*Arashi*" takes on the anime-like form of a "fantastic being," and yet is completely isolated in her fear that others "would...not notice me," even as she walks, "Pounding the earth with both feet/ Feeling the comforting vibration rising up through my body.../ Taking to the untamed wind in my own way" (*Chijô ga manbennaku* 36-39).

Certainly Isaka's semiotic transformation, or *animation*, of the abject can be seen as deeply liberatory. Indeed, her poetry represents a new discourse of desire that "strangles the house," releasing women from deeply-engrained gendered processes of the *ie* that bind them. American critics have yet to account for the ways in which women poets have contributed to the dismantling of gendered identities in Japan after World War II, when women were "liberated" from the *ie* (household). As my dissertation will show, women have not emerged easily from those confines. Poets who participate in this enterprise must not only contend with the various ways in which women have been historically subjugated by the delimiting institutions of *ryōsai kenbo*, or, at the other extreme, sexual slavery, within the *ie*. They must also grapple with the imperative for autobiographical writing that has so often been imposed on women writers. Adopting the personae of "men, beasts, and gods," these writers bravely take up the voices that even today mark them as deviants. Nonetheless, extrapolating the explosive force of their pain, they invent new aesthetic means by which to explore their emergence from the *ie*, a fraught enterprise that reveals not only pain, but an underlying sense of pleasure that permeates their works as well.



**Chapter 1**  
**Through Beastly Tears: Devouring the Dead**  
**in the Poetry of Ishigaki Rin**

**Introduction**

A strong sense of abjection permeates postwar Japanese poetry and can in fact be viewed as a condition of the postwar imaginary. A corpse comes "tapping on the iron rails" after having met death, "vomiting sausage-like parasites," in Kitamura Tarô's opening title poem of the group *Arechi's* 1951 anthology *Bochi no hito* (*Man from the Graveyard*), for example. And in fellow *Arechi* poet Miyoshi Toyoichirô's "Shadowgraph," it is the "cries of children, scratching at space," that "draw a vivid sketch of a shrieking woman" (Keene 367, Koriyama and Lueders 77). Postwar Japanese poets graphically explore, often hyperbolically, or fantastically so, the sense of physical and moral devastation to which the nation's citizens were subject during and after the war. This chapter explores the manifestation of the abject in Japanese postwar women's poetry through the works of the late Ishigaki Rin (1920-2004), who began publishing her work in union newspapers after the war ("*Tachiba no aru shi*," "Poems that take a position" 116).

While Ishigaki did not belong to the male-dominated *Arechi* coterie, many of her works exemplify not only the terrors of war, but the anxieties through which those terrors are reflected in postwar life, particularly within the home. Loosely affiliated with the

eclectic *Rekitei* (Course of wandering) group,<sup>16</sup> Ishigaki stresses that her postwar union activities during her thirty years as a bank employee were crucial to her development as a poet, providing her with not only early publishing venues and appreciative audiences, but with opportunities to create and present new works, such as "*Aisatsu*" ("A greeting"), a poem written "on-demand" for her union to commemorate the seventh-year anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima ("*Tachiba no aru shi*" 116). In her latter writings about her life and work, however, Ishigaki describes her poetic maturation in terms of her ability to develop an independent stance, to "walk on her own two feet." Learning during the war years to question authority quietly, Ishigaki's deeply-ironic stance emerged outside of any connection to family wealth or notoriety.<sup>17</sup> Her formal education did not extend beyond the time she left school for work at the age of fourteen ("*Tachiba no aru shi*" 124).

Ishigaki is one of several influential women poets to emerge in the late 1950s. Tinged with a profound sense of despair and desire, Ibaraki Noriko's epochal 1958 poem "*Watashi ga ichiban kirei datta toki*" ("When I was at my prettiest") has been canonized in modern language textbooks as a poem that defines a generation of Japanese women coming of age during the devastation of war. Tomioka Taeko, whose poetic career would influence a generation of women poets, published her first book *Henrei* (*Return gift*) in 1957. Adamantly refusing to adopt fixed or "naturalized" gender categories, "feminine"

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<sup>16</sup> *Rekitei* remains the largest institutionalized poetry group in Japan today, see Selland 197.

<sup>17</sup> In his section on Ishigaki Rin in his book *Modernism in Practice*, Leith Morton foregrounds Ishigaki's use of irony as a feminist tactic, see Morton 89-96. I wish to thank Leith Morton for his comments on this chapter and my translations of Ishigaki's poetry.

voice, nor standardized Japanese, as mentioned in the introduction, Tomioka also refuses to be entrapped within the domestic sphere in which Ishigaki's personae so often struggle.

This sense of struggle that so deeply informs Ishigaki's poetry often comes to us in the guise of childhood experience. Many of her most ironic poems play upon the "*dôwa*" (fairy tale) and "*dôyô*" (child's song) motifs. Appropriating these forms so often associated with childhood becomes a means of revealing the complexities and inherent contradictions of experience, on both personal and political levels, an approach that becomes all the more poignant when we consider that Ishigaki lost not only her own mother when she was four years old, but two stepmothers as well during her early years ("*Shi o kaku koto to, ikiru koto*," "Writing poems and living" 126). Having sung in support of her two brothers, "brave soldiers" sent off to fight in World War II, Ishigaki would later go on to write "*Genshi dôwa*," ("Atomic lullaby"), a visionary poem that considers the new myths to which we are subject in a post-nuclear world. In her poem entitled "*Dôyô*" (A child's song), the dutiful child pretends to eat a meal that consists of the corpses of family members, "tastefully" laid out under white table cloths. Claiming that her poetry is written as though in a "second" everyday language, Ishigaki goes on to describe the frustrations of her writing process, likening the writing of her *deceptively* "simple" poetry to the experience of a "mute child pursuing language" ("*Shi o kaku koto to, ikiru koto*" 134).

Beginning with Mizuta Noriko's observation that Ishigaki's poetry revolves around notions of "home," which become for her "a source of imagination and poetic energy" (5), this chapter also describes the many ways in which Ishigaki's search for

home and identity is conditioned by her inventive, often fantastic, use of personae. Indeed, as "*Dôyô*" illustrates, the fantastic in Ishigaki's poetry is so often entwined with what Julia Kristeva defines as the abject, "that which does not 'respect borders, positions, rules,' that which 'disturbs identity, system, order'" (qtd. in Creed 8),<sup>18</sup> particularly through images in which the narrator devours the dead, or is, in turn, devoured by the family she supported. Through the mockingly horrific act of eating the dead as part of the funeral ritual, the child-narrator of "*Dôyô*" reveals the ways in which ritual, within Kristeva's notion of the abject, "renews" our "initial contact with the abject element," in this case the empty corpses of her parents, "before excluding that element," through burial or cremation (qtd in Creed 8).

However, even though Ishigaki so often situates the scene of abjection within ritual, not only in "*Dôyô*," but also in "*Oni no shokuji*" (A meal for ogres) as well, her emphasis is on the "disintegration" of religion's ability to soothe and purify (Creed 14). Subtly suggesting the strong sense of abjection that permeated the moral fabric of postwar Japanese society, Ishigaki's poetry is distinguished by her unflinching confrontation with the broken promises of institutions such as religion to heal the personal wounds of war. In this way, Ishigaki fulfills Kristeva's notion that "the work of purification now rests solely with 'that catharsis *par excellence* called art'" (qtd in Creed 14), even when, for Ishigaki's narrators, solace is most tellingly achieved through their embrace, rather than rejection, of the abject other. In the following, I will foreground poems that alternately

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<sup>18</sup> Kristeva outlines her theories of abjection in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, translated in 1982 by Leon S. Roudiez. In her book *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, Barbara Creed offers a very useful interpretation of Kristeva's work on abjection.

depict the poet, often quite literally, consumed by the impoverished family she started supporting at fourteen in the mid 1930s as a bank employee (Taku 138), or conversely, her own grisly act of "devouring" these same family members through her poetry several years later. Despite her strong use of imaginative personae, as Arai Toyomi points out, Ishigaki is probably the first Japanese woman poet to speak of the household "in such a naked way" (19). Just what is meant by this "nakedness" with which Ishigaki so vividly exposes the family home as a primary site of abjection will be illustrated throughout this chapter. We will see traces of Ishigaki's unflinching depiction of the family home in other poets this dissertation explores, such as Itô Hiromi and Isaka Yôko. Ishigaki's use of the monstrous no doubt flows from many sources. Bound not only to the severity of life immediately following the war, Ishigaki's poetry also reveals the painful ways in which women began to assume new "male" roles, such as that of breadwinner, during and after the war.

Pursuing Susan Napier's recognition of the search for "home" as "a kind of Ur-theme of the fantastic" in her 1996 *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, I will foreground Ishigaki's crucial contribution to the development of new voices and personae through which Japanese women poets explore, clarify, and elaborate their experiences and desires in the postwar world. For critic Tom Moylan, pursuing the fantastic can be seen as a "quest for what has been repressed or denied...that sense of home which includes happiness and fulfillment" (qtd in Napier 16). Through her own poetic search for "home," Ishigaki, like so many postwar writers drawing upon the fantastic, actively deconstructs some of the most strongly-held ideologies of modern Japan, particularly the notion of Japan as "a homogeneous middle-class nation, supported by traditional and uniquely Japanese values founded on a harmonious nuclear family" (Napier 54). A woman who supported her debilitated father, Ishigaki explores her doubly abject status as *female worker*, a "foot soldier" at a major bank in Japan as Mizuta puts it (13), throughout her poetry.

Ishigaki was born in 1920, the first year of a decade in which the Japanese government began to reconsider women's rights. As Miriam Silverberg points out in "The Modern Girl as Militant," the Civil Code that granted "full power to the male head of the household" was challenged in 1925, and changes were proposed that would give women greater rights when it came to choosing their own marriage partner, divorce, and managing their own property (259). However, when it came to the increasing numbers of middle-class women who began working during the 1920s, the "permissive social atmosphere" toward working women that was suggested, for instance, in women's magazines, was also accompanied by negative public opinion that reflected deep anxieties "about the impact of...increased modernization and industrialization on the family" (Nagy 203, 210). As Margit Nagy suggests, the underlying anxiety toward social change during the interwar years resulted in working women becoming the target of unwanted sexual advances on commuter trains, for instance. Citing Nobuhiko Murakami, Nagy explains the processes of their abjection: "men felt free to engage in these improprieties...since no proper woman—that is, wife and mother—rode the public transit during the rush-hour periods" (211).

As Yoshiko Miyake points out, during the war years in which Ishigaki began her career as a bank employee, the political attitudes that had seemed so hopeful in the 1920s had all but vanished as the government instituted its strict policy of *kazoku kokkakan* (family-state ideology), mentioned in the introduction, which "promoted population growth not only to assure a supply of soldiers and colonists for imperialist expansion, but also to associate ideas of fecundity and productivity with the power of the state" (268). During this time in which women's labor was "desperately needed," "the state looked on women's increasing entry into the work force as a potential threat to the institution of the Japanese stem family (*ie*), which was expected to buttress the ruling order" (269). Just as women became the object of the unwanted sexual advances mentioned above, they were just as likely to undergo some form of dehumanization, or desexualization, when they assume the role of breadwinner, for instance. These anxieties are deeply embedded in Ishigaki's

poetry, and manifest themselves in poems in which the female worker is personified as a *kappa*, a frog-like water sprite of Japanese folklore, or *tako* (octopus).

As Judith Butler argues, the term *abjection* has profoundly political ramifications as well. Sharalyn Orbaugh points out in *Japanese Fiction of the Allied Occupation: Vision, Embodiment, Identity* that "abjectness" was not only a term that General MacArthur imposed to describe the "humiliation" of the Japanese nation after its defeat, but it became the overriding condition that the Occupation army *had to prove* in order for Japan to be admitted to the "family of nations" (36, 41).<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the "example" of postwar Japan clearly elucidates Butler's claim that the creation of categories of abjection is so often deployed as a hegemonic method that renders these realms necessarily "uninhabitable" (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 3); indeed, the "terrible retribution the surrender terms impose[d]," to quote MacArthur, would dictate the extent to which Japan would embrace Western-"imposed" democracy. Ishigaki, as we shall see, uses the fantastic as a means of penetrating what Butler calls the "abject borders of signification" that delineate postwar suffering (Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" 183). Recovering "excluded domain[s] of intelligibility" that extend beyond commonly perceived categories of gender, class, race and nation (qtd in Orbaugh 24), Ishigaki's poetry not only provides a heart-wrenching exploration of the painful subject positions men and women assumed after the war, but also vividly elucidates the "disruption and rearticulation" of these categories (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 8).

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<sup>19</sup> Orbaugh quotes a statement MacArthur made on October 16, 1945: "Nothing could exceed the abjectness, the humiliation and the finality of this surrender. It is not only physically thorough, but has been equally destructive on the Japanese spirit. From swagger and arrogance, the former Japanese military have passed to servility and fear. They are thoroughly beaten and cowed and tremble before the terrible retribution the surrender terms impose upon their county in punishment for its great sins," see Orbaugh 36.

While I will come to focus on the personal inflections of the abject in Ishigaki's poetry in two of her most highly-regarded collections, *Watashi no mae ni aru nabe to okama to moeru hi to* (*In front of me the pan, the rice pot and the burning flame...*, 1959) and *Hyôsatsu nado* (*Nameplates and the like*, 1968), I begin my analysis of Ishigaki's work with an overview of the many bold ways in which she abjectifies the *political body* of the nation-state in poems that seek to recover from this devastated body the sense of peace that its citizens crave. The fantastic vision that these poems finally evoke, however, reveals a new world order in which "the alien is no longer a nightmare from which one can awaken," to quote Napier's description of the horrific ways in which what is "alien" so often manifests itself in postwar works (108).

At the same time, Ishigaki also depicts in her poems the growing institutionalization of power and the predatory ways of the newly-reconstructed "alien nation." Showing the ways in which its companies feed upon its "abject poor" in the name of progress and greed, Ishigaki reveals, often through her evocations of the fantastic, the brutal costs of modernization, as Napier puts it, "the reverse side of the myths of constant progress, economic miracles, and social harmony" (12). Whether Ishigaki is discussing the faceless victims of atomic warfare, Japanese workers who toil in the heat of metal factories to make fine tableware for Westerners, or even the "obscenity" of the love she witnesses between her father and stepmother, the fantastic "other" is never pushed aside, discarded or made an "unintelligible" object of abjection, but is, more



often than not, embraced.<sup>20</sup>

### I. Atomic Lullaby for the Post-atomic World

Ishigaki strikes a consciously political stance in the opening poem of her 1959 *Watashi no mae ni aru nabe to okama to moeru hi to*, "*Genshi dôwa*." Daring to imagine "the new myth" of peace, as Ishigaki puts it in this poem, Ishigaki's vision of the post-atomic "fantasy" of peace is conditioned by the sense of destruction and annihilation that preceded "peace" and continues to permeate everyday life. Indeed, the sense of lasting peace that Ishigaki craves requires such a powerful act of the imagination that only the fantastic will suffice. Rather than dwelling on the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, "*Genshi dôwa*" delivers the promises and perils of this post-atomic age. The poem considers the overriding threat of nuclear weapons not only to Japan, but to the world, a threat that became integral to the Japanese narrative during the Emperor's surrender speech, in which he "referred to weapons capable of destroying all of humanity" (Orbaugh 33). As this poem points out, "peace" can in no way resemble that of the past. Enveloped in sadness, if "peace" *does* exist, it will prevail in an atmosphere marked by a deep sense of ambivalence, thus engendering a "new myth" that encompasses these seemingly contradictory circumstances. We cannot ignore the possibility that the highly philosophical terms in which this poem is framed may be the result of the Occupation's "Press Code," which, as Lisa Yoneyama points out, placed "legal restrictions on all

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<sup>20</sup> As Napier points out in her chapter "Woman Lost: The Dead, Damaged, or Absent Female in Postwar Fantasy," female abjection is marked in the fiction of postwar male writers by women's "elimination from the text" or by..."assault and murder." Embracing the abject other, Ishigaki's poems stand in marked contrast to these works, see Napier 58.

publications and public debates about the bomb, regardless of their form" (20) until it was abandoned in the year this poem is dated, 1949.

### Atomic Lullaby

### 原子童話

#### Opening Battle

#### 戦闘開始

The airplanes that took off from  
two countries dropped atomic bombs  
on their enemy at the same time

二つの国から飛び立った飛行機は  
同時刻に敵国上へ原子爆弾を落  
しました

The two countries were annihilated  
The only survivors throughout the world  
were the crews of those two planes

二つの国は壊滅しました  
生き残った者は世界中に  
二機の乗組員だけになりました

No matter how full of sorrow,  
did they live in peace, too?

彼らがどんなにかなしく  
またむつまじく暮らしたかー

This, perhaps,  
will become the new myth

それは、ひよつとすると  
新しい神話になるかも  
知れません。

(*Watashi no mae ni 10-11*)<sup>21</sup>

Stressing the ambiguous sense of peace that nuclear weapons foster, "*Genshi dôwa*" revolves around a highly-contingent question that is not, and cannot be, answered: "No matter how full of sorrow, / did they live in peace, too?" Indeed, casting this vision of harmony as myth (*shinwa*), however, relegates it to the realm of fairy tale, as the title "*Genshi dôwa*" suggests, a gentle "lie" invented to create an illusion of peace.

Recognizing Japan as both target and potential aggressor, Ishigaki looks beyond the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to show atomic weapons as vehicles for mutual destruction, implying that future use of these weapons requires that aggressors imagine their own sure destruction. This struggle, in which the annihilating and the annihilated are merged as one,

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<sup>21</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the translations that appear in this dissertation are my own.

becomes the "opening battle" of the post atomic age, an era that can produce neither winners nor losers, nor, as Ishigaki poignantly points out, "peace" without "sorrow." In Ishigaki's post-atomic vision, aggression becomes untenable without the aggressor's active consideration of itself as abject other, in this case, the "annihilated" body of its "enemy."

What is perhaps most disturbing about this fantastic vision of an "alien" new world is that it is already so familiar insofar as it emanates from the very real sense of "annihilation" that the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki precipitated, rather than from the "unknown." Nonetheless, for Ishigaki, the boundaries of this new "post-atomic" era are, as they are for us reading her poetry today, unfathomable. While she did not experience either blast from ground zero, it should be pointed out that Ishigaki's family home in Akasaka was completely destroyed in the Tokyo fire bombings of May, 1945,<sup>22</sup> and that her vision, in much the same way as that of *hibakusha* writers such as Nagasaki survivor Hayashi Kyôko, "resist[s]...the historians' relentless valorization of the hermeneutic code," as mentioned in the introduction (Barthes qtd. in Orbaugh 16). For Ishigaki as well, as long as such weapons continue to exist, "there is no 'end'" to their threat, no plausible interpretation that such a code would require (Orbaugh 16).

Although this particular poem takes place far above the devastated sites of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Ishigaki in no way turns away from the more tangible physical horrors wrought by those blasts in other poems, and in fact vividly reveals the charred face of a Hiroshima victim in a later poem in the collection, "*Aisatsu*," mentioned in the opening of this chapter. Written to accompany a photograph in a workplace display commemorating the seventh anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing, as Ishigaki explains in "*Tachiba no aru shi*," this remarkable poem was written on demand over the course of an hour for the labor union she belonged to (116). Describing the "hideously burned face" in the photograph as "one of the two hundred and fifty thousand hideously burned faces" of Hiroshima, the

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<sup>22</sup> Ishigaki relocated to the Izu Peninsula until August, when she was able to rejoin her family in Tokyo (Shinagawa). Leith Morton, e-mail message to author, December 1, 2008.

narrator is compelled by an intense longing to embrace not the dead, but the living, her fellow bank employees, whom this photograph and poem "greeted" as they checked in for work on August 6, 1952 ("*Tachiba no aru shi*" 118).<sup>23</sup>

Placing the living into immediate juxtaposition with the many who died in Hiroshima, by the end of this poem, Ishigaki reveals not only the deep similarities between the living and the abject other, whom they so closely resembled up until 8:15 on August 6, 1945, but also stresses unchecked feelings of apathy on the part of the living, a sense of forgetfulness that cannot be excused in the post-atomic age: "All of the two hundred and fifty thousand people who died in one moment/ the morning of August 6, 1945/ were like you like me/ who are here now/ peacefully beautifully off guard." The harshness of the graphic image of the burned face, revealed both by the accompanying photograph and the *language* that describes this burned face (*yaketadareta kao*) in the opening lines, are juxtaposed to the gentle invitation to her listeners to look at one another's faces: (*tomo yo/mukiattagai no kao o/moichido minaosô*), as well as to Ishigaki's delicate use of metaphor as she describes the narrow depths between life and death in the post-atomic world: "*sei to shi no kiwadoi fuchi o aruku*" (31).

### A Greeting

—based on a photo of the atomic bomb

Ah,  
this hideously burned face  
is of a person who was in Hiroshima  
on August 6, 1945  
one of the two hundred and fifty thousand  
hideously burned faces

Even though *they* are no longer of this world  
friends  
I want us to take another look

### 挨拶

—原爆の写真によせて

あ、  
この焼けたただれた顔は  
一九四五年八月六日  
その時広島にいた人  
二五万の焼けたただれのひとつ

すでに此の世にないもの  
とはいえ  
友よ

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<sup>23</sup> "*Aisatsu*" was three years after the Occupation ban on the publication of materials depicting the bombs' effects was lifted, see Orbaugh 89.

at each others' faces  
as we face each other  
at today's healthy faces  
fresh, morning faces  
showing no trace of the fires of war

I shudder  
when I search among those faces  
for tomorrow's hope

How can you be so peaceful  
so beautiful

when the world possesses hundreds of  
atomic bombs  
and we walk the narrow depths between  
life and death?

Listen quietly  
Don't you hear it coming closer?  
The thing we must see is right before our  
eyes  
The thing we must grasp  
is in our hands  
8:15 am arrives  
every morning

All of the two hundred and fifty thousand  
people who died in one moment  
the morning of August 6, 1945  
were like you like me  
who are here now  
peacefully beautifully off guard.

(August, 1952)

向き合つた互の顔を<sup>24</sup>  
も一度見直そう  
戦火の跡もとどめぬ  
すこやかな今日の顔  
すがすがしい朝の顔を

その顔の中に明日の表情を  
さがすとき  
私はりつぜんとするのだ

地球が原爆を数百個所持して  
生と死のきわどい淵を歩く

なぜそんなにも安らかに  
あなたは美しいのか

しずかに耳を澄ませ  
何かが近づいてきはしないか  
見きわめなければならぬものは  
目の前に  
えり分けなければならぬものは  
手の中にある  
午前八時一五分は  
毎朝やってくる

一九四五年八月六日の朝  
一瞬にして死んだ二五万人の  
人すべて  
いま在る  
あんたの如く 私の如く  
やすらかに 美しく 油断して  
いた。

(一九五二・八)

(*Watashi no mae ni* 30-33)

Here, the dead and the living are drawn into an inextricable embrace with one

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<sup>24</sup> Ishigaki does not use the usual 互い form here.

another, as mentioned above, into an expression of "greeting" that marks the vulnerability of those who live in the post-atomic age. What is equally compelling, however, is the way in which, searching today's "fresh morning faces" for "tomorrow's hope," the narrator "shudders" to witness just how peaceful, how beautiful these faces are in a world that "possesses several hundred atomic bombs." In this poem, the figure of abjection not only becomes an ironic source of intense beauty in the narrator's imaginings in the moments before the blast, but those who retain a peaceful sense of "beauty" in the face of such a violent event become objects of horror to her. In this way, Ishigaki issues a subtle reminder that all of Japan was culpable in the war in Asia and must remain "on guard" against the tendency for feigned innocence in the post-nuclear age. Elaborating the complex embrace of self and other, the intertwining of "beauty" and "horror," Ishigaki calls into question the dichotomies through which the abject "other," specifically the victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki blasts, are so often held apart in Japanese culture, their bodies tainted with radiation. Pointing to the entwined destinies of *hibakusha* and non-*hibakusha* alike, Ishigaki retains some small measure of the humanity taken from the *hibakusha* by the bombings.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, "lasting peace" is at once exceedingly fragile and yet, at the same time, heavily burdensome in "*Nadare no toki*" (Season of avalanches): "The word *peace* whirls like fine particles of snow/ and falls thickly in heaps/ on this native ground of Japan/ this country grown so small." Vastly preferring postwar "hardship" to the violence that surrounded her during the war, the narrator of this poem acknowledges that the brief period of "hibernation" following the war did not necessarily represent total

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<sup>25</sup> As Orbaugh says, the *hibakusha* have experienced "segregation and exclusion" in Japanese culture: "until recently the disabled have often been hidden from public view; and many of the *hibakusha* lived out the remainder of their lives in the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission hospitals because their scarred appearance led to social ostracism and shame," see Orbaugh 403-404. The critical stance that Ishigaki takes in this poem has much in common with the poetry of Kurihara Sadako, a Hiroshima poet who wrote extensively about the Hiroshima blast, see Minear 1.

demoralization for at least one of the citizens of this "modest country." In fact, as she says, "Even with its various hardships" this hibernation was also "a good thing": "rather than living in a country that competes for domination in the world/ this way suits my way of life." As these lines demonstrate, Ishigaki did not hold a static view of Japan as a nation victimized by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: that is, her act of "remembering" Hiroshima did not allow her to "forget" Japan's role as an aggressor in other poems.<sup>26</sup>

While we might at first view the tone of this poem as reifying the sense of Japan as an abject nation in some way deserving of "punishment," this winter sleep is a temporary phenomenon, and, as the poem goes on to say, the destructive force of the avalanche of decidedly human desires cannot be stopped in its season. As this narrator implies, already, though hidden, this "avalanche" of desires cannot be held back: "Under the heaps of fallen snow/ already the sprouts of small ambitions falsehoods/ and desires are hidden." The poet is only too aware of the force of the avalanche: mere rumblings in the "distant" peaks, the avalanche is eventually released, and further provoked, in its season, by a human litany of "it can't be stopped":

#### Season of Avalanches

#### 雪崩のとき

People say  
*the time has come*

人は  
その時が来たのだ、という

*The avalanches will come  
because avalanche season has arrived.*

雪崩のおこるのは  
雪崩の季節がきたため  
と。

Oh, the peaceful heart of that frozen country

武装を捨てた頃の

---

<sup>26</sup> As Yoneyama explains is often the case, "remembering the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as events in the history of humanity has significantly contributed to the forgetting of the history of colonialism and racism in the region," see Yoneyama 12.

when we vowed to throw away our arms  
and put aside our authority and the conflicts  
of the world

The hibernation of our modest nation

even with its various hardships

was also a good thing.

Peace

lasting peace

the absolute peace of a snowy landscape

It's true the word *peace*

whirls like fine particles of snow

and falls thickly in heaps

on this native ground of Japan

this country grown so small.

Sometimes, while mending my torn socks

I gave my hands a rest

and gazed out the window

And now I'm so relieved

Here at least there are no bombs exploding

nor the color of fire

I remember thinking

rather than living in a country

that competes for world domination

this way suits my way of life just fine.

When we see this too pass, in a short time

while the firewood is still plentiful

people will grow restless and say,

*The time has come*

*We cannot defy the season*

The snow has stopped falling

Under the heaps of fallen snow

already the sprouts of small ambitions

あの氷世の誓いや心の平静  
世界の国々の権力や争いを  
そとにした

つつましい民族の冬

ごもりは

色々な不自由があつても

また良いものであつた。

平和

氷遠の平和

平和一色の銀世界

そうだ、平和という言葉が

この狭くなつた日本の国土に

粉雪のように舞い

どつさり降り積つていた。

私は破れた靴下を繕い

編物などしながら時々手を

休め

外を眺めたものだ

そして ほつ、とする

ここにはもう爆弾の炸裂も

火の色もない

世界に覇を競う国に住むより

このほうが私の生きかたに

合っている

と考えたりした。

それも過ぎてみれば束の

間で

まだととのえた焚木もきれ

ぬまに

人はざわめき出し

その時が来た、という

季節にはさからえないのだ、と。

雪はとうに降りやんでしまった、

降り積つた雪の下には

もうちいさく 野心や、



falsehoods  
and desires are hidden  
*It's all come down to this*

*and can't be stopped*  
When the single expression

tumbles down from the distant peaks  
we provoke more snow

We say, *it can't be stopped, can't be stopped,*  
*can't be stopped,*  
and it falls

Oh, those avalanches,  
the growing might  
of those words

Their gradual crescendo  
comes closer

I can hear them  
I can hear them  
(January, 1951)

いつわりや  
欲望の芽がかくされていて  
"すべてがそう なつてきた

のだから  
仕方がない"というひとつ

の言葉が  
遠い嶺のあたりでころげ

出すと  
もう他の雪をさそつて  
しかたがない、しかたがない  
しかたがない  
と、落ちてくる。

ああ あの雪崩、  
あの言葉の

だんだん勢いづき  
次第に拵がつてくるのが  
それが近づいてくるのが

私にはきこえる  
私にはきこえる。  
(一九五一・一)  
(*Watashi no mae ni* 12-16)

While the narrator of this poem finds temporary solace in the safety of the "hibernation of a modest country," she knows that seasons change, and that human desire, through which a spring of "ambitions" and "falsehoods" will eventually emerge, will provoke avalanches that "can't be stopped." As will be shown in poems that discuss the narrator's tendency to "devour" the dead as a profound expression of grief in the final section of this chapter, this sense of destructive desire wrought by the *suppression of desire* is a mainstay in Ishigaki's poetry. This foreboding, apocalyptic tale of human desire, too, can be seen within the context of the failed wish-fulfillment fantasy of the

"search for home" alluded to above. In this case, the occupied nation searches and fails to find its place for long in the "home" of suppressed desire in which it is forced to "hibernate." Ironically, despite the comfort that the narrator herself finds in this "home," her desires to remain there appear to be subverted not only by those around her, but by the poem itself, which in the end draws the narrator, too, into the overwhelming force of the avalanche, emphasized by the incantatory quality of the poem's final lines that suggest the rolling and roiling of the downslide of snow. Beginning with the repetitive "dan dan," the avalanche builds with the force of the repeated progressive adjectival phrases (*hirogatte kuru no ga/... chikatzuite kuru no ga//*) which lead finally to the heaviness of the final two lines echoing in the speaker's (and the reader's) ears: *"dan dan ikioitzuki/ shidai ni hirogatte kuru no ga/ sore ga chikatzuite kuru no ga// watashi ni wa kikoeru/ watashi ni wa kikoeru.* (Oh, those avalanches,/ the growing might/ of those words// Their gradual crescendo/ comes closer// And I can hear them/ I can hear them.)"

The poem that follows "*Nadare no toki*," "*Sokoku*" (Homeland), which describes a summer trek with a friend up a public mountain trail into the highlands, sounds, in a far more direct manner, a similar mistrust of the suppression of desire. Lamenting the ways in which people who must submit to the will of a "guard" at a checkpoint "forget their own possibility," she comments upon the debilitating notions of surveillance and restrictions of freedom of physical movement, two of the disturbing continuities between wartime and the postwar "democracy" that she delineates in this poem. Starting the journey with a feeling of intimidation, she and her friend feel dwarfed by the "towering mountains." After the arduous task of climbing the summit, however, the narrator's

perspective changes entirely, and the mountains are in fact now dwarfed by the exhilarated climbers, who have viewed the world from the mountain's summit:

I became wonderfully enormous  
as vast as the mountains  
The huge mountains  
went on and on  
in my friend's footsteps.

私は素晴しく大きくなった  
山のように大きくなった  
友の足もとにも  
大きな山々がつづいていた。

*(Watashi no mae ni 19)*

These feelings of exhilaration do not last long though: Imagining that the right to climb such mountain peaks could be easily taken away, the narrator defiantly vows to pull down any notice she sees to that effect, for the sake of others who may wish to make this transformative journey:

Without knowing why, I was screaming,  
If there was someone who has put up a sign,  
I will pull it down  
Without fear  
I will definitely pull it down.

私はなぜともなく叫んでし  
まった、  
もし立札を立てる者が  
あつたら  
それはぬきとろう  
おそれずに  
必ず ぬきとろう、と。

*(Watashi no mae ni 22)*

The poem's sense of fantastic, "mountain-moving" metamorphosis alluded to above, in which humans can both physically and spiritually take on the vast scale of mountains, is not entirely new with Ishigaki: We can hear within this poem strong echoes of Yosano Akiko's acclaimed poem "The Mountain is Moving": "Mountain moving day has come,/ is what I say. But no one believes it./ Mountains were just sleeping for a while./ Earlier, they had moved, burning with fire./ But you do not have to believe it./ O people! You'd better believe it!/ All the sleeping women move/ now that they awaken" (Trans. Sam Hamill and Keiko Matsui Gibson). Envisioning mountains that follow in the footsteps of humans, Ishigaki conveys the scope of human desires that

span the breadth of mountains, desires that are particularly poignant for women, since until recently, religious prohibitions had limited women's freedom of movement in mountainous areas of Japan. In this way, Ishigaki, like Yosano Akiko before her, reifies the ways in which the fantastic can "resist...transgress...and ultimately attempt explicitly to subvert" authorities who could easily deny access to such magnificence (Napier 6), forcing people to "forget their own possibility."<sup>27</sup>

## II. In the Belly of the Beast

Although Ishigaki's first collection was not taken up by a mainstream publisher until 1959, as mentioned above, many of its poems had in fact been collected and published shortly after the war in the newsletters of the union with which she was affiliated. Indeed, there are several poems that detail the poet's sympathies with the abject status of the nation's poorest workers, specifically addressing the ways in which they are so often sacrificed by the nation in the name of "progress" after the war. As Arai notes, Ishigaki's poetry is "born out of the encounter between the social and the inner world of the poet." Through the exploration of "her private life," Ishigaki "gives expression to the life of common people" (17). In her poem "*Kyô mo hitori no*" (Today, one more), Ishigaki describes the fate of construction workers falling to their deaths in the quest to provide Tokyo with the office space that it lacked after the war. So doing, she reveals not only the very false-sounding slogans under which these sacrifices were made--in "the battle for peace" (*heiwa no tame no ikusa*) for instance--but she also goes on to describe

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<sup>27</sup> Tomioka Taeko, too, alludes to Yosano Akiko's powerful image of women "moving mountains." Her poem "*Keeburukaa no ryokô*" (Cable car journey), ends: "The next chance I have/ I will definitely ride up with the sirens and the women poets/ With their powerful senses/ I will have them move mountains," see *Henrei* 22.

the invisibility of such work as construction, and the sense of human history that remains within the buildings these workers toil to build:

Is human work something that is not there?	人間の仕事はないものだろうか、
If that were so	もしそうであつたら
how brilliant it must be,	建物と共に残る私たちの歴史は
the history of these buildings and those of us	どんなに輝かしいことだろう。
who remain inside them.	

(*Watashi no mae ni* 61)

In her poem "*Kaigi*" (Meeting), Ishigaki describes the plight of metal workers in the Niigata city of Tsubame, who stood "under the blazing sun" before "deep red burning fires" to produce fine silverware for overseas markets. Explaining that the workers' "low wages" are what allow the silver to be sold cheaply, the narrator points to the ironic disparity between the diets of the workers in Tsubame and the people who use the fine tableware that they produce.

The fierce injustice of this disparity between those who can afford to dine with elegant eating utensils, in this poem, Westerners, and those in Japan who cannot, is poignantly revealed in another of Ishigaki's poems, "*Hyakunin no onaka no naka ni wa*" (Inside the bellies of one hundred people). Subtly suggesting the stark disparities between those Japanese elite who can afford to dine on expensive fish and those who cannot, this poem also invokes the fairy-tale realm of illusion that "*Genshi dôwa*" introduces, this time, through the all-too-delicate sensibilities of Otohimesama, Princess of the Sea. The illusionary quality of the diners' world of feasting, revealed by their off-handed question "*what's become of the world lately?*" is offset by the exacting, almost geometrical way in which the spatial relationships between the diners and their food are described in the opening stanza:

<b>Inside the Bellies of One Hundred People</b>	百人のお腹の中には
On the table, one hundred plates	テーブルの上に百枚の皿
Before them, one hundred people	その前に百人の人

On the plates, one hundred soles	皿の上には百匹の比目魚、
Among the faint sounds of clinking silver only a few fish bones, the head and tail remain (If the Princess of the Sea, <i>Otohimesama</i> , saw this, what would she say?)	食器のふれ合うかすかな音の中で 魚はわずかに骨と、頭と、 しつぽを残される (乙姫様がごらんになった ら、何ということか!)
One hundred ladies and gentlemen wiping their mouths with white napkins gracefully talking <i>My, what's become of the world lately?</i>	百人の紳士淑女 白いナプキンで唇を拭きとつて、 しとやかに話すこと 「まあ、この頃の世相は何という ことでしょう」
Inside the bellies of one hundred people the corpses of one hundred fish	百人のお腹の中には 百匹の魚の屍。 ( <i>Watashi no mae ni</i> 46-47)

This poem also introduces the important link between eating and death, "devouring the dead," a trope that will be further explored in the third part of this paper, through the image of the "corpses" (*shikabane*) of the fish *hirame* (or sole, a delicacy in Japan), which remains, as though entombed, perhaps even rotting, in the bellies of the diners. Through this image, we sense, in the most physical of terms, the entwined relationship between the abject other and, in this case, the abjecting elite.

While many of the social concerns that Ishigaki gives voice to in her poems are presented with an almost hyperbolic physicality, describing the placement of each fish in "*Hyakunin no onaka no naka ni wa*," for instance, this poem, as mentioned above, has a fantastic dimension as well. In this and other poems that will be described here, "the fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of a culture," as Rosemary Jackson puts it, "that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent'" (qtd. in Napier 8). "*Tenba no zoku*" (The tribe of heavenly horses), for instance, is addressed to, but also takes up the voices of "work horses"—distant relatives of mythical, flying horses—who are forced to work day in and out. Exhausted, the horses are forced by their grueling work to

forget "the powerful freedom of the world" (*ikioi jiyû no tenchi mo wasure*). Unable to accept the cruel ways in which they have come to be treated, the horses pleadingly assert, "Don't whip me like that/ I am healthy and beautiful/ my legs standing straight as cedars/ my mane like pounding waves" (*Watashi no mae ni* 35).

Appearing early on in Ishigaki's first collection, this poem not only expresses the poet's concern for the dignity of workers, but shows the very flexible ways in which Ishigaki takes up the voices of animals and other fantastic creatures to express the sheer exhaustion and pain of labor. Devoting herself to her work as a bank employee to support her impoverished family during and after the war, Ishigaki frequently dons the mask of a fantastic creature when describing her own experiences of work and supporting her father, her various stepmothers and brothers, particularly in her latter collection, *Hyôsatsu nado*. Among these creatures are the menacing and ever-endangered water sprite, *kappa*, in "Kappa tengoku" (Kappa paradise) as well as a *tako*, or octopus, in "Haete kuru" (Ready to sprout), who endeavors to hold up the family home with her eight legs. Producing neither military goods nor able-bodied boys, Ishigaki entered the world of work at age fourteen to escape the sense of despair that permeated her family home (Mizuta 4). It is only an irony of her own personal history that she would later become the main breadwinner and sole provider of the family that she had endeavored to escape.

"Kappa tengoku" is a playful poem that nonetheless describes the dehumanizing "heaviness" of work for this "kappa," whose very life is "wrapped up" in the envelope in which her monthly salary is delivered. The poem is written in the form of a mock interview with a newspaper journalist who has come from "far away" to "Kappa Paradise" to interview her:

### **Kappa Paradise**

### **カ ッ パ 天 国**

*How's your job treating you there?*  
he asked.

そこで、お勤めのほうはいかがですか  
と、きた。

*It's so heavy, the monthly salary.*

「重いですよ、月給が」

Indeed, he didn't even ask  
if it was heavy because it is too much.  
I couldn't live without it—  
it's *that* heaviness.

多すぎて重いのですか、とはさすがに  
聞かなかつた。  
無い、と生きてゆけない  
その重たさ、だ。

It's the terrible weight  
of my life wrapped up  
in an envelope the color of thin,  
dry leaves.

それはごく、うすでの枯葉色の  
紙製品で、私の生活をつつむ  
ただ一枚の衣裳で  
いわば、かっぱの背にはりついて  
いるアレ。

This is my only suit of clothes, you  
know, that shell stuck to my  
kappa back.

The private parts of my heart are  
completely exposed—  
ah, the charms of make-up.  
What with all of us around here  
being kappa  
there's nothing to hide.

精神の恥部はまるだしで  
顔に化粧するご愛嬌  
このへん、みんなかっぱだから  
まあいいや。

(Perhaps a human does live  
somewhere on the edge  
of the fabled river.)

(ひよつとすると人間は、どこかの  
寓話の川のほとりに、住んでいる  
かも知れないな)

I smiled sweetly  
and said,  
*it's a very good place.*

私はにつこり笑って  
いつた  
とてもいい所なんです。

This is how I replied to a newspaper  
reporter who came one day  
from far away.

ある日、遠くからきた新聞記者に  
答えたこと。

(*Hyôtsatsu nado* 104-06)

The image of the payment envelope presented in this poem is central to Ishigaki's poetry. The envelope, which is described as "the color of thin, dry leaves" is reminiscent of "*Gekkyû bukuro*" (Monthly payment envelope), a poem from her former collection that addresses the payment envelope directly. In this poem, the fragile envelope literally



becomes her family's home, the very shelter that her monthly salary provides her family members: "My elderly parents and little brothers peer out of the envelope/ and remind me/ 'So, don't forget to go to work tomorrow'" (*Watashi no mae ni* 145). While "*Gekkyû bukuro*," too, presents a home whose tin roof is as "fragile" as the thin, leaf-like payment envelope described in "*Kappa tengoku*," the salary that it contains provides the narrator access to the food her family needs, sought-after commodities such as apples, eggs, and sardines. By contrast, the cash envelope in "*Kappa tengoku*" provides the narrator not with "clothes" per se, but with the sign of her abjection, the humped "thing," or "shell," as I have added to my translation here, that is the *kappa*'s back. Expressing these most "intimate" details of her heart, she is "completely exposed," not only physically, but emotionally as well, by these admissions to the journalist. Although she mentions the "charm" of makeup, behind which she might conceal her abject identity as *kappa*, or female in the male world of work, she would appear to have no access to these "tools" of femininity in "*kappa* paradise," nor to her own humanity, although we may take some measure of hope that "perhaps a human does live somewhere on the edge of the fabled river."

This powerful image of a "defeminized," though decidedly female, *kappa* suggests the ways in which women, who are already "othered," as Orbaugh points out, in Japanese society at large, are further othered, as Ishigaki suggests, defeminized, in this world beyond the home, which is, after all, traditionally viewed as a male realm.<sup>28</sup> Abjected from the guises and norms of femininity, she is naked, so to speak, inside of her thin, colorless *kappa* clothing, with no way of "saving face" by the use of make-up. Ironically, though, the narrator can take comfort in the fact that she is not alone in her otherness in "*Kappa* Paradise," where "everyone," save the person to whom she is talking, is a *kappa*. The beauty of Ishigaki's metaphorical use of the fantastic *kappa* is that it allows the poem many interpretations: The *kappa* could also be read in terms of race, representing

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<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, Ishigaki describes her long career as a bank employee as that of a "salaryman," see "*Tachiba no aru shi*" 124.

the burden of the Japanese living under the Occupying Army, a profoundly "othering" experience for men in particular, as Orbaugh stresses.<sup>29</sup> However one reads the image of the *kappa* Ishigaki presents, one senses the deep irony of the *kappa*'s position. No longer maintaining the threatening presence the *kappa* relished in traditional folklore as a menace to children and women in particular, Ishigaki's *kappa* is now exhausted, yearning for make-up and clothing, the "creature comforts" that might allow for her survival as a human being in "*kappa* paradise."

While Ishigaki does draw rather extensively on traditional fantastic creatures from both Eastern and Western mythology, such as the *kappa*, for instance, or even the "heavenly" or "flying" horses, as "*tenba*" is sometimes translated, she is perhaps most inventive when she creates her own fantastic beings, as she does in the final poem of *Hyôsetsu nado*, "*Haete kuru*." The title of this poem refers to the octopus legs that the narrator sprouts to better attempt the seemingly insurmountable task of holding up the roof of her family home, which, as she tells us in the poem's opening "is slipping off little by little." The "fragile roof" that holds together the payment envelope is now literally held up by the support of a female speaker not only in "*Haete kuru*," but in "*Yane*" (Roof) as well, from her previous collection: "The Japanese home has a low roof/ the poorer the house, the lower the roof;/ the lowness of the roof/ weighs on my back." Wondering "what makes the weight of the roof?" the narrator discovers that it is "the thickness of blood" that belongs to her sick father, stepmother, and brothers, all of whom "live on the roof," consuming her strength (trans. Hiroaki Sato 572).

In "*Haete kuru*" however, the blood of the narrator's ancestors enshrined in the family's Buddhist altar, or *butsudan*, becomes the blood the family must consume to

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<sup>29</sup> As Nagy also mentions, research during the 1920s reveals strong concern about whether women who chose work over marriage could keep their "feminine virtue...intact" (200). Commenting on the ways in which Japanese men in particular were othered by the presence of the Occupation Army, Orbaugh writes, "Suddenly, to be 'normal' and 'adult' was to be not only male but also physically large, white, English-speaking, and prosperous-looking. In contrast to that normative image, young Japanese men discovered themselves to be figured in the visual economy of the Occupation as small, 'raced,' linguistically inept, materially impoverished, abject infants/adolescents," see Orbaugh 390.

survive. She prays, "Let this house/... endure the richness of the taste/ And the heat of the blood." The extra legs the narrator is able to sprout provide sustenance as well: a familiar and yet utterly "mysterious human" comes "to eat those legs." As in "*Kappa tengoku*," Ishigaki reveals in this poem that which is most profoundly human through the fantastic image of abjection: Only by giving up her human "desires and ideals" is she able to grow the extra legs that allows her to support her family:

### Ready to Sprout

### 生えてくる

Even though my house is small,  
    living in it is a burden.  
Even though my two legs support it  
the roof is slipping off little by little.

私の家はちいさいのに暮しが重い。  
二本の足で支えているのに  
屋根がだんだんずり落ちてくる。

Since nothing can be done about it  
I shuck away one by one  
things like desires and ideals,  
and happiness.  
They are like a skeletal frame

しかたがないので  
希望とか理想とか  
幸福とかいうもの  
それらの骨格のようなものを  
ひとつずつぬき捨て

In the end, stripped to the backbone,  
my body goes limp.

ついに背骨までひきぬいてしまい  
私のからだはぐにやぐにやになつて  
しまい。

Please let this house,  
with its burdens from the past,  
the dead inhabitants of the family altar  
more lively than the living,  
right down to the kitchen inside the altar  
and also the food made each day there,  
let this house endure the richness  
of the taste  
and the heat of the blood.  
My hands folded together in prayer  
octopus-like legs sprout  
from my torso.  
I sprout four and then five legs  
and they become eight.  
Just when I'm relieved that we

どうぞこの家、  
過去のしがらみ、  
仏壇ばかりにぎやかに  
仏壇の中に台所まであり  
毎日の料理もそこでつくられる  
その味わいの濃さ  
血の熱量に耐えられますように  
と両手のなかで祈るうち。  
私の胴体からは  
タコみたいな足が生えて  
四本も五本も生えて  
八本にもなつて。  
さあこれでどうやら支えられると  
    安堵したら  
その足を食べにくる

can be supported by them  
he comes to eat them,  
the mysterious human with a face  
I've seen before.

And when I ask,  
*Who are you?*  
he says, *your parent*

*I'm Mr. So and So.*  
*Did you forget?*

I shake my head and cry,  
*No,*  
*you are not one of me*  
*I'm an octopus, not a human.*

But an octopus cannot get her feelings  
across to a human.  
My eight legs will be eaten,

yesterday a leg, today a leg.

When, in a fit of sadness,  
I spread the story

that six of my legs were eaten,  
the family that loves me said,  
*humans have had two legs from*  
*the beginning,*  
*and so, if you are a two-legged human,*  
*you shouldn't go around saying*  
*these things.*

Even if I pout,  
sucking the air,  
since genuine love,  
wide and deep,  
surrounds me like an ocean,  
since it surrounds me endlessly

見たような顔をした不思議な人間。

あなたは？  
と聞けば  
親だという

誰々だという  
忘れたの？  
という。

私は首をふつて涙をこぼす、  
いいえ  
私の同族ではない  
私はタコです、人間ではない。

けれどタコの気持ちは人間に  
伝わらなくて  
八本の足が食べられる

きのう一本、今日一本。

悲しまぎれに  
六本足を食べられた、

と  
言いふらしたら  
人間の足はもともと二本  
二本足の人間なら  
言つてならないことがある。

と、私を愛する家族がいう。  
口をとがらせてみても  
吸いこんでみても  
広い、深い  
正真正銘の愛というものが  
海のようにとりまくので

<p>from the time I lost them  those legs that somehow look as though  they could be eaten again  are ready to sprout.</p>	<p>かきりなくとりまくので  私の足は減つたところから  またどうにか食べられそうな恰好で  生えてくる。  (<i>Hyôtsatsu nado</i> 150-155)</p>
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Even though the narrator's legs are in danger of being "eaten again," their growth cannot be stopped, since it is driven by her family's "endless" love for her. Loved by her family not because of her alterity, but in spite of it, the narrator, even as she disavows her place in the human family, is drawn back to it, "ready to sprout" new legs for them in an "endless" cycle of sacrifice and regeneration. In this poem, we can clearly see the symbiotic relationship between self and other that will be further explored in the final section of this chapter. As in "*Kappa tengoku*" and poems that follow, it is the narrator herself who is embraced as the subject, not the object, of abjection.

### III. Devouring the Dead

Literally consumed by her own family in "*Haete kuru*," Ishigaki further reveals this symbiotic relationship between self and other in the many poems in which her narrators come to "devour" the dead. While Ishigaki's poetry explicitly shows the various ways in which her family depended on her, the expression of her deepest emotional connections to her own family is often fraught with pain. Turning away now from the abject status of nation and worker, this final section reveals the family unit itself as a site of profound abjection, a place of origin that both attracts and repels the poet. While devouring the dead can be seen as a form of retribution, an ironic pay back, for the ways in which the poet's life was consumed by the years of labor she devoted to her family, this often tongue-in-cheek act of corpse-eating can also be seen as a painful expression of love for them. The strong physicality of this act, toward her father in particular in "*Kurashi*" (Living), can be seen as a final, all-consuming expression of the strength of the poet's bond to him. As we saw in "*Haete kuru*," the family's love for the narrator is also overwhelming, surrounding her

"endlessly," "like an ocean." Instead of rejecting the abject bodies of dead family members in "*Dôyô*," the narrator covers their faces with cloth, as though protecting a meal that will be saved for later. In the end, the narrator *reveals* his own abject status as a mortal being who will also one day die.

The family as a primary site of abjection can be seen in a number of poems that describe not only the abject poverty in which the family survived during and after the war, but the sense of physical and emotional "suffocation," as Mizuta puts it (5) that "*Haete kuru*" suggests. In "*Fûfu*" (The couple), Ishigaki describes her own financial, as well as her stepmother's physical and emotional, support of her paralyzed father. So doing, Ishigaki also allows us insight into the ways in which men were so often marked as failures after the war, "othered" and feminized (Orbaugh 390).<sup>30</sup> While it should be pointed out that Ishigaki's father's paralysis was not caused by injuries received through military service, his sense of "otherness" as a *debilitated man* provides a mirror image of the ways in which his daughter's otherness was doubled as well, as a *woman worker*, or *female foot soldier* during a time when women were encouraged to reproduce rather than work (Mizuta 13). The boldness with which Ishigaki took up such excruciatingly personal topics, however, did not come without a cost: In later life Ishigaki said she "regretted" these poems that detail her sufferings within the family that had "given her so much" (Beichman 304).

In "*Fûfu*," the stepmother lugs home a bag of groceries in one hand, and tugs her husband, who is barely able to walk, with the other. What Ishigaki describes as her "unbearable home" (trans. Mizuta 7) (*kono yarikirenai ie*) in "*Yûkoku*" (Evening), is further

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<sup>30</sup> See previous footnote.

represented by the focus on father and stepmother in "*Fûfu*," whom the poet invents as the very objects of her repulsion: "The offensiveness of 'the couple'/ Oh, how I want to turn away from them/ the indescribable ugliness of what we call love." In the end, however, it is the speaker's despairing *attachment* (*shûchaku*) to her parents, in all of their abjection, that gives this poem such poignancy.

### The Couple

### 夫婦

With the passing years, Father is getting older,  
and can't use half of his body  
Even so, when he is led by the hand by Mother  
he can walk in a manner that is close  
to crawling on all fours.

年をとつて半身きかなく  
なつた父が  
それでも、母に手をひかれれば  
まるで四つん這いに近い恰好で  
歩くことができる。

The sound of those sandals trailing behind  
  
is the sound of my father's footsteps as he walks  
in the early morning, before the town has woken,  
leaning on Mother, crying, yelling, pleading.

あのひきずるような草履の音は  
  
まだ町が明けやらぬころから  
泣いたり、わめいたり、  
甘えたりしながら  
母にすがつて歩き廻る、父の  
足音だ。

Supporting on his stooped back  
the ruins of a life  
he can by no means recover.  
But his terrible attachment to some  
unnamable thing  
so exasperates Father he gropes for Mother's  
hand.

もう絶対に立ち直ることのない  
いのちのかたむきを  
こごめた背中でやつと支え  
けれど、まだすさまじい何ものか  
への執着が  
父をいらだたせ、母の手を  
さぐらせている。

Those footsteps,  
*zuru, zuru*, the sound of those dragging sandals.

あの足音  
ずる、ずる、とひきずる草履の音。

For us to survive within just the slightest  
margin of comfort,  
we suffered our whole lives, making the most  
of the small amount of money we saved.  
And then there's the father who no longer cares  
about appearances or what others think.

自分たちが少しでも安楽に  
生きながらえるため  
一生かかつて貯めたわずかな  
金を大事にしている  
そして父は、もう見栄も外聞も  
かまわず

If I passed him on the street  
with his crude-looking walk  
I would wonder how he could be my parent.

相末な身なりで歩く  
道ですれ違えば  
これが親か、と思うような姿で。

Right beside that father  
stepmother too walks through town.  
A shopping bag in one hand, she pulls Father  
by the hand.  
Mother matches Father's speed  
without caring about other people  
who turn to stare.

その父と並んで  
義母も町を歩いている。  
買物袋を片手に、父の手をひき  
父の速度にあわせて、母は歩く  
のだ、  
人が振り返ろうと心にもとめず  
まるでふたりだけの行く道で  
あるかのように。

The offensiveness of "the couple" —  
Oh, how I want to turn away from them,  
the indescribable ugliness of what we call love.

夫婦というものの  
ああ、何と顔をそむけたくなる  
うとましさ  
愛というものの  
なんと、たとえようもない  
醜悪さ。

I will go out as their daughter, today, too, to work  
so that they can fulfill this

この不可思議な愛の成就のために  
この父と義母のために

incomprehensible love,  
to provide them their meager provisions.

娘の私は今日も働きに出る、  
乏しい糧を得るために働き  
に出る。

*Zuru, zuru*, as if towing the earth behind him,  
as though sliding into the earth,  
that sound of my father's sandals,  
that attachment to inexplicable life.  
Was it from that attachment that I was born?

ずるずるつ、と他を曳くような  
地にすべりこむうような  
あの、父の草履の音  
あの不可解な生への執着、  
あの執着の中から私は生まれて  
きたのか。

Grasping Mother's thin, dry hand,  
as though it were his only hope,

やせて、荒れはてた母の手を  
ただひとつの希望のように  
握りしめて

my wandering father.  
Will I too be connected

歩きまわる父、  
あのかさねられた手の中にある  
ものに



and pulled  
by the thing inside those hands,  
one resting upon the other?

また、私もつながれ  
ひきずられてゆくのか。  
(*Watashi no mae ni* 136-40)

Just as the speaker's father clings to the thin, rough hand of his current wife for support and guidance, Ishigaki movingly acknowledges in the final line of this poem her own unavoidable bond to this couple: "Will I too be connected/ and pulled/ by the thing inside those hands, one resting upon the other?" Indeed, it is as if the narrator sees her parents as the walking dead, "as though sliding into the earth." The repellent sense of intimacy between stepmother and father, expressed as "indescribable ugliness" (*tatoeyô mo nai shûakusa*) in "*Fûfu*" is in fact expressed very directly, in terms of the speaker's disgust for the smells of their waste, as well as their sexual fluids, which permeate the family's small bathroom, in Ishigaki's poem "*Kinkakushi*" (Toilet), the second part of a longer poem called "*Ie*" (House), also included in her first collection: "There is one tiny toilet in the house/Oh, the smells that come up from below/ The intimacy between Father and Stepmother/ makes me hold my nose" (*Watashi no mae ni* 133). Although she holds her nose, the narrator cannot escape the smells of her parents' abject bodily fluids and waste that emanate from this old-style, non-flush toilet. As Creed points out, even though "the subject must exclude the abject, the abject must, nevertheless, be tolerated for that which threatens to destroy life also helps to define life" (9).

While the abjection of the parents is very closely—one may even want to say *lovingly*—described in Ishigaki's poetry, we must see the speaker of the poem as a primary object of abjection as well, for she refers to herself time and time again as offspring, the extraordinary byproduct, of "this obscenity called love" (*kono, ai to iu mono no iyarashisa*) as she puts it in "*Yûkoku*" (Mizuta 6-7). The unfathomable, enigmatic quality of the speaker's attachment to her parents is musically rendered in the highly ironic, lyrical language of the poem, by the repetitive scraping sound of the father's sandals against pavement, making excruciatingly concrete to the narrator her own painful "attachment" to

her father: "zuru zuru, as if dragging the earth behind him,/ as though sliding into the earth/that sound of my father's sandals/ that attachment to inexplicable life/Was it from that attachment that I was born?"

The intimacy of this parental bond is further revealed in the strong connection the narrator draws between flesh-eating and the rituals of mourning in "*Dôyô*," especially in the affection of the cheeky, but nonetheless movingly ironic remark the narrator makes as the family stands in mourning beside the recently deceased father: "Dad didn't taste so good at all,/ bad to the point of choking us with tears." Appropriating the direct speech of children by her use of highly colloquial phrases such as "*hân, otôsan no aji wa masuin da na*" as she observes her father's "bad" taste and the almost exclamatory, and yet hushed musicality of the repeated "*oishi oishi shi*" (delicious, tasteful deaths) in the final line, Ishigaki says in the funeral setting what *cannot* be said by an adult:

### A Child's Song

### 童謡

When Father died	お父さんが死んだら
we put white gauze over his face.	顔に白い布をかけた。
Like the square of white cloth placed on a meal prepared in advance.	出来あがった食事の支度に 白いふきんがかけられるように。
As all of us were crying I realized that Dad didn't taste so good at all, bad to the point of choking us with tears.	みんなが泣くから はあん、お父さんの味はまずいんだな 涙がこぼれるほどたまらないのだな と、わかった。
When Mother dies we will place a white cloth on her, too. It's as natural as having to eat three meals a day.	いまにお母さんも死んだら 白い布をかけてやろう それは僕たちが食べなければならぬ 三度のごはんみたいなものだ。
Now, on the day that I die I will die more beautifully, like those high-class meals under a white cloth.	そこで僕が死ぬ日には 僕はもつと上手に死ぬんだ 白い布の下の 上等な料理のように、さ。

Fish poultry beasts  
all dying their very *delicious*,  
*tasteful* deaths.

魚や 鶏や 獣は  
あんなにおいしいおいしい死に  
かたをする。  
(*Hyôtsatsu nado* 146-148)

Appearing just before "*Haete kuru*" in *Hyôtsatsu nado*, "*Dôyô*" not only reveals the bonds of intimacy and duty that extend between the living and the dead, but towards the end, the narrator, whose use of *boku* indicates that the poem is spoken in the voice of a young boy, considers his own death and egotistic desire to "die more beautifully." At first identifying with the "high quality meals" that his parents become in death, the narrator quickly undercuts this notion and mockingly links his own death with the "*delicious*, *tasteful*" deaths that come from the slaughter of "fish," "poultry," and "beasts," or *kemono*, a term, which, as we will see in Ishigaki's poem "*Kurashi*," becomes an ironic image for what is most deeply "human." Further, Ishigaki suggests that this abominable act of eating the dead, sanctioned by the Buddhist rituals performed in her poem "*Oni no shokuji*," reflects the ways in which humans consume each other in life as well: Eating the dead is "as natural as having to eat/ three meals a day." In "*Oni no shokuji*," the delicate line between the ritualized act of "passing bones" and the abjection implied by this act (carried out by human *oni*, or ogres, no less) is once again blurred, and yet it is the faintly veiled "obscenity" of this act that the reader is left to ponder: "The mourners picked up the chopsticks/ as if ready to eat. // How obscene they would have looked/ had they not dressed in ceremonial clothes" (*Hyôtsatsu nado* 94).

Similarly, in "*Shijimi*" (Clams), the well-known opening poem of *Hyôtsatsu nado*, the poet invokes an *onibaba*-like narrator (translated here as "menacing crone") who delights in the prospect of consuming helpless "living" clams that await their deaths in a corner of her kitchen. Playing upon the contrast between the voracious appetites of the *onibaba* and the clams, which so often symbolize female chastity in Japanese culture, the poem nonetheless also foregrounds the narrator's identification with these innocent creatures through the carefully-drawn image of her mouth as she sleeps. Slightly open, her

mouth subtly resonates with the opening image of the clams' "wide-open mouths," an image that tantalizingly undercuts their presumed chastity, perhaps foreshadowing the narrator's wish that she was not sleeping alone.

### Clams

### シジミ

I woke in the middle of the night.  
In a corner of my kitchen  
the clams I bought last night,  
their mouths wide-open, were alive.

夜中に目をさました。  
ゆうべ買ったシジミたちが  
台所のすみで  
口をあけて生きていた。

*At daybreak*  
*I will eat each and every one of you.*

「夜が明けたら  
ドレモコレモ  
ミンナクツテヤル」

I laugh the laugh of a menacing crone.  
From that point on  
my mouth slightly open,

鬼ババの笑いを  
私は笑った。  
それから先は

I do nothing all night but sleep.

うつすら口をあけて  
寝るよりほかに私の夜はなかつた。  
(*Hyôtsu nado* 8-9)

Invoking *oni* and *onibaba*, the flesh-eating monsters of Japanese legend, in the ordinary settings of the funeral parlor and kitchen, Ishigaki once again suggests the inextricable relationships between a deeply *human* sense of desire and grief, consumption and loss.

"*Kurashi*" also takes place in a kitchen. But, in this case, the narrator appears not as an *onibaba*, or an undertaker, but as an ordinary, forty-year-old woman standing at midlife in a kitchen strewn with the peelings of carrots, chicken bones, *and* her father's entrails. Clearly a scene of profound abjection, the "eating" that has gone on in this kitchen may not be sanctioned by religion, but is nonetheless a powerful means of "digesting" that which cannot be reconciled in her relationship to her father. The poem begins by listing the things in life that the narrator is bound to, the things that she cannot live without:

### Living

### くらし

I can't live without eating.

食わずには生きてゆけない。

Rice	メシを
vegetables	野菜を
meat	肉を
air	空気を
light	光を
water	水を
parents	親を
siblings	きょうだいを
teachers	師を
money and heart.	金もころも
Without eating, I could not live.	食わずには生きてこれなかつた。
Holding my swollen belly	ふくれた腹をかかえ
wiping my mouth	口をぬぐえば
scattered about my kitchen	台所に散らばつている
the peelings of carrots	にんじんのしつぽ
chicken bones	鳥の骨
my father's entrails	父のはらわた
forty sunsets	四十の日暮れ
For the first time, my eyes brim with the tears of a beast.	私の目にはじめてあふれる獣の涙。

(*Hyôtsatsu nado* 18-19)

For such a seemingly straight-forward poem, "*Kurashi*" is brilliantly-constructed in terms of its visual effect and sound. Ishigaki signifies the importance of each item of need by placing it on its own, self-contained line, and punctuates each but the last two of these nouns with the particle marker "wo," linguistically, the vowel produced the farthest back in the mouth, a sound that in this poem at least evokes the body's cavernous depths, its need to be filled: "*meshi wo/yasai wo/niku wo/kâki wo/hikari wo/mizu wo/oya wo/kyôdai wo/shi wo/kane mo kokoro mo.*" By the end of this list the sound softens with the shift to the particle *mo*, meaning "also."

The trajectory of this poem's opening, both in terms of its grammar and "objective" content, makes the poem's sudden turn into the subjectivity of the beastly persona of the *kemono* all the more startling: holding her swollen belly and wiping her mouth, the cannibalistic persona emerges, distraught with the destruction that her voracious eating has

caused. Significance grows exponentially with each item that is mentioned in the second part of the poem: from the "peelings of carrots" and "chicken bones," the narrator moves on to admit the presence of her "father's entrails," as well as "forty sunsets," which we can read as the forty years of life she has lived. Within the context of the other poems discussed here that describe the family's consumption of the narrator, we can sense in this all-consuming act of devouring the father, the narrator's dire need for parental "nourishment." Withheld so long, this need can be fulfilled only in the realm of the fantastic, the narrator's eyes "brim[ming] with the tears of a beast," tears that, ironically enough, emblemize her most deeply-felt human needs in this ravenous "acceptance" of her father's love. Embracing her debilitated father, the poet comes to terms with her own abjection as a woman who, by all appearances, has replaced him, painfully taking on the role of "man of the family" in the arc of the narrative that Ishigaki's work so powerfully implies. As Morton suggests, "rather than seeing this as just an unequal power relationship," however, "the reader is invited instead to consider... [this relationship] as a continuous loop, where both parties are locked into an unending cycle of dependency, each, by extension, imposing different burdens on the other" (95).

While Ishigaki's poems very much describe the harsh "realities" of postwar life, they are often based in the fantastic. Nonetheless, her works are centered in the home, even when, as Orbaugh points out, the home at this moment in Japanese history is "a barely intact structure" (353). Perhaps this "newly-imagined type of home-life or family" that Orbaugh refers to, so often thrusting women into unexpected positions of responsibility and authority, demanded the invention of the fantastic female forms that Ishigaki so provocatively delivers (353). Offsetting loss with her passionate, often visionary imagination, Ishigaki Rin not only gives voice to her own concerns as a woman negotiating the boundaries of her own abjection during and after the Pacific War, but draws some of the nation's most vulnerable subjects into the wide embrace of her poetry as well. Whether she is discussing the irrepressible longing of the abject nation for peace and the means not only

to survive, but to thrive, or her own intense longings for the sustenance and sense of happiness that "home" should bring, Ishigaki crosses the borders of abjection that so often separate us from one another to reveal, throughout her poetry, the common bonds that sustain us.

## Chapter Two

### In the Voice of Amano jaku: Tomioka Taeko's Poetry of Refusal

#### Introduction

In the introduction to the thick, single volume that represents the poetry section of Tomioka Taeko's *zenshū*, or collected works, celebrated photographer Araki Nobuyoshi describes his attraction to Tomioka as a photographic subject. Araki's camera, "A," as he calls it in his brief essay, readily captures the poet's penchant for performance, her ability to shift identities at will, in a photo shoot Araki did for a special retrospective issue on Tomioka's poetic career in the May, 1976 issue of *Gendaishi techō* (Contemporary poetry notebook).<sup>31</sup> Requesting that she don an eye patch he brought to this first photo shoot with her, Araki also photographs Tomioka in a long-sleeved, flowered dress<sup>32</sup> in a forsaken, garbage-strewn yard, and in kimono in a dry wilderness of leaves and barren trees. While it would be a mistake to suggest that these photographs have any direct bearing on the poetry that I will discuss in this chapter, they do suggest the variety of personae that Tomioka inhabits in her poetry, as well as a possible structure in which to "frame" such a versatile poet who defies categorization: as a death-defying, transhistorical woman, as a woman who dwells "between" action and inaction, for instance, and finally, as a disguised woman who, having seen too

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<sup>31</sup> Tomioka gave up writing poetry in favor of prose in 1973, see Morton 101.

<sup>32</sup> Although Araki had wanted to photograph Tomioka in a swimming suit, she was suffering from a cold, nor for that matter, did she even own a swimming suit, according to Araki. Although he does not mention the desolated garden in which he photographs her, Araki does mention the dog who, upon finally looking away, allowed him to capture the image of Tomioka that he sought, see image below.



much, turns a blind eye to us, protecting herself from the penetrating gaze of Araki's camera.

In this chapter, I have aligned Tomioka with Amano jaku, a figure of abjection who, appearing in "*Mi [no] ue banashi*" (Story of my life), suffered the fate of becoming a pedestal for the gods. Despite the compromised position in which Amano jaku finds himself, however, he becomes a changeling in "*Mi [no] ue banashi*," always doing the opposite of what one expects, especially in terms of gender in this and other poems that will be discussed in the final section of this chapter, "Stupid Question, Stupid Answer: Refusing Gender." Like Amano jaku, Tomioka can be seen as a trickster as well, constantly subverting our expectations.



In the first section, "The Simultaneity of History, or Long Live the Anti-hero, Love," I will explore the transhistorical Japanese woman who refuses the fixed linearity of history that the first photograph (reading from left to right) suggests. Indeed, except for the photographic medium in which she is rendered, this "diamond in the rough" could have existed centuries before the late 1950s in which Tomioka first began to publish her poetry. At the other extreme though, the narrator of other poems this section will explore sheds her kimono in favor of another costume, that of nakedness, becoming a figure of abjection that beguiles even death itself. In either

case, as the poems in section one will show, Tomioka's ballad-like narratives feel as though they stream out of an intangible, eternal continuative, the "archetypal flow" of the amoeba mentioned in her poem "*Kichi*" (Wit), discussed in the first section (*Karisuma no katsu no ki*, Charismatic oak 45).

In section two, "Inhabiting the Space Between," the contemplative woman in the second photograph looks out from the vast landscape that surrounds her, a tiny, contemporarily-dressed figure accompanied by a dog who looks away. Located in what might have been a garden in another season, the scene of the rag-strewn yard will be seen here as the aftermath of a long winter, or war, the gray zones of ambiguity that Japanese citizens came to live within after their defeat. In this environment, the choice between action and inaction--and everything "between"--is by no means a given, but a hard-earned right.

And finally we come to the third image: although this smoking figure takes up most of the frame, she remains emotionally-distant, hiding the black eye she has received from her two-timing lover behind the very conspicuous eye patch that her photographer has asked her to wear. Even though it is true that something we cannot see is "hidden" behind the patch, at the same time, the wound suggested by this patch, fictitious as it may be, could not be more pronounced. This chapter will explore what is at stake when a poet of the postwar generation transcends her own times, or, choosing to take up residence in the ambiguous space between action and inaction discussed in section two, in this case, to live in the ethereal smoke of a woman "wronged" by her man. No less ambitious an approach than poets who embraced a stance of social protest against Japan's revision of AMPO in the late 1950s, for

example, Tomioka dwells in the difficulty of her times, favoring complication over simplification, surrealism over slogans.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, this ambiguity has a personal dimension as well, extending to issues of gender and sexual preference in many of the poems that will be discussed in the final section.

Although he does not say so directly, on first reading of Araki's description of the eye patch "*omiage*" (gift) he brings for Tomioka, one might imagine a dark pirate's patch, since Araki does not give its color. Suggesting the surprising, revolutionary bluntness of Tomioka's poetry, her radical ability to vividly display that which cannot ordinarily be included in women's poetry, the dark eye patch would also make a fitting emblem ("*Taeko shô*," *Taeko Excerpts*, 1-2). The story behind the eye patch is a peculiar one, however, and, like so much of Tomioka's poetry, leaves much to the reader's imagination. Of the many poems he quotes in his introduction, Araki is most taken by Tomioka's image of a sanitary belt in "*Joyû*," (*Actress*), an image steeped in the narrator's spiteful jealousy.<sup>34</sup> Going so far as to abjectify her rival in love through the depiction of her lover's "idol" wearing only a sanitary belt (and presumably sanitary napkin to soak up menstrual fluids), the narrator says, "That actress,/ your love and your idol,/ I saw her walking in a sanitary belt, today,/ from the window" (*Tomioka Taeko shû* 287).<sup>35</sup> Since the eye patch that Tomioka wears in the photo Araki describes, as shown in the photo above, is, in fact, a white, medical

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<sup>33</sup> AMPO is the Japanese name for the post-occupational security treaty between the US and Japan, which was up for revision in 1960. Especially unpopular with students and labor unions, the proposed revisions that went against the notion of Japan as a non-nuclear nation and situated Japan under the "nuclear umbrella" of the US, see AMPO.

<sup>34</sup> Although "*Joyû*" does not appear in any of Tomioka's individual collections, it appeared in *Gendaishi techô* in February, 1962, which is where Araki says that he read it. It is included among Tomioka's "uncollected works" in the poetry section of her collected works.

<sup>35</sup> This poem will be taken up in the final section of this chapter.

eye patch, rather than a black pirate's patch, we must surmise that the bandage-like patch emblemizes the emotional violence that the love triangle of "*Joyû*," suggests, or, given the penchant for the bizarre that both Araki and Tomioka have been known to display, even a sanitary napkin worn comically over the eye, the unflattering disguise of a woman who has seen so much that she sheds blood from her eyes, rather than tears.

At the conclusion of his introduction, Araki mentions meeting Tomioka for a drink in Shinjuku. Before she is aware that he has arrived, he sees her face in shadow, this time a "criminal" for whom Araki will create "a past" through his portraiture ("*Taeko shô*," Taeko Excerpts 2-3). In many ways, I see my undertaking as a similar one, but rather than creating a past, I hope to cast Tomioka in the future, as a prophetic, transhistorical poet who has much to teach us about our own generation's refusal of the notion of fixed identity and categorization. While it is also difficult to categorize the ways in which the abject personae that this dissertation takes up manifest themselves in Tomioka's poetry, her focus on the transgendered character that we encounter in "*Mi [no] ue banashi*," as well as the actors, vagrants and other "anti-heroes" with whom her narrators fall in love, suggests a strong affinity and prophetic interest in the contemporary "objectionable" bodies that Butler refers to as the abject, or excluded "Other" (*Gender Trouble* 169-70).

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Tomioka Taeko was born in 1935 in Osaka. Her father, a merchant "engaged in recycling iron products," deserted her family early on. Tomioka started writing poetry as a college student at Osaka Women's University in 1954, and her first

collection of poetry, *Henrei* (Return gift, 1957) was awarded the Mr. H Award while she was still a student (Miller 322).<sup>36</sup> Tomioka's third book, *Monogatari no akuru hi* (Day after the tale, 1960) received the Murô Saisei poetry prize in 1961 (*Tomioka nenpu*, Tomioka chronology, 254). In 1973, Tomioka stopped writing poetry to devote herself exclusively to fiction. The recipient of several awards for her fiction as well, Tomioka is also a respected literary critic, and in 1992 co-authored with Ueno Chizuko and Ogura Chikako *Danryû Bungakuron*.<sup>37</sup> This influential roundtable discussion "started by applying the same essentialist views to male authors that had been applied previously to women, simply in order to demonstrate how absurd it was to reduce women's writing to the sex of the author" (O'Leary 131).

As stated above, Tomioka's "*Mi [no] ue banashi*," originally published in *Henrei*, is nothing short of visionary at the present postmodern moment that rejects the concept of "fixed identity." Occupying both female and male subject positions, the narrator of "*Mi [no] ue banashi*" embodies the notion of "situated" gender identities that are performed, rather than natural to male and female bodies.<sup>38</sup> Mizuta describes Tomioka as a writer of *han-monogatari*, or *anti-monogatari*, a term that

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<sup>36</sup> The Mr. H Prize for Poetry (*H-shi shô*) was established in 1951 as a means of providing recognition to an outstanding younger poet for a collection published in the previous year. It includes a cash award from a fund established by its benefactor, Hirasawa Teijirô, see "Mr. H. Prize."

<sup>37</sup> *Danryû bungaku ron* can be translated as *An Argument for Male Literature*. This title plays on the term *joryû bungaku*, a phrase that literally means "the flow of women's literature" and defines the "feminine nature" of women's writing in the early modern era. Because of the biased ways in which the concept categorizes women's writing in the Japanese tradition, the term has fallen out of use by most Japanese feminist critics.

<sup>38</sup> Tomioka anticipates Butler's 1990 analysis of the "'incoherent' or 'discontinuous' gendered beings who...fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined," see Butler's discussion of "'identity' as a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience," as well as her descriptions of the "performative" qualities of gender identity in *Gender Trouble* 23 and 173-177.

describes not only Tomioka's fiction, but many of her poems as well, which rebuild gender from "ground zero," as Mizuta puts it in *Monogatari to hanmonogatari no fûkei: bungaku to josei no sôzôryoku*, (A view of monogatari and anti-monogatari: literature and the power of women's imagination 50).<sup>39</sup> "*Mi [no] ue banashi*" is a sweeping narrative that spans several centuries and generations, as is typical of many *monogatari*, but rather than upholding the highly reified notions of femininity that the *Genji monogatari*, for instance, depends on, the poem features an engaging persona who, determined to be born a girl, changes gender at will, depending on her own desires, as well as those of the people around her:

### Story of My Life

### 身上話

Mom and my old man  
the midwife too  
the tipsters, every one of them  
laid down their bets I'd come out a boy  
so I just had to tear from  
my mother's placenta a girl

おやじもおふくろも  
とりあげばあさんも  
予想屋と言う予想屋は  
みんな男の子だと賭けたので  
どうしても女の子として  
胞衣をやぶった

Then  
everyone was disappointed  
so I became a boy  
Then  
everyone praised me  
so I became a girl  
Then  
everyone turned against me  
so I became a boy again

すると  
みんなが残念だったので  
男の子になってやった  
すると  
みんながほめてくれたので  
女の子になってやった  
すると  
みんながいじめるので  
男の子になってやった

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<sup>39</sup> Traditional romantic novels or "tales," *monogatari*, such as *The Tale of Genji*, contribute strongly to the construction of femininity in Japanese culture through depictions of women as paragons of elegance, modesty and beauty or as jealous spirit-possessors, as in the case of Lady Rokujo. While *Genji*, interestingly enough, displays a strong element of femininity, the women characters, as unique as they all are, are strongly imbued with "feminine traits." In the more modern *han-monogatari* that Mizuta describes, women characters, too, display gender characteristics that challenge these traditional Japanese notions of "femininity."

When I came of age  
my lover was a boy  
so there was nothing else to do but  
become a girl

Then  
everyone besides my lover complained  
I had become a girl again  
so I became a boy for them  
My lover was mortified  
and said if I was a boy  
he wouldn't sleep with me  
so I became a girl for him

Before long many centuries passed  
Now the poor rose up in bloody revolution  
ruled by a single piece of bread  
I became their medieval church  
I wandered the backstreets handing out  
rice balls and old clothes,  
chanting *love, love, love*

Meanwhile, several more centuries passed  
Hailing the kingdom of God's arrival  
the rich and poor became friends  
And so I dropped leaflets  
from my private helicopter onto them

Before long centuries passed  
Now  
the bloody revolutionaries  
knelt at a rusty cross  
The flames of order appeared  
out of chaos  
So I drank and played cards  
in a dark tavern  
with Byron, Musset  
Villon, Baudelaire

年頃になって  
恋人が男の子なので  
仕方なく女の子になった  
すると  
恋人の他のみんなが  
女の子になったと言うので  
恋人の他のものには  
男の子になってやった  
恋人にも残念なので  
男になったら  
一緒に寝ないと言うので  
女のこになってやった

そのうちに幾世紀かが済んでしまった  
今度は  
貧乏人が血の革命を起して  
一片のパンだけで支配されていた  
そこで中世の教会になった  
愛だ愛だと  
古着とおにぎりを横丁にくぼって  
歩いた

そのうちに幾世紀かが済んでしまった  
今度は  
神の国が来たと  
金持と貧乏人が大の仲良しになって  
いた  
そこで  
自家用のヘリコプターでアジビラを  
まいた

そのうちに幾世紀かが済んでしまった  
今度は  
血の革命家連中が  
さびた十字架にひざまずいていた  
無秩序の中に秩序の火がみえた  
そこで  
穴ぐらの飲み屋で  
バイロンやミュッセや  
ウィヨンやボードレールや  
ヘミングウェイや黒ズボン

Hemingway and girls in black pants  
passionately arguing about  
the peculiarity of the libertine  
in that Oriental country called Japan  
mocking his total devotion  
to things like the simultaneity of love

の少女達と  
カルタをしたり飲んだり  
東洋の日本と言う国の  
かの国独特のリベルタン  
とかについて  
しみじみ議論した  
そして  
専ら愛の同時性とかについて  
茶化し合った

Mom and my old man  
the midwife too  
all said I was a child genius  
so I became their village idiot  
Everyone called me a fool  
so I became an intellectual  
and built my den out back  
I couldn't control the power of my body  
When my reputation as an intellectual  
grew stronger  
I walked out ahead  
This was the path paved  
by mom and my old man  
Amano jaku was at a loss  
agonizing over his changeling's privilege  
た And so I became a splendid girl  
I became a boy for my lover  
forbidding him to complain

おやじもおふくろも  
とりあげばあさんも  
みんな神童だと言うので  
低能児であった  
馬鹿者だと言うので  
インテリとなり後の方に 住家をつくった  
体力をもてあましていた  
後の方のインテリと言う  
評判が高くなると  
前に出て歩き出した  
その歩道は  
おやじとおふくろの歩道だった  
あまのじゃくは当惑した  
あまのじゃくの名誉にかけて煩悶し  
そこで  
立派な女の子になってやった  
恋人には男の子になり  
文句を言わせなかった  
(*Henrei* 112-116)

Indeed, "*Mi [no] ue banashi*" epitomizes the voice of refusal I wish to foreground in this chapter, through the abject persona of Amano jaku, the long-suffering, repentant trickster who serves as the pedestal of gods who have adorned Buddhist temple gates from as far back as the seventh century.<sup>40</sup> Synonymous with the perverse in contemporary parlance, Amano jaku, in his traditional manifestations,

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<sup>40</sup> See appendix at the end of this chapter for images of Amano jaku from Hasedera in Kamakura.



is the very image of abjection, literally crushed beneath the feet of the gods. In "*Mi [no] ue banashi*," however, while Amano jaku retains his abject status as an object of derision--a "village idiot and a fool"--he stands upright and, wearing his perversity on his sleeve, emerges from his "den out back" as a leader of intellectuals, "agonizing over his changeling's privilege." In this final stanza's rapidly-transforming series of shapes and images, our irrepressible narrator becomes the "changeling" Amano jaku, bound and determined to stand up from beneath the feet of gods.

As the first section of this chapter, "The Simultaneity of History, or Long Live the Anti-hero, Love," will show, Tomioka's poems are full of anti-heroes and anarchists, actors and storytellers, many of whom struggle against not only their abject status, but against a history that casts them into that position. Indeed, as Butler would contend and Tomioka implies, the abject cannot be excluded, since their stories are absolutely essential to the identity formation of the reigning subjects of history. In so many of Tomioka's poems that reconfigure the subjects of history, our notions of history as a chronology of events become a form of anarchy as well. Rather than unfolding in any kind of linear order, it occurs "simultaneously," not unlike the libertine's love interests in "*Mi [no] ue banashi*." For instance, the seemingly contemporary first section of "*Mi [no] ue banashi*," with its midwife and tipsters, takes place centuries *before* the middle ages: after meeting our gender-changing protagonist, "...any number of centuries passed/ Now/ the bloody revolutionaries/ knelt at a rusty cross/ The flames of order appeared/ out of chaos." We might even see this poem as a rewriting of civilization from a more egalitarian, "civilizing" perspective in which all humans have access to both male and female genders and

their accompanying sources of power from the "beginning," which is after all, occurring all at once in the simultaneous past, present, and future.

In particular, however, the struggle of the various anti-heroes we encounter in Tomioka's poems also encompasses their struggle against the ways in which the abject are defined by language. In her essay, "Women's Language and National Language," Tomioka outlines how women's language (*bogo*)--the language children learn at their mother's knee--and regional dialects, are subordinated to, and "extinguished" through the processes of education by the language at the center, the masculine language of national speech (ironically dubbed the mother-tongue, *bokokugo*).<sup>41</sup> Indeed, language itself can be seen as a marker of the abject, for, as Tomioka puts it, "Those who have not attended school are embarrassed to speak in public. Those who can use only 'regional language' tend to stand mute...Before long," she continues, people who adopt the national language "lose the ability to speak the other, earlier language, which, in turn, causes them to grow ashamed of these ways of speaking" (136). Ostensibly rejecting the polite forms of so-called "women's language" in favor of the earthy, direct speech of the periphery, Tomioka ignores the need to employ a feminine mode of *public* speaking in her poetry. The absence of "feminine speech" in a poetry that is so vitally connected with *private* speech underlines linguist Miyako Inoue's notion of "women's language" as a "vicarious" entity. That is, while *consumed* by the majority of Japanese woman, primarily in the media, Inoue shows that this language is in fact rarely *spoken* by these female

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<sup>41</sup> This essay can be found in the eighth volume of Tomioka's *zenshū* (collected works). A translation by Joan Ericson and Yoshiko Nagaoka appears in *Woman Critiqued: Translated Essays on Japanese Women's Writing*, edited by Rebecca Copeland.

"consumers" of women's speech (7). Importantly though, as Inoue asserts, "women's language" forms the "scaffolding" of the "foundational narrative of modern Japan as a nation-state--with universal tropes of progress, modernity, tradition, the middle class, and homogeneity," a narrative which Tomioka reveals only in the negative, as the shadowy background that brings the abject as a "speaking subject" into focus.<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, Tomioka posits "women's language" as an elite language, so often employed "when a more polite language than is necessary is used as proof of one's high status." Acknowledging the many forms of inequality that women's language so often demarks, Tomioka also reminds us that women cannot erase these inequalities by simply taking up male speech, since to do so only "perpetuates sexual disparities;" nor can women insist upon women's language as somehow equal in status, for such an approach "risks perpetuating its limits as a stigmatizing code." For Tomioka, there is a "radical linguistic need" to "create an Esperanto between the way men and women speak," a new language that retains both female and male modes of speaking and can be used by both men and women ("Women's Language and National Language" 140). Indeed, Esperanto becomes a very apt metaphor for the ways in which Tomioka pushes against the boundaries of what is typically defined as female speech in the strongly gender-coded language that Japanese is in both its spoken and written forms. We might even say that Tomioka takes a bisexual approach to language when we consider the ways in which her narrators' decidedly "male" manner of speaking is so

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<sup>42</sup> Inoue challenges the notion that women's language is "uniquely Japanese, with unbroken historical roots in an archetypical, imaginary Japanese past" that is "inescapably linked to an equally traditional and archetypical imaginary Japanese womanhood." In her compelling study, Inoue examines the "kind of social, economic, and historical conditions" that "make it possible for some segments of the population to cite the law of women's language so faithfully and successfully to the extent that they can identify themselves, or that they can be identified by others, as the 'original' speakers of women's language and thus claim its ownership," see Inoue 2-12.

often couched in the writer's gentle use of hiragana, so often read a sign of the woman writer's hand (Shiraishi, "*Hachijû nendai to joseishi*," *The eighties and women's poetry* 65).<sup>43</sup>

Through her use of male language such as *oyaji* and *ofukuro* in the opening lines of "*Mi [no] ue banashi*," slang terms for "mom and dad," or "mom and my old man" in my translation, it is clear that, through her diction, Tomioka is subverting conventional notions of "women's language." To do so is entirely appropriate in the context of the poem, since the speaker can change genders at will. Subverting everyone's expectations and hopes that she will "come out a boy," the speaker also subverts our expectation that if she is born a girl that she will talk the way she is "supposed to." Further undercutting our expectations for female speech in the poem, the speaker consistently uses the word "*yaru*," an impolite or gruff (if not "masculine") verbal of giving that makes clear that the speaker is, in some cases, changing gender not only according to her own desires, but in response to the desires of others. Through her rather demeaning usage of *yaru*, the speaker places herself above others in a fairly patronizing way throughout the poem, and so doing, puts herself on equal footing with men, reflecting her "male right" to privilege as one who can change gender at will, through impolite, masculine speech. What is remarkable here is that despite the sense of agency the narrator gains as a practitioner of male speech, the narrator consciously insists upon her choice to be a female both at the outset and at the conclusion of the poem. This choice is reified by Tomioka's

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<sup>43</sup> Shiraishi describes this "masculinity," both in terms of Tomioka's vocabulary and level of bluntness, or "crudeness" (*dorokusasa*) as a feature of her straight-forward Osaka-style narration, see Shiraishi "*Onna tomodachi no shûhen*" (*The periphery of Women friends*) 82.

consistent use of hiragana, her choice to render her family members in hiragana in the opening of the poem, as opposed to kanji.

Although "*Mi [no] ue banashi*" is spoken in the voice of an abject anti-hero, the narrator also speaks from a perspective of "between," in this case, from the intimate and yet highly-ambiguous space that exists between herself and her lover. As strident as this persona is in the recounting of her "life story," the story itself revolves around not only the narrator's relationship with her boyfriend, but in dynamic relationship to others she alternatively wishes to please and to rebel against: her mother, her father, and the "tipsters," all of whom have wagered in the opening lines that she would be born a boy. This highly subjective space that exists "between" is hardly one that can be easily shared by those who are most intimate with one another, much less by outsiders (readers, for instance), and the smallest foothold that one can attain with anyone else in this space "between" becomes a cause of celebration in Tomioka's poetry.<sup>44</sup>

As the middle section of this chapter, "Inhabiting the Space Between," explains, however, in other poems, the space "between" becomes a social, rather than private, space, the unfathomable spaces between Japanese women who may share the same generation, but possess different levels of confidence when it comes to embracing women's "freedoms," women's right to work and pursue romantic relationships as a means of fulfilling their own desires, as in "*Engeiji ringu*," (Engagement ring), for instance. As the poem entitled "Between--" suggests, the space "between" may also signify the many shades of gray that exist between

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<sup>44</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, and as we will see in the next chapter, Yoshihara Sachiko's poetry is often set in this gray, often alienating, space between lovers as well.

pacifism and aggression, the many shades of consciousness in which poets could openly dwell in the postwar environment.<sup>45</sup> Most interesting, however, is Tomioka's ability to insert her powerful imagination between words themselves in highly experimental poems such as "*Hanigo*" (Antonyms) and "*Happee endo*" (Happy ending). Stripping apart our common associations between words and their meanings, Tomioka establishes her passion for surrealistic wordplay, as well as her place among poets on the cutting edge of avant-garde experimentation. Indeed, anticipating by some ten years what Shimaoka Shin describes as the "era of nonsense," Tomioka published her ground-breaking 2500-line book-length poem *Monogatari no akuru hi* (Day after the tale), her third collection, in 1960.<sup>46</sup> Subverting more linear forms of story-telling in favor of a style that requires the reader to leap imaginatively between ideas is a common feature of Tomioka's *han monogatari*, which she performed in public on numerous occasions.<sup>47</sup>

Situating herself between cultures, Tomioka views Japan from the outside, and her poetry is full of Japan's consciousness of itself as "other" on the world stage, with the inclusion of a whole cast of Western writers in "*Mi [no] ue banashi*"--from the

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<sup>45</sup> As Keene explains, "poets, more so than prose writers, served during the war years as chroniclers of the achievements of the military, singing of arms and the man in the manner of poets from time immemorial." He continues, "not all poets joined in the flaring up of poetic activity during the war years, but there was little resistance." Kaneko Mitsuharu was a notable exception, openly opposing Japan's militarism during the 1930s, see Keene 292-93, 358.

<sup>46</sup> In his book *Modern Japanese Culture*, Leith Morton mentions other writers such as Terayama Shûji who were forerunners of "nonsense" poetry as well. Terayama, too, wrote "verse dramas" and other forms of performance poetry from as early as 1960, see Morton 180-81.

<sup>47</sup> This form of semantic leaping becomes the over-riding feature of *Monogatari no akuru hi*, which Tomioka describes as a work of "automatism" that "makes no sense." Like other "non-sense" poets, performance was an aspect of Tomioka's poetry as well. She claims to have improvised and created new renditions of *Monogatari no akuru hi* before live audiences, see "Henrei kara LP made" 6 and *Tomioka Taeko shû: shi* 6.

fifteenth century vagabond-thief-poet François Villon to our own twentieth century Hemingway--with whom the narrator and the other women in black pants chat, making fun of a "libertine" in that "Oriental country called Japan." The image of the Japanese "libertine" is fraught with meaning when it comes to women's history in Japan, especially when we consider the dark history of women's sexual enslavement through concubinage, geishahood, and prostitution.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, this lawful exchange of women is what makes possible the libertine's free-wheeling sexuality of "simultaneity," which I take to denote his desire to have many lovers at once. And yet, as Tomioka's focus on the libertine shows, her stance toward him is never completely condemnatory, evidence of her poetry's generous embrace of the plurality of sexualities that she explores. The libertine, too, becomes an abject figure with which she, as a daughter of the *ie seido*, must contend.

As "*Mi [no] ue banashi*" suggests, gender can in no way be construed as a fixed entity in Tomioka's poetry. And, as she implies through her critique of compulsory heterosexuality in "*Itsumo no yô ni*" (Just like always), which she rather scientifically describes as a two-headed "male-female" creature, neither can one's sexuality (*Onna tomodachi* 25-27). This notion can be illustrated by the many sexual identities that her narrators inhabit in poems that will be discussed in section three, "Stupid Question, Stupid Answer: Refusing Gender." As Shiraishi points out, these poems forbid us from simply labeling Tomioka's poetry as "lesbian poetry" (80

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<sup>48</sup> In *Reflections on the Way to the Gallows, Rebel Women in Prewar Japan*, Mikiso Hane reminds us that "as the urban population grew while agrarian poverty persisted, the number of girls being sent into...brothels increased steadily. In 1904 there were 43,134 inmates in public brothels; in 1924 there were 52,325. Despite the 'modernization' of Japan, the institution of public brothels survived until the end of World War II," see Hane 9-10.

*Nendai to joseishi* 65). Within a single poem such as "*Joyû*," the narrator exhibits a strongly bisexuality that allows her to seduce her male lover's female lover. Just as the speaker of "*Mi [no] ue banashi*" will not be pinned down in the end to an exclusively female or male identity, neither will her narrators exclusively identify themselves as gay or straight, Eastern or Western. Given Tomioka's tendency to push against tradition, while in the same breath pointing to the "self-Orientalizing" of Japan in "*Mi [no] ue banashi*," it is no small irony that she selects such a traditional figure as Amano jaku to suggest her stance "between" exclusive--and mutually-exclusive--identities. Both speaker and poet, then, can be identified with the perverse, shape-changing trickster that Amano jaku embodies. What better persona to bear the burden of history that Tomioka's poetry seeks to transform?

### **I. The Simultaneity of History, or Long Live the Anti-hero, Love**

The deep history of mythology, a space apart in which events can unfold, not one by one, but simultaneously, is the life-blood of Tomioka's poetry. This section will explore the ways in which Tomioka utilizes this evocative space to access and reinvent the so often ignored "object" as a new subject of historical inquiry. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Tomioka uses the *monogatari*, or *han monogatari*, to rewrite history, inventing a new mythology, or even prehistory, of Japan. Refusing chronology, the past, present and future are so often collapsed into one continuous, moving timeframe of mythic simultaneity, so that it is possible that a contemporary scene such as the one presented in the opening of "*Mi [no] ue banashi*" can take place *before* the Middle Ages. In her poem "*Kichi*," mentioned in the



Introduction to this chapter, future generations surge toward us, their "march,/ not so much a zigzag,/ as a slight swaying movement/ like the amoeba's archetypal flow" (*Karisuma no katsu no ki* 45), an image that captures this collapse of the future, present, and past as well. In many of the poems that refuse the linearity of history, Tomioka valorizes the antihero and the anarchist, often a figure of profound abjection who has been all but abandoned by history. Taking him as a lover, the narrator resuscitates him with her love, nurturing him with her timeless "Breasts that Swell" ("*Harete yuku chibusa*"). As the narrator says in "*Shigatsu no kyôfû*" (Strong winds of April), her embracing "warmth," even in death, is "a revolution."

Let us begin though in the "present" historical moment, the churning instant in which we become conscious of death in both Tomioka's poems "*Sakubô*" (Machinations) and "*Mô nanimo kamo*" (Probably already nothing), the one sure thing that connects us with all of those who have come before and after, tangible and vague as the "pus-colored liquid" that fills a horse's eyes in "*Sakubô*." In these poems, the reader is invited by the speaker to place herself in a persona of abjection, in "*Sakubô*," that of a horse whose eyes literally fill with the knowledge of its own death. No ordinary horse though, the horse becomes the landscape it flies through, a sudden, irrevocable flight into the unknown.

### Machinations

### 策謀

If you think of yourself as a horse  
 your running  
 becomes the landscape  
 No landscape surrounds the horse  
 Only a fence and dirt  
 and an off-and-on-again sky  
 Moving from the upward rising slope

自分が馬だと思えば  
 走っていることは  
 ひとつの景色になります  
 馬のまわりには景色なんてありません  
 あるのは柵と土と  
 時折の空です  
 向かう正面の上り坂から

it faces head-on  
It gets caught in a corner  
The eyes of the horse muddy  
A liquid like pus  
oozes from the back of the eyes  
The world fills with the pus-colored liquid  
and then, finally  
you become aware that you die

コーナーにかかると  
馬の瞳はにごってきます  
膿のような液体が  
瞳の奥からにじみ出てきて  
世界は膿色の液体でみたされます  
それでやっと  
自分が死ぬのだと気がつくのです

(*Tomioka Taeko shû 1: Shi*, 473)

Dependent upon the reader's ability to imagine himself as a running horse, the physical landscape, like Tomioka's notion of time in other poems, cannot be fixed. It, too, is in constant motion, adapting to the moving figure of the horse, "your running." In some abstract "corner" of this highly-contingent, surreal universe, the horse is done for, its eyes running with the awareness of its own finality, death. In Tomioka's poetry, even though death becomes a way of linking us to both the past and the future (as well as to all creatures), it is also the medium through which our bond to history, and the passage of time that history traditionally depends on, is broken, connecting us to what lies beyond, what we might call the eternal. In this poem, however, it is the horse's unlikely awareness of the darkness it will soon enter that the poem contemplates, so that in this way, too, the horse becomes mired in the moment, forever held apart from the eternity that awaits it. In its own way, poetry, too, in its tantalizing ability to teeter on this precipice, becomes a means of, if not defeating, then of at least challenging, or contradicting, the perceived linearity of history.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> One cannot analyze this poem without being reminded of many Western examples that take up notions of the eternal through the metaphor of the horse, including Emily Dickenson's "Because I Could not Stop for Death," Sylvia Plath's "Ariel," and Robert Frost's "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening." The work horses we encounter in Ishigaki's "*Tenba no zoku*" are ironically juxtaposed to the "heavenly horses" referred to in the title of her poem, translated "Tribe of heavenly horses."

"*Mô nanimo kamo*" is in fact spoken to a corpse who will witness the ways in which her naked body is disposed of after death, a rhetorical move that implicates the reader as well as a persona of abjection. Responding to this scene as though still sentient, this "corpse," too, hovers on the precipice between the dead and the living, facing down the corpse eaters that we encountered in Ishigaki Rin's poetry. Rather than playing the part of corpse eater, the protagonist of this poem is not only a corpse, but the unwilling object of the corpse-eater's desire, one who "chews" on the corpse's discarded language. The reader is drawn into close range of this corpse by her identification as "you":

### Probably Already Nothing

As if walking on tiles  
you lift the hem of your dress  
Slowly making your way from afar  
you'll no doubt be wrapped by someone  
    waiting  
with an outstretched towel  
You'd just as soon say,  
*Well, that's a big help*  
But the person unfurling the towel  
laments,  
"there's not much I can do"  
*Please, I beg of you*  
"I'm sorry,  
it's my lot to wipe the flesh of another body"  
Even as you scream, *that's violence,*  
*I'll kill you!*  
there's also a guy who collects your words  
    into an enamel spittoon  
and picking them up one by one  
must throw them into a ditch  
And then  
there's another guy who picks up the stuff  
thrown into the ditch

### もうなにもかも

タイルの上を歩くみたいに  
裾をからげて  
そろそろと向うからきてみたら  
タオルをひろげて待っている  
    人間に  
きみはくるまれてしまうだろう  
大きなお世話だと  
いいたいところであるが  
タオルをひろげて待っている人間は  
たいしたお世話もできませんと  
いたみいって  
どうぞおたのもうしますと  
おそれいって  
別の人間の肉体を拭く運命にあるのだ  
きみがそれを暴力だと叫び  
殺してやるぞと叫んでも  
きみの言葉を瑠璃びきのタン壺に  
ひとつひとつひろって  
ドブへすてねばならぬ運命の奴  
    もいるのだ  
しかもその  
ドブへすてられたものをひろって  
シケモクを喫うように

and chews on it  
 and coughs as though puffing cigarette butts  
 Well-taken care of by fate,  
 buck naked, you stare at your body  
 greeting the gambling thugs  
 It's so embarrassing  
 that it's come to this  
 But your naked body  
 had no window from which to gaze at the sky

咳をしながら口に出す運命の奴  
 もいる  
 運命の大きなお世話になって  
 肉体が仁義をきるのを  
 きみはハダカで眺めるのであろう  
 恥かしいねえ おまえさん  
 そんななりでー  
 でもきみのハダカの肉体には  
 空を眺める窓はないんだった  
 (Tomiooka Taeko *shû 1: Shi*, 465-66)

Dealing with the abject corpse as a hypothetically "living" entity, Tomioka imbues her with the humanity that the "gambling thugs," death and his minions, deny and feed upon. While the living corpse is all too aware of her own abjection as she "stare[s]" at her own body that so clearly evokes her wretched status, it is death, fated to pick the corpse's last words from the ditch and "chew" on them. Indeed, as this poem shows, there is no abject figure greater than this corpse-eater, death.

The humanity of the corpse is further explored in Tomioka's poem, "*Shigatsu no kyôfû*," when the narrator's love life is considered from the vantage point of her grave. The poem, which appears in *Henrei*, recounts the narrator's life with her "comrade in flesh," a story that comes back to her each spring, when the "Strong Winds of April" blow. While the theme of the anti-hero lover will be more thoroughly explored in "*Harete yuku chibusa*," the narrator suggests that her lover is an actor, traditionally seen as an outcast in Japanese cultural history, as the narrator puts it, "deserv[ing]" of "the most scorn." The love between the two is portrayed in terms of the abjection that her death and the actor's status implies: "that first kiss stinking of fish/ the kiss of the sea stinking of death beside us." When the narrator states that her "warmth is a revolution," she is referring to the radical notion that her

still-warm corpse can continue to radiate her love from the grave. As metaphor, however, the "revolutionary" quality of their love suggests the miraculous nature of the love that the narrator shared from the grave with the actor. Through the power of their love, she comes to an understanding of her lover's abject status, though, for the moment she will deny her own abjection: "While there is still time I will not admit/ that I am a corpse that is a lump of tissue."

Despite the serious nature of these themes, the narrator's comic tone is apparent. Suggesting what she calls the "laxative" effect of her words in the first stanza, the narrator stresses that this love should be viewed as a tragedy; indeed, it is the stuff of entertainment, and perhaps, as the poem's ending suggests, the sentimental story of this poem should be read as melodrama. As the narrator comically suggests, "everyone should rejoice" if she made the story of their love "into a little skit," which is precisely what she does by writing this poem:

### Strong Winds of April

It all came right back to me  
the day the winds of April blew so hard:  
My comrade in flesh  
argued with words he should not use,  
and we took a vow not to speak to each  
    other  
Having a friendly cup of tea together  
we made our tailor agonize over  
    all of our requests  
Even though words are no laxative  
the memories ended up rushing out all  
    together

Our love, too long at peace,  
comes completely back to me now  
In this world

### 四月の強風

すっかり思い出してしまったよ  
四月の強い風の日  
肉身同志が  
言っではいけない言葉で口論して  
沈黙を誓い合ったのと  
和気あいあいとお茶をくみかわして  
仕立屋に多くの注文で悩ました  
    ことも  
言葉は下剤にならないことも  
一緒くたに思い出してしまったよ

愛が長すぎる平和であることも  
すっかり思い出してしまったよ  
この世の中で

the thing that deserves the most scorn  
is an actor  
and your body weight  
I'll bring it all right back for you

On that day of the strong winds of April  
that first kiss stinking of fish  
the kiss of the sea stinking of death  
beside us  
In the light of the malfunctioning lamp  
on the table  
I am forced to remember  
that all that is lost comes back

I think you should remember  
that many thousand days after  
while my body is still warm  
I have possibility  
My warmth is a revolution  
You should remember  
that while there is still time I will not  
accept  
that I am a corpse, a lump of tissue  
the same as the red seaweed  
the woman picking up firewood  
on the edge of a small island  
starts her fire with  
This is not a tragedy  
but I did have attachments  
I always yearned to walk naked  
You should remember  
how we burned with love  
over the flames  
releasing our love into the strong  
April winds

We should make everyone happy  
making this into a little skit

Let's be satisfied with waiting  
Let's enjoy the feeling of sympathy  
so similar to this feeling of waiting

最も軽蔑に値するものは  
役者だったことも  
あなたの身体の重量と一緒に  
すっかり思い出してやるのだよ

四月の強い風の日  
さかなくさい初めてのくちづけも  
磯くさいいまわの際のくちづけも  
不健康な卓上ランプによって  
失っては再び手に入れるのだと  
私に思い出させてやったよ

幾千という日の後に  
あなたは思い出すべきだと思う  
私の死体にぬくもりがあるうちは  
私は可能であって  
ぬくもりが革命であって  
小さい島のふちで  
薪をひろっている老女が  
紅色の藻で火をつくるのと同様に  
私は死体という組織のかたまりを  
時のあるうちは認めないという  
ことを  
悲劇はなくて  
執着があったために  
いつも素裸で歩くことにあこがれ  
火の上でのあなたとのまじわりを  
四月の強い風にとばしたことを  
思い出してくれるべきだ  
それを寸劇にしたてて  
みんなを喜ばすべきなのだ

時間待ちを満足しようじゃないか  
同様な意味の同情を  
充分満喫しようじゃないか

Why don't we cut a big crunchy apple  
into two  
and then again  
and then one more time  
to make a salad?

大きなパリパリした林檎を  
ふたつに割って  
又ふたつに割って  
もう一度ふたつに割って  
サラダにしようじゃないか

Licking the dust of the great wind off  
of our lips  
Let's touch our tongues together  
just one more time  
facing the interior sea  
*I love you! I love you so much!*  
Your splendid voice gives them so  
much pleasure  
We spit out the skins of the apple,  
One more time, spit them out  
One last time, spit them out  
I press my chest carefully to yours  
with the feeling of the craziness of  
boredom and anger and possibility  
and saying to my left and right hands  
and feet  
don't leave each other  
I embrace you with all of my heart  
The strong winds of spring  
These crazy, fierce winds  
These storms like love  
As sentiment goes, aren't they just the best?

強風のほこりを舌なめずりして  
もう一度だけ舌を重ねようじゃ  
ないか  
内海に向って好きだ大好きだと  
立派な声で楽しませてやり  
林檎の皮をはきだし  
もう一度はきだし  
最後にもう一度はきだし  
私は胸を大事におさえて  
退屈と怒りと可能の気狂いとして  
左右の手と脚に  
別れてはいけないよと  
感傷的に抱きしめてやるのだ  
季節の強風は  
滅茶滅茶の烈風は  
恋のような暴風は  
感傷にはもってこいじゃないか  
(*Henrei* 41-45)

Referring to the little "skit" of her life that crowds might throng to see,

Tomioka reveals not only her interest in the story-telling form of *monogatari* that she embraces, but other forms of literature as well, such as *jôruri*, the poetic oratory that accompanies puppet theater. A native of Osaka, Tomioka claims special affinity with the *gidayû* performers, the singer-narrators of *bunraku*, or puppet theater. This interest, which is reflected in her long, ballad-like poems that so often focus on star-crossed love (Mizuta, "Interview" xvi), came to a head in Tomioka's career when she agreed to write the screenplay for Shinoda Masahiro's internationally acclaimed *Shinjû*

*ten no Amijima (Double Suicide, 1968)*, adapted from Chikamatsu's *bunraku* play (Mizuta and Selden, "Introduction" vii).

Unlike the tragic situation of *Shinjû ten no Amijima*, however, as "*Shigatsu no kyôfû*" and "*Harete yuku chibusa*" illustrate, Tomioka's poetry is more often affiliated with comedy than tragedy. In "*Harete yuku chibusa*," the narrator, who describes herself as a kind of missionary (*senkyô*), provides her destitute lover with food, shelter, clothing, as well as her "breasts that swell." Infusing religiosity with sexuality, Tomioka's narrator delights in her unconventional, indeed, revolutionary style of proselytizing love. As she says, "I have a definite obligation/ to show off my swelling breasts." Claiming that her consciousness is "spawned" by the "ecstasy" that her "swelling breasts" produce, whenever she "show[s] them to people they swell" all the more. In both "*Shigatsu no kyôfû*," and "*Harete yuku chibusa*," Tomioka makes use of her keen sensibility for drama and film to great comic effect, taking this ripening sentiment of love to its limit, milking it for all of its melodramatic potential. In the end, that love is expressed through the cinematic cliché of lapping waves, the anarchist's "splendid voice" shouting, "*I love you! I love you so much!*" and the crowd that has gathered to watch the sentimental display swooning. In "*Harete yuku chibusa*," the usual contradictions between religiosity and sex, the sacred and the profane, are pressed to the point of comedy. Although she prides herself that her ecstasy originates in her breasts that swell, she clucks that even with all of her proselytizing, the man she endeavors to help wants only to embrace and kiss her, fondle "each of her breasts in turn."



The profound sympathy with the revolutionary figures--anarchists, scorned actors, vomiting vagrants, evangelists and the like--that Tomioka expresses in her first two collections, *Henrei* and *Karisuma no kashi no ki*, published in 1957 and 1959 respectively, is not entirely surprising, given her affiliation with the anarchist poet Ôno Tôzaburô, with whom she studied at Osaka Women's College. Born in 1903, Ôno dropped out of Tokyo University because of its "authoritarian forms of education" and in the 1920s, contributed his anarchist poetry to the newspaper *Aka to kuro (Red and Black)*, and founded his own Dadaist-anarchist publications *Dam-Dam* and *Dando (Trajectory)* with poet Akiyama Kiyoshi, both of which were banned shortly after publication in the 1920s and 1930s respectively. He published his first collection, *Hanbun hiraita mado (A Half-Opened Window)* himself in 1926. Although he had shifted to a "Marxist-realist position" by 1934, his poetry remained full of social criticism (*Organize*).

Ôno returned to Osaka in 1933 and during the interwar years, he founded several literary circles, as well as a school of creative writing, *Osaka Bungaku Gakkô*, in 1956 (*Horagai*). As James Kirkup explains, Ôno "took up literary criticism with a socialist tendency, with which he was able to exert a major influence," publishing a series of essays in the journal *Bunka Soshiki (Organization of culture, 1940-43)* that was eventually collected in *Shiron (Essays on poetry, 1947)*. Kirkup asserts that Ôno "sought to reject musical quality and replace tanka-type lyricism by a visionary verse founded on a critical and rational spirit." His postwar works include *Daika-hen (The ocean's edge, 1947)*, *Hi-nomu Keyaki (Fire-Swallowing Zelkova, 1952)*, *Juyu Fuji (Heavy oil Fuji, 1956)* and *Ikyo (Strange land, 1966)* (Kirkup). He received the

Yomiuri Literary Award in 1975 for his collection *Kyozetsu no ki* (Refusal tree) (Horagai).

The vagrant lover in "*Harete yuku chibusa*" is a figure of overindulgence and abjection, with his sexual bingeing and vomiting. While it is difficult to discern just who this "fellow" is that the narrator refers to throughout "*Harete yuku chibusa*," he, at the very least, is certainly one of her converts, who, though "wired" differently is in the "same boat" as she is. The narrator's biggest challenge, or "mission" as she says at the end of the poem, is to "shock him into seeing" her ecstatic sexuality as a form of religion. The speaker's attitude toward him vacillates between pity, titillation, and revulsion for his "sour spit," which coats her legs and breasts. While "biological imbalance" does seem to play a role in the different way that the protagonist and the narrator are "wired," I would not be tempted to read their "differences" as a result of gender, the difference between having breasts and not. In Tomioka's poetry, an idea will tilt and shift in the light of a narrator's mind like a mobius strip, continuous but always in constant flux. While the narrator of "*Harete yuku chibusa*" admits at the onset of the poem that she has given up all hope for a common consciousness with her lover, by the end of the poem, she is certain that her fellow possesses the ability to "know" what she does. In this way, even rejecting the currency of her own "historical" moment, Tomioka's deeply mythological poetry can be seen as an ironic proselytizing tool, not just a rewriting of history, but a history that teaches.

### III. Inhabiting the Space "between"

As both "*Harete yuku chibusa*" and "*Shigatsu no kyôfû*" show, it is the space *between* people that so often colors the sense of intimacy within which they coexist. This theme is profoundly suggested in Tomioka's poem "Between--" through the narrator's "sorrow that I don't understand you." In this poem, however, the personal distance between the "you" and "I" is so clearly mirrored by the social space that surrounds them, the narrator's refusal to embrace or reject the notion of war outright. Appearing in 1957, on the eve of the protests of the upcoming 1960 revision of the AMPO treaty that ended the US Occupation of Japan in 1952, "Between" epitomizes Tomioka's refusal to accept the black and white terms that divided the nation over the revision of AMPO, which pitted protesting students and labor unionists on the left advocating for a neutral, pacifist Japan against, on the right, the government, who, under Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke, many saw as attempting to return to the police "prewar levels of power" (Bestor).<sup>50</sup> Refusing both war and pacifism, Tomioka adopts a stance "between" and hopes only to be able to maintain her alertness, to "keep her eyes open" as a vigilant observer in such circumstances: "I hate war/ and I am no pacifist/ The effort just to keep my eyes open/ The sorrow that I can make only that effort."

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<sup>50</sup> Bestor notes that between spring 1959 and autumn 1960, "some 16 million citizens took to the streets to protest the treaty." She explains that Kishi's proposals for the solidification of police power were "drafted after secret consultation with the Public Safety Commission...[and] would have enabled the police to conduct searches and seizures without warrants in order 'to maintain public security and order' and to prevent crimes." As Bestor explains, the proposals are reminiscent of the language of the 1925 "Peace Preservation Law" that was "so instrumental in thwarting the prewar Left and any and all opposition to increased militarization and military aggression in China." The protesters were successful in forcing Kishi to abandon his proposals for increased police power, if not the treaty, see AMPO.

This ambiguous space "between" is a prominent setting in other poems as well. The ambiguities of women's existence in the rapidly changing world of postwar Japan is the subject of Tomioka's poem, "*Engeiji ringu*," which examines the contradictory values of the new breed of self-sufficient "salary girls," whose dream is to possess an engagement ring. Seen through the critical eyes of a narrator who has access to neither a job nor a ring, the poem depicts a woman who rejects the two generations between which she is caught in the years immediately following the war. Above all else though, Tomioka's personal, social messages cannot be separated out from her experimental, even anarchical, poetics, as poems such as "*Sakubô*," discussed above, and "*Happee endo*" (Happy ending) and "*Hanigo*" (Antonyms) so vividly show. Through their constantly shifting sense of direction and space, the subject of these poems becomes language itself, the gaps, silences and occasional gasps between words. As will be discussed later in this section, critic Awatsu Kiyoshi likens the flow of discordant images in Tomioka's poetry to the surrealist film director René Clair's 1924 *Entr'acte* (*Between acts*), which is described by critic James Travers as "a surrealist concoction of unrelated images, reflecting Clair's interest in Dada, a fashionable radical approach to visual art which relied on experimentation and surreal expressionism."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Entr'acte* was incorporated into Francis Picabia, Jean Börlin, and Erik Satie's ballet, *Relâche* (Theatre closed). The ballet was to premiere on November 27, 1924 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. Although the performance was cancelled because of the illness of one of the key performers, given the ironic title of the piece, the cancellation was deemed by some as the "ultimate Dadaist stunt," see Travers.

In his introduction to Tomioka's collected poems, Araki points out the strong cerebral quality of Tomioka's poetry (2). And yet, as Tomioka's "Between--" shows, the very abstract qualities of this ambiguous space are so often centered in emotion, in the case of "Between," sorrow:

**Between**

There are two sorrows I pride myself on  
After slamming the door to my room  
    behind me  
After slamming the door to my house  
    behind me  
Because of the rain of rainy season,  
    visibility is limited  
When the day begins  
what can I do  
What will I do  
Either way  
Either way  
I am neither friend nor enemy  
With whom can I discuss  
these concrete doubts?  
I hate war  
and am no pacifist  
Just keeping my eyes open requires  
    such an effort  
The sorrow of being able to make only  
    this effort

There are two sorrows I pride myself on  
The I who is with you  
I don't understand you  
And so, the I who understands that you  
    are here  
And so, the I who understands that I  
    am here  
The sorrow that I don't understand you  
The sorrow that you are who you are

**Between**

誇ってよい哀みがふつつある  
部屋のドアをボタンと後に押して  
家の戸口のドアを  
ボタンと後に押して  
梅雨の雨で視界のきかない  
    表通りで  
一日の始まる時  
これからどうしよう  
これから何をしよう  
どちらにも  
どちらにも  
味方でも敵でもないわたくし  
この具象的疑問を  
誰に相談しよう  
戦争ぎらいで  
平和主義者ではないわたくし  
ただ目を見開いてゆくための努力  
その努力しか出来ない哀しみ

誇ってよい哀しみはふつつある  
あなたと一緒にいるわたくし  
あなたがわからない  
だからあなたが在るのだとわかる  
    わたくし  
だからわたしが在るのだとわかる  
    わたくし  
あなたがわからない哀しみ  
あなたがあなたである哀しみ  
(*Henrei* 76-77)

Although the first line takes a highly analytical approach in its promise to describe the two sorrows that the narrator can "take pride in," the action of this poem quickly turns to anger, with the narrator slamming doors, and walking onto a street where nothing is clear, as much a result of her anger as a result of the "rainy season." The emotion with which this poem opens is central to the ambiguous space "between" that the narrator occupies. Indeed, the space between can be seen as the painful place in which no action is possible for the one who hates war and yet is not a pacifist, for one is who is neither enemy nor friend--to whom, we cannot be sure--and finally, for one who is caught in the paradox of relationships, the center of her sorrowful pride, in which those who are together can never "understand" each other.

Indeed, the title, rendered in English, which avoids the concreteness of the Japanese words for between (*no naka* or *aida*), reflects the narrator's refusal to commit whole-heartedly to either side of the issues that enveloped her times, such as the revision of the AMPO treaty. Not only is the narrator bewildered by how to live, what she should "do" on any given day, but she has no one with whom she can express these doubts. As vague as they would seem to us as readers, however, these doubts could not be more vivid for the speaker, who couches her uncertainty in her very logical rhetoric of cause and effect: "Understanding" that lovers can never understand one another "therefore" (*dakara*) becomes the "truth" of their separate existences. But, just as poignant is the anguish that comes with the narrator's feeling of being somehow separate from herself, of possessing a split "I": "The I who is with you" and "the I who understands that you are here/...who understands that I am here." "Between," which appears in Tomioka's first volume, announces the indeterminate personal "inner" space

out of which so many of her narrators speak, a place that reflects not only the anxieties of "personal experience," but the complex ambiguity of socio-political experience of postwar life, the difficulty of finding a place from which to speak "between" wars, the Pacific and the Vietnam War, for which Japanese support was guaranteed under the AMPO revision.<sup>52</sup>

"*Engeiji ringu*" examines the gaps in the different ways in which Japanese women saw themselves after the Pacific War, especially in relation to work and marriage. As in "*Mi [no] ue banashi*," the speaker stands apart, excluded, in this case, from the mainstream of women who flowed into the work force after the War. And yet, at the same time, as an observer of these "salary girls" whose ulterior motive is to obtain an engagement ring, the narrator also possesses a critical understanding of contradictions inherent in their liberation. Like "*Mi [no] ue banashi*," "*Engeiji ringu*" is a portentous poem. Written some thirty-years before the passage of Japan's Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOC) of 1985, the poem shows the limitations of the female worker who remains bound to the institution of marriage. Imagining the ways in which women become trapped on the low-paying, low-status "female [marriage] track" in the workplace, a problem the EEOC does nothing to solve, Tomioka reveals the emotional underpinnings of a problem that continues to haunt Japanese women.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> As Glenn Hook notes, "the Japanese government under the Satô [Eisaku] administration felt obliged as an ally of the US--and intent on securing the return of Okinawa--to continue supporting the US war effort and South Vietnam," see Hook 219.

<sup>53</sup> As Millie Creighton explains, "the law as interpreted by the Ministry of Labor does allow companies to differentiate between a career track and a non-career track. Companies are not required to treat all female and male employees equally, but only those employees in the same track." Creighton also suggests that components of the EEOC "reflect a desire to participate in international life, rather than an internal shift in Japanese social values regarding women's roles." As Creighton points out, "Had Japan not made such changes by the end of the United Nation's Decade for Women

Yearning for a ring, the speaker comes to imagine all that must accompany the ring, and eventually rejects it. Originally a metaphor suggesting the narrator's anger over her exclusion from this seemingly elite set of working women, her action of "walking beyond" these girls also reveals her forward thinking. "Carried...home" by "something other than my legs," the speaker of this poem imagines what else might exist beyond the "terminal" ending of marriage these women content themselves with.

### Engagement Ring

### エンゲイジ・リング

The girls who come on Saturday after work all of these salary girls have rings I don't have one Because they walk with such confidence I walk swiftly The flash of their rings pierces my eyes Something other than my legs carry me home I keep walking and walk way beyond them Walking beyond them, what could there be?	土曜日の午後にやってくる サラリーガールの彼女等に みんなユビワがあって わたしにはない 彼女等の濶歩する足並があるので わたしは足早に歩む 彼女等のユビワの閃光に目を射られ わたしの足の他は家に帰る わたしは歩いて足並を超えてゆき 歩いて超えて何が在る
On Saturday afternoon everyone is sparkling with the promise of a date All the girls have dates I don't Because all of them are working they are tired, but ready to cut loose I become infuriated with their marching And then, I take up my humanity and become righteously angry I am walking The street dead-ends into the department store bus terminal	土曜日の午後は きらきらとみんなデートで みんなに約束がある 彼女等みんなに約束があって わたしにはない 彼女等は働いているのだから 疲れた戯れがあって わたしは彼女等の行進が 無性に腹の立つことがら そこでユマンニテというもの ひっさげて 腹をたてひとりよがり 歩いて行って つきあたりはデパートのターミナル

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(1975-1985), Japan would not have been allowed to ratify the U.N. Resolution on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," see Creighton 195, 192.



On Saturday afternoon	土曜日の午後にターミナルで
I am waiting for my boyfriend at the terminal	わたしはわたしの彼を待ち
I ask him to give me a ring	ユビワをくれと注文する
He wants nothing to do with terminals	彼はターミナルと無縁で
Everyone has been promised	エンゲイジリングという
an engagement ring	みんなに約束があって
I don't have one	わたしにはない
I put on a ring	ユビワをはめて
and fly past the women	彼女等をひとつ飛び
I fly past the department store	デパートをひとつ飛び
I cross over and over, and then...	超えて超えてそれから
The women on Saturday	土曜日の彼女等
their fellows	彼女等の彼等
don't understand the territory of women	彼女の女の領域を知らない舌を
They open their mouths and stick their tongues	口を明けて半分つき出し
halfway out	きっちり指をからませ
Their fingers firmly entwined	みんなにユビワがある
everyone has a ring on	淫売婦にやるキリストのユビワ
The ring Christ gave to a prostitute	涙もろい唯物論がくれるユビワ
the ring given out of sentimental materialism	両方とももらってそれから
Women receive both kinds, and then...	
Saturday afternoon	土曜日の午後
I complain to my boyfriend	わたしはわたしの彼に文句を云う
What will you promise me?	わたしに何を約束する
Or are you going to propose?	それともわれらのアンガアジュ
All the women are watching us	彼女等みんなわれらを見物し
All the men and women will draw from their	彼等と彼女等貯金おろして
savings	ちいさな家をたて
to build a small house	土曜日に週末旅行
On Saturday, it's a weekend trip	わたしはわたしの彼に教えてやる
I tell my man	日本にはユビワよりいいものがある
in Japan we have something even better	ユイノウ
than rings:	
betrothal gifts	
I still want a pretty ring	わたしは綺麗なユビワが
I put on the ring	それでもほしい
I cross past all the girls spit out of their	ユビワをはめて
workplaces	吐き出される土曜日の午後の
on Saturday afternoon, and then...	足に

Because there is nothing there	向って越えてそれから
I wonder if the ring I will receive	何もないものが在るから
will be like someone I will never know	わたしのもらうユビワが
At our terminal for two	わたしの他人なのかしら
I eat an ice cream with my boyfriend	ふたりのターミナルで
watching the elegant flirting of the others	彼とソフトクリームをなめながら
Humanity without rings	上品な戯れを見物する
Even so on Sunday	ユビワのないユマニテ
because he sounded like he would give me	それでも日曜日には
a cheap ring	彼が安物のユビワをくれるそう
just because on Monday	だから
the two of us parted so nonchalantly	なぜなら月曜日には
I was buried under so many various rings	ふたりは何気なく別れるのだから
I put down various plans on paper	いろいろなユビワにうずもれて
to go home	家に帰るために予定表をつくり
I will smile and smile forever	いつまでもにこにことする
All of a sudden I do an about face	くるっと方向を変えて
Because the women walk quietly through the	彼女等の地下に潜み歩くのだから
underground	わたしはユビワを放りあげ
I toss up the ring	空から帰ってくるわたしのユビワを
I toss away my ring that returns to me	もういちど放りあげる
from the sky one more time	( <i>Karisuma no katsu no ki</i> 78-83)

The "*Engeiji ringu*" that we encounter in Tomioka's 1959 *Karisuma no katsu no ki* anticipates the 1967 campaign to "popularize diamond engagement rings in Japan" on the part of a South African diamond firm that accomplished this feat with the help of the largest advertising agency in the world, J. Walter Thompson (Epstein). The ring also epitomizes the increased consumerism that followed the revision of the AMPO treaty, with the "income doubling plan" of the new prime minister, Ikeda Hayato, who replaced Kishi when he was forced to resign in 1960 (Bestor). Longing for a ring that is finally thrown away in the final lines of "*Engeiji ringu*," the narrator undercuts this longing with irony throughout the poem.

The image of promise that the engagement ring implies also betrays the notion of male ownership of women that has haunted Japanese women's history. As Tomioka

sarcastically exclaims, "in Japan we have something even better than rings: betrothal gifts," the gifts, often money, that the family of the groom must pay the family of the bride. In this way, the bride is *acquired* as a kind of commodity by the groom's family as a new family member through marriage. Tomioka points out that there are at least two kinds of rings--the kind that Christ gave to the prostitute Mary Magdalene, and the kind given out of "sentimentality," which the new engagement ring would represent as the symbol of marriage based on the sentiments and emotions of the couple, rather than on the family alliances mentioned above. But given the connection that the narrator makes between engagement rings and betrothal gifts, we must assume that Tomioka believed that marriage based on sentiment was more an ideal than a reality in the late 1950s.

Both Mary Magdalene's and the ring of "sentimentality" can be taken as engagement rings, though, and as such, as Tomioka implies, represent opposite sides of a single coin, the two sides of an ostensibly "sentimental" marriage in which the wife "prostitutes" herself for economic gain. The narrator's boyfriend's grudging promise of a cheap ring allows her to further imagine, and finally reject, the implications of the ring. Marriage as a "terminal for two" becomes the final irony of this poem: glittering with promise, marriage becomes the "terminus," or final stop, that she rejects not just once in the final action of the poem, but twice, since the ring she has thrown away comes rebounding back to her from the sky, an image that indicates the difficulty with which marriage was rejected in the decades immediately following the War.<sup>54</sup> Flinging away the ring, however, and all that goes with it, the narrator portends the experience of

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<sup>54</sup> As Yumiko Sueyoshi-Fujita notes, there was a sudden increase in the marriage rate in Japan following the Pacific War, see Sueyoshi-Fujita 7.

the many Japanese women today who reject marriage for the "something beyond" towards which she propels herself.

While the ambivalent social spaces that Tomioka carves out in her poetry are especially evocative, as the final two poems of this section, "*Hanigo*" and "*Happee endo*," will show, the vast, invented space "between" words becomes one of Tomioka's most vibrant canvases. Revealing Tomioka's penchant for surrealistic, linguistic play, "a poetics based upon juxtaposition and harmonizing of incongruous elements," as Miryam Sas describes the surrealistic project, these poems, both of which appear in *Karisuma no katsu no ki*, can be seen as part of a long tradition that Sas traces back to the use of *kakekotoba* on the part of Kokinshû and Shinkokinshû poets (17). Rather than necessarily "linking unrelated meanings" through punning in "*Hanigo*," however, Tomioka rejects the conventional meanings of certain words, replacing these meanings with new, invented meanings that, in effect, reveal the arbitrary quality of words as signs, their potential as "non-sense," or nonsensical signs. Indeed, the sense of play that Tomioka exhibits in this poem is extensive, and even includes the *makura kotoba* "*aatarachine no*," a pillow word, or fixed epithets of reverence for "mother" (*haha*). Amusingly, as will be show below, this pillow word, also a feature of classical Japanese poetry, is presented as a kind of password in the poem, whose required response is its tonal antithesis, "*iyarashii mama*" (annoying mama).

In "*Hanigo*," Tomioka tugs against the notion of a one-to-one correspondence between words and their meaning by juxtaposing words and phrases with the seeming randomness of children who play the word game of "capped verses" in her poem, with the last syllable becoming the first syllable of the next word, another of the many forms



splendid suit of clothes  
*Haimaato* and *hairaato*, homeland and  
 marriage  
 A wise saying for betting  
 without checking the standings  
 If you suspect a "guillotine" over there  
 the old lady will butt in--she knows nothing  
 about it  
 If you call out the password "mother"  
 she replies, "such an annoying mama"

予想表をみないで  
 賭けろという金言  
 そこにはギロチンといふかれば  
 おかみさんは知らないという横やり  
 そこであたらちねの母と呼べば  
 いやらしいママと答える  
 炎天のおとなしい大通りで  
 (*Karisuma no katsu no ki* 99)

Later, the poem returns to the aphasia with which it begins, and it is at this point the aphasic not only loses her grasp on the connective tissue that ordinarily exists between words, but language itself begins to disappear, taken back by the sun:

The starting point of this malady of words  
 is the quiet sun  
 He took back eight parts of speech  
 The permutations of marriage, *hairaato*  
 The negative *haimaato*, homelands  
 Summer's blooming chrysanthemums  
 The nestling foxtails  
 carry out their disinterested, watery affair

原点の失語症は  
 おとなしい太陽  
 八品詞をうばいかえし  
 順列で組合せたハイラアト  
 マイナスのハイマアト  
 夏の菊咲き  
 エノコロゲサがしなだれかかり  
 (*Karisuma no katsu no ki* 101-102)

From the lush, erotic world of underwater plants we are suddenly plunged into, the poem makes a humorous turn to the sex lives of politicians, who, like the speaker of this poem, possess the ability to have their way with words: "The politicians from England who like to study/ Their passionate skill at heavy petting/ A prayer with magical powers/ Magical signs and numbers/ Something like the magic of human love." But the poet, who luxuriates in her underwater world, warns the politicians against their aggressive use of language to get what they want: "Don't spew forth false-sounding true words/ at the body of yawns that are immune/ to the indifferent bones that have nothing to lose/ Don't suck on private parts/ and lift your swollen face/

projecting this and that previous scene/ Don't add any more death than this," so that black becomes white and "today is yesterday/ yesterday is tomorrow."

In the end, it is the everyday language of "marriage" and "homeland" that wins the day, the poet's ability to fashion that everyday "body of yawns" with which we live into something extraordinary: "The everyday speech whose name is 'marriage'/ The practical conversation that puts the fire of urgency in your pants/ The homeland is the starting point/ Copulation is the starting point/ Compile our whole/ conversation of yawns without boredom/ and our happiness will be more expansive/ than Newton's outer limits." In even her most experimental, surrealist poems, this notion of capturing the expansive joy of everyday speech very aptly evokes one of the essential pleasures of Tomioka's poetry, as well as the current preoccupations of the nation, or homeland, in the particular postwar moment in which Tomioka is writing: the role of marriage in women's lives.

In many ways, "*Happee endo*" takes up from where "*Hanigo*" leaves off. In this poem, we are deposited into an even more remote, surrealistic "homeland," a world in which we must fend for ourselves to glean meaning from this highly unconventional landscape. Entering the expanse of "Newton's outer limits" in the final lines of "*Hanigo*," we find ourselves walking with the narrator of "*Happee endo*" across the parched landscape of a face, "butterflies teeming." Eventually, "two" are "assimilated" by the sand, and, slipping into an "unlocked hole" from which the narrator believes she will not return, a place in which one is "implored to run." In this moment, the unlikely "place" that we have come to inhabit "is erased" in the world. As the "anesthesia" sets in, the speaker declares our encounter in this strange, strange world to be "things as

they are things as they are." Just who the "two" are who had "met once before" in this world remains ambiguous; as the speaker says, however, they "may be wearing shirts in primary colors." The narrator's subjective way of seeing these men is emphasized by the fact the world she sees is very much colored by the sunglasses that she wears. As she says, "My sunglasses change the original colors." The denseness of this sandy world and the slowness with which we move through it with these shadow-like figures is accentuated by the poem's thick prose format.

### **Happy Ending**

Periodically, the face cracks Just now, sprinkling sand on that face It probably won't crack Butterflies teeming I have to make huge gestures with my arms just to walk I can determine the size of the rectangle by eye-balling it Like the famous Russian fairytale It tells me the necessary area The exit of the hole is the shape of an isosceles triangle The two men may be wearing shirts in primary colors My sunglasses change the original colors Their purplish-grey straw hats go up and down The two met once before The butterflies push their way in I brush away the sand on the face The bones of animals and fish are scattered about Urine and liquid secretions were arranged Because if I go against that arrangement, it will demand creativity Nothing but reason wins the day We possess cigarettes in order to eat The building I will come across first will probably be a cafe I drink ice water Sand is sprinkled on that face I walk I cannot bury that face I walk

That face merged with the fish and urine The two met once before The sand assimilated the two I'm thinking that first place I will come across will not be a cafe I came out of the hole And from the triangle, how many stair steps are there? Stones and butterflies know The typhoon does not come I'll wipe your forehead with this handkerchief Can you hear the Song of Solomon? Not even the veins make a sound Where did the mercury come from? I sing out elegies in a smooth, round voice and songs of praise in a rolling voice This assumption comes through my sunglasses Let's walk I'm walking The perfect, silent device is an emotion for insanity The straw hats go up and down I once met a single shadow of sand

The glass will melt on the face with just the noise of one person Doesn't it shoot the core of the encounter from the left and the right? Do I beg for forgiveness? I am walking Do I still reach out to the wild strawberry? My legs move to and fro Prayer is not in the Western sky The lock on that hole is open I probably won't return The two once met The place that implores one to rush From then on, that place is erased in the world My muscles are neither cramped nor relaxed I walk The anesthesia sinks in Things as they are Things as they are Sand becomes



glass The nostrils will flare This face too reflects chaotically in the coolness I  
walk

### ハッピー・エンド

周期的に顔がひび割れる 今砂をかけたばかりのあの顔には 亀裂はないだ  
ろう 蝶が充満して 歩みのために大きい身ぶりが要る 長方形の面積を自分  
量で決定してきた ロシアの偉大な童話だったようだ 自分に必要な面積を教  
えていた ほら穴の出口は二等辺三角刑をしていた 二人の男は原色のシャツ  
姿なのだろう サングラスは色素を変える けしずみ色の麦わら帽が上下する  
二人は出会っていた 動物と魚の骨が散在して 尿と分泌液は配置される その  
配置に対すれば創造が要求されるため 理性にしか勝ちはない シガレット  
は食べるために所有されている 最初に出くわす建物はカフェだろう 氷水を  
のむことになる あの顔には砂がかけられている 歩くのだ あの顔は埋  
められない 歩くのだ

あの顔は魚と尿と同化される 二人は出会っていた 砂は二人を同化した  
最初に出くわす空間はカフェではないだろう ほら穴を出たのだ 三角刑から  
階段はいくつあつただろう 知るものは石と蝶と 台風はこない ハンカチで  
ひたいをぬぐってやろう 雅歌が聞こえるのか 静脈の音もしない 水銀はど  
こから来たのだろうか まるい声でエレジイをころがる声で讃歌をうたった その  
仮定はサンクラスを透す 歩こう 歩いている 完全無音装置は狂気のため  
の情緒である 麦わら帽が上下する 砂のセキエイに出会っていた

ひとりの雑音でも顔にガラスが溶解する 出会いの芯を左右から射たではな  
いか 許しを乞えるか 歩いている まだ野イチゴに手を伸ばすのか 脚は交  
互に運動する 祈りは西の空にない ほら穴に錠はおろされていない 帰らぬ  
だろう 二人は出会ってきた かけこみ訴えをする場所は そのときから世界  
に消えている 筋肉はゆるみもひきつりもしていない 歩く 麻酔剤は陥没し  
ている あるがままに 砂はガラスとなり 鼻孔は開放されるだろう その顔  
も冷却の中に乱反射し 歩く

(*Karisuma no katsu no ki* 15-17)

The irony of finding "things as they are" within such a surrealist world of  
"incongruous or contrasting elements, 'distant realities,'" as Sas characterizes the  
surrealist poem in both Japanese and European literary history, drives the authoritative,  
matter-of-fact tone of the poem.<sup>55</sup> "Like the Russian fairy tale," like the rectangle that

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<sup>55</sup> Sas is quoting French poet Pierre Reverdy, who wrote: "the image is a pure creation of the mind. It is born not of comparison, but rather of the bringing together of two more or less distant realities. The more distant and true [*juste*] the two realities brought together, the stronger the image-- and the more emotional power and poetic reality it will have," see Sas 14.

allows the narrator to "eyeball" its "area," the poem confidently gathers its own momentum, setting its own private perimeter, the natural limits of its world. As mentioned above, Tomioka's penchant for the surreal can be attributed to her teacher Ôno Tôzaburô (Morton, *Modernism in Practice* 96).<sup>56</sup> In his essay "*Tomioka Taeko no 'uta no wakare,'*" ("Tomioka Taeko's farewell to verse") Ôno does not deny his influence, but admits his immense dissatisfaction with the postscript that he wrote for Tomioka's *Henrei*, writing later that he felt he had "missed the point."<sup>57</sup> In this essay, Ôno also expresses his admiration for the analysis of Tomioka's poetry by Awatsu Kiyoshi, which appeared at the end of an early edition of Tomioka's collected poems. In his analysis, Awatsu compares Tomioka's poetry with surrealistic director René Clair's 1924 film *Entr'acte*: like the images of this film, Awatsu asserts, Tomioka's language is in "constant flux." Claiming that there is no other poet like Tomioka, Awatsu claims her unique ability to penetrate the interior of the "contemporary maze" of language makes "the tips of words shine." According to Awatsu, "Repeating them, knocking against them and poking at them," Tomioka "is the only person who persists at language like this" (qtd. in Ôno 48).

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<sup>56</sup> Tomioka describes her mentorship with Ôno, an especially non-judgmental and encouraging teacher, in an interview that appears in her 1999 collected works. Tomioka claims to have learned to write poetry by imitating works in his books *Osaka* (1953) and *Fûkei shishô* (Selected Scenes, 1943), see "*Henrei kara LP made*" 5. In an interview I conducted with Arai Toyomi in December, 2008, Arai confirmed that Tomioka's affinity with surrealism is indeed through Ôno, rather than through direct contact with French poetry.

<sup>57</sup> In his introduction to *Henrei*, Ôno notes Tomioka's interest in D.H. Lawrence. Asserting that postwar poets, unlike his generation, do not convey their ideas with the sincerity of the prewar poets, he points to the "unmediated quality," the directness of Tomioka's poetry, its Lawrence-like tendency to describe a variety of life experiences. Lacking a clear subject, Ôno asserts that Tomioka's poems, "like the others of her generation, refuse to go in one set, personal direction, that they become ill-tempered as soon as they show the signs of good intentions," see *Henrei*, Introduction 4-5.

Tomioka's most experimental works can be linked with those of avant-garde poet Gertrude Stein. "*Happee endo*" employs a Stein-like "cubist" form of repetition, with Tomioka's constant return to certain shapes: the "two men," for instance, their hats bobbing up and down, each time at a slight different angle of obscurity and color.<sup>58</sup> As in Stein's poetry, the arrangement of the poem appears to be random; and yet, like "bones of animals and fish scattered about the poem," it is an "arrangement" that "demands creativity," as Tomioka says, for not only the poet, but the reader as well. Indeed, the face, the sand, the butterflies teeming, the one who walks, the two who had "met once before," appear and reappear throughout the poem as though they were anchors, or points of reference, in an otherwise unstable world that might slip, or crumble, from beneath us.

As with many of Stein's poems, "*Happee endo*" can be seen as a study in the arrangement of objects. Tomioka, like Stein, "takes ordinary language—the 'language of information'—and makes it strange, forcing us to be acutely aware of the way words work" (Perloff). In "*Happee endo*," words, as uprooted as they seem in this poem, become, in their return to us in the form of repetition, markers in an otherwise uninterpretable world. Stein refers to the notion of "arrangement" in the first of the "Objects" in her collection *Tender Buttons*, "A Carafe, That is a Blind Glass," which becomes "a spectacle and nothing strange a single hurt color and an arrangement in a system to pointing" (qtd. in Perloff). If an "arrangement" does in fact signify "a system to pointing," just what is being pointed to remains elusive, beyond the reader's reach. And yet, there is a place for us, too, within hermetically sealed worlds that both Stein

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<sup>58</sup> Tomioka translated Stein's first work, *Three Lives (Sannin no onna)*, in 1969, see Mizuta, "Translation and Gender" 159.

and Tomioka create. Who else can better occupy and absorb the seemingly insurmountable distances that exist between words, the uncomfortable space between words and their meanings, than the unwitting outsider, invited "in" for the journey?

#### **IV. Stupid Question, Stupid Answer: Refusing Gender**

Shiraishi Kazuko rightly chastises Western critics who labeled Tomioka a "lesbian poet" with the publication of her 1964 collection *Onna tomodachi* (Girlfriend) ("80 *nendai to joseishi*" 5). While *Onna tomodachi* once again predates the politics that it implies, this categorization can be understood in terms of the atmosphere of "identity politics" of the 1970s, a term which denotes "a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups" (Heyes). In her critique of identity politics in the 1990s, however, Butler points out the rationale for such an approach that depends so strongly on categorization: "The foundationalist reasoning of identity politics tends to assume that an identity must first be in place in order for political interests to be elaborated and, subsequently, political action to be taken" (*Gender Trouble* 181). As Shiraishi implies though, in the context of Tomioka's poetry, the label "lesbian poet" greatly limits the realm in which Tomioka's poems, and their characters, live and breathe. While poems such as "*Onna tomodachi*" (Girlfriend) and "*Rataiga*" (Nude drawing) in this section will show that love relationships between women do play an important role in Tomioka's poetry, what is most interesting about Tomioka in regard to gender and sexual identity is her ability to break down the firm boundaries between sexual identities, her refusal of fixed boundaries, including those that would demarcate the limits of an exclusively gay identity.

Favoring the innately *human* over the gendered, Tomioka more often than not leaves the notion of male-female gender outside of her discussion of love. Two love poems from *Onna tomodachi*--"Anata no namae wa, nan desu ka" (What is your name?) and "Shaberanai de watashi wa kiita (I listened without talking)--do not even identify the genders of the speakers or characters. In Tomioka's poem "Neko shijin" (Cat poet), the narrator describes her existence as one in which she is forever "leaning" (*katamuite*): "I went out and leaned/ Yesterday/ and the day before that/ I leaned a great deal" (*Onna tomodachi* 47). Whether or not the "cat poet" is describing her lesbian "leanings," we cannot be sure, but she does go on to say, "my saintly girlfriends/ love my dazzling words" (*Onna tomodachi* 50). Showing the absurdity of the "man-woman" entity of compulsory heterosexuality in another poem from *Onna tomodachi*, "Itsumo no yô ni" (As always), Tomioka's speakers are at times bi-sexual, making love to both men and women in the same poem, as in "Joyû," mentioned at the onset of this chapter.<sup>59</sup> Or, as she does in "Mi [no] ue banashi," the narrator will establish a gendered identity early on in a poem like "Gumon gutô" ("Stupid question, stupid answer), only to surprise us in the end:

**Stupid Question, Stupid Answer**

**愚問愚答**

Recently  
 someone asked if I'm glad I was born  
 I answered that I'm grateful to be alive  
 And to have been born Japanese  
 To have been born a child to poor parents  
 I said that I was completely grateful  
 to have been born a girl

最近  
 生れてよかったかという質問を  
 受けました  
 生きているのはありがたいことだと  
 答えました  
 日本人に生れたことも  
 貧乏人の子供に生れた  
 女の子に生れたことも

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<sup>59</sup> The term "compulsory heterosexuality" would be coined by Adrienne Rich in her 1980 essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence."

すべてありがたいことだと答えまた

Women spread their arms  
Women spread their legs  
Women are heavy with angels  
and the number of humans increases  
If women locked their hands firmly  
                  over their breasts  
and closed their legs  
humans would cease to exist

女は手をひろげます  
女は脚をひろげます  
女は天使を孕みます  
そして人間はふえます  
女が手でかたく胸をおさえ  
女が脚を閉じておれば  
人間はいなくなります

The groans of women's desire  
continue on and on like the chanting of sutras  
Young women tear at their breasts  
Fully mature women lift their breasts  
Old women too peer at their own genitals  
Every woman embraces a man like a mother  
す  
Ah, mother

女の欲望のうめき声は  
読経のようにつついています  
若い女は自分の胸をかきむしり  
成熟した女は自分の胸をもちあげ  
老いた女も自分の陰部をのぞきます  
どの女も男を母親のように抱きしめま

ああオカーサン

(*Tomioka Taeko shû 1*, 485-486)

In "*Gumon gutô*," even though the narrator so clearly identifies herself as a woman throughout, the question of her sexuality cannot be described in straight-forward terms, for in the end, she finds herself in "mother's arms," swooning, "Ah, mother."

Claiming that Western translators have inaccurately categorized Tomioka's poetry "lesbian poetry" on the basis of only a handful of poems that directly take up amorous relationships among women, Shiraishi goes on to state that Tomioka's poetry is so much broader, reflecting the "weird stupidity of living things," including, but not limited to, the intimate lives of both men and women, as well as appetite, both sexual and nutritional, death, and birth. As Shiraishi intimates, the depth with which Tomioka penetrates the "queerness" of human relationships of all kinds cannot be easily quantified, and as mentioned before, Tomioka's narrators more often than not do not identify the gender of the characters she describes. Unlike "*Gumon gutô*," in which

female gender is a given, in "*Onna tomodachi*," we either assume that the speaker is a woman who happens to appreciate the way a dress clings to the curve of her lover's hips, "just the way men like," or that the narrator speaks as a man. Another option, however, is that we can put the question of gender aside in appreciation of the erotic feelings that the poem describes. While I happen to interpret this love relationship as one among women, as mentioned above, built in to the ironic rubric of Tomioka's poetry is the figure of the trickster, an *Amano jaku* character who would leave us guessing at the sexual orientation of her subjects, in part to suggest the primacy of human relationships in Tomioka's poetry.

### Girlfriend

The "kept woman" next door  
 recites a sutra  
 Afternoon  
 I watch a donkey-like animal  
 pass below the window  
 through a slit in the curtains  
 Always through slit in curtains  
 Even though there is a woman who comes  
     to see me  
 she hasn't come yet today  
 wearing a Georgette dress  
 like a woman from Annam  
 It clings to her hips, just the way men like  
 She promised to come  
 but today since she hasn't come  
 she probably died today  
 Before  
 when I went on a little trip with her  
 she wanted to buy an old woodprint  
 from Germany or someplace  
 at an antique store in the country  
 For the first time  
 I was able to muss up her hair

### 女友達

となりの  
 二号さんがお経をよむ  
 ひるさがりに  
 ロバのような動物が  
 窓のしたを通るのを見た  
 それをカーテンのすきまから見た  
 いつもカーテンのすきまから  
 あたしに逢いにくる女のひとがいる  
     のに  
 今日はまだこない  
 ジョウゼットでできた  
 安南人のようなきものをきて  
 男好きのする腰つきで  
 かの女はくる約束をした  
 今日はまだこないの  
 今日死んだのかもしれない  
 このまえ  
 かの女と旅をしたら  
 田舎のコットウ屋で  
 ドイツかどこかの古い木版画を  
 ほしがったことがある  
 田舎の宿で  
 あたしはかの女の

cascading  
 like Bridget Bardot's  
 at the country inn  
 The two of us danced  
 Our flushed cheeks forever  
 pressed together  
 we danced a Viennese waltz  
 So transparent  
 her poetic imaginings  
 spill forth like occasional beads of sweat  
 I'd like to mistake them for tears  
 Today she doesn't come  
 Like the mistress next door  
 I raise my voice in prayer  
 in the middle of the day  
 She did not promise  
 not to come  
 You who have gone  
 Oh, you who have gone

ブリジッドバルドウのような  
 もりだくさんの髪の毛を  
 はじめてかきむしることができた  
 ふたりは踊った  
 いつまでも  
 からくれないの頬よせて  
 ウィンのワルツを踊った  
 透明のかの女の  
 楽天的な詩想が  
 ときたま汗のようにこぼれる  
 のをあたしは泪とまちがえたい  
 かの女は今日こない  
 となりの二号さんのように  
 まひるから声をあげて  
 祈るのである  
 かの女は  
 こない約束はしなかった  
 往ける者  
 往ける者よ  
 (*Onna tomodachi* 33-37)

If we imagine the speaker as a woman, her desires shed their tendency toward cliché; fresh again, they signify a sense of freedom that her next-door-neighbor, a kept woman, or "mistress," chanting her sutras, cannot possess. Whether the narrator is a man or a woman, the intimacy of this poem is communicated by the details the narrator reveals about her lover: the beads of her sweat, the German woodblock print she admired, the make of her dress, her mussed up hair. Allowed a private glimpse of their relationship, as though through the very slit in the curtains through which the narrator waits to view her lover's approach, we are never made to feel self-conscious in our role as voyeurs at a country inn.

Just as significant as the scene at hand, however--the eroticism of what we may or may not interpret as lesbian love--is the resounding depth of the narrator's despair that his or her lover has not appeared, the fear that she may be gone for good:



"You who have gone/ Oh, you who have gone." Indeed, this line is all the more poignant because it is directly addressed to the lover who had been described only in the third person up until this point in the poem. While many have commented on the wry cynicism of Tomioka's poetry, as poems such as "*Onna tomodachi*" illustrate, emotion, when it does appear, resonates with uncommon depths of despair. In another essay that appears in Tomioka's collected poems, poet Hirata Toshiko questions whether Tomioka can be considered a "sentimental" writer. In the end, however, Hirata decides that sentimentality is indeed a quality of Tomioka's poetry, but that for this poet, sentimentality is a form of lamentation that is always a question of scale and depth (4).

"*Rataiga*," on the other hand, possesses the mocking sense of playfulness that characterizes so much of Tomioka's poetry. While, as in "*Onna tomodachi*," the small details of this poem suggest the intimate relationship that the poem describes, the "leftover vegetables" and "pin curls," the "short-sleeve nightie" and the "bobby pins" are also emblematic of the trappings of the light-hearted comedy that we sometimes call "love" in Tomioka's poetry. The value that Tomioka places on the artist's ability to capture the animated quality of this feeling, so strongly evoked in this poem, is summed up in the last line of the poem: "Even the greatest of artists/ can't start out from the beginning doing cartoons."

### Nude Drawing

Leave the leftover vegetables  
scattered where they are  
You with your pin curls  
and your short-sleeve nightie  
you think that you're such a coquette

### 裸体画

食べ残した野菜は  
ちらかしたままにしておこう  
あなたはせつかく髪にピンカールして  
半袖の寝まきをつけて  
コケティッシュなつもりだが

Take out those bobby pins  
I know that you want me  
Go ahead, take off your nightie  
Your husband won't be jealous  
The flesh of your calves, so taut  
your torso  
appropriately spreading its decadence

I want to buy one of those drawings  
you showed me back then  
as you removed the claws of your cat  
If you won't sell it, I'll just steal it  
Your drawings aren't worth any money  
But I'd like to avoid becoming a thief if I can  
If you don't want it stolen  
just go ahead, draw me  
Holding your pencil, still naked as you are  
draw me naked, as I am before you  
I won't move

Just like you did with your husband  
right here last night  
make love to me, then  
draw me happily with your pencil  
If he is laughing on the paper  
I should be laughing on the paper, too  
If he is crying on the paper  
I should be crying on the paper, too  
Go ahead, draw me  
Holding your pencil, still naked as you are  
draw me naked, as I am before you  
I won't move  
My torso is pathetic  
But as a woman, it's not that you can't take it  
If drawing me is so distasteful  
I won't allow you,  
my servant,  
to be jealous of this ego of mine  
With my clothes on  
I'll say all kinds of flattering things

そのピンをはずせよ  
わたしを可愛いがりたいのだからから  
その寝まきをはずしていいよ  
あなたの主人は嫉妬などしない  
あなたのふくらはぎは肉がしまって  
あなたのトルソは  
てきとうに頹廢をひろげている

先ほど猫のツメをむしりながら  
あなたがみせてくれた数枚の絵から  
わたしは一枚を買ってあげよう  
売るのがいやなら盗むだけだ  
あなたの絵に金を出す値うちはないが  
なるべく盗人にはなりたくない  
盗まれるのもいやなら  
さあ わたしを描くんだ  
あなたがその裸のままですエンピツ  
もって  
あなたの前にいるわたしを描くんだ  
わたしは動かない

あなたが昨夜ここ場所で  
あなたの主人にしたように  
わたしを可愛いがってから  
わたしを楽しくあなたのエンピツで  
描け  
画用紙のかれが笑っているなら  
画用紙のわたしも笑っている筈  
画用紙のかれが泣いているなら  
画用紙のわたしも泣いている筈  
さあ わたしを描くんだ  
あなたがその裸のままですエンピツ  
もって  
あなたの前にいる裸のわたしを  
描くんだ  
わたしは動かない  
わたしのトルソはまずしいが  
女のあなたに耐えられぬ筈はない  
描くのもいやなら  
従者のあなたが  
このわたしのもつ自我に嫉妬する

about the drawing  
of your husband's naked body  
Scarf down those leftovers and say good-bye  
Even the greatest of artists  
can't start out from the beginning doing  
cartoons

ことを  
わたしは許さない  
わたしは着物をつけたまんま  
あなたの描いた  
あなたの主人の裸体画に  
存分のお世辞を伝えて  
残りものをたいらげてさよならだ  
どんなえらい絵かきでも  
始めから戯画は描けないものなのだ  
(*Karisuma no katsu no ki* 18-21)

As in "*Joyû*," the final poem of Tomioka's that I will discuss, "*Rataiga*" features a love triangle between two women and a man, in this case, the protagonist, her female lover and the lover's husband. While I suggested above that the markers of intimacy, and, I would argue, femininity, in both "*Onna tomodachi*" and "*Rataiga*," are revealed in the minute details that define the relationship between narrator and lover, the protagonist's gender is also implied in "*Rataiga*" through her sense of physical identification with her lover. As much as she emotionally identifies with her lover's husband, she knows that her lover will identify with her body, sympathize with her feeling that "My torso is pathetic/ But as a woman, it's not that you can't take it." As in "*Onna tomodachi*," the protagonist's desires are described in "masculine" terms, as if to underline that "masculine" desire does not exclusively "belong" to either gender. Indeed, in "*Rataiga*," the narrator insists that her artist-lover depict her in the same way that she depicts her husband; that is, her emotions, her desires, in short, her affection for the narrator should, in the end, be one and the same with her feelings for her husband: "Just like you did with your husband/ right here last night/ make love to me, then/draw me happily with your pencil/ If he is laughing on the paper/ I should be laughing on the paper, too/ If he is crying on the paper/ I should be

crying on the paper, too." In many ways, this character insists, in the most human terms, on the performative notion of gender that Butler would come to explicate some thirty-five years later, in particular the practiced ability on the part of women to "perform" masculinity. Describing the sense of agency brought about by such "appropriations," Butler writes, "...if there is *agency*, it is to be found, paradoxically, in the possibilities opened up in and by that constrained appropriation of the regulatory law, by the materialization of that law, the compulsory appropriation and identification with those normative demands" (*Bodies that Matter* 12).<sup>60</sup>

Staking out her corner as jealous lover in the love triangle that "*Joyū*" suggests, the speaker's feelings are, as we have come to expect in Tomioka's poetry, anything but unambiguous. Not only does she strongly abjectify her lover's lover as a woman "on the rag," parading about in a sanitary belt in front of a window, but at the same time, the narrator has also infiltrated the relationship between this woman and her lover as both her dresser and confidant, as lover.

**Actress**

**女優**

Today  
I saw from my window your love idol  
that actress  
walking around in a sanitary belt  
I was thinking of reporting it to you  
But you are always gone  
But you were always  
reporting to me  
that you were playing a part with her  
or thinking of reporting it  
Even today

きみの愛しかつあこがれの  
あの女優がきょう  
月経帯をつけてあるいていたのを  
わたしは窓からみたので  
きみに報告しようとおもっていた  
ところがきみはいつもいない  
ところがきみはいつも  
かの女優と芝居をしているのだと  
わたしに報告していたし  
報告しようとおもっていて  
きみはきょうも

---

<sup>60</sup> For an informative work that focuses on female appropriations of masculinity, see Judith Halberstam's *Female Masculinity*.

you were just telling me  
that you burned with love for me  
But because you forgot and left it along  
the way  
because you hide me  
as if I were only your bill collector  
as if I were only your debt  
But for me  
my only consolation  
is to prowling after you  
So much more worthy  
than that pipsqueak actress  
You said let's play making some beautiful  
art together  
Because you choose that tart's curse  
over friendship and real love  
all I can do  
is to watch this from the window

That actress of yours however  
is so frustrated  
and is constantly telling me  
how much more simple it would be  
if truly you weren't a man  
But also, just like an actress  
she takes out and puts into her dresser  
so many pieces of flesh  
You enjoy this  
you, who don't know how to enjoy  
anything  
tried, just as hard as you could,  
to help her into her stockings  
and to button her up  
surely messing up their order, too  
I was always there  
helping the actress get dressed  
and just for good measure  
I'd try and sleep with her too  
She has a thick layer of fat

きみはついさきほども  
わたしに恋情をもやして  
きみはそれを途中でおき忘れた  
ので  
まるでわたしを借金とりのように  
まるでわたしが借金であるように  
きみはわたしをかくしているの  
わたしとしたところが  
それはなぐさめであって  
きみをつけねらうことであって  
あんなかけだしの女優サンより  
あたいたいっしょにじょうずな  
ゲイジュツを  
してあそぼうよというので  
あった  
きみは友情よりもこの親愛よりも  
ちんぴらの呪詛をえらぶので  
わたしとしても  
それを窓からみているしかない  
のであった

きみのあの女優にしたところが  
きみなんてもどかしくって  
ほんとはきみがおとこでない方が  
どれだけことがかんたんなことかと  
つねづねわたしにいつている  
というのに  
また女優的に  
いく枚ものにくたいを  
まいにちダンスから出し入れして  
いて  
きみはそれをたのしみ  
じっさいはたのしみのすべもしら  
ぬきみが  
ただできるのはくつしたをはかせ  
ボタンをとめてやるくらいで  
それもかならず順番をまちがえている  
わたしはいつもそこにいて  
かの女優の身じたくを手伝っており  
そのオマケとして  
わたしは女優とねてみることもあった

and says to any stranger  
I prefer to be a perfect stranger  
a stranger, like god  
With that kind of woman  
you are truly just like a stranger sleeping  
with a stranger  
For you however  
looking at this must be what you want  
out of life  
even though you can do nothing but  
watch this  
from a window

I lie down spread eagle  
and wait, mouth parched  
wondering if our relationship is fated  
to become a monster  
You kicked me and my chair  
and dressed in kimono went out into  
the air  
What did it taste like--that time?  
Now your face  
and so many utensils are starting to break  
And what's more, you just can't  
understand it  
Your expression just like that of a poet  
you said I will definitely kill myself,  
just like a dead person  
and for the first time diligently set out  
to make money  
Those people known as women  
don't even turn around to look at you,  
wanting only your body  
Even then your flesh was already  
beginning to go flabby  
and the women  
were already just about to start wearing  
make-up  
Tomorrow, too, you  
will have to get together  
with your male admirers

かの女はしぼうの層があつくって  
どんな他人からも  
かんぜんに他人であるわよといい  
神様のように他人であった  
そんなかの女を  
ほんとうに他人と他人らしくねるので  
きみにしたところで  
それをみているのは生きがいという  
もので  
きみはそれを窓からみているしか  
ない

それでわたしは大の字になって  
ねころんで  
きみがわたしとの因縁で  
化けものになっていきはせぬかと  
なまつばのんでまつのであった  
きみはわたしや椅子などを足で  
けて  
きものまんま空気の方へでていった  
どんな味がしましたか それは  
きみはいま  
顔をはじめさまさまの器具が  
こわれており  
しかもきみはそれを理解できないで  
あたかも詩人のごとき面構えで  
かならず死んでやるぞと死人の  
ごとくいい  
金儲けにせい出しはじめたのは  
よかった  
おんなというものたちは  
きみにふりむきもせず  
きみにくたいだけがほしい  
そのきみはもはやにくがふやけ  
はじめていて  
かの女たちは  
はやくも化粧をはじめるところで  
あった  
きみはあしたも  
きみのとりまきのおとこたちに

to tell them stories  
Your only son  
hasn't come home yet today either  
you joke  
telling your exaggerated story

つきあいの関係で  
いろいろ物語らねばならない  
きみのひとりむすこは  
きょうもまだ帰ってこない  
きみはおどけてそれを  
大げさに語るのであった  
(*Tomioka Taeko shû* 1 287-291)

In addition to the inclusion of the sanitary belt that so excited Araki, this poem is also remarkable in its portrayal of women as highly sexual beings. As outrageous an image as it is, a woman wearing only a sanitary belt is also charged with sexuality. In a similarly suggestive vein, the speaker describes herself as being reduced to a "woman on the make," or the "prowl" as I have translated it here. Elsewhere in the poem, she lies in bed "spread eagle," her "mouth parched," an image that anticipates the domestic abuse that Araki's eye-patch suggests. Turning away from nothing in this wide-ranging poem, the narrator directly relates her lover's violence toward her: "wondering if our relationship is fated/ to become a monster/ You kicked me and my chair/ and dressed in kimono went out into the air/ What did it taste like--that time?" In the end, her lover makes light of his own philanderings, invoking a prodigal son who "hasn't come home yet today either."

As this chapter emphasizes, the many-faceted images of abjection are anything but static in Tomioka's poetry. Yes, the narrator of "*Joyû*" is beaten, but at the same time, in an interesting reversal of roles, the female protagonists in "*Joyû*," jealous rivals in love no less, become conspirators, vying only for the "body" of their man. Their ability to play many different roles in their relationships with each other and their men, indeed, to discard men like worn clothing, can be seen in the way the actress "takes out and puts into her dresser/ so many pieces of flesh," an occupation

that the narrator's abjected lover apparently "enjoys." Preceding a generation of women poets and thinkers to come, Tomioka faithfully unstitches any notion of what it might mean to be a woman poet in postwar Japan, laying the groundwork for the highly-charged, and even confrontational, sense of sexuality that Itô Hiromi's poetry exudes.

Tomioka stakes out her poetic turf on the constantly-shifting, "revolutionary" ground of the ambiguous, and so doing, refuses not only female voice, gender norms, and fixed sexual identities, but her place in the history of women's poetry in Japan as well. Refusing conventional notions of gender and sexuality, time and space, and religion and death, Tomioka's final tribute to the ever-suffering, ever-triumphant trickster Amano jaku was her decision in 1973, after the publication of her collected works, to give up writing poetry altogether in order to devote herself to fiction (Morton 101). And yet, despite her relatively brief poetic career of just fifteen years, it is Tomioka Taeko's inventive poetry that contemporary poets such as Itô Hiromi and Isaka Yôko cite when describing the major poets and influences of their generation. Well ahead of her time in terms of her vision of gender and poetic experimentation, Tomioka is in a class of her own and continues to be a poet that even the youngest, most experimental poets writing today return to.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> In my 2008 interview, Arai suggested that young poets today such as Yasukawa Nao are writing in a style that is strongly reminiscent of Tomioka. Yasukawa is the author of *Melophobia* (a combination of the words "melody" and "phobia"). Yasukawa's poetry is discussed in the conclusion of this dissertation.



Appendix 1

Sculptures of Amano jaku at Hasedera in Kamakura, see Amano jaku.



## Chapter 3

### In the Voice of a Human God: (Ad)dressing the Open Wound

#### in the Poetry of Yoshihara Sachiko

#### Introduction

In Yoshihara Sachiko's poetry, the abject appears as a festering wound. So often emblematic of love, Yoshihara's wounds represent the attempt to love as the human "condition." Painfully held apart, lovers are imprisoned in separate worlds of solitary confinement, where they pay for their "crimes" of loving, acts that neither humans, nor even gods, locked within their separate existences, can achieve. As expressed in her poem "*Kyôhan*" (Complicity), from the 1973 collection *Hirugao* (*Dayflowers*), lovers are held apart by virtue of their separate pasts, the seemingly infinite distances between them that cannot be crossed. In "*Kyôhan*," the speaker's pain is poignantly expressed by her own retreating memories, mirrored in the "small, pitiful backs" of a couple who moves away from her, unable to share the past, and hence, their present life together:

The retreating figures move away  
のThe small, pitiful backs grow distant:  
the steam from the past the laughter  
顔Can't two people share  
り  
the present  
unless they've shared all of the past?  
Are we that solitary?  
か

うしろ姿がゆく いぢらしいものたち  
小さな背中が遠ざかる  
あのときの湯けむり あのときの笑  
すべての過去を共有しない限

どんなふたりも  
現在を共有することはできないのか  
そんなにわたしたちはひとりぼっち

(*Chidoriashi* 117)

In her poem "*Dokubô*" (Solitary confinement), also from *Hirugao*, the wound becomes the single, defining characteristic of life itself. Indeed, in this case, death is marked by the absence of wounds. That is, without wounds, the speaker cannot exist: "*Kizu wa*

*nai no dakara watashi wa nai*" (Because I don't have wounds, I don't exist) (*Zoku Yoshihara Sachiko* 22).

As Mizuta Noriko points out, Yoshihara's poems cut very close to the bone: the speaker's pain is always apparent and more often than not, imbued with a vibrant physicality (311). In "*Dokubô*," for instance, the poet-persona's blood becomes the very ink with which she writes; indeed, in a poem in which the existence of all things is questioned, the poet's "red ink" becomes the one thing that can always be found: "*aka inku de itai moji o kaku/ aka inku dake wa fushigito/ itsumo aru*" (I write the painful characters in red ink/ How strange/ that there is always red ink) (*Zoku Yoshihara Sachiko* 22).

This chapter will begin by exploring the painful persona of the "wounded" that Yoshihara so brilliantly brings to life in the "red ink" of these lines, and will then move on to examine, in section two, the personae of the volatile "wounding" women who also inhabit her poems. Given the poet's gender, it is tempting to read the wound *only* as the bleeding wound/womb of the female sex, the phallogentric reading of woman as castrated man put forth in Freudian psychology. While there is some element of this at work in Yoshihara's poetry, we must also consider her use of the persona of Abe Sada in "*Otoko--'ai no koriida' ni*" (Man--in *realm of the senses*).<sup>62</sup> Poignantly turning to the lover she will castrate, the narrator reminds him, "the heart and the body are the same" (Mizuta, "From the Thirst of the Accomplice" 318).

Located at the center of Japanese women's poetry in the 1980s as a co-editor, with Shinkawa Kazue, of the feminist literary journal *La mer*, Yoshihara contributed

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<sup>62</sup> "*Otoko--'ai no koriida' ni*" ("Man--In *The Realm of the Senses*") refers to Ôshima Nagisa's 1976 film "*Ai no koriida' ni*."

significantly, both as a poet and an editor, to the "women's poetry boom" that occurred in the 1980s. Indeed, Yoshihara's poetry demands to be examined within the context of the issues that defined this movement: the entwined relationships between sexuality and power, corporeal autonomy and freedom, and above all, the recognition of the responsibility women bear in "choosing" their own happiness. The role that the imagination can play in these choices is a powerful motif in Yoshihara's poetry and will be explored in the final section of this chapter.

While, as Mizuta writes, the "bright red" wounds that Yoshihara describes exist on the "surface of the skin...before our eyes" (311), they originate from a source deep within the body, psyche, and experience of the speaker. That is, in Yoshihara's poetry, the wound is not so much "an external menace from which one wants to distance oneself," but, to bring another element of Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject into play, these wounds "menace us from the inside" (Kristeva qtd in Guberman 118). Indeed, as Mizuta says, they emblemize the "aftermath of love" (311), dramas that are so deeply internalized within the poem that the details of their motivating events all but vanish. In other words, the wounding drama is often so deeply embedded that the reader is left only with its emotional weight, not its origins. These dramas, according to Arai Toyomi, should be viewed as those that "surround modern consciousness" (27). Although we view them as if they were staged as a play, "before long we feel them as our own, as though they inhabited our interior lives" (28).

This penchant for the dramatic is not surprising, given Yoshihara's early interests in drama as a student in the French department in Tokyo University in the 1950s. Appearing in plays by Sartre, Anouilh, and Brecht, Yoshihara wrote a thesis

called "The Problem of Love in Jean Anouilh" (Morton, *Modernism in Practice* 424-25). Claiming that Yoshihara's interest in "the drama surrounding love" appears most strongly in her 1973 book *Hirugao*, Arai cites Yoshihara's poem "*Rôsoku*" ("Candle") to describe the highly metaphorical quality of these poems. Taking up the persona of a candle, the speaker exclaims, "I am not something that burns/ I am not the burning flame that ignites me/I am burning, burning itself" (27). Possessing an aching sense of awe and sensuality, the burning wound comes to epitomize the unlikely joy that can be found in Yoshihara's poetry as well. The narrator of "*Rôsoku*" is not unlike Christ, at once eternal and alive in the beauty of the moment of his greatest sacrifice: "*Rôsoku*" ends, "I stand in my flowing blood/Always, forever, I am here" (*Hirugao* 27-28). Indeed, an intense lyricism underlies Yoshihara's provocative image of the wound, and, as this chapter will show, the longing for wholeness suggested by the musicality of Yoshihara's language imbues her poetry not only with a profound recognition of the ways in which women suffer, but with the understanding that these wounds are emblems of the poet's vivacious capacity for joy as well. The ecstasy that flies from the ravaged wounds found in Yoshihara's works, as well as her penchant for larger-than-life dramatic personae, displays a sensibility reminiscent of American poets Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton. Born in the same year as Plath, 1932, Yoshihara bore witness to many of the same world events Plath and Sexton were subject to as children-- Auschwitz and Hiroshima, as Yoshihara points out in her essay on Plath--the events of a generation whose extremity becomes a catalyst for the deeply personal dramas that play out in their poetry (*Chidoriashi* 191-92).

## I. The Tracings of Human Memory: Scars, Wounds, Stains

As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, the wounds that appear in Yoshihara's poetry emblemize failed love, which, in Yoshihara's world, defines what can be called "the human condition." That is to say, while Yoshihara's poems feature startlingly individualistic narrators, a deeply resonant sense of the universal so often emerges from the intimate voices of these speakers, the particularity of the metaphors through which they convey their suffering. Their stories deeply embedded beneath their linguistic surfaces, both "*Kizuato*" ("Scar") and "*Dokubô*," which appear in Yoshihara's collections *Ondine* (1972) and *Hirugao* respectively, become "scars" themselves, poems that reveal only the emotional weight of a particular story, or wound, whose traces of memory form the remaining scar. Delineating the outline of a "brittle," heavily "cross-stitched" "glass scar," the narrator of "*Kizuato*" remains unfazed by the memory of her wounds, the appalling physical pain that a "ripped shoulder" or "torn arm" should have represented; although she does not perceive this physical pain, she is all too aware that her heart is "too heavy," a sentiment that is reminiscent of the narrator of Ishigaki Rin's "*Kappa tengoku*," who describes the burden of her work and responsibility for her family as an unbearable "heaviness." "Healed by a wounded hand," the narrator of "*Kizuato*" remains vulnerable, like the *kappa*, a "misshapen form," one wants to say a "trace" of her former self, ready to break into "smithereens," should she be wounded again:

### Scar

A glass scar  
like meat after several stitches  
have been sewn  
Brittle

### 傷痕

ガラスの 傷  
いく針か縫はれたあとの肉のように  
ふるびたセロテープに十文字に  
かがられて

as old tape etched in a cross

硬直する

Wounded, clumsily unable to finish  
a life that's expected to shatter

傷つけながら碎ける筈の一生を  
無器用に 終り損ねて

A personal wound  
healed by a wounded hand  
exposes the misshapen form

自ら傷つき  
傷つけた手に復元されて  
不具の姿をさらす

And then saying  
next time you break  
it will be to smithereens

そして云ふ  
こんどこはすなら 粉みぢんにと

Ah, this  
ripped shoulder a torn arm  
mean nothing  
My heart is too heavy  
I don't understand the ache of skin

ああこの  
裂けた肩 ちぎれた腕は  
何ものでもありません  
こころが重すぎて  
わたしに 肌の痛みはわかりませぬ

Or, even more than that  
the faint blood smeared on your  
fingertips  
That pain  
That weight

それよりも  
あなたのその  
かすかに血のにじむ指さきは  
その痛みは  
その重みは

It is barely visible  
That I can't die yet  
is so painful

なまじ見える そして  
もう死ねないことが 苦しい

(Zoku Yoshihara Sachiko 17-18)

The denial of *physical* pain in this poem--the "ripped shoulder" and "torn arm" that "mean nothing"--becomes a means of gauging the enormity of the narrator's *emotional* pain, the poignancy of her despair and wish to die. In other words, even as Yoshihara embraces the specificity of bodily experience that critics such as Arai claim epitomizes postwar women's poetry, she calls its existence--"the ache of skin," "blood smeared onto...fingertips"--into question. Indeed, it is this paradoxical denial of the body that allows Yoshihara to reveal the body in all of its abjectivity: a body that is essentially stripped limb from limb, a body that she would willingly sacrifice to relieve

her emotional suffering. The very language of the poem can be construed as paradoxical as well. As in so many of Yoshihara's poems, the abject subject matter is thoroughly enveloped in the beauty of her selective use of a formal, pre-war writing system that would produce the under-tracings of classical language, such as "云ふ" in the line from "そして云ふ／こんどこはすなら 粉みぢんに と" (And then saying/ next time you break it will be to smithereens). Similarly, as these lines show, Yoshihara communicates the brutality of the narrator's experience in her strongly "feminized" use of *hiragana*; in addition, she does not turn away from the gentility of the poetic exclamation "ah," to introduce the startling image of "this ripped shoulder/ this torn arm."

In Yoshihara's poem "*Dokubô*," the non-existence of the body, indeed, of all things physical, reaches the level of an obsession: the first two stanzas alone include "nonexistent blood," a "nonexistent cigarette," and a "nonexistent hotdog," which the narrator garnishes with mustard and blood before eating. Nonexistence is a blessing, of course, when it comes to wounds. Acknowledging that "Love cannot exist without wounds," the speaker reasons that because "love does not exist" in the solitary cell in which she is imprisoned, "neither can wounds." Indeed, the speaker's embrace of nonexistence is caught in the balance between "sin" and "crime" that Yoshihara's frequent use of *tsumi* implies--"flying a nonexistent balloon in a nonexistent sky" is a sin, as is "hugging a nonexistent lover." This tension between sin and crime will be further explored in the next section of this chapter, but suffice it to say, in English translation, sin turns to crime when (the nonexistent) actions become violent enough: "As punishment for the crime of stabbing a nonexistent lover/ I was put in a nonexistent



isolation chamber"). Metaphorically speaking, the net result of building such a highly-subjective sense of reality, far beyond the bounds of what we might call "consensus reality," becomes, in this poem, an extreme form of isolation, confinement to "Solitary Confinement," "*Dokubô*":

### Solitary Confinement

A white ashtray, the inside painted red  
About half of what has accumulated there  
is nonexistent blood  
I put out the flame of a nonexistent  
cigarette--poof, just like that

I put mustard and blood  
on a nonexistent hotdog and eat it  
The blood is every bit as tart as ketchup

Love cannot exist without wounds but  
because love does not exist neither  
い

can wounds  
The sin of flying a nonexistent balloon  
in a non-existent sky  
The sin of hugging a nonexistent lover  
Half of my sentence has been served

And the remaining half  
is the time it takes to prove  
that I am not there  
The knife I reached for does not exist  
Because the wound does not exist I  
do not exist

As punishment for the crime of stabbing  
a nonexistent lover  
I was put in a nonexistent isolation  
chamber  
While the prison guard isn't looking  
I write painful characters in red ink  
on nonexistent paper I have spread

### 独房

内側を赤く塗られた白い灰皿  
そこに半分ぐらいたまってるのは  
ない血だ  
ジュッと ないタバコの火を消す

ないホットドッグに  
辛子と血をつけて食べる  
まるでケチャップのようにすっぱい

傷のない愛などある筈はない だが  
愛はないのだから 傷もある筈がな

ない空にない風船をとばした罪  
ない恋人を抱いた罪  
半分が終わった

さうして残る半分は  
わたしがそこにゐないことを  
証明するための時間だ  
とどかなかったナイフは ない  
傷はないのだから わたしは ない

ない恋人を刺した罪 は  
ない独房で罰せられ  
看守の眼をぬすんでひろげた ない  
紙に  
赤いインクで 痛い文字を書く  
赤いインクだけは ふしぎと  
いつも ある

around me  
How strange  
that there is always red ink

(*Zoku Yoshihara Sachiko* 21-22)

As in so many of Yoshihara's poems, by the end of "*Dokubô*," we return to what is most basic to us all: human blood, which in this case, appears, significantly enough, in the form of red ink. Even though the narrator is bent on proving her own nonexistence--"*sôshite nokoru hanbun wa/ watashi ga soko ni inai koto o shômei suru tame no jikan da*" (the remaining half [of her sentence]/ is the time it takes to prove that I am not there)--the poem ends in this red ink of the poet/narrator's blood, the one thing in this poem that "always exists." Only by extracting from her body the abject medium of blood can the narrator write herself back into existence, and yet, using the vital fluids of her own body as ink, life, at best, is a tenuous proposition. While I would argue that there is some measure of hope contained in the narrator's desperate attempt to reach out of her isolation to communicate in her own blood, as a whole, the poem also evokes the sentiment that poetry cannot serve as a substitute for life, that the poet "cannot write instead of live...cannot write instead of love," as expressed by the narrator of Yoshihara's "*Jikai*" (Self-discipline), which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter. In "*Dokubô*," after all, flying a nonexistent balloon in a nonexistent sky is a "sin," as serious as hugging a "nonexistent lover.

The metaphor of blood, expressed as the poet's "ink" that we find in "*Dokubô*," is ever-present in the poetry of Sylvia Plath as well. Instead of ink, "A million soldiers...Redcoats every one" run from a wound the narrator accidentally inflicts upon herself in Plath's well-known poem "Cut." Both Yoshihara and Plath respond to their wounds in a variety of registers. In the beginning of "*Dokubô*" and

"Cut," for instance, they respond with the callousness of war veterans who have seen it all: unafraid to ingest her own blood, Yoshihara squeezes it onto a hotdog, while Plath opens her poem with the deadpan "What a thrill----/ My thumb instead of an onion./ The top quite gone/ Except for a sort of hinge/ Of skin,/ A flap like a hat,/ Dead white." What is most relevant in comparing these highly-innovative poets, however, in relationship to the development of women's poetic expression, is their use of invented personae in poems that are so often described as deeply "confessional." That is, both poets create imaginary worlds through which to detail suffering that we can assume was very real to them both. This impulse behind each poet's desire to work through personae who cannot be mistaken for the poet herself no doubt arises from various sources, but the end result is the same: a poetry that is large enough to encompass the overpowering sense of emotion that each poet attempted to convey in her works.

The extent to which we can claim a direct influence of Plath on Yoshihara cannot be determined with any certainty; however, Yoshihara notes that she was encouraged to read Plath by Plath's Japanese translator, Tokunaga Chôzô, because of the similarities he noted between the two poets. Recognizing something familiar in the "severity" and "overpowering" quality of Plath's poems, Yoshihara also felt a kind of kinship to Plath in terms of her "wild style" ("*Kyôki to no tatakai--shirubia parasu,*" Sylvia Plath: The battle with insanity 191). Noting that Plath had "finished" her work by her early thirties when she committed suicide, just as she was beginning her own poetic career, Yoshihara went on to read other books of Plath in translation, notably *The Bell Jar*, a novel about a young woman named Esther who attempts suicide on several occasions. In her essay on Plath, Yoshihara describes her deep feelings of



	の場所に わたしを解き放ってください
Do not place your hands on my shoulders	わたしの肩に手を置かないで
Do let me turn around	ふりむかせないで
And do not wipe away the small stain	わたしのみつめている小さな
that I am staring at	しみを
with your huge, benevolent hands	親切な 大きな掌で
	ふいてしまわないでください
	( <i>Zoku Yoshihara Sachiko 53-54</i> )

The question of who the intimate other in "*Inori*" is a significant one. Indeed, the figure with whom the speaker pleads for "release" can be seen as a person with an all-powerful influence over the speaker, if not a God. The humble stature of the terrified speaker, as well as the "tiny" "spot on the floor" that the stain of her sin has been reduced to, provide a human scale for this figure, its "huge, benevolent" (and, presumably, all-powerful) "hands." While this poem can be also be read as a kind of death wish--in the speaker's desire to be "released"--what is most intriguing about it is the value the speaker places on the "wound" she contemplates in this poem, a tiny "stain" that defines her in the brief moments in which this poem takes place. As the shadow of stained glass, the "wound" becomes a transitory abstraction whose shapes and colors must change with the passage of time, and indeed, have done so already between the second and third lines, moving from the body of the speaker to the floor, where she can scrutinize "her stain" from a greater distance. Hence, if the speaker is to be released into the peace, or "quiet loneliness" she finds in contemplating the stain, time must stop, before the shadow of stained glass disappears completely into the darkness of the coming night. In other words, to fix this moment of "clarity," the speaker must die, for, as a living being, she, too, can exist only in time. While this

poem can be seen as the narrator's wish to be "released" from life, it is also a reflection of the power of poetry to "fix" the fleetingness of the poet's perception in time. Should God "heal" this wound through the passage of time, the result would be tinged with irony as the speaker returns to the things in this world that the passage of time brings with it, namely, the terrors of love.

We might assume from the title "*Sonemu*" that the relationship described in this poem is more human in scale than the one that we encounter in "*Inori*," and, while this may be true, the magnitude of the pain we find in this poem is so much larger; for that matter, as in "*Inori*," if this poem is not addressed to God, it is addressed to someone with great power over the speaker, given that she fears disappearing into his "depths," which are associated with those of clouds and the ocean, both of which would obliterate the speaker. She envies the ways in which the seagulls and fish can draw close to the clouds, the "other" this poem describes:

### Envy

The clouds, blood-stained by the glow  
of evening  
I envy for just a moment the way  
the seagulls fly so close to them

The fish all the way down  
at the bottom of the ocean's blue-black  
depths

And then, the way the yellow sail  
spreads like a kiss  
from the light blue belly  
of a capsized boat

I did not want to be tainted by seagulls  
They did not want to be tempted by me

### 嫉む

夕映えに 血塗られた雲 あんなに  
も近く  
かもめがとぶことを 嫉むひととき

海に 魚がゐることを  
あんなにも蒼黒い深まりの底に

さうして くつがへったボート  
の 水いろの腹に  
黄いろいヨットの帆が  
くちづけようと はばたくことを

けがされたくなかった かもめに  
さそはれたくなかった わたしに

Wanting to live in this faint light  
like a gentle wind or a fish

そよ風のやうに 魚のやうに  
うすら明りに 生きてみたかった

I will not enter  
the clouds, the ocean, you  
within your depths  
you fall silent I am no more

わたしは入ってゆかない  
雲にも 海にも あなたにも  
あなたの深まりの底に  
あなたはだまる わたしはみない  
(*Natsu no haka* 18-19)

The image of the wound in this poem takes on great beauty: indeed, the narrator envies the seagulls, who do not fear "the clouds, blood-stained by the glow of evening" the way that she does. A highly metaphorical "wound" in this case as well, this stain of beauty may in fact represent poetry itself, the difficult process whereby the poet can enter, and then express through language, her own suffering. And yet, as expressed above, poetry is not a medium in which one can permanently reside. Indeed, as this poem suggests, poetry offers no safe haven, only danger. In her best poems, Yoshihara skims dangerously close to these clouds, these wounds, that could envelop her. Knowing she can go only so close to them, she wants to hover at a slight distance from them, "to live in this faint light/ like a gentle wind or a fish." And yet, from her vantage point, the poet is fully aware of the dilemma she is caught in: She cannot enter the clouds, the life of poetry itself, for, to do so would mean certain death; on the other hand, *not* doing so, the poet must reconcile herself to a another kind of death, a death brought on by an unexamined life. The other, addressed as "*anata*" in the final lines of the poem, can, in this way, be seen not only as a lover, or as God, but as the poet's voice as well, a voice that can confess this dilemma, if not resolve it.

## II. Crime and Punishment: In the Voice of a Human God

Yoshihara joined the Rekitei poetry coterie, the same group with which Ishigaki was affiliated, in the early 1960s. Known as one of the major "centers of the postwar poetry renaissance" (Morton, *An Anthology of Contemporary Japanese Poetry* 407), Rekitei was led by the noted poet Kusano Shimpei (1903-1988), who specialized in long poems comprised of many short poems.<sup>63</sup> Yoshihara, too, made strong use of the sequence, especially during the 1970s, with the publication of *Ondine*. This collection features the long sequence "Ondine," an intensely lyrical poem that exemplifies Yoshihara's interest in the despairing depths of the "human drama," the "starting point" that leads to the "catastrophe" that the poem calls "love." First produced in 1938, Jean Giraudoux's play *Ondine* details the love between the water nymph Ondine and her human lover, Hans, a wandering "knight-errant" who is engaged to marry a woman at court. In many ways, the play can be seen as the mermaid's quest for a human soul through marriage, as the tragedy of spiritually incompatible lovers. As Yoshihara puts it in these early lines of the poem, Ondine's love is so pure that it becomes her "downfall."

Purity is one of the diseases of this world It developed the complications of love and grew acute So You ought to have searched for another you A diseased Ondine	純粹とはこの世でひとつの病気です 愛を併発してそれは重くなる だから あなたはもうひとりのあなたを 病気のオンディーヌをさがせば よかった
Types like Hans while embracing you Always looked elsewhere Your purity will not permit this When you became gentler	ハンスたちはあなたを抱きながら いつもよそ見をする ゆるさないのが あなたの純粹 もっとやさしくなって

---

<sup>63</sup> Other Rekitei poets included Nakahara Chûya and Miyazawa Kenji, who, along with Kusano had a keen interest in the "effects of sound" in their poetry. Kusano, a poet with "anarchist leanings," is remembered especially for his series of poems about frogs, see Keene, 356-457.



And tried to forgive him  
It was your downfall  
Your love

ゆるさうとさへしたのが  
あなたの墮落  
あなたの愛

(*Ondine* 36-37, trans. Morton, *An Anthology of Contemporary Japanese Poetry* 267)

Both Ondine and her estranged lover speak to one another in the poem, but the voice we hear in this passage is that of a seemingly "all-knowing" persona, a God-like entity who addresses Ondine from afar. This is not the only poem in which a narrator's voice takes on the largeness of a god. The tenor of the highly lyrical voice Yoshihara adopts in her poem "*Kyôhan*" approaches that of the gods as well, and yet, because, in many ways, the speaker of "*Kyôhan*" describes her own singularly *human* experience, the effect of this persona that approaches godliness, indeed, this voice of a "human god," is all the more poignant. "*Kyôhan*," too, is presented in many short sections whose brevity and crispness helps this poem of more than one hundred lines sustain its many short bursts of intensity.

While Yoshihara explains in her essay about "*Kyôhan*" that the poem is in fact based on excruciatingly personal experience, she evokes this experience abstractly, through the metaphor of crime, and it is this tendency toward abstraction that further elucidates the contemplative voice, or voices, of the gods. However, what is perhaps most startling about this persona is the emotion that lies in wait behind the abstract human suffering that the narrator describes. This tension between the godliness of the voice and the human quality of the speaker's "experience" as something she has "lived through" allows the speaker her profound insight into human frailty: "Loneliness" is something she is "swallowed by;" her "weakness," as she puts it, her "small right." This double-edged sword of decidedly *human* confession on the part of a super-human narrator is one of the hallmarks of American

women poets so often deemed "confessional" in their approach, such as Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. In the case of Plath, Sexton, and Yoshihara, and, to some extent, as we will see in the following chapter, Itô Hiromi, the confessional voice becomes deeply ironic. That is, the deepest secrets of the heart are revealed impersonally, through a "super human" persona who might go so far as to commit murder, as in Plath's "Daddy," in which the narrator plunges a stake into her father's heart, or in Itô's famous, or infamous, "*Kanoko goroshi*" (Killing Kanoko), in which the narrator murders her infant daughter.

Nowhere specifying the kind of god or gods whose voices are invoked throughout "*Kyôhan*," as Yoshihara puts it in her essay about the poem, she adopts a persona that "crosses the borders of the self," taking on an existence that she says can only be called that of a "god" (*kami*) ("*Shi 'kyôhan' ni okeru dôki*," The role of motive in the poem "Complicity" 88). That is to say, while the narrator addresses her lover as a god in this poem, she also literally "invokes" the voice of a god, inasmuch as she speaks through what we might call a godly voice as well. Even though she claims a human existence in the poem--"Even not being a god/ There are times when I can forgive"--her god-like voice can be detected on a number of levels in the poem, but most readily through the speaker's informal address to her lover/god in the form of the second person "*anata*" (you). Indeed, in this poem, the narrator confronts the god-like presence she can only tremble before in poems such as "*Inori*" and "*Someru*." "*Kyôhan*" opens with a *kotobagaki*, or poetic preface, that relates a brief disclaimer, or confession, on the part of the poet. While this confession is offered up in the all-too-human voice of the poet, it gives us nothing of the personal details that we might expect in such a preface, only the seriousness with which she

approaches her subject, the terms "crime" (*tsumi*) and "punishment" (*batsu*). Even though she claims to reject both terms, they are the very words she must summon the courage to use to describe the relationship the poem invokes:

### Complicity

### 共犯

I reject the word I once used: *crime*. Also, the word *punishment*. After all, we wouldn't use these words for a person who could not stab someone with a knife: they cannot apply to me either. For now though, with the palest face, I dare return to these words.

—わたしは かつて用ひた罪<sup>1</sup>といふ自分のことばを否定する。罰<sup>1</sup>といふことばをも。結局は何ものにもナイフを突きたて得なかった人間にとって そんなことばはない。だから 今のわたしにもない。だが 少くとも今 わたしは最も蒼ざめつつ あへて再びこのことばに還る。—

For the first time I invoke the gods!

はじめて 神に訊ねる！

Is the accomplice, the only one serving  
a sentence,  
a betrayer?

じぶんだけ服役してしまふ共犯者は  
裏切者か？

Why don't we say "we"?  
Not to other people  
of course, but to you, gods.

わたしたちが  
と何故言はないのか？  
ひとにではない  
むろん 神よ、あなたに。

Ah, is this mercy? Or betrayal?

ああ あれはやさしさ？ 裏切り？

\*

God, I do not die easily.  
Someone else is always risking their life,  
not me.

神よ わたしはしぶとい。  
いつも 命がけなのは  
わたしでない 誰かだ。

\*

One kind of cowardice:  
Accepting the punishment,  
but taking no responsibility for the crime.

ひとつの卑怯。  
罰をなら ひきうけるのに  
罪を ひきうけようとしないこと。

Another kind of cowardice:

もうひとつの卑怯。

More so than the punishment,  
accepting the burden of the crime.

罰よりも より多く  
罪を ひきうけたがってゐること。

\*

The smoker, resigned to lung cancer  
The drinker, resigned to stomach cancer  
Always, we need to resign ourselves  
to something

タバコ吸ふなら 肺ガンをかかご  
ウイスキーのむなら 胃ガンをかかご  
わたしたちには いつもたくさんの  
覚悟が要る

One can't choose the punishment  
Only the crime

罰は選べない  
罪は選べる

And we made our choice!

さうして わたしたちは選んだのだ!

\*

Stunned like a child chided for pranks  
If it's a cup easily dropped,  
you should have broken it from  
the beginning  
For instance, when it comes to whisky,  
if necessary, I will serve my sentence,  
but I will not repent.

いたづらを叱られた子供のやうに  
びっくりして 手落すぐらみのコップ  
なら  
はじめから 割れはよかったのだ  
たとへばウイスキーについて  
必要なら 服役はしよう  
だが 懺悔はすまい。

\*

Struggling in so many ways  
with loneliness,  
swallowed by loneliness  
This is our weakness,  
our small right  
even if it seems so far from merciful.

淋しさを  
それぞれのかたちでもがいたり  
のみこまれたりするの  
わたしたちの弱さだ  
弱さといふ小さな権利だ  
時に やさしさから遠くみえた  
としても。

Weakness, I forgive.  
I don't care if the gods or anyone else  
overhear these arrogant words.

弱さは ゆるす。  
この不遜なことばが 神と誰か  
とにきこえてもいい。

Even not being a god  
there are times when I can forgive  
The more difficult thing is to be forgiven  
by people weaker,

神よ あなたでなくたって  
ゆるすことができるときもある  
むづかしいのは ゆるされることだ  
より弱いものから

more lonely than I

(I can't hear your voice,  
so time and again, I've plucked matches

like the petals of a red poppy:  
"He forgives me, He forgives me not"  
Was the number even or odd?  
You no doubt know the answer,  
but then again, there's always  
the chance of my miscount,  
of your mistaken answer)

\*

Everyone is lonely,  
everyone  
To grasp hold of something,  
one must let go of something.  
For one not to be lonely,  
one must make someone lonely  
We let go:  
For the sake of the brush, we let go  
of ink  
For the sake of the arrow, the sword

We are one-handed!

The one letting go the thing let go of  
The one who grasps hold the things that  
are held  
Because of one's loneliness one is lonely  
Because of others' loneliness we all  
suffer pain  
It all blends together  
But perhaps this is the difference  
between sorrow and pain

\*

It all blends together now  
for one as well as another

より淋しいものから

(あなたの声がきこえないので  
何度かわたしは マッチ棒で  
占った  
ひなげしの古ひのやうに。  
<ゆるされる> からはじめて  
奇数だったか 偶数だったかー  
あなたは知ってゐるだらう でも  
わたしの数へ違ひやー  
あなたの答へ違ひも あった  
かもしれない)

誰だって淋しい  
誰だって  
何かを手にするためには 何かを  
手放さねばならない。  
ひとりが 淋しくなるために  
ひとりの 淋しいひとをつくる  
わたしたちは手放す  
筆のため 墨を  
劍のため 弓を

わたしたち片手なのだ！

手放すものも 手放される  
ものも  
手にするものも されるものも  
じぶんの淋しさのために淋しく  
ひとりの淋しさのために苦しい  
のだ  
それはまじり合ってる  
けれど たぶん  
かなしみ と いたみ のちがひは  
それだ

それはまじり合ってる いま  
ひとりにも もうひとりにも。

The proportion differs  
by only a little or else vastly--

And so  
I will not cry  
I cannot cry  
My suffering is only a little  
or else infinitely vast  
The shame of it:  
pain outdistancing sorrow

\*

The retreating figures move away  
The small, pitiful backs grow distant:  
the steam from the past the laughter  
from the past  
Can't two people  
share the present  
unless they've shared all of the past?  
Are we that solitary?

Despite sharing the crime  
the weights of our punishments are  
already different!

\*

Once again, God,  
I don't care if you hear this

(Because there is a place inside me  
that hurts so badly  
I feel the terror only dully  
Even so, I say this trembling)

If you say my painful way of letting go  
is not yet enough

I would rather have sorrow,  
the same punishment

まじりかたの割合ひはちがふ  
ほんの少し 或ひは無限に多く一

だからわたしは  
泣かない  
泣けない  
わたしのいたみが ほんの少し  
或ひは無限に多く  
かなしみを追ひこしてしまふことを  
わたしは恥ぢる

うしろ姿がゆく いぢらしいもの  
たちの  
小さな背中が遠ざかる  
あのと時の湯けむり あのと時の笑顔  
すべての過去を共有しない限り  
どんなふたりも  
現在を共有することはできないのか  
そんなにわたしたちはひとりぼっちか

罰を分けても  
その罰さへも すでに重さが異なる  
のか!

もういちど 神よ  
あなたに きこえてもいい

(ひどくいたむところがあるため  
おそろしさを にぶくしか感じ  
ない  
それでも これを言ふときふる  
へる)

わたしのくるしい手放しかたが  
まだ足りないといふのなら

むしろ かなしみを  
同じ罰を

the same sentence!

同じ服役を！

\*

If we are bound  
by weakness  
and mistaken kindness,  
letting go of nothing  
then humans can only agonize  
extending hands that don't reach  
one another from the world's edge  
And now, by virtue of what we've lost  
we are not set free  
We are all the more tightly bound

もし 弱さや  
まちがったやさしさから  
何も手放さないでつながれてある  
のなら  
にんげんたちは  
世界の縁と縁とから  
とどかない手をさしのべ合って  
悶えるだけだ  
しかも いま 失ふことによって  
ひとり は 解き放たれたのではない  
ますます固く縛られただけだ

And now, there are also those who  
by virtue of what is not lost  
are all the more tightly bound

しかもいま ひとりもまた  
失はないことによって  
ますます固く縛られただけだ

\*

Yes, one must release something:  
to grasp love, our purity,

そう 何かを手放さねばならない  
愛を手にするためには わたしたちの  
無垢を

for repentance, the crime itself!

懺悔を手にするためには 罪  
そのものを！

\*

But, kind gods,  
surely you give even the condemned  
who must be separated their daily  
sustenance  
not rice, nor wheat:  
rather, the bitter bread of time,  
the poison called time  
the bitter medicine of time

だが 親切な神よ  
はなればなれの服役者たちにも  
あなたは確実に 日々の糧をお与へ  
下さる  
米でも 麦でもない  
食べるにいがい <時間> といふ糧  
<時間>といふ毒  
<時間>といふ薬  
(Chidoriashi 114-119)

As Yoshihara makes clear in her preface, while she has not committed what we think of as a "crime" per se (stabbing someone with a knife, as she says), she did willingly participate in something comparable to crime, with one whom she shares "complicity." Yoshihara readily admits in her writing about the poem that, as mentioned above, the "origin" of the "crime" is love and that this fact accounts for the speaker's feelings of betrayal, since, while sharing in the "crime," her accomplice/lover did not allow her to share in the resulting "punishment." Describing this scenario by means of analogy in her writing about the poem, Yoshihara explains that it is as though she and her accomplice had robbed a bank and then inadvertently ran over someone in the get-away car as they were fleeing the scene. In this scenario, she managed to escape and her "accomplice" in crime lied to the authorities upon questioning, perhaps in an effort to protect her, claiming that he was in fact acting alone. Despite sharing together in the crime, then, he alone is punished (*Chidoriashi* 88). It is in this sense then that Yoshihara asks whether her partner, "the only one serving a sentence," is a "betrayer."

While Yoshihara says the "criminal" aspect of the poem serves as a kind of associative "*engo*" throughout this poem that addresses the end of a love affair, we might at first be tempted to reverse this frame of reference to suggest that the primary focus of this poem, at least in the beginning, is criminality, and that it is love that serves as *engo*, the associative patterning that makes up the under-story of the lover's sufferings. The poem opens, after all, with an intense focus on the criminal, not love, particularly in terms of punishment, the aftermath of the lovers' crime: As mentioned above, the narrator declares the lover not only a God, but an "accomplice"/ "betrayer"



as well, and then turns to two interpretations of "cowardice," both of which weigh the relative merits of her lover's acceptance of punishment, rather than "responsibility for the crime," "a burden" she herself takes on: "One kind of cowardice:/ Accepting the punishment,/ but taking no responsibility for the crime.// Another kind of cowardice:/ More so than the punishment, / accepting the burden of the crime." It is only several pages into the poem that the subplot of love begins to emerge, through the telltale details of loneliness and weakness: the de-petaling of Love me/Love me Nots (or in this case, matches, sardonically enough, given the mention of lung cancer, that stand in as "Forgive me/Forgive me Nots"), the pain that outdistances sorrow, loss, and repentance for the narrator, a pain far worse than the punishment the lover/accomplice must endure. As this list shows, however, when the theme of love does emerge, it emerges in full force; indeed, perhaps the overpowering nature of this theme demands that it be held back at first through the metaphorical framework that crime provides.

This desire to push beyond the metaphorical limits of crime, to represent the "crime" of love as something very tangible, becomes, in and of itself, an important theme in Yoshihara's work. A similar movement can also be seen in "*Kyôki*" (Lethal weapon), also from *Hirugao*. Despairing over her lack of access to "lethal" weapons such as pistols and knives, the speaker can be seen as the mere poet, stranded in a metaphorical world of her own creation, a world she would just as soon shoot her way out of. By the end of the poem, she sees herself in the "bleeding clouds" that only the sea gulls could draw close to in "*Sonemu*," discussed above. Standing directly before the clouds that endure the violence the narrator herself would have liked to claim as

her own, she addresses them directly: "you, who are bleeding/ the many deaths I cannot have":

### Lethal Weapon

### 兇器

I don't want to dissolve  
I want to be dissolved

溶かしたくない  
解きたい

I don't want to breathe  
I want to be breathed in

吸ひこみたくない  
吸ひこまれたい

I don't want to kill  
I want to die

殺したくない  
死にたい

But I want to kill  
in order to be dissolved

でも殺したい  
溶けるために

Ah blood pistol knife  
The many lethal weapons I am unable  
to have  
especially the white gleam  
of a sword

ああ 血 ぴすとる ないふ  
わたしの持てないたくさんの兇器  
ことに刃もの  
のしろい光

I want to thrust violently at the whole  
world  
Thrusting violently I want to join in  
にI want to be breathed in by all of those  
I don't reach  
I want to be killed by the thrusting sword

つきたてたい 世界に すべてに  
つきたてることによって加ほりたい  
吸ひこまれたい とどかないすべて  
つきたてることによって殺されたい

Now I stand before the bleeding clouds  
you who are bleeding  
the many deaths I cannot have

いま 血を流す雲のまへに立って  
血をと流すあなた  
わたしの持てないたくさんの 死  
(Zoku Yoshihara Sachiko 22-23)

Although the wish to die that pervades this poem could not be more pronounced--"I don't want to dissolve/ I want to be dissolved// I don't want to breathe it in/ I want to be breathed in// I don't want to kill/ I want to die"--the narrator of this poem is hardly passive in her desire to "join in," "thrusting violently at the whole

world," even if this action is, as she says, a way of fulfilling her desire "to be dissolved." Indeed, this is one of several poems in which we sense the subtle shift of balance between the Yoshihara's narrators' wish "to die" and their wish "to thrust violently" at the world. This desire to strike back at the world comes to an extreme resolution in the act of castration in two poems that will be discussed at the conclusion of this section, each written from a different point of view: that of the male recipient/victim and female perpetrator.

This shift away from victim to that of aggressor can also be seen in "*Ningyô*" (Doll), which also appeared in *Natsu no haka*. In this poem, the doll can be seen as the narrator's double, or alter ego, so tender is her care, and destruction, of the doll. The speaker pries open the doll's lips and examines her from the inside, demanding, "who crammed you with sand?" What the doll has seen and heard in her suffering is invaluable to the narrator, who, after removing the doll's eyes and ears, places them in her jewelry box, holds them in her own hands:

### Doll

I take out your eyes  
and put them in my jewelry box  
I remove your ears as well and hold  
them in my hands

A marionette hanging down  
from the sky  
You dangle down  
So afraid of something harming you  
You have already been so violated  
You can't be violated any more  
By any color or sound

I pry open your lips  
Who crammed you with sand

### 人形

瞳をとり出して  
宝石箱へしまふ  
耳もはづして 掌にはりつける

空がぶら下げた あやつりにんぎやう  
そんなにして 侵すものを おそれる  
けれど  
おまへは 砂に侵されすぎて  
どんな色にも 音にも  
もう 侵されようがない

おまへの唇を こちあけて  
砂をつめこんだのは だれ

It got so overwhelming you did not  
cry out  
Because it tasted so bad, you did not eat  
Inside the box, your eyes are completely  
open  
No shovel can dig up your corpse

No matter who grabs at you  
or shakes you  
You shake you head like glass

きびしくなって 叫ばなくなって  
あまりまづいので 嘔まなくなって  
箱のなかで瞳孔はみひらいたきり  
どんなシャベルも 死体を掘れない

何がおまへを  
つかんでも ゆさぶっても  
おまへは  
ガラスのやうに 首をふる  
(*Natsu no haka* 28-29)

Despite the narrator's invasive treatment of the doll, she clearly emerges as the doll's protector, the one who would prevent others who would "violate" her even in death. The narrator's recognition of the doll's suffering allows the doll a kind of self-awareness: "inside the box," the doll's "eyes are completely open." Isolated within the box, the doll's corpse cannot be dug up, "no matter what the shovel," suggesting that the only way to get to the doll now is through the speaker's empathy. "No matter who grabs" at her "or shakes" her, the doll is empowered with the new, if exceedingly fragile, ability to refuse further torment, "shake[ing]" her head "like glass."

In a sense, the narrator of this poem must destroy the doll to get at the source of her suffering. Indeed, in doing so, she plays with the important cultural icon with which Japanese women are so often associated, the *hakoiri musume*, or "daughter in a box," who was sheltered and hidden from the world in an attempt to keep her purity intact for marriage. In this poem though, the "jewelry box" that contains the doll becomes her coffin. A miniature version, or alter ego, of the speaker, the doll's eyes are "wide open," signaling both the doll's and the speaker's awareness of the way in which they have already been violated. While we will see a similar dismantling of this image of female purity in Isaka

Yôko's "*Tsuki no deku*" (Mannequin from the moon) the doll is also a familiar image in contemporary poetry by American women poets as well. Anne Sexton, who, like Plath also championed the "confessional" mode in the 1960s, made extensive use of the doll motif. The narrator of Sexton's poem "Those Days," from her 1966 collection *Live or Die*, also confesses her morbid affinity for dolls: "At six/ I lived in a graveyard full of dolls,/ avoiding myself,/ my body, the suspect/ in its grotesque house." Sexton drives home the mute isolation of the doll that Yoshihara also foregrounds, continuing "I was locked in my room all day behind a gate,/ a prison cell./ I was the exile/ who sat all day in a knot" (29). In "Self in 1958," also contained in *Live or Die*, Sexton addresses the questions of identity that the doll motif so readily poses: "I am a plaster doll; I pose with eyes...that open, blue, steel, and close." The pursed lips of Sexton's doll are also "pried" open, but in this case, not by a sympathetic other, but by a "violator": "They pry my mouth for their cups of gin/ and their stale bread" (73-74).

The gentle mutilation that takes place in "*Ningyô*" gives way to castration in Yoshihara's powerful poems "*Otoko: Ai no koriida*," (Man: *In the realm of the senses*) and "*Kyori*," (Distance), from Yoshihara's collections *Yakan hikô* (Night flight, 1978) and *Hirugao* respectively. In "*Otoko: 'Ai no koriida' ni*," which refers to Ôshima Nagisa's 1976 film *Ai no koriida*, this "transformation" from a wounded to the wounding, indeed, castrating woman Abe Sada, demonstrates the cyclic nature of punishment, the ways in which the "wounded woman" has internalized her own abject status to the extent that she has begun to leave her "mark" on others, as a form of retaliation for wounds that have been inflicted on her. Indeed, in the context of poems discussed thus far, castration can be seen as the outward release of anger that the narrator so often directs toward herself in other

poems. Since lovers are so profoundly isolated, not only from one another, but from the outside world, it is as though they think they have no choice but to resolve their conflicts through acts of self-mutilation and mutilation of the other. Indeed, in the world of Yoshihara's poetry, the couple has only themselves, and each other. In this way, castration becomes the paradoxical form of love that permeates "*Otoko: 'Ai no koriida' ni*," ostensibly a love poem whose violent back story is impossible to ignore, in the final, resonant lines especially: "the heart and body are the same" ("*Risô no otoko*").

In "*Kyori*," which explores the distance between self and other, castration is carried out on the narrator by his lover, for his lack of "purity." In many ways, the emotional thrust of this poem parallels that of Yoshihara's earlier poem "*Ondine*," mentioned above: *Ondine's* purity is juxtaposed to that of a philandering man, who the godlike narrator describes as a "diseased *Ondine*." As in "*Ondine*," "*Kyori*," too, revolves around the notion of other as mirror image of the self, especially in its focus on the unlikely sense of balance the lovers attempt to achieve between purity and abjection. As the narrator says at the end of this poem that explores the excruciating ways in which the lovers achieve this "balance," the castrating other's "purity" is as heavy as the narrator's "madness."

### Distance

I was terrified of you  
of your purity

If I am a single weight  
the more we are apart  
the more the scales are out of balance  
how many centimeters of suffocating  
distance will be needed  
in order for my weight to balance

### 距離

わたしはあなたをおそれた  
あなたの無垢を

もしわたしが ひとつの錘りであるなら  
はなればはなれるほど  
秤りは かしぐだらう  
あなたの重みに  
わたしの重みがつり合ふためには  
何センチメートルの 息ぐるしい

yours?	距離がゆるされるのか
But if I carry my heart on a plate I must balance your flesh at the far end of a stick (In the next room a blue candle is lit There is a single blanket to cover me)	けれどもし 皿の上に ころをのせてしまった のなら 肉体は 竿の とほい先端まで行かねばならない (隣の部屋には 青い蠟燭がともってゐる わたしをしまひこむ 一枚の毛布 がある)
You castrate me even as you set me aflame I pray into a cup of sweet liquid	わたしを 燃やしながらか勢して くれる コップ一杯の やさしい液体に わたしは祈る
The moment balance is lost even though the needle of the scales wavers it becomes still What I want most is for you to survive the moment we hear the sound of the world flying open	均衡の 破れる瞬間 こんなに ふるへながら静止する 世界の 音たててはじけとぼうとする 瞬間 を どうか やりすごしてほしい
Your purity is as heavy as my madness	わたしの狂気ほどにも 重い あなたの 無垢のために (Zoku Yoshihara Sachiko 29-30)

This poem directly addresses the philandering sexuality of the male narrator as an abject wound that can be "healed"--or balanced against his partner's purity--only through the sexual erasure of castration. And yet, in the ironic world of his partner's "purity," this form of "healing" leaves another, and this time, irreversible wound of abjection, the lack of a penis. If the narrating "other" is a mirror image of the perpetrator, the castrating woman recognizes herself in her victim as one who has already been castrated. And now that she has castrated her lover, they have achieved

the kind of sexual "balance" that they seek, the "madness" of the abject body balanced against the perpetrator's purity. Indeed, now they are, at least on the surface, the same. The physical act of castration that we witness in "*Kyori*" might be compared to the murderous actions carried out by the narrator of Plath's "Daddy," who pierces her father's heart with a stick. In this case, however, the narrator gains a symbolic phallus, making herself an "equal" to her father through the act of murder. Through these acts of hateful love, Daddy, who "bit" the narrator's "pretty red heart in two," ends up with a "stake" in his "fat black heart." One must believe that in "*Kyori*," castration is carried out "lovingly" as well. The pure other has carried out this act in order to still the scale's "wavering" needle. And, ironically enough, the pain of the castrator is emphasized by the narrator/victim: his only desire is for his lover to "survive the moment/ we hear the sound of the world flying open."

As mentioned above, the act of castration that forms the background of "*Otoko: 'Ai no koriida' ni*," can also very much be seen as an act of love as well, in this case, as Chrisine Marran shows in her essay on Sada, "So Bad She's Good: The Masochist's Heroine in Postwar Japan, Abe Sada," as a form of lover's double suicide. Fleeing through Tokyo with her lover's penis in her purse before she was apprehended by police three days after castrating and asphyxiating him, Sada left the following note written in her lover's blood on the bedsheets: "*Sada Kichi futari-kiri*" "Sada and Kichi, cut off [from the rest of the world]" (Marran 82). In this sense, castration commemorates the end of the love affair that the poem foregrounds. At the same time, however, as the final lines of the poem suggest, these acts become the only way the narrator can keep his heart to herself. Indeed, Sada's motive for both killing and



castrating her lover was that he had planned to return to his wife, "keeping" Sada as a mistress (Marran 82).

The poem that follows can be seen as Sada's reminiscence on her relationship with Kichi before these fateful events, a relationship in which she dominates her lover, who meets her at the station wearing her red robes. Indeed, the intimacy of this relationship is also emphasized by the unusual hiragana orthography of the poem, which contains no kanji outside of the title.

**Man: In *The Realm of the Senses***

をとこ「愛のコリーダ」に

Kittsuan  
I wanted to see you  
wearing my red robe  
a man who comes to meet me  
    at the station in cold weather  
a sweet man who shaves  
his pungent neck just for me  
a smiling man who gazes at me  
with the same seriousness that I gaze  
    at him  
Always, it is your heart that makes you  
    so hard and excited  
Always, it is your heart that makes you  
    so hard and excited  
Kittsuan, don't you know, the heart  
    and body  
are the same

きつつあん  
おまえさんにあひたかった  
あたしのあかいじゅばんきて  
さぶいていしやばへむかへにきて  
    くれるをとこ  
やさしいをとこくさいえりあしを  
あたしのためにだけそるをとこ  
あたしがみつめるのとおなじ  
    くらゐしんけん  
    あたしをみつめてほほえむをとこ  
おまへをいつもいつもあつくあつ  
    くかたくするのはおまへの  
    こころだ  
おまへをいつもいつもあつくあつ  
くかたくするのはおまへの  
    こころだ  
きつつあん こころとからだは  
おなじものだねえ  
("Risô no otoko")

While this poem does not focus specifically on the act of castration Abe is so famous for, it does specifically address the narrator's power over her lover, in so far as the male lover is located inside the narrator's gaze, a man so consumed with her that he dresses and goes out into public in her red robe and shaves for her alone. The act of castration is

suggested in the final lines of the poem, as one of the many possible acts that can be carried out on the body, which, as the narrator points out, represents the intentions of the heart. In other words, choosing to castrate her lover, the narrator does so as a means of coveting his heart, driving home her sense that "the heart and the body/ are the same." This poem, by virtue of the dramatic story of Abe Sada embedded within it, evocatively displays Yoshihara's powerful notion that both crime and punishment carried out against the other become a form of love.

### III. Choices: To Live or Die

Many of the poets and critics who have come to examine Yoshihara Sachiko's career after her death in 2002 hail her early poem "*Mudai*" (Nonsense) as one of her most representative poems, a poem that shows Yoshihara's great "longing and bravery" (Shinkawa et al 23).<sup>64</sup> A brief, highly sensual poem that appears in Yoshihara's first book *Yônen rentô* (Childhood litanies, 1964), the poem evokes the "symbolic" presence of a poet who attempts "to protect the fierceness of her heart with the purity of the...[poem's] nouns and verbs." As Arai puts it, "the depth of the loneliness that is at the end of this pursuit...rises up as a single tree in the night wind." Describing the tree that appears in "*Mudai*" as "a metaphor for the naked form of the poet's wounded consciousness," Arai continues, "we end up seeing blood pour from that wound even as she appeals to the tree to rise up" ("*Sono ai no katachi*," "The form of that love" 118). Indeed, "*Mudai*" exemplifies the final theme this chapter will explore: the powerful role that the imagination plays as the poet bravely, and, at times, *playfully*, faces down her wounded

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<sup>64</sup> The title "*Mudai*" is accompanied by the *furigana* gloss "*Nansensu*" (Nonsense).

condition. Transformed into the slug she herself has immobilized by sprinkling it with salt, the poet is paralyzed by the sense of terror she faces in her choice "To be/ or not to be." Taking place in the unlikely setting of a shower, this poem exudes the pathos and charm so characteristic of the poems with which this section will conclude:

**Nonsense**

**無題 (ナンセンス)**

The wind blowing

風 吹いてゐる

A tree rising

木 立ってゐる

Ah on this kind of night how it  
rises, the tree rises

ああ こんなよる 立ってゐる  
のね 木

The sound of the wind blowing the  
tree rising

風 吹いてゐる 木 立って  
ゐる 音がする

Late at night alone in the tub  
The bitter play of soap  
bubbles that spew forth like a crab  
The tepid water

よふけの ひとりの 浴室の  
せっけんの泡 かにみたいに吐  
きだす にかいあそび  
ぬるいお湯

A slug creeping  
over the wet tiles  
Ah on this kind of night the slug,  
how it creeps

なめくぢ 匍つてゐる  
浴室の ぬれたタイルを  
ああ こんなよる 匍つてゐるのね  
なめくぢ

When I sprinkle you with salt  
Even though you disappear you are  
still here

おまへに塩をかけてやる  
するとおまへは なくなるくせに  
そこにある

The terror of it all  
To be  
or not to be

おそろしさとは  
ゐることかしら  
ゐないことかしら

Even though spring has come again  
and the wind is blowing again

また 春がきて また 風が  
吹いてゐるのに

I am a salt-covered slug And I am not  
here

わたしはなめくぢの塩づけ  
わたしはゐない

Nowhere to be found

どこにも ゐない

Surely buried in soap bubbles  
I was washed away

わたしはきっと せっけんの泡に  
埋もれて 流れてしまったの

Ah, what a night

ああ こんなよる  
(*Yōnen Rentō* 12-13)

Relishing her position between being and non-being, in the narrow margin between life and death, the narrator celebrates the poet's uncanny ability to fix herself in such a tenuous state, a tendency marked with despair in poems discussed earlier, such as "*Inori*" and "*Sonemu*." In "*Mudai*," however, this ability brings an (albeit terrifying) sense of joy: Even though "spring has come again and the wind is blowing again," the narrator herself has become "a salt-covered slug" and is "not here." And yet, even in her absence, she maintains her presence within the poem, "nowhere to be found...buried in soap bubbles...washed away." In this way, "*Mudai*" epitomizes the notion of poetry as an alternative space, as a refuge, in which the narrator can, through the agency of her own imagination, act *playfully* upon the suicidal impulses that she so often expresses in her other poems, and, at the same time, remain "safe" from harm. The sense of ecstasy built into the refrain "Ah, what a night" reflects not only the poet's sense of pleasure in dying, but the pleasure of living, indeed, of surviving the suicidal impulse, as well. To modify the well-coined phrase, the poet has her death, and survives it, too.

Published in 1964, *Yōnen rentō* appeared one year prior to Sylvia Plath's crowning, posthumous achievement, *Ariel*, whose title poem also provides the same stunning sense of suicidal dissolution we find in "*Mudai*." Rapidly undergoing a series of transformations, the narrator, a "White/ Godaiva," "unpeels" the many layers of herself, announcing, in the final three stanzas of the poem, "And now I/ Foam to wheat, a glitter of seas./ The child's cry// Melts in the wall./ And I/ Am the arrow,// The dew that flies/

Suicidal, at one with the drive/ Into the red// Eye, the cauldron of morning." As does Yoshihara's narrator in "*Mudai*," the narrator of "*Ariel*" is "at one" with the highly-elusive forces of the universe that "drive" both life and death, suggestively depicted in "*Ariel*" as a galloping horse, "The brown arc/Of the neck I cannot catch," as Plath puts it.

In her poem "*Jikai*" (Self-discipline) from her 1976 collection *Yume aruiwa...* (Dreams, or perhaps...) Yoshihara addresses the value of poetry, and, by extension, the forces of the imagination, as a kind of panacea for "dying" and "killing": "as helpful as medicine," poetry is the thing that keeps her alive. And yet, at the same time, despite the sense of exhilaration that can be found in poems such as "*Mudai*" and "*Ariel*," as "*Jikai*" illustrates, there is something "lost" in the act of writing when it becomes a substitute for "living," for life itself. Indeed, perhaps this knowledge is part of what allowed Yoshihara to survive the same impulses that Plath and Sexton came to act upon. Indeed, this knowledge becomes a form of "Self Discipline," directed toward the next generation:

### Self Discipline

You, young people,  
in the end, I did not die, not even once  
Perhaps it is because I wrote  
instead of dying instead of killing

If I live without dying  
by writing  
"I want to die"  
poetry becomes as good as medicine  
But at the same time  
I cannot write instead of live  
I cannot write instead of love

When I write flower  
it is certain the flower will be lost

When I dragged my foot over the paper

### 自戒

わかものたちよ  
わたしはつひに一度も死ななかつた  
たぶん 死ぬかほりに  
殺すかほりに 書いたからだ

死にたい  
と書くことで  
死なないですむのなら  
詩はクスリみたいな役に立つ  
けれど その調子で  
生きるかほりに書いてはいけない  
愛するかほりに書いてはいけない

花と書くとき  
花は たしかに 失はれる

紙の上に 足をひきずると

surely life became lighter

いのちは たしかに かるくなった  
ので

And so, I will walk around erasing my  
footsteps

わたしは足あとを消しに歩きまはる  
すると わたしのうしろに

When I do behind me  
る

あたらしい足あとが またついてみ

new footsteps too will follow

(Zoku Yoshihara 73-74)

In "*Jikai*," the act of literary representation itself is deceptive, erasing life itself, that which the poet attempts to depict: "When I write flower," the poet says, "It is certain the flower will be lost." And yet, by means of writing, or "drag[ging] my foot over the paper," as the poet puts it, "life will become light." Despite its initial questioning of the validity of choosing, not to live instead of die, but to *write* instead of die, the poem is victorious in the end. It is the act of writing, the poet suggests, that "erases" the painful footsteps of life, which, after all, can never be fully represented. The poem is, in this way, if not life itself, life-giving, and brings with it the next best thing: the unknown possibility of hope that life offers, "new footsteps," as Yoshihara says.

If "*Jikai*" suggests that the poem wins out over death in the end, Yoshihara's poem "*Sentaku*" (Choice) would suggest that that the poet "wins out," too, though the terms of her victory are less than what the poem may initially promise. This poem becomes a kind of conversation between the two sides of the poet, the side who would "live life deeply," perhaps through the "life" of the poem, and the side who would "run...away" from life:

### Choice

### 選択

Saying, "I don't want to live my life  
in this world too deeply" the lonely person  
ran away perhaps

<世界に深入りしたくない>  
と言った さびしいひとは  
逃げて行った たぶん

in the direction of another world

もうひとつの"世界"のはうへ

Even though living deeply was  
my most dazzling  
wish

深入りする まさにそのことが  
わたしには いちばんまぶしい  
願ひだったのに

I was blocked by a glass door  
The golden tips of leaves shining  
The world spilling over without a sound  
I was standing at that brink shaking

ガラス扉にさへぎられて  
黄金の葉ずゑが光り  
"世界"は音もなく溢れっづけ  
そのふちに ゆれながらふみと  
どまって

And then, at long last  
whispering "I can go down deep!" I broke  
the glass  
The wind that had been waiting for me  
flowed right through me

そしていま たうとう深入り  
できたよ！ と  
つぶやきながらガラスを破る  
わたしに 待ってゐた風が  
流れこみ

(While licking a wound on my hand)  
I make a phone call  
to the one who had escaped

(掌の傷を 舐めながら)  
逃げて行ったひとに  
電話をかける

"What is it like,  
the taste of happiness after you died?  
I am still as unhappy as ever  
If I don't get too fat  
let's meet again one time"

<死んだあとの 幸せの味は  
いかがですか  
こちらやっと不幸  
まだ 肥りすぎてゐないなら  
会ひませう いちど>  
(Zoku Yoshihara 93-94)

As we learn at the end of this poem, the destination of the one who had escaped into "another world" is death, where, the narrator believes, it may perhaps be possible to savor the "taste of happiness." While we cannot say with certainty that the narrator's "dazzling wish" to "live deeply" necessarily points to a one's wish to *write* deeply, as a poet, the metaphorical quality of Yoshihara's language makes that interpretation a very appealing one: "I was blocked by a glass door/ The golden tips of leaves shining/ The world spilling over without a sound/ Standing at that brink shaking." Entering the evocative world of the poem, the poet says, "the wind I had been waiting for/ flowed

right through me," leaving in its wake the poem. As "*Sentaku*" suggests, however, the poem is only a quasi-effective refuge, a place where one can still be wounded; nonetheless, it is also a place where the narrator can nurture, or at least "lick," her wounds, an act of great significance in Yoshihara's oeuvre of poems that is dominated by the image of the festering wound.

Indeed, these are the "chosen" wounds of the poet, who received them as she crashed through the glass barrier of her imagination. In this way, Yoshihara suggests that writing poetry in and of itself can be a dangerous enterprise. That the poet is still "unhappy" and, as she so playfully and self-deprecatingly interjects, "fat," Yoshihara suggests that the poem should not be viewed as a world unto itself, a world apart from life, but as a place that exudes everyday reality, perhaps more so than the poet had originally supposed. In many ways, "*Sentaku*" answers the question that "*Jikai*" poses: claiming that poetry cannot function as a substitute for life, it can, in a sense, become its willing servant, offering up the poet's best, albeit imperfect, representation of life. Despite the poet's wish to meet up with her other half, the one who chose to die, the poem also strongly suggests that while it cannot be a fail-safe refuge, it is a place one can inhabit, a distant spot from which the small ironies of life can be viewed, an imperfect paradise in which the poet can live, still "fat" and "unhappy." In this sense, despite the poet's ambivalence with her "choice," the poem allows her to choose life. Anne Sexton portrays the ironic position from which she faced such "life and death" choices in the final poem of her 1966 *Live or Die* "Live," "Here,/ all along,/ thinking I was a killer,/ anointing myself daily/ with my little poisons./ But no. I'm an empress./ I wear an apron. My typewriter writes. It didn't break the way it warned" (89).



For Yoshihara, the poem becomes a site from which the many sufferings inherent in life, especially the wounds that lovers inflict upon one another, can be revealed in all of their abjection. Yoshihara's "speaking wound" becomes a new mode of female confession for Japanese women poets, a vital form of expression that parallels the approach that other women poets such as Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton were also taking in the early 1960s. Through her use of larger-than-life narrators, and, at times, the voices of the gods, Yoshihara reveals the painful intensity of the wound, and yet, at the same time, keeps secret the originary dramas from which this pain emerges. The privacy of this choice lends resounding depth and resonance to the painful ways in which those who dare to love, and live, suffer. For the poet, the often-brutal revelation of this pain becomes a way of exorcizing it from the body onto the page, for, as Yoshihara puts it in "*Dokubô*," it is only "the red ink" of this pain that "always exists." Perhaps it is this refusal to "tell all" that allows the poem to become a form of therapy and healing, a way of not only allowing the wound to speak, but of "addressing" and "dressing" it as well.

## Chapter Four

### Pain and Beauty, Pleasure and Horror:

#### The Aesthetics of Abjection in the Poetry of Itô Hiromi

##### Introduction

While we have seen many instances thus far of poets taking up revisionist approaches to women's role in the mythic past, no other contemporary poet has done so much to reinvent the personae through which women have both suffered and overcome their suffering in the world of Japanese legend and myth than Itô Hiromi. As Ueno Chizuko says of Itô in a special issue on the poet published by the *US-Japan Women's Journal*, "Borrowing voices and rhythms from old traditional narratives... Itô successfully transforms her own personal tragedies into the universal suffering of everyday life...The history of literature involves not just the development of new forms but the revival of traditional forms through the influx of new ideas, thus renovating them in new and idiosyncratic ways. Itô has achieved this renovation in unprecedented ways"(5).

This chapter will discuss two of Itô's works that return to Japanese mythology to explore and re-envision the origins of the abject personae women have aprioristically inhabited "since the beginning": Itô's 1993 "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*" (I am Anjuhimeko) and her 2004 collection *Nihon no fushigina hanashi* (Wondrous stories of Japan).<sup>65</sup> Both works feature larger-than-life personae: while the first takes up that of a three-year-old girl, Anjuhimeko, who, cast out of house and home as an infant, embarks on a terrifying journey to *kamihood*, the second is narrated in the voice of the eighth-century

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<sup>65</sup> While the term "*fushigina*" is typically translated as "weird" or "strange," Itô explained in a 2009 interview I conducted with her that she means to capture the original meaning of Kyôkai's *Nihon Ryôiki* (Wondrous, or miraculous, stories of Japan), on which her text is based. The term "*ryôiki*" is no longer in common usage. I use "wondrous" here to distinguish Itô's title from the way in which Kyôkai's title is typically translated (as *Miraculous stories of Japan*).

priest Kyôkai, the compiler of *Nihon ryôiki* (Miraculous stories of Japan), Japan's first collection of *setsuwa*, or Buddhist tales. The abject body plays a key role in both works: As Michelle Li notes in her *Ambiguous Bodies: Reading the Grotesque in Japanese Setsuwa Tales*, the "grotesque representations" through which the abject body comes into being in the original tales that Kyôkai collected give them the "potential to...subvert..the official aristocratic and ecclesiastical discourse of the times" (Li 3). In both "*Anjuhimeko de aru*" and *Nihon no fushigina hanashi* as well, the abject woman is fully capable of spiritual salvation and enlightenment. In addition, as Itô suggested in my interview with her, *Nihon no fushigina hanashi* provides Japanese women with high quality erotic literature that cuts across that discourse with its emphasis on the mother as an erotic figure.

This chapter will illustrate the ways in which language itself becomes a conduit to the mythic past as well. Indeed, *Anjuhimeko* is one of several voices channeled by the *miko*, or *itako*, as the female shaman who originally recited *Oiwaki sama ichidaiki* (The biography of Oiwaki-sama), the tale from the Tsugaru Peninsula in northern Honshû on which Itô's poem is based. Stressing the *miko's* frenzied multivocalism, as well as the sounds and rhythms of words, rather than the meanings that they signify, Itô enters the vast landscape of the mythic through what Kristeva calls the semiotic "rupture" of language (79). This sense of rupture, with its accompanying intensities of sound, repetition and rhythm, is one of the central features of the artistry of Itô's poetry that this chapter will explore. Noting the ways in which Itô's development as a poet "exploded" after the 1985 publication of her fifth book, *Teritorii ron 2*, critic Sasaki Mikiro goes on to describe the sense of linguistic freedom that Itô achieved when she began to invoke the incantatory persona that "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*" makes such strong use of, "letting the words out like at *utabikuni* or a *miko*" (qtd. in

Dudley 7-8).<sup>65</sup>

In both "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*" and *Nihon no fushigina hanashi*, Itô provides a vibrant sexuality for her female characters that may have been either absent, or merely unexplored, in the original myths in which they appear. In *Nihon no fushigina hanashi*, for example, Itô dwells deeply on the sexuality of the female characters of this ancient Buddhist text, and so doing, as noted above, introduces a new outlet for erotic literature for contemporary Japanese women. Sometimes referred to as the "childbirth poet" of Japan (Tsuboi 27), Itô gives the abject maternal body in particular a sense of multi-dimensionality and depth that the abject mother so often lacks in her depictions as a grotesque figure of horrific proportions. In "*Chichi yarazu no en*" (My fate for not giving milk), the opening story of *Nihon no fushigina hanashi*, in which the mother in question chooses to leave her children behind so that she can meet a lover, Itô is careful to note that while her lactating heroine is no less than a despicable monstrosity in the eyes of her lover, she is known by others, including her own neglected children, as a figure of incomparable beauty and grace. In the end, she is encouraged by the storyteller to take pride in her breasts as objects of *both* sexual and maternal love.

The monstrous mother is hardly a new persona for Itô. In her (in)famous poem "*Kanoko goroshi*" (Killing Kanoko), which appears in her landmark *Teritorii ron 2* mentioned above, Itô dynamically explores the limits of her persona's capacity to survive the physical and emotional strains of motherhood by creating a larger-than-life mother who, in

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<sup>65</sup> *Utabikuni* literally means "singing nun." The phrase originated during the Muromachi period (1392-1573) to designate nuns who traveled around Japan telling Buddhist stories. Poet Kido Shuri, who calls Itô a 'shamaness of poetry' (*shi no miko*), does so to describe the very dynamic role she has played in the development of women's poetry in Japan: "Her physiological sensitivity and writing style, which cannot be captured within any existing framework, became the igniting force behind the subsequent flourishing of "women's poetry" (*josei shi*), just as Hagiwara Sakutarô had revolutionized modern poetry with his morbid sensitivity and colloquial style," see JAANUS and Angles, "Intro" 7.

fits of rage, kills her own child, not just once, but several times over.<sup>66</sup> As is the case with many of the poems discussed in this chapter, "*Kanoko goroshi*" can be seen as a kind of "mother's response" to the intense issues of abandonment explored from the child's viewpoint in Murakami Ryû's important novel *Coin Locker Babies* (*Koinrokkâ Beibîzu*, 1980) for instance. Itô's poem, set against a backdrop of abortion and suicide, grapples with the very real life and death struggle of a mother who wants to "throw Kanoko away" before she is devoured by her, both physically and emotionally:

Always, Kanoko aiming at the chance to bite my nipples	いつも噛み切る隙をねらっている カノコはわたしの時間を食い
Kanoko eats my time	カノコはわたしの養分をかすめ
Kanoko makes off with my nourishment	カノコはわたしの食欲を脅かし
Kanoko threatens my appetite	カノコはわたしの髪の毛を抜き
Kanoko pulls my hair	カノコはわたしにすべてのカノコ I
alone am forced to deal with Kanoko's shit	の糞のしまつを強要
I want to throw Kanoko away	しました
I want to throw dirty Kanoko away	カノコを捨てたい 汚いカノコを捨てたい
	( <i>Teritorii ron</i> 2, 148)

We cannot fathom the ways in which Itô's poem may in fact mirror her life, but by creating this larger than life persona who acts out the unthinkable, Itô betrays the powerful emotional "reality" of the frustrated mother. But trapped in the isolation of a suffocating relationship with her infant daughter, the monstrous mother becomes a sympathetic figure in "*Kanoko goroshi*," especially in the very open ways in which this persona reveals her dilemmas. Although she does not make use of the "womanly" voice that the *Shinchô* critics mentioned in this dissertation's introduction would have preferred, she does very much express the "true thoughts, observations, and worries" (about child-rearing no less) of a "real

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<sup>66</sup> In addition to her many award-winning collections of poetry and prose, Itô is also the author of several volumes of best-selling, though quite unconventional, self-help books for mothers on child-rearing that aim at the goal of helping contemporary Japanese women cope with the demands of motherhood.

woman" (1) Ueno goes so far as to say to say that " it sounds as though this act of poetic narration might have saved her from the actual act of infanticide. The excessiveness of her aggressive expression keeps her from excessive damage to herself " (5).<sup>67</sup>

"*Kanoko goroshi*," especially when performed on stage, also reveals Itô's penchant for the multi-vocal, experimental forms of the *miko*. Readers of "*Kanoko goroshi*" will notice that this poem features two parallel texts. As though they were competing stories, one pitted against the other, the top text (flush with the top of the page) tells the story of Kanoko and her mother, while the bottom text (flush with the bottom of the page) relates the story of the suicide of a woman whose name happens to be Hiromi. Indeed, despite its power as a written text, this poem must be experienced in performance to be fully appreciated, since these two stories are performed simultaneously: When she first started performing this poem in public, Itô would read the mother and Kanoko's story while playing a recording of herself reading Hiromi's story (Morton 106).<sup>68</sup> So doing, Itô not only reveals the cacophony of multi-vocal narration, but she also foregrounds the intense interrelatedness of these "events" (real or imagined), the notion that neither story can be "prioritized" above the other. In addition, because the woman named Hiromi appears to be someone very different from the mother in the other section of the poem--indeed, "Hiromi" is not identified as a new mother--questions of identity begin to emerge.

As in "*Chichi yarazu no en*" cited above, Itô also goes far to reclaim the sexuality of the mother in "*Kanoko goroshi*." A sexuality that has so often tended toward erasure at the

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<sup>67</sup> Itô does have a daughter named Kanoko, but Kanoko is alive and well.

<sup>68</sup> In a 2003 interview I conducted with Itô at her home near San Diego, she demonstrated the way in which she would perform Kanoko and the mother's section of the poem, kneeling and bowing her head to the floor, especially during the refrain "*horoboshite omedetô gozaimasu*" (congratulations for the destruction).

moment of conception in Japanese culture, the sexual mother becomes a figure of profound abjection, an "engorged" auto-erotic body that operates without limits:

My uterus full,  
my entire body engorged  
I could overeat as much as I wanted  
When I thought of my baby's birth  
I masturbated endlessly  
imagining the apex of that moment  
Oh, the happy fingers of the pregnant  
woman

子宮は充実して  
全身は充血して  
いくらでも過食して  
分娩のことを考えると  
際限なくマスターベー  
ションできた  
のぼりつめる娩出の瞬間を  
思いやる  
たのしい妊婦の指の動き  
(*Teritorii ron 2*, 147-48)

The mother whom the narrator of "*Chichi yarazu no en*" encounters is forced to endure the punishment of death by grossly engorged breasts after repeatedly leaving her children for her lover. Suffering as she does, with pus pouring from her breasts, she is at the same time darkly sexual:

*I asked, "What's wrong?" A woman of rare beauty, she looked in my direction.*

*"My breasts hurt so much--I just can't bear it." Her voice was, how can I say this, so sweet and loving, and what's more, she was so lavishly naked. She fixed her gaze on me, and, as if it were nothing, she held out her breast to show me.*

*"Look, they are so hot and swollen. And all this pus is coming out. I've tried sucking and squeezing them, but nothing that I try brings relief. This is my own body, but there's nothing that I can do for it."*

("Chichi yarazu no en," 15-16)<sup>69</sup>

The passage is reminiscent of the *yamanba* mother depicted in prints by Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806). A traditional mountain witch of Japanese folklore and legend, *yamanba* figures predominantly in Itô's "*Watashi wa anjuhimeko de aru.*"<sup>70</sup> In both Kitagawa's print and Itô's

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<sup>69</sup> The translation, along with Itô's original of this story can be found in its entirety in the third section of this chapter, see page 215.

<sup>70</sup> The *yamanba* has appeared throughout Japanese literature, in folk tales and oral narratives, as well as in Nô plays and contemporary stories and poems, see Viswanathan 241.

"*Chichi yarazu no en*," as Meera Viswanathan puts it, "gone are the long gray hair and the haggard and aged countenance [of the *yamanba*]; instead, we are presented with a voluptuous woman in the prime of her life" (249).

Throughout her work, Itô does not hesitate to use the most graphic images of the female body, a tendency which is brought to a head in her work *Ashi, te, niku, karada* (Feet, hands, flesh, body), a 1995 collection of long narrative prose poems accompanied by photographs of Itô by Ishiuchi Miyako.<sup>71</sup> Foregrounding, rather than hiding, the "flaws" in the poet's body, the photographs become an intimate study of the poet's body, replete with wrinkles, stretch marks, veins, and worn, dry skin.<sup>72</sup> "This obsession with the boundaries of the body," the skin and its porous surfaces, so evident in these photographic images, are a hallmark of Itô's poetry as well, "prevent[ing] her from soaring up to the unearthly metaphysical extremes of her male colleagues" as Ueno puts it (4). And yet, in no way can we equate the photographic image with "reality." Fragmented glimpses of the most intimate parts of the body, the photos are surrounded by texts that make strong use of personae and include even the voices of dogs and insects. Indeed, through this unique juxtaposition of voices and images, Itô invites us to reconsider the boundaries of "personal writing."

In "*Kanoko goroshi*," the narrator describes the physical sensations that accompany the aftermath of a second-trimester abortion, previous to the birth of Kanoko: Told by her doctor that "because your baby was big/you will have a lot of milk," the narrator describes the strange joy she finds in the experience of this bodily fact:

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<sup>71</sup> Subtitled *Hiromi 1955*, *Ashi, te, niku, karada* is modeled after Ishiuchi's exhibition and book *1947*, which according to Kasahara Michiko, curator of the Tokyo Museum of Art, features "close-up photographs of hands and feet of women born the same year as Ishiuchi," see Kasahara.

<sup>72</sup> Please see images from *Ashi, te, niku, karada* in the appendix to this chapter.



Milk really did come out  
When I squeezed my breasts  
a white secretion stained my clothes...  
I'm so happy to have milk  
springing from nothing  
sweet and comforting...

ほんとうにお乳は出てきました  
つよくひねると白い液がにじむ  
程度で...  
お乳が出るってことはめでたい  
何もなかったところから  
のめて甘味もあるもの...  
(*Teritorii ron 2*, 145)

Finding comfort in the release of milk that would have nourished an aborted fetus is at the very least an unsettling form of consolation that can also be taken as a form of mourning. Itô conveys the intensity of this mourning, which encompasses not only the loss of the fetus that would have lived off of the narrator's body, but a kind of cathartic cleansing of the body's lost potential, a cleansing that reveals a kind of "happiness" inside of the mother's grief:

The stuff I secrete is like piss,  
I secrete it like spit and tears  
So much roiling milk gushing  
out of my ass, my mouth, my vagina  
makes me so very happy

おしっこみたいに分泌するのは  
もの  
つばや涙やおりものみたいに分泌  
するのは  
肛門から口から尿道から膣から  
夥しい乳がわいて出てくるんです  
もの  
うれしくなって  
(*Teritorii ron 2*, 146)

Indeed, the mother's happiness is ejaculatory, her milk "springing from nothing," "gushing out of my ass, my mouth, my vagina." The ejaculatory pleasure of milk is repeated as well in "*Chichi yarazu no en*" as the narrator is in fact "about ready to reach orgasm": "completely beyond my control, my warm milk, stinking like the rawness of life itself, came flying out of my strained breasts, drawing an arc in the air." Perhaps these transgressions of gender and sexuality that do not respect the boundaries of the sexed body are among Itô's greatest feats. While Itô stresses the female body in her work, the male body, too, is capable of defying its biological limits as well. Just as lactation is seen as a form of ejaculation in "*Kanoko*

*goroshi*" and in "*Chichi yarazu no en*," ejaculation becomes a form of "giving birth" in Itô's poem "Triptych." Indeed, it is the father who gives birth to the abject fetus-persona:

父はいつも射精、嘔吐、脱糞したい  
つまり  
父はいつも  
つねに  
分娩したい  
わたしを  
父が妊娠したのはわたしである  
父は生涯にわたししか妊娠しなかった  
唯一の精子であったわたし  
わたしは成長していつもいつも  
父の内部で胎動する  
父は射精したい嘔吐したい脱糞したいが  
何よりもまず  
わたしを体外へ排泄してしまいたい

Father always wants to ejaculate,  
vomit, shit  
In other words  
father always  
and continuously  
**wants to give birth  
to me**  
I am the one father is pregnant with  
Father was pregnant with no one but  
me his whole life long  
His only sperm  
I was always always growing  
quickenings in his womb  
Father always wants to ejaculate,  
vomit, shit  
More than anything else  
he wanted to excrete *me* from his  
body  
The umbilical cord between us is so  
fat in the photo  
("Triptych")<sup>73</sup>

"Triptych" is the second poem of *Teritorii ron 1* (published after *Teritorii ron 2*), a book whose authorship Itô shares on equal basis with photographer Araki Nobuyoshi (whose images of Tomioka Taeko are featured in Chapter 2), as well as with layout artist Kikuchi Nobuyoshi. Also reproduced in the appendix of this chapter, some of Araki's photographs that accompany "Triptych" and other poems in the collection are strikingly graphic, while others are difficult to decipher. Often blurry, the images, so carefully arranged in juxtaposition to each other and the poems, resemble garbage, road kill or even

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<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, the pages of *Teritorii ron 1* are not numbered, perhaps to avoid the interference of the visual images that are so integral to the text. "Triptych," which describes this father figure through the paintings of Francis Bacon, is the second poem in the collection. The bold faced words appear in the original as well.

feces or vomit, reflecting both a literal (and extremely visceral) response to the abject material that Itô's poetry explores, in this poem, the "vomit" and "shit" of the father as he gives birth to the narrator. At the very end of "*Yume miru koto wo yamenai*" (On not giving up dreaming), the opening essay of *Ashi, te, niku, karada*, the female poet-narrator who is stalking a male taxi driver "ejaculates" (22). With mothers and female poets ejaculating and fathers giving birth, it is little wonder that the transgressive, sexed body should become the signature of a poet who expresses nothing less than exasperation at being categorized merely a "woman" poet (Tsuboi 24).<sup>74</sup>

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As mentioned above, Itô's acclaimed 1993 tale-poem "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*" is based on *Oiwaki sama ichidaiki* (The biography of Oiwaki-sama), which was transcribed by anthropologists in the twentieth century (Iwasaki, "*Zoku Sanshō Dayū kō: sekkyō jōruri no sekai*, More thoughts on Sanshō Dayū: the world of Buddhist tales 149).<sup>75</sup> Recited for the anthropologists by *itako*, *Oiwaki sama ichidaiki* is a distant cousin of the better-known Sanshō Dayū legend, a vital story from the oral tradition of the *sekkyō*, or Buddhist morality tale. The Sanshō Dayū story, which did not appear in text form until the seventeenth century, takes up the plight of two young children, a brother and sister named Zushiō and Anju, who are kidnapped from their courtly parents and sold to a slave owner, or bailiff (*dayū*), named Sanshō. After long years of struggle on Sanshō Dayū's plantation, Anju convinces her brother to escape in order to find their parents, while she herself is tortured and killed for her part in her brother's escape. This story has been taken up and modified by several twentieth century

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<sup>74</sup> Tsuboi quotes an interview published with Itô in the feminist journal *La mer*, in which she vents her frustration at being categorized as a woman poet, generically lumped together with so many other woman poets of her generation, see Tsuboi 24.

<sup>75</sup> Japanese anthropologists recorded the story in 1931 and 1967, according to Iwasaki Takeo's 1978 study of the Sanshō Dayū mythic tradition, see Iwasaki 149.

artists, beginning with Mori Ôgai's story in 1915, which inspired the 1954 film by Mizoguchi Kenji, and, most recently, by Umehara Takeshi, who published his story in 1993, the same year Itô published her version of the tale.

In contrast to these artists' rendering of the popular Sanshō Dayū myth, so deeply steeped in Buddhist values, and Confucianist filial morality as well, the lesser-known *Biography of Oiwaki sama* focuses almost exclusively on the suffering Anjuhimeko must endure as she journeys toward becoming the Shinto god (*kami*) *Oiwaki-sama*. Itô's poem represents a significant rewriting of the *Oiwaki-sama* myth insofar as Anjuhimeko not only suffers physical hardship from the nearly-impossible tasks she must perform along the way to *kamihood*, but she is repeatedly raped by her task masters. In other words, as in "*Chichi yarazu no en*," the sexuality of the female protagonist, even in her violated, child-infant state, is pushed to the forefront.

As mentioned above, Itô's use of the multi-voiced *itako* narrator allows her to foreground her great talents as a performance poet. As Iwasaki notes, the *itako* narrator is often cast in the role of "mediating" the intimate relationships of family members who have been separated from one another by death, and in so doing, gives voice to their several competing interests (Iwasaki, *Sanshō Dayū: sekkyō jōruri no sekai* 163-64). While the Sanshō Dayū myth is usually cast in the third person, the *itako* narrator of the Tsugaru version becomes a performer of these many subjectivities, revealing the first person perspectives of not only Anjuhimeko, but those of her mother and father as well, who, as Iwasaki puts it, tower "like dark pillars" above her (*Sanshō Dayū kô: sekkyō jōruri no sekai* 169).

In Itô's version, the *itako* seamlessly conveys these intertwined narratives, and

this poetic suturing of voices helps to define this work as poetry.<sup>76</sup> Like so many traditional *monogatari* (Japanese tales), a word that Itô uses in the opening of the tale to compare her story to other tales, this work contains very little punctuation. While Itô does use regular punctuation in most of her poems, she has placed her periods to signify a shift in voice and narrative perspective in "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru.*" This multivocal presentation of the many competing voices that comprise the mediated "voice" of Itô's poem contributes to its strong sense of fractured identity. In this way, the poem challenges modern notions of unitary subjectivity so strongly suggested by Ôgai and Mizoguchi's depictions of Anju and Zushiô, as either children developing a psychological response to their environment in the Ôgai story, or as adults developing a sense of moral consciousness in the Mizoguchi film, ideas that will be more fully explicated in the second section of this chapter.

On the other hand, Itô's pervasive use of multivocality, along with her free-flowing use of repetition, sound, rhythm, and entwined sentence structures, evoke emotions and senses so much larger than the sum of what the words themselves signify, allowing for what Julia Kristeva calls in *Revolution in Poetic Language* the semiotic "flow of *jouissance* into language," or as Kristeva further describes it, "the cracking of the symbolic order, splitting it open, changing vocabulary, syntax, the word itself"(Kristeva 79). An example of this evocative, repetitive language, which will be more thoroughly described in the second section of this chapter as well, comes at the end of the first section of the poem when Anjuhimeko exclaims that she is "a growing, laughing, living body, a growing, laughing, living

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<sup>76</sup> Although both "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*" and "*Chichi yarazu no en*" appear in a prose format, Itô is quick to defend her works as poetry, in part because of the many poetic devices she brings to these pieces, such as the repetition, sound and rhythm noted above.

body, a growing, laughing, living body" (*sodatte waratteru ikitashintai, sodatte waratterushintai, sodatte waratterushintai*) (13), her sense of unbounded joy over surviving the sandpit in which she is buried by her father rising with each repetition.

Indeed, the mediating voice of the *miko* who literally channels the voices of the poem's characters, becomes a powerful, if not volatile, vehicle for Itô, who, in her own performances of the poem very much evokes the image of the *miko* as the "shamanistic-performer" of Shinto rites (Miner 70). The performative aspects of the Sanshō Dayū myth are of no small importance in this regard either, since the story is regarded as central to the *sekkyō* tradition. While the tradition of *sekkyō* began as a "formal, solemn commemorative service performed by monks" in the Heian and Kamakura periods (794-1185 and 1192-1333 respectively), it was later popularized and secularized in the Muromachi era (1392-1573). At this time, *sekkyō* were enacted by performers who dressed as tonsured priests to give dramatic tellings of popular Buddhist stories in religious and secular settings. Accompanied by various *sasara* – "clappers, rattles, or scrapers associated with folk music [and] *sekkyō*" – these stories were meant to "move their audiences to tears" (Miner 296).

The sufferings of Itô's Anjuhimeko have no less a dramatic effect on her contemporary audiences: In a March 2009 performance of the opening of "*Watashi wa anjuhimeko de aru,*" at The American School in Japan in western Tokyo, Itô began the piece with a rhythmic drum roll, her hands pounding the ground where she knelt on a wooden stage. Assuming more the posture of a traditional story-teller than a contemporary poet, Itô invites her audiences to view her, too, as a medium for this "original" voice of *Anjuhimeko*, as another modern-day *miko*, linking us to the unknowable past through her performance.

Indeed, in another partial performance of the poem in 2005 in Lexington, Kentucky, Itô alluded to the entwined relationship between *miko* and poet, reminding us that the poet, too, is a medium for the voices of the gods. So doing, Itô draws her work into association with story-telling shamans of the past, the legendary Hieda no Are (b. 653) for instance, who, as many have believed, recited the texts upon which the *Kojiki* is based. Hieda no Are was said to be related to the descendants of the goddess Ame no uzume, “the archetypal shamaness (*miko*).” As Doris Bargen has put it, Ame no uzume “lured the aggrieved sun goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami out of her cave by exposing her genitals in a dance before the assembly of deities gathered outside the cave; their boisterous laughter led the curious sun goddess to emerge, thus returning light to a darkened world” (182).

Indeed, Itô further invokes her links to Japan’s mythic past, and to the *Kojiki* in particular, through the cameo appearance of Leech-child toward the end of her poem, the child the gods Izanagi and Izanami disposed of in their first attempt at procreation. After much struggle, Leech-child returns to the Japanese archipelago as the god Ebisu in order to oversee the safety of fisherman and the health of small children. Leech-child is triumphant in Itô’s poem as well, guiding Anjuhimeko to her final destination of Tennôji, a feat Anjuhimeko’s brother is unable to perform. Because Anjuhimeko is cast out to sea by her father, perhaps the surviving Leech-child should be seen not only as her savior, but as Anjuhimeko’s double, as survivor, as well. Indeed, this gesture of protection and rescue is mutual, as well, since Anjuhimeko carries Leech-child on her back.

*Yamanba*, the mountain crone of folklore mentioned above, makes an appearance as well as the wildly copulating mother of Leech-child in Itô’s poem. As Viswanathan points

out, in other modern evocations of *yamanba*, such as Ôba Minako's story "*Yamauba no bishô*" (Smile of the mountain witch), "the trajectory of the *yamanba* may be described as one of naturalization and domestication, moving from the demonic to the demotic" (243). The *yamanba* in Itô's poem, however, becomes a paragon of celebratory sex in the climactic conclusion of "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*," thrusting her "domestic" role as mother to the infant Leech-child onto Anjuhimeko. While we can in no way see Itô's *yamaba* as domestic, her singular focus on her own pleasure prevents us from seeing her as demonic either.

Through this act of "re-channeling" Japan's mythic past, Itô participates in and in many ways fulfills what poet and critic Alicia Ostriker has called "revisionist mythmaking": "Whenever a poet . . . is using myth . . . the potential is always present that the use will be revisionist: that is the figure or tale will be appropriated for altered ends, the old vessel filled with new wine, initially satisfying the thirst of the individual poet but ultimately making cultural change possible" (13). The Shamanistic world view in which Itô's revision is immersed is entirely conducive to the sense of cultural change that Ostriker describes. Claiming that "the importance of shamanism in ancient as well as medieval life has been underestimated and essentially ignored in contemporary historical discourse," Barbara Ruch goes on to describe the practice as "female-dominated and individual-oriented... in marked contrast with male-dominated and institution-oriented Buddhism" (523).

Tapping into a compelling, virtually unknown Shinto-based version of the Sanshō Dayū story from the heart of Tohoku's shamanistic tradition, in her radical rewriting of this myth, Itô not only celebrates the sexuality of a shaman such as Ame no uzume who would



“expose her genitals in a dance,” but, perhaps even more significantly, through her brutalizing depiction of the infant Anjuhimeko’s sexual molestation, exposes that which the Tsugaru transcript of the myth tends to suppress: the suffering of women that the shamanist tradition itself perpetuated. For, as Ruch points out, “at the lower edges of the shaman profession, as indeed of all professions in which women were central, hovered the slave trade, a source of young girls for any of the matrilinear professions (shamans, entertainers, prostitutes) that could afford the purchase” (525). While many will despair the darkness of Itô's vision, as Ostriker suggests, the revisionist act of rewriting such deeply engrained myths is one way of forging cultural change or, at the very least, of providing a critique. Painful as it is, exposing women’s sexual suffering that is so often suppressed below the surface of myth can be seen as one of the strategies of “returning light to a darkened world,” to cite the marvels of Ame no uzume.

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As pointed out in the introduction to this dissertation, women poets live and breathe at the edges of culture, stretching the boundaries of what is possible in this world. Intoning the prophetic voice of the *miko*, Itô's highly visionary works mirror, in their oral, story-telling approach, those of the eighth-century monk Kyôkai. In his preface to *Nihon Ryôiki*, Kyôkai wrote that he wished for nothing more than to "pull people forward by the ears" by "editing these stories of miraculous events" (5). Although Kyôkai's stated goal of leading people to enlightenment so that they "may all be reborn in the western land of bliss" is certainly different than Itô's goal of recovering women's sexuality through her retelling of the stories Kyôkai collected, both accomplish their goals through stories that feature the

gripping voice of the story-teller who is at once a visionary and a performer.

Kyôkai's collection marks the birth of "legendary literature" in Japan "and served as the fountainhead for later writings," or as a "casebook for preachers" that was carried on in such works as *Hyakuza hôdan kikigakishô* (Summary notes of one hundred lectures on dharma) (Nakamura 42-43). As Kyoko Motomochi Nakamura writes in the introduction to her 1973 translation of *Nihon Ryôiki*, "the narrative aspects" of Kyôkai's compilation "found their fullest expression in the *Konjaku monogatari* (Collection of tales present and past) and *Uji shûi monogatari* (Tales from the later gleanings of Uji) (43). Kyôkai's habit of interjecting his own "comments and morals" at the conclusion of stories "developed into the genre of moralizing legends which flourished in the Kamakura period [1192-1333]" (Kyôkai 43-44).

Written during the era of the "degenerative dharma (*mappô*)," Kyôkai's works are very "this-world centered," standing "in sharp contrast to that of a later period when men longed for rebirth in the pure land" (Nakamura 60). Indeed, these works continue to resonate with the contemporary audiences before whom Itô performs the introduction to her own, abbreviated version of the *setsuwa* collection: "People are cruel, ridiculous, and lustful. The world gets worse and worse. The good acts that have taken place in the world becomes scarce like flowers that bloom on a mountain of rock, and the reckless deeds writhe around, overrunning a mountain of earth like weeds. People are possessed by evil spirits and lose their sanity, commit sins and chase after profits, voraciously devouring food, and repeatedly killing" (11).<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> In Kyôkai's collection there are one hundred and thirty-nine stories; Itô has selected out fourteen to rewrite.

Although many of the moralizing tales included in the collection are meant to nudge his audiences forward toward enlightenment, the stories also strongly reflect Kyôkai's latter-day belief that "some people totally lacked such potential" (Nakamura 61). As Kyôkai states in "On Gaining an Immediate Penalty for Driving a Heavily Burdened Horse without Mercy," "Beasts in the present life might have been our parents in a past life" (60). Indeed, although he was a priest, as Itô's interpretations stress, Kyôkai, who in fact was married, was quick to point out his own "innumerable" sins, "desires and attachments." As he says in Itô's version of the introduction,

I am a priest but lived like a person of the world outside of the temple, and like an ordinary person, I am married. I also have children. Although many of them survived, many of them died, too. What a wonderful thing it would be if there were a world where little children did not die. Seeing children die was such an awful thing. I have cremated children myself. Performing their funerals was even more miserable. Even so, I would make love to my wife. Sex was delightful with my loving wife.

わたくしは僧ではありますが、俗人のように寺の外に住み、俗人のように妻帯しています。子どももおります。何人も生まれましたが何人も死にました。幼い子どもが死なない世がきたらばどんなによいだろうと考えます。死んでいく子どもを見るのはとてもつらい。それをみずからの手で焼き、埋葬するのはさらにつらい。それでもわたくしは妻と性交します。性交は楽しく妻はいとしい。

(*Nihon no fushigina hanashi* 9)

As the second section of this chapter will show, Itô makes use of the full-range of themes that can be found in *Nihon Ryôiki*. Focusing on the dark sexuality of the mother in "Chichi yarazu no en," Itô also turns her attention to the sexual violence that stories such as "Zokuyô satsujin" (Murdering folksong) so intensely exude. A proponent of the idea that women, too, can achieve enlightenment, Kyôkai expounds upon this belief in *Nihon Ryôiki*, despite, as Ruch reminds us above, a social climate that did not widely support such ideas. In her story "Nikudango" ("Flesh ball"), Itô pushes this theme to the forefront in her description

of a horribly deformed girl who is born a ball of flesh and yet goes on to become the Bodhisattva Sari.

At the same time, however, Itô is equally interested in the mother who produced and nurtured such a child and comes to marvel at the mother's body at the conclusion of "*Nikudango*." It is the mother, after all, who leads the search and rescue of the abnormal child she gave birth to, after her husband, following the advice of his wife's midwife, abandoned her on a mountainside. Doing so, she finds that her daughter has broken out of the shell in which she was born, that, like Anjuhimeko, that "laughing living body" noted above, the flesh-ball child is "living and squirming" (Itô 33). As in "Anjuhimeko de aru," however, the recovery of the abject body is not merely an act of compassion, or motherly love, but an expression of the miraculous nature of the body, in this case, the mother's body. Finding their daughters in the sandpits or among the mossy rocks they are "thrown away" to, these mothers give birth a second time to the living gods these daughters will become, as *bodhisattva* in the case of the flesh-ball girl and *kami* in the case of Anjuhimeko.

### **I. In the Voice of a Modern-day Miko:**

#### **Itô Hiromi's Retelling of the Sanshō Dayū Legend**

Anjuhimeko becomes an abject subject by virtue of her birth. Her father is repulsed by Anjuhimeko's infant body, her mouth "so big it stretches all the way to her ears" (*kono ko no kuchi wa mimi made sakete iru*) ("*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko*" 8). Believing his daughter to be the child of another man, Anjuhimeko's father orders his wife to bury their newborn daughter alive in a sandy river bed, literally abjecting her from house and home. Conspiring against her husband, Anjuhimeko's mother inserts a long reed into what would be

Anjuhimeko's burial grounds for her to “suck in the dew through” (*tsuyu o namete*) (“*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko*” 13) . The baby girl lives on into her third year, at which time her father had said he would reclaim her if she survived. However, the father reneges on this promise and again attempts to abject her, sending the three-year-old girl drifting out to sea, where she embarks on a hair-raising journey of enslavement, sexual molestation, and, eventually, salvation. In the end, she will become the *kami*, or Shinto god, called Oiwaki Sama, the god of Mount Iwaki, which rises out of the Tsugaru plains in Aomori Prefecture.

Itô’s retelling of this “Tsugaru” version of the Sanshō Dayū myth departs significantly from the early Taisho era (1912-1926) version of the tale that Mori Ôgai published in 1915, the story on which both Mizoguchi and Umehara based their respective 1954 film and 1993 story. In Ôgai's more popular version of the myth, which many Japanese say they learned at the knee of a parent or grandparent, Anju is a young girl when she and her brother Zushiō attempt to journey with their mother and her maid from their estate in northern Japan to the site of their father’s banishment in southern Tsukushi (modern day Kyushu). Abducted by slave traders early on in the journey, the children are sold to a wealthy plantation owner named Sanshō Dayū, while their mother is taken to Sado Island, left to a fate of chasing birds from millet fields. After toiling for many years on Sanshō Dayū’s estate, Anju convinces her brother to escape, urging him to find their parents and carry on their good family name. In both the Ôgai and Mizoguchi versions, Anju commits suicide by drowning herself, taking the secret of Zushiō’s escape to her watery grave. In keeping with the earliest extant seventeenth-century *sekkyō* version of the myth, summarized by Iwasaki Takeo in his two studies of the myth, in the Umehara Takeshi version, Anju is

tortured to death by fire and water for her part in her brother's escape (Iwasaki, *Sanshō Dayū kō: chūsei no sekkyōgatari*, Thoughts on *Sanshō Dayū*: Buddhist tales of medieval times 33-34).

The differences between these three more popular versions of the myth and the Tsugaru version Itô's poem is based on are so many we might choose to view them as separate myths, but at the core of both is Anju/Anjuhimeko's unshakeable spiritual forbearance. Just as Anju sacrifices her life so that her brother might live to be reunited with his family, in the Tsugaru version, Anjuhimeko is forced to undertake nearly impossible physical tasks to prove herself worthy of ascending to *kamihood*. As if this were not enough, as in the Umehara version mentioned above, she is also subjected to extreme forms of torture as well in Itô's retelling of the myth. Indeed, her ability to endure this torture points to her spiritual fortitude.

This "mark" is most tellingly--and traumatically--rendered through the branding of Anju/Anjuhimeko's flesh, a brutal act that each of the versions must account for, since this motif is central to the standard *sekkyō*. In the earliest extant versions of the text, the children are overheard talking about their desires to escape their fate as slaves by Sanshō Dayū's son, Saburō, and are immediately summoned by the slave owner and branded on their foreheads. Among the modern accounts, however, only Itô's Tsugaru version has Anjuhimeko herself permanently "branded," though the details of her torture by fire are significantly different: the three-year old child is roasted over flaming cattails whenever she refuses to obey her various masters. Indeed, Anjuhimeko is no ordinary child and survives this "trial by fire." Literally dangled by her feet by her tormentors over the fire, she becomes a super-human

child, able to endure whatever form of torture they mete out to her. An almost *manga*-like figure in her invincibility, Anjuhimeko, by virtue of her status as a three-year-old, retains a strong sense of vulnerability as well. While her body hardly seems to scar, Anjuhimeko is constantly reminding us that she is "just a three-year-old child," and avoids being roasted over the cattails by carrying out the slave masters' wishes ("*Watashi wa anjuhimeko*" 17).

Aside from Itô's version, only in Umehara's telling is branding retained as a physical imprint upon the children; nonetheless, even in Umehara's version, their brands vanish when the children pray to their protective amulet, a small statue of the Buddha, to whom the brands are transferred. Interestingly enough, even though in both Ôgai's story and Mizoguchi's film, the children are not branded at all, each artist manages to subtly invoke the branding motif to suggest the trauma of living in the shadow of that threat. In Ôgai's story, the children are branded in a dream that they have at the same time, a dream that not only signifies their fear of Sanshō Dayū, but their vital, almost telepathic connection with one another as well. In Mizoguchi's film, living his life under the daily threat of a branding, Zushiō, upon reaching adulthood, finds himself having to brand an old man who has attempted to escape Sanshō Dayū's estate.

Both Ôgai's and Mizoguchi's use of the branding motif betray their concerns and sensibilities as artists: While Ôgai displays his fascination with modern subjectivity, both through the children's shared dream (or nightmare) of branding and their entwined psychologies as brother and sister, Mizoguchi's film explores the nature and origins of evil as Zushiō takes on the characteristics of his master, Sanshō Dayū. As critics point out, the interiorized world of the children Anju and Zushiō is given far more substance than the

physical world in which they find themselves enslaved in Ôgai's version. In their comparison of the Ôgai and Mizoguchi versions, Andrew Dudley and Carole Cavanaugh cite the fairy-tale quality of Ôgai's telling: "...for Ôgai, the children are only a distressed Hansel and Gretel; not slaves in constant fear of their lives" (15). I would assert, however, that, true to many fairy tales, Anju and Zushiô inhabit a subliminally terrifying world of looming threat, reflecting their liminal status as adolescents, ages fourteen and twelve respectively. Depicting their branding as the children's simultaneous dream, Ôgai taps into the unfathomable reservoir of the children's fear, giving them life as subjects, a modern subjectivity that had not existed in previous tellings of this tale. And though the children's flesh is in fact spared, the readers' emotions are not, for we do not realize that Ôgai is describing the children's simultaneous *dream* until their branding is etched as something very *real* (and terrifying) in the story.

In his 1954 film, Mizoguchi, too, renders the impenetrable subjectivity of Anju's choice to take the secret of Zushiô's escape to her grave: Anju walks serenely into the swamp, disappearing beneath rings in the water that spread out above her. While Ôgai reveals much about the subjectivity of Anju and Zushiô as developing adolescents, as Andrew and Cavanaugh point out, Mizoguchi turns to their vastly more complex subjectivities as young adults. One scene in the film version that renders Anju's interiority in almost spatial terms occurs when she hears the eerie evocation of her mother through the song of a girl who has recently joined Anju in her task of spinning thread. Hailing from Sado island, where Anju's mother had been taken those many years before, the girl intones the low, haunting refrain of the mother's longing for her lost children: "*koishii Zushiô, koishii Anju.*" Following Anju



as she encircles the girl who sings bent over her spinning, the camera spins a cocoon of airy intimacy around the girls, giving the song its subtle intensity in strikingly visual terms.

It is the film's branding scene in particular, however, that reveals Mizoguchi's interest in interrogating the moral depths to be plumbed in the tale. Tarô, as "the good son" is known in Mizoguchi's film, tells the children they must wait until they are adults to try to escape. The children heed Tarô's advice, but by the time they are "old enough" to escape, Zushiô has become so jaded by his fate as a slave that rather than remaining devoted to the family's *jizô*, the heirloom his father has given him on his banishment to Tsukushi, Zushiô despairingly believes he has no choice but to devote himself to Sanshô Dayû. Zushiô lives up to the brutal legacy of his slave master by carrying out the branding of an elderly man who has worked on the Sanshô estate for some fifty years, an act that effectively makes Zushiô the "son" of Sanshô Dayû (Dudley and Cavanaugh 23). More significantly, however, this act shows how far Zushiô has fallen in this world in which the only recourse for the oppressed is to join forces with the oppressor.

Zushiô follows this act with one of equal cruelty, carrying an elderly woman, a long-time working companion of Anju's, up to the hilltop grave-yard. Still alive, as Zushiô well understands, the woman will eventually die as she is eaten by carnivorous birds. It is here, at this desolate, bone-strewn site of the dead, that Anju is able to help her brother recover the keen sense of spiritual acuity that he has lost, a sense of hope that Anju herself has somehow managed to retain. As he escapes, Zushiô carries the ailing woman to the temple that harbors them both. Only after transferring her spiritual powers to Zushiô can

Anju end her suffering through her choice to drown herself.<sup>78</sup>

In Itô's Tsugaru version, however, Anjuhimeko's existence is grounded in the physical life of punishment that is inflicted daily. As pointed out above, "branding" is in fact a "roasting" over cattails, a punishment she is subject to whenever she refuses, or is simply unable, to carry out the will of any one of the men she serves:

... he torments me, saying, "Anjuhimeko, go pound the millet, go pound the rice," but what can a three-year-old child do? I can't possibly be expected to hold a pestle with this tiny body of mine, and so he hangs me upside-down over the flaming cattails and begins roasting me. What can I do but this? There is nothing I can do but hang here and be roasted.

このあんじゅひめ子、粟を搗け米を搗けと責められる、どうして三歳の子どものなりしたわたしが、この身体で、杵いっぽん持てるはずもない、そうしたら蒲を焚かれて逆さにつるされあぶられた、どうしようもこうしようもない、あぶられるままにあぶられているよりしかたがない...

(*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko* 15)

This punishment has the desired effect of deterrence. Before long, the only way

Anjuhimeko can avoid roasting is to submit herself to the will of her various masters. Her hard labor includes sexual servitude as well:

... tormenting me with their "Anjuhimeko, suck on this," I suck on them against my will, and then they tell me to keep it in my mouth, I think how awful it is to be roasted over the cattails, and so when I keep it in my mouth against my will, they next torment me by saying, Anjuhimeko, put this in you, I'm just a three-year-old child, if I put this in me, my body will split wide open and that will be the death of me for sure, I cry, and beg of them, no, anything but that, but the men make their fierce faces, just as I thought, it's the cattails, the cattails for me, why do men always say such awful things?

あんじゅひめ子、これをなめろと責められる、いやいやなめると、こん

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<sup>78</sup> For further explanation and exploration of Ôgai's story and Mizoguchi's film, please see my paper "In the Voice of a Modern-Day *Miko*: Itô Hiromi's Retelling of the Sanshō Dayū Legend" in *Studies on Asia*.

どは口にふくめと責められる、いやいやとおもうけれども、蒲であぶられるのはせつない、いやいや口にふくめば、あんじゅひめ 子、こんどはこれをそこに入れろと責められる、三歳の子どものなりしたわたしの身の上、そんなものをここに入れたらわたしの身体は裂けちってそれでおしまい、そればかりはどうか許してと涙をながしてたのんだけれども、男たらおっかない顔をして、やっぱり蒲だ蒲だ、男とはこうまで無理なことをいうものか...

(*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko* 17)

Nowhere in his fifty page study of the Oiwiki-sama myth does Iwasaki mention Anjuhimeko's sexuality, much less the kinds of horrendous sexual abuses Itô describes. In fact, Mizoguchi and Umehara make reference to the sexual implications of slavery, for women in particular: Mizoguchi evokes the mother's plight as a courtesan, and indeed Zushiô first searches for her in a brothel on Sado. In addition, Zushiô suggests that Anju will be forced into prostitution after he escapes, though of course because Anju kills herself, this fate is conveniently avoided. In Umehara's version, one of the men who abducts Tamaki, Anju and Zushiô's mother, says he would like to make her his concubine. After Tamaki's maid jumps from their captors' boat into the water where she will drown, he says to Tamaki, "Damn! If I let something happen to you, I'll lose five whole *kan*. You'll be my wife, or be sold for a whore, but the one thing you *won't* do is die on me!" (trans. Paul McCarthy 177).

In Itô, however, Anjuhimeko's suffering is rendered in such hyperbolic proportions that it approaches the absurd, suggesting in the most symbolic terms the emotionally traumatic and physically painful ways in which both children's *and women's* bodies are commodified and abused, a theme that is suggested, but never fully developed, in the other narratives. Through the unlikely, almost *manga*-like, portrayal of the grossly abused three-year-old Anjuhimeko at the hands of the men who "employ" her, Itô has readers

reflect not so much on the hyperbolic suffering of this super-human child as on the more tangible suffering of *real* Japanese women forced to live in sexual servitude as prostitutes and concubines, indeed, as "comfort women" and "*panpan*" alike.<sup>79</sup> While we cannot avoid reading Itô's poem as powerful testimony to the physical and psychological horrors of the sexual abuse of children, by choosing to convey this story through a myth that centers around sexual enslavement, Itô evokes the sense of vulnerability of all Japanese women who have suffered under that regime as well.

Another central difference between these two strains of the myth revolves around the issue of Anjuhimeko's agency. In the Umehara, Ôgai, and Mizoguchi versions, Anju's agency is limited to the spiritual realm: indeed, she plays a vital supporting role in these renditions of the story. Encouraged by Anju to flee Sanshō's estate, Zushiō not only journeys back to his mother, but, eventually, to Sanshō Dayū's plantation as well, where he abolishes slavery as the new governor of Tango. In the Tsugaru version, however, Anjuhimeko becomes the sole agent of her own salvation as she undergoes the many physical tests and journeys that define her ascent as *kami*, as Iwasaki describes the spiritual progress of the Tsugaru version (Iwasaki, *Sanshō Dayū kō: sekkyō jōruri no sekai*, 160).

In fact, Anjuhimeko's brother plays a far smaller role in the Tsugaru version than Anju does in the Umehara, Ôgai and Mizoguchi versions, existing only as a voice inside

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<sup>79</sup> During the Pacific War, the Japanese Military instituted a wide-ranging institution of sexual slavery, in which women throughout Asia were, as Yoshimi Yoshiaki puts it, "systematically rounded up and imprisoned in 'comfort stations.'" Euphemistically called "comfort women," Japanese women were included in this system as well. After the Pacific War, Japanese women were drafted into the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA) in 1945 to serve as prostitutes for the American forces occupying Japan. After the system was disbanded one year later, prostitutes known as *panpan* continued to serve American troops illegally, see Yoshimi 1-2 and 100-101, as well as Molasky 103-108. Also see note forty seven in Chapter Two for further information about sexual slavery and prostitution in Japan before the Pacific War.

Anjuhimeko's head, a voice she "hears from far away" in time, "his voice now like that of an old, old, old man" (*tôku kara kikoeru, ano ko no koe wa ima totemo, nen totta, nen totta otoko no yô ni*) ("Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru" 28). In this Tsugaru version, Anjuhimeko retains her spiritual potency and takes up the very search for her parents that Zushiô undertakes in the Sanshô Dayû myth. Indeed, in Itô's version, when Anjuhimeko telepathically summons her brother, Tsusômaru, as he is called in the Tsugaru version, with the hope that he will be able to direct her to the site of her salvation at Tennôji, he is unable to do so.

Another major departure from the more popular myth is the portrayal of Anjuhimeko's father in the Tsugaru version. While Anju's father does fall out of favor with the reigning emperor and is banished, he is depicted as an unfairly-treated, upright man of nobility. As Iwasaki points out, however, Anjuhimeko's father has more in common with *oni* (monstrous demons) than with humans. In fact, the *oni*-father is deeply associated with the various slave-masters that Anjuhimeko encounters once she is banished from home, the first of whom is known as Sanshô Dayû, according to excerpts of the Tsugaru version that Iwasaki provides (*Sanshô Dayû kô: sekkyô jôruri no sekai* 173). While the molesting slave masters remain conspicuously unnamed in Itô's poem, the father, too, is very much implicated in the child molestation that virtually consumes Itô's poem-tale and so tellingly marks it as a child's story of survival. While, as noted above, the sexual dimensions of enslavement are touched upon in both Mizoguchi and Umehara's versions as well, Itô, by means of her innovative rewriting of the relatively unknown Tsugaru version, thoroughly exposes this theme that so deeply haunts Japanese women's history, a dark legacy of sexual

enslavement that, as pointed out above, extends well into the twentieth century.

While Anjuhimeko must be read as a powerful agent capable of withstanding any hardship in the original Tsugaru version, Itô reinvents the girl as a sexual being, and her ability to survive the horrendous forms of sexual abuse she encounters on her journey to godhead contributes to, rather than diminishes, her power as a character. Indeed, Itô's graphic depictions of the bodily damage Anjuhimeko suffers through repeated rapes are deeply disturbing, as is the profound sense of psychological injury that accompanies her trauma. That Anjuhimeko believes her father carries out such violent acts out of a sense of "love" is a case in point, even if we extend Iwasaki's theory and see the father's abuse as yet another test of Anjuhimeko's "spiritual endurance."

The trajectory of her story, however, suggests that true salvation comes to Anjuhimeko only after she bears witness to the powerful desires of *Yamanba*, the mythic mountain witch whom Itô inserts into her version of the story. Toward the end of Itô's poem, *Yamanba* cajoles Anjuhimeko into carrying her up to a huge mountain phallus she wants to have intercourse with one last time before she dies. Jeffrey Angles points to the importance of the *Yamamba*'s teachings, describing her vast desire as one that "seeks self-gratification, independently of the pleasure of the partner." This is of course all the more significant to Anjuhimeko because, as Angles reminds us, her own "sexual experiences have . . . not been voluntary" (15). Given that Anjuhimeko finds her way to Tennôji temple, the site of her salvation, by following the directions of *Yamanba*'s progeny, the Leech-child (Hiruko) that *Yamanba* gives birth to after her wild coupling with the potent phallus, we might even say that what Anjuhimeko achieves in the Itô version is as much a form of sexual salvation as

a spiritual one. Indeed, in her reinvention of the yamanba as a positive force of women's sexuality, Itô joins the ranks of authors such as Ôba Minako and Tomioka Taeko in their writing of what critic Mizuta Noriko calls the *han-* (anti) *monogatari*. Obliterating the dualistic notion of gender that underlies much traditional *monogatari*, which so often casts its female characters as sexual victims, as mentioned in the previous chapter on Tomioka's poetry, these writers rebuild the *monogatari* from “ground zero” (Mizuta 50).

Itô confronts the painful legacy of the sexual enslavement of Japanese women through her presentation of a female body as alive in its pleasures as in its suffering, through the example of Yamanba to be sure, but also through Anjuhimeko, and to some degree, Anjuhimeko's mother as well. Whether she is talking about the raped body of the three-year-old girl who can admire the beauty of her own sexual organs as they slide from her body, or the despair of Anjuhimeko's mother, who buries herself in the sandpit to be close to her daughter, Itô lines the underbelly of pain with pleasurable sensuality. Hearing their cries, feeling the warmth of the many infants who inhabit the sandpit, Anjuhimeko's mother ponders the mystery of the swirling prints of her daughter's toes. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, however, no image better epitomizes Anjuhimeko's potential for fully-embodied pleasure than her emergence from the sandpit as a “growing, laughing, living body” (*sodatte waratte ikita shintai*):

when they dig me up, I'm not dead, I haven't dried up, I was just warming myself in the sand, a growing, laughing living body, mother marked my place with a stalk, and I would suck the dew morning and night through the tiny, tiny, tiny hole, a growing, laughing, living body, a growing, laughing, living body, a growing, laughing, living body, that's me, that is who I am!

掘りあげてみればわたしの身の上は、死んだわけでもないしひからびて

るわけでもない、砂の中であたたまって、育ってわらってる、生きた身体である、母が蔑いっぽんしるしにたてたその小さい、小さい、小さい穴から朝夕の露をなめて、育ってわらってる生きた身体、育ってわらってる生きた身体、育ってわらってる生きた身体、それがわたしそれがわたしである...

(*Watashi wa anjuhimeko* 13)

The sense of graphic physicality that evokes not only the father's phallus, but the mother's umbilical cord as well is supported by the physicality with which Itô embodies her language, in large part through the rapidity and frequency of her "torrential" repetition. This use of repetition is one of the features of the Tsugaru transcripts that Itô brings to full fruition in her poem. As evidenced by the transcription that Iwasaki provides, the phrase "I am a growing, laughing, living body" is repeated in the Tsugaru version, but only minimally:

掘りあげで見れば、わだしの身の上は死んだわけでもないし、成長つて笑てる身体である。母が蔑を印に立でだ、づ穴から、朝夜の露を甜めるながら、成長てる身体である。  
(qtd. in Iwasaki, *Sanshō Dayū kō: sekkyō jōruri no sekai*, 170)

When they dig me up, I'm not dead, I am a growing, laughing living body.  
Mother marked me with a stalk, and I sucked the morning and evening dew, I am a growing, living body.

Taking the original into her own finely-tuned sense of aesthetics, Itô pushes the language of the Tsugaru transcript to the brink of sensibility, so that the reader is more immersed in the experience of the sound of the words, rather than the comprehension of their meanings.

Repeating this phrase that serves as both the title and final image of the first part of her four-part poem--"I am a growing, laughing, living body"-- no less than four times in the section quoted above, Itô allows us to appreciate these words as much for their sound and texture as for their symbolic value. Releasing the strongly-felt emotions of her characters through such



repetition, Itô accomplishes the unlikely feat of the semiotic “rupture” to which Kristeva alludes. Just as the body of Anjuhimeko literally tears open from repeated rapes, so too does the symbolic order of language that can barely contain the extremes of violence and joy Anjuhimeko’s story imparts.<sup>80</sup>

This sense of mythic language that informs Kristeva’s notion of the semiotic as a conveyer of timeless signifiers is very much reflected in the mythic landscape of Itô’s Tsugaru version, which is another stark contrast to the purely social, or in the case of Ôgai, psychological, landscape within which the other stories exist. In these versions, there is a clear setting and mapping of the children’s journey to Tango, one slave-owner, Sanshō Dayū, and a sense of chronological time that traces the lives of the Anju and Zushiō. In Itô’s version, however, place, time and even people are collapsed, or compressed, into one place, one time and one person. Although it seems that Anjuhimeko has experienced a lifetime of physical torture and hardship, she has in fact progressed only to the age of seven by the third and fourth sections, in which she reflects back on her experiences as she embarks on a search for mother, father, and ultimately *kami*hood. The journey away from her parents is thus marked by her eventual return to them.

While the narrative trajectory strongly suggest Anjuhimeko’s journey to salvation and *kami*hood, all place names, with the exception of Tennōji, are omitted, and one senses

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<sup>80</sup> Please refer and listen to the sound recording of Itô reading the first section of "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*" in the appendix of this chapter. The recording is in both Japanese and English, with Itô reading her own translation of the poem. It is my hope that this recording, particularly the Japanese portion, will provide readers with a better understand of the performative aspect of Itô's work, with the pounding rhythms and strong use of repetition that Itô brings to her performance of the poem. The beginning of the recording includes music as well, which is not typical of Itô's performance of the poem before a live audience. The drum beat included in this recording, however, does replicate the way in which she pounds the floor while performing the poem, see *Nihon gendaishi no rokunin*.

that she is always circling back to the same place no matter how far she journeys: cast out to sea by her father, Anjuhimeko arrives crashing back into her father's house, and then runs away into the nearby woods where she is forced to carry out a series of nearly impossible physical tasks, such as filling a basket full of holes with water by not just one taskmaster, but presumably many, who are repeatedly referred to as "*otoko*" (man). As mentioned above, these faceless men become Anjuhimeko's rapists, and as such, she tells us, they are all versions of her father. Itô's orientation to time, place, and person in the Tsugaru version contributes to the reader's deepening sense of the fractured world of this myth, challenging the sense of unitary subjectivity that characters achieve in both the Ôgai and Mizoguchi versions. Paradoxically, this compression of place, time, and person gives way not only to an imploded, rather than an emplotted, narrative, but also compels the sense of rupture through which the underlying "infinite signifier" of myth and metaphor can flow (Kristeva 31).

The orality of Itô's Tsugaru tale as one intoned by a *miko* also contributes significantly to the poem's mythic quality: indeed, we could say that the poet's performance of the poem's pounding repetitions gives way to the rupture and flow of the mythic that, as described above, the literal text enacts as well. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, when she performs this poem in front of an audience, Itô clears the pathway for this onslaught of the mythic by pounding the ground where she kneels before she begins her recitation of the poem. As suggested above, the main action of the poem is described not just once, but sometimes many times over, as the poet repeats key rhythmic phrases. Itô puts this reverberation of ideas into motion from the opening lines, when the father announces his wish to kill his infant daughter. The looming presence of the father is immediately evoked by

the speaker's repetition of the word father (*chichi*), repeated three times in the opening run-on sentences that propel the forward-motion of the spoken narrative. Comparing her own story with other *monogatari*, or tales, she has read, Anjuhimeko intones,

The man they refer to as "father" usually wasn't there, was absence itself, or that's what I believed, no matter which story I listened to, the stepmother would always tell everyone the father was dead at home or traveling, but in my house, "father" does exist, and all he wants to do is kill me, his single-hearted intent is to kill me, and so what can I do, I've had nothing but hard times since I was born

父というものはたいていそこにはいないものだと、不在であるものだと、わたしはおもっていましたが、どんなものがたりを聞いてみても、父というものは、家の中で死んでるか旅に出てるか継母のことをきいてるかである、しかしわたしのうちには現在の父がいて、わ

たしを殺したい一心でわたしを殺しにかかる...

(*Watashi wa anjuhimeko* 8)

Itô creates a veritable round of words through these repetitions, and even as their symbolic value sloughs away, they come to signify so much more than the acts they describe. Indeed, it is as though the repetition comes to approximate Anjuhimeko's disbelieving, traumatic horror at her own experience. That is, she must repeat her tortures many times over not only to emphasize their veracity to her listeners, but, perhaps, to convince herself that she has survived the abuses inflicted upon her.

As so many of the passages cited here show, Itô's rendition of the Oiwaki-sama myth can be excruciatingly physical. In the following passage as well, Anjuhimeko's mother's pain, sorrow, and guilt over the loss of her child, whom she herself buries and follows into the sandpit grave, is exemplified by Itô's emphasis on the mother's clogged breasts, as well as by the experience of burying her daughter and crying herself blind, her life

consumed by sorrow. Indeed, as in "*Chichi yarazu no en*," we might even imagine that the mother's body swells with sadness--or as in "*Kanoko goroshi*," mourning--clogging her breasts. While in many instances, the father's words quoted above are in fact reported by Anjuhimeko, in this next passage, his words issue from the mouth of his wife. While the overwhelming actions of the father are muted to some extent when given voice by his more forgiving daughter, this is not the case at the end of the following passage in which the mother conveys the father's anger that he neglected to bury his wife as well, his words merged seamlessly together with hers:

Giving birth to three children in three years, one of the children I had gone through all the trouble of bearing was buried by my husband in the sand, and now I don't know what to do with my swollen breasts, the holes in my breast where the milk comes out are plugged up and feverish, so swollen, they hurt so badly that they feel like they could rip open with just one touch, I really don't know which is worse, the pain in my breasts or the sorrow at my child being buried, I spend everyday from dawn to night weeping, and with all of this weeping, I have ruined my eyes, when that happened my husband said do me a favor and just go, you're the one who gave birth to the child that had to be buried, you have some deep, dark karma that made you give birth to that child and made you blind, if you stay here, your deep, dark karma will rub off on me, before that happens, do me the favor of dying or at least get out of my house, I wish I had buried you in the sand too

三年で三人の子を産みふやしながら、せつかく産んだその子どもは夫に砂に埋けられる、張る乳房をもてあます、乳を出す穴という穴がふさがって熱をもち、はれあがり、乳房は触れただけでも裂けちるかと思うぐらい痛んだ、乳房が痛いのか子どもが埋けられてかなしいのか、毎日ひにち泣きくらしした、泣きくらししてるうちに、目が泣きつぶれた、そのとき夫がいうには、目がつぶれたからにはこの家に来てくれるな、埋けられるような子を産んだおまえだ、子を産んだのも目がつぶれるのもおまえの業の、深いせいにちがいあるまい、このままここにいられてはおまえの業の深いのがおれにまでうつってくるようだ、そんならその前に、死ぬかおん出るかしてくれと、

おまえも砂に埋けてしまえばどんなによかったかと、そういうことを  
いう

(*Watashi wa anjuhimeko* 9-10)

It is interesting to note the ways in which Itô dramatizes this scene, the ways in which she invigorates the original sense of repetition that the Oiwaki transcript also contains in its emphasis on the mother's crying her eyes out until she can no longer see. By examining the original, we can also see the dramatic way in which Itô has enlarged upon the "separation" between the mother and the father that is so muted here:

砂の中さ埋げで、泣いて泣いで眼が見なぐなつた。眼  
が見ない為に亭主に離縁される。

(Qtd. in Iwasaki, *Sanshō dayū kô: sekkō jōruri no sekai*, 165)

I buried her in the sand. Crying, crying, I could no longer see. Because I could not see, I was separated from my husband forever.

True to the character of nature-dwelling *kami*, the spiritual force of this poem resides within the physical, and, in many ways, its repetition recasts language as a physical “medium” that embodies the mythical world of Oiwaki-sama’s rebirth. Indeed, the semiotic force that resides outside of the “sense” of the words is driven home by the presence of the Leech-child, who, appearing in the last section of the poem, has no language. The “grotesquely formed” first child of Izanagi and Izanami, Leech-child, like Anjuhimeko, was “floated away” on a small boat by his parents, only to return later as the god Ebisu. As in the *Kojiki*, Leech-child is redeemed in Itô’s poem as well. In Itô, however, Leech-child survives in its original form. Not only does Leech-child's survival reflect and reaffirm Anjuhimeko’s status as a survivor, but, at the same time, we might see in the survival of Leech-child Itô's reaffirmation of Leech-child's mother, Izanami, to have “spoken first” in her

courtship with Izanagi, the very act that doomed Leech-child in the first place (Keene 18-39). This sense of female empowerment is reflected throughout Itô's poem, through the free-spirited *Yamanba*, for example, as well as through the actions of Anjuhimeko's mother, who is responsible for her daughter's survival. *Yamanba* thrusts the Leech-child onto Anjuhimeko shortly after giving birth to him, and casting Anjuhimeko herself into this unexpected position of mother as well, Itô reaffirms Anjuhimeko's right to speak the unspeakable: the abuse she suffered at the hands of her father.

More so than any of the other versions of the Sanshō Dayū myth, Itô interrogates the limits of language, channeling the semiotic forces of the mythic through the pulse of her vibrant (and sometimes violent) rhythms and repetitions. Leech-child conveys the way to Tennōji without words, and the "intersubjectivity" that Anjuhimeko achieves with Leech-Child is vital to the semiotic progress of the poem, since, as Kristeva writes, "the symbolic becomes at once the domain" of such "intersubjectivity" (31). The medium of exchange between Anjuhimeko and Leech-child is of course poetry. Speaking as poet, Anjuhimeko laments at the end of the poem that all she has is language that slides from Leech-child's "slippery surface" (*Watashi wa anjuhimeko* 32).

And yet, speaking to Leech-child, Anjuhimeko's voice harnesses the semiotic power of poetry: Leech-child's desire for the music of Anjuhimeko's voice is slowly sated by her words. So, too, is that of the reader, who, in the end, is delivered safely from the terrifying world that Anjuhimeko inhabits. And yet, for all of the *miko*'s spiritual ability to convey what has been lost, language, like the Leech-child whom Anjuhimeko carries on her back, remains a burden. Indeed, what compels the poet is the gap between what she

envisions and what language can finally convey, even as it brings the extra-symbolic forces of rhythm and repetition to bear on the subject. Closing her poem with the image of Anjuhimeko lugging her telepathic Leech-child to Tennôji, Itô reaffirms the improbable ways in which Anjuhimeko has managed to rescue herself in this tale she tells as *miko*, in language that can never fully contain, or release, her.

## II. The Woman with the Exploding Breasts:

### Wondrous Stories of Japan

Given the ways in which Itô reinvigorates the original Tsugaru myth in "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*," one of the noteworthy qualities of Itô's interpretations of Kyôkai's stories is how closely she follows their basic plotlines. While Itô does inscribe female characters in stories such as "*Chichi yarazu no en*" with a much more vibrant sexuality than they possess in Kyôkai's original, his *Nihon Ryôiki* offers much for a writer so deeply concerned with the spiritual and sexual lives of women. Departing from the common Buddhist view of women as a hindrance to enlightenment and instead "maintain...[ing] the equality of men and women before dharma," as this section will show, the *Nihon Ryôiki* features a "rich diversity of women, both high and low, rich and poor, lay and clerical" (Nakamura 72, 69). Indeed, many of these women are able to attain salvation and, on occasion, even enlightenment, despite their abject status as subjects living under the "degenerative dharma (*mappô*)" (Nakamura 10). This unlikely feat of female enlightenment is illustrated most tellingly in "*Nikudango*," a story about a

girl who, as mentioned above, persists in her desire to practice Buddhism despite her physical handicaps as a "ball of flesh" and is eventually proclaimed the Bodhisattva Sari.

While, as *Nikudango* illustrates, women are able to transcend their abject status in *Nihon Ryôiki*, many of the stories do in fact take a negative approach to their moral function, depicting the ways in which women and men are punished for sins committed in either their previous or present lives. There is the woman in "*Chichi yarazu no en*," for instance, who is inflicted with grotesquely swelling breasts for refusing to give her mother's milk to her children, abandoning them instead for a lover. In "*Zokuyô satsujin*," a woman is devoured on her wedding night by her new "husband," who fiendishly reduces her to no more than a bloody, decapitated head and finger. Kyôkai's tale retains its aura of mystery in Itô's version as well, beginning and ending with the folk song the title refers to, an omen that portends the bizarre killings as punishment for an unnamed deed carried out in a previous lifetime. Providing evidence for Li's observation that images of the grotesque loom large in many *setsuwa*, Itô's versions also illustrate that even the most grotesque, secular *setsuwa* can be seen as a "synthesis of three elements": "as teaching," "as knowledge," and "as pleasure" (1, 19), as Li puts it, qualities that I will foreground in each of three the tales by Itô that I describe in this section.

Let us begin with the "knowledge" of the Bodhisattva Sari, whose birth as a ball of flesh so horrified her parents that they readily abandoned her in the forest at their midwife's urgings. While the sex of the flesh-ball child is ambiguous, her status as a girl-child is implied throughout the story in both Itô and Kyôkai's versions. Although "she had a hole for urine, but no vagina" and had "no relationships with men," she is defined by Itô as a female, not only for her lack of a penis--"She had no penis. She was female"



("Mara wa nakatta. Onna de atta")--but by her "uncommonly beautiful voice," which, as both Itô and Kyôkai's versions stress, would attract people far and wide when she read the sutras (*Nihon no fushigina hanashi* 34). When she shows up at a lecture by an important priest named Kaimyo, he identifies her as a "nun" and admonishes her because, as a woman, she was not permitted to attend such events. Reminding him that "Buddha shows his compassion to all people equally," however, she asks, if "I am discriminated against and excluded in this place especially, then where can I exist?" It is at this point that "the throngs outside pushed their way into the hall," hearing her voice. Already beginning to assume her religious authority, she questions Kaimyo and the other priests, but they are unable to answer and are "easily defeated" by her superior knowledge of Buddhism. In this moment, she is proclaimed the Bodhisattva Sari and everyone gathered around her to receive Buddha's teachings" (Itô, *Nihon no fushigina hanashi* 36).

What is so significant about the flesh-ball child's enlightenment is that she need not first become a man to attain it, as women do in Buddhist scriptures such as *Hoke-kyô*, *Nehan-gyô* and *Muryôju-kyô* (Nakamura 70). As Nakamura points out in her introduction to her translation of the *Nihon ryôiki*, although Kyôkai "learned the Buddhist teachings through these scriptures...he did not accept the view of woman contained in them." "Devout and compassionate," his women are also "capable of attaining enlightenment" (71). The only story in which a woman is given the title of bodhisattva in the *Nihon ryôiki*, as Nakamura points out, *Nikudango* not only shows traces of the influences of the story from the Indian tradition, which also emphasizes the flesh-ball girl's apparent "lack of physical gender," but it also shows the transition of the enlightened body from male to female, as well as the feminization of the Buddhist tale in

Japan. As Nakamura writes, "This story serves as a bridge between an early Mahayana trend and a later Tantric trend in which woman plays a central role as a cosmic symbol" (72).

In Itô's version of this story, however, the cosmic role of women does not end with the flesh-ball child, but extends to the mother as well, especially in relation to her seemingly miraculous powers of childbirth. While Kyôkai's version of "*Nikudango*" does not put emphasis on the processes of nurturing the infant flesh-ball child, as we might expect, breastfeeding and nurturance are of great importance in Itô's version. Indeed, it is only when the mother's breasts begin to swell with milk for the infant she and her husband abandoned in the forest that the couple realize their mistake and go looking for her. According to Itô's "*Nikudango*," the parents discover that their flesh-ball has undergone a second birth of sorts, breaking free of the egg shell in which she was born. Reminiscent of Anjuhimeko's survival in the sandpit, the flesh ball child is found to be "living and squirming" (*ikite, ugomeite ita*) (*Nihon no fushigina hanashi* 33).

Everything in the moss-covered environment that Itô creates--ferns, spiderwebs, the mother's breast and stomach--is damp with dew. The onomatopoeic language of this section emphasizes not only the intimacy of the mother-infant bond, but the incantatory quality of this repetitive language (indicated in bold here) seems to all but erase the abject status of the flesh-ball child in the mother's eyes: "*Tsuma wa omowazu hashiriyotte, dakitotta. **Nukunuku** to shite ita....**Heenheen** to nakidashita. Sono totan ni tsuma no chibusa ga **mukumuku** to fukureagari, chibusa wa tachiagari, sentan ga hiraita*" ("Without thinking, the wife ran to the baby and held her, snuggling, snuggling. The baby bawled it's head off: 'waaaaaaah!' At that instant, her breasts swelled bigger

and bigger: her breasts filled and her nipples opened") (*Nihon no fushigina hanashi* 33). The miraculous nature of the mother, giving birth to a lump of flesh that will eventually become a bodhisattva, is emphasized at the end of the story as well. Noting that many such children have been born in China, the narrator is filled with wonder that her own body could produce such a miraculous being.

In a very different story, "*Zokuyô satsujin*," a woman is devoured on her wedding night by the man she has just married, who fiendishly reduces her to no more than the bloody body parts mentioned above. Following the original tale that the story is based on, the meaning of this event remains a mystery in Itô's version as well, beginning and ending with the folk song the title refers to, an omen that portends the killing that, according to Nakamura and Li, can be interpreted as punishment for a sin. In the opening line of the song as it appears in Itô's version, the murdered woman's choice of husbands is questioned: "Who wants you for his bride?" (*omae wo yome ni hoshigaruru wa dare ja*) (*Nihon no fushigina hanashi* 50). Although this story can be easily identified as one that "teaches" about the laws of karmic retribution, neither Nakamura nor Li, both of whom translate Kyôkai's version, can agree on just what the transgression was that is being revisited in the story, nor even by whom the transgression was carried out.<sup>81</sup> Taking no stand on who is at "fault" in the story, Itô instead lays emphasis on the mystery of the song, with which she begins and ends the tale, along with the physicality of the aftermath of the murder.

Both would-be victims, the protagonists of "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*" and "*Chichi yarazu no en*" emerges triumphantly. On the other hand, Yorozunoko, the

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<sup>81</sup> Li suggests in her translation that the parents had brought about their daughter's cruel death for their greed for her suitor's treasures, while Nakamura maintains that the punishment is directed at the daughter for her deeds in a previous life, see Li 128 and Nakamura 206.

protagonist of "*Zokuyô satsujin*," is brutally murdered, the victim of what appears in Itô's version a bizarre sex crime. Co-mingling the grisly, and painful, murder with the lyric beauty of the song, however, Itô is very much in her element, suggesting the mystery and sensuality of this event through the liturgical force of repetitive language, especially in the final line of the song quoted here, "you were so charming, bewitched" (*hore hore omaejya omaejya*):

Who wants you for his bride	おまえを嫁に ほしがるはだれ
Yorozunoko of Amuchinokomuchi?	じゃ
The mountain ascetics imbibe	あむちの こむちの よろづの子
more and more	なむなむや ひじり さかも
chanting the sacred teachings:	さかも
Oh save me Buddha!	もちすすり のりもうし 山の知識 You
who were so charming, bewitched	さん
	ほれ ほれ おまえじゃ おまえ
	じゃ

(*Nihon no fushigina hanashi* 50-51)

The terrible murder and, most likely, rape, of Yorozunoko, whose cries of pain were thought by her parents to signify only the loss of her virginity on her wedding night, gives meaning to this mysterious song, which was sung by everyone--"children, old people, men and women"--without thought to its content (Itô, "*Nihon no fushigina hanashi* 51). As mentioned above, Itô emphasizes the brutal physicality of the deed: "when the parents tried to push the door open" the next morning, "they choked with the smell of blood. In the terrible ocean of dark blood that had accumulated, there was just a lump, unmistakably Yorozuko's head and finger. The parents each screamed as if a spirit had passed before their eyes" (*Nihon no fushigina hanashi* 53).

Foregrounding the shocking details of Yorozunoko's death, Itô shows the vulnerable mutability of the object body: As Li writes, "The grotesque body bleeds,

decays, is penetrated or is absorbed by another body or force, or is consumed. It is open in its vulnerability: forces other than time can act upon it and change it in ways different from aging and death" (43). While the meaning of the song is clarified to some extent in the story, the perpetrator of this crime, whether "he" was the human he appeared to be or a fiendish flesh-eating *oni* impersonating a charming husband, remains a mystery.

Imbuing the tale with psychological intensity of the grotesque, Itô portrays him as an "unnamed force showing us that our world is unreliable and causing a fear of life rather than of death" (Li 40). As Li points out, "the misogynistic implications of this tale make its redeeming qualities difficult to see" (128). But at the same time, Itô's unflinching portrayal of this crime, her unwillingness to turn this story into something that it is not, allows her to use the original myth to shock us into an acute awareness of the violence carried out toward women in the name of "teaching" in the Buddhist story-telling tradition.

"*Chichi yarazu no en*," on the other hand, is not only a story that "teaches," but, as Itô pointed out in our 2009 interview, it is a story that is also meant to impart pleasure to contemporary Japanese women. In the process of providing quality erotic literature for Japanese women, Itô also creates an unusual form of erotica that centers around the mother, no small feat in a culture in which the mother's sexuality is so often de-emphasized. As Anne Allison argues in her *Permitted and Prohibited Desires*, while the Japanese construction of the self so often centers around the mother, the mother-child bond emphasizes the narcissism of the child, rather than an erotic bond to the mother. Unlike the Freudian model, sons "are compelled to abandon not eroticism for their mothers, but hatred and resentment," in short, the "narcissism" that the mother-son bond

is said to engender in Japanese culture (4, 25). Citing Kosawa Heisaku, who in 1932 offered a counter-theory to Freud's Oedipus complex, Allison points out that in the Japanese family, which "centers almost entirely on the relationship between mother and child...there is a gradual development of this bond rather than an abrupt disruption at the time of adolescence." In this process, which "barely involves the father, maturity is marked by the child's ability to not break from the mother but remain bonded to her while recognizing her as a person rather than an omnipotent ideal" (3).

Citing the taboo that exists around cultural representations of the sexual mother, Allison does present one notable exception: that of the incestuous mother who seduces her son as he enters the final stages of his college entrance exam study. Arguing throughout her study that "motherhood" in Japan is "sutured" to "the very regime of a child's [academic] performativity" ("Introduction" xv), this mother-son incest, so widely covered in the press in the 1980s, while "deeply pleasurable to both parties," can also be interpreted as an extension of the mother's role as the "*kyōiku mama*" (education mama) who "notices" her son's sexual "distraction," and worrying "that it will obstruct his work," begins an affair with him (123). In contrast to this model of the mother's sacrificial sexuality, the sexual mother we encounter in Itō's "*Chichi yarazu no en*" is punished, not for sacrificing her sexuality to her children, but for sacrificing her children so that she can pursue an intimate relationship with her lover. In the end, however, her children forgive her for no other reason than "she was our mother" (21), and she is urged by the narrator of the story to "take pride in your shining, rising breasts," as *both* lover and mother (23).

Narrated at first by Kyōkai in Itō's version, "*Chichi yarazu no en*" is told primarily in the voice of Jakurin, a friend of Kyōkai's, who, in a dream he has on a

religious pilgrimage, encounters a beautiful spirit in the snowy forest, a woman writhing in acute agony. Her breasts are literally about to explode in pain, the punishment she must endure for refusing to give her infant son, Narihito, her mother's milk. Her *"hourglass-shaped nipples"* black and swollen, oozing with pus, *"her loose flesh rolling like waves,"* she *"grasped her knees and rocked her hips back and forth, enduring the pain. Holding her breasts, she gently stroked them, and repeating this movement, her pained voice spilled out"* (15).

Despite her pain, Jakurin nonetheless recalls the spirit's rare beauty: *"Her voice was, how can I say this, so sweet and loving, and what's more, she was so lavishly naked. She fixed her gaze on me, and, as if it were nothing, she held out her breast to show me."* Despite his claims to the contrary, Jakurin appears to be mildly aroused by this ghostly woman, who says to him, *"Look, they are so hot and swollen. And all this pus is coming out. I've tried sucking and squeezing them, but nothing that I try brings relief. This is my own body, but there's nothing that I can do for it"* (15-16). Ironically, the grotesque depiction of the woman's breasts, her black nipples oozing with pus, does not erase, but perhaps even sets off her great, and even arousing, beauty. Quoting Victor Hugo, Li delineates the effect of this "sublime" contrast with the grotesque: "Sublime upon sublime scarcely presents a contrast, and we need a little rest from everything, even the beautiful." For Hugo, the grotesque presents the viewer with "a halting-place, a mean term, a starting-point whence one rises toward the beautiful with a fresher and keener perception" (37). Translated below, the story opens with one of Itô's favorite motifs, which Kyôkai's version does not contain: the wild growth of plant life. Entering this

world, we are surrounded by a landscape of earthly desires and attachments, which grow "as densely as these plants" (13).

### **The fate of a woman who did not give breast milk**

I am Kyokai.

The plants grow too thickly. If our worldly desires and attachments could take on a shape, they would probably grow as densely as these plants. Around Nakusa County, in Kii, where I was born and grew up, the plants multiply like insects, and creep along like snakes. The plants have even gotten inside of people's houses. When it becomes autumn, and then, even when winter comes, the plants do not die. Their colors fade, and they just become a little reticent.

However, my friend Jakurin told me that there are also winters when this is not true. Jakurin is an elder of mine, from the same neck of the woods as me. The other day he returned from a religious pilgrimage, filthy from his journey.

*I was wandering around in various places, and when I went north at the end of autumn, the plants were dying, falling to the ground right before my eyes. Before long everything had died off and was buried under pure white snow. It was at this point that the spirit emerged.*

And so the story that he began was this one.

*In 770, the first year of the Hoki Era, I stayed in Uneda in Kaga a whole winter at the end of just that kind of autumn. I still remember the date, December 23 in winter when everything was completely covered in snow. I had a dream.*

*In this dream, I was in Ikaruga, and right before my eyes was Prince Shôtoku's palace. Even though one might think that a big mirror had been placed on the front of the palace, it wasn't a mirror, but a road. It's one straight road that extends into the direction of the Far East. I was walking on that road. On both sides of this road, there were thickly growing groves like the ones that can be seen in Nakusa. Suddenly, hearing a woman's groaning voice, I peered inside the dense forest.*

*There, a naked woman was crouched down, groaning.*

*She was a large, pale woman, and her breasts were extraordinarily large and pendulous. When I looked hard, I noticed that they weren't just large, but that they were very red and swollen. From the tips of her dark black, hourglass-shaped nipples, pus was dripping down. I gathered that the woman's pained voice was because of those nipples.*

*The woman, kneeling down, her loose flesh rolling like waves, grasped her knees and rocked her hips back and forth, enduring the pain. Holding her breasts, she gently stroked them, and repeating this movement, her pained voice spilled out.*

*Because this was a dream, I wasn't surprised at all. As though she were just any old woman having a little fit, I asked, "What's wrong?" A woman of rare beauty, she looked in my direction.*



*"My breasts hurt so much--I just can't bear it." Her voice was, how can I say this, so sweet and loving, and what's more, she was so lavishly naked. She fixed her gaze on me, and, as if it were nothing, she held out her breast to show me.*

*"Look, they are so hot and swollen. And all this pus is coming out. I've tried sucking and squeezing them, but nothing that I try brings relief. This is my own body, but there's nothing that I can do for it."*

*"Let me try to help you," I said. No, even though it was a dream, I had no evil intent; yes, precisely because it was a dream, I had no evil intent at all, and so coming up beside her and crouching down, when I came to touch one of her breasts, she sadly shook her head and blocked my hand.*

*"I am Narihito's mother."*

*"And what of that?" I asked. Glancing at me in my confusion, she began this story.*

*"When Narihito, my youngest, was a baby, I was crazy about a man. I left my children behind and went out to meet this man and have sex with him again and again. And then, whenever I went back home to my children, they were dirty and hungry, but when they saw me, they cried out, 'mommy, mommy!' and came galloping happily toward me, spreading their sticky hands wide to give me a big hug. The baby Narihito, slobbering all over, would suck, and the bigger children, too, sitting on my knee, or climbing on my shoulders, tried timidly to touch the breast that Narihito had been sucking. How could I leave such young ones behind? Even I was disgusted with myself, but, soon, all that was swirling around in my head was 'I want to meet my man, I want to meet my man.' Even while I was giving Narihito milk, my head was in the clouds and all I could think of was him putting his penis in my vagina. Whatever happened with my children, with people's gossip, by then, I could really have cared less. I was gradually so excited thinking about him that I went out to meet him again.*

*"When I couldn't give milk, my breasts became bloated. My vagina filled with his penis, I was completely absorbed and gasping. All by themselves, my breasts bloated and, tension building, they became stiff. He was completely sickened: 'How disgusting,' he said. 'You are not even a human, are you?' Even still, in this condition, when I continued to have sex and was about to reach orgasm, completely beyond my control, my warm milk, stinking like the rawness of life itself, came flying out of my strained breasts, drawing an arc in the air.*

*"And then, the man said, 'look how disgusting you are. My feeling for you is completely gone. A woman with children is so unattractive.' And so, when he pulled his penis out, I cried.*

*"When he was thrusting his penis into me, all I could think was that it was so good that I wanted to die. I thought about which was better, dying with this feeling or my vagina becoming empty, I, too, becoming empty and disappearing.*

*"I couldn't help going out to meet my lover. I couldn't help putting his penis in my vagina. Not going out, I felt so anxious, my empty vagina so cold. It was as though I was leaking out from my vagina, and so I didn't know what else I could do.*

*"And then, after a short while, I became sick and died. When I died, my vagina was completely empty. My feelings of ecstasy about dying were completely different. I knew this death to be painful and sudden, and far more empty than my vagina. Narihito*

*had not yet separated from my breast. There is never a time when I don't think about how much he must have struggled growing up.*

*"Now I am suffering the punishment of my swollen breasts. They were swelling and the pus accumulating; they were boiling and became so hot, something churning inside them. Because I could not bear the pain, I even wondered if I could tear them open and take out the bad part.*

*"This was not a punishment for sleeping with my lover, nor even a punishment for wanting to meet my lover. I know that it's a punishment for making my child go hungry for my breast. As for this punishment, I must accept it--I can't get rid of it," the woman moaned, writhing in pain, massaging and squeezing her breasts, the hissing hot pus oozing and dripping.*

*"I have a favor to ask. Please let Narihito know what has happened to me. If only he would forgive me, I..." Just as she was saying this, I woke up.*

*When I woke up, this was the same village of rice paddy furrows that it always was. When I went outside to the front of the small shack I was staying in, there was a layer of snow on the field; the bushes and trees were withered and dying, and there was no place at all that the woman's body could have been hidden.*

*Relying on the woman's story, I walked to her village and met a man who said, "I am Narihito, but what business do you have here?" He was a short, unsociable man, quite different from his mother, a man of few words. I talked with him about his circumstances, but the man who had separated from his dead mother so early could only mumble, "Well, I don't even remember my mother's face."*

*However, as evidence that he was not as unfriendly as he looked, Narihito led me to the house of his older sister, who knew a lot about the situation. It was a wealthy-looking, imposing house. When the sister came out of her house, I glanced at her breasts without thinking. I saw them sagging under her clothes. Her facial features were similar, but there was not any trace of the way her mother looked just after sex with her lover. She was a woman who gave the impression of not having much laughter in her life. Considerably older than Narihito, she was also much older than her mother in my dream.*

*When I started to speak, her eyes widened and she opened her mouth, but when she had finished listening to me, she hung her head in silence. At Narihito's urgings, she hesitantly opened her mouth.*

*"She is my mother, the mother in your dream is my mother."*

*The sister, falling silent, finally sighed and told this story as if all in one breath.*

*"It is just as you say, Mr. Jakurin. My mother was famous for her beauty. She was well-liked by men, and they frequently came to our house. She was rumored to be lascivious and fickle by other people, and she frequently ended up leaving us young ones behind to go off someplace. In this house where mother did not return, I was the oldest and so ended up looking after my little brothers and sisters, nudging them, pushing them along, and making them cry. The neighbors did help out, but being a child, I desperately pretended to be strong and waited. Even thinking about how late mommy was, I had faith that she would be back sometime, and as long as she did return, she was still my mother. Pretty and kind with her warm soft breasts so round, whether hers was a good smell or a bad smell, it was a smell I didn't know at all.*

*"I have the memory of thinking of her smell and sleeping in her arms, but truthfully, those things have been long-forgotten, and it's just because I saw that it was that way for Narihito that I remember those kinds of things, tracing these memories back to myself. But sometimes even now I can suddenly smell her scent.*

*"Mr. Jakurin, perhaps we were left behind at home, and Narihito cried because he did not have his mother's milk. But she was our mother, and we've never had bitter feelings toward her. She was our mother."*

*Having told this story, the sister began to sob like a child. Narihito was flustered, and hovered around his sister.*

*Although I thought the mother's suffering had left her with the sister's words, afterwards, I helped them give their mother a memorial service, just to make sure.*

*Shortly after that, the mother appeared again in a dream. This time, too, she was completely naked. In my dream, I was wondering if one wore clothes in hell.*

*"The sin has been purged." The woman with the bright, shining face stood there and openly lifted her heavy breasts in her hands and rocked them, then disappeared.*

*Jakurin said, Because the children forgave her and didn't hold any bitter feelings, I didn't understand very well the kind of punishment she had received. I am not enlightened enough yet and I thought that this was the reason I should continue my journey of religious training after the snow disappeared.*

*I see, I see. Because I have children of my own who are still small, I understand. I always feel guilty for the layman's life I lead, but at times like this experience is useful.*

*It's just that kind of thing. It's fine for mothers to sleep with a man whenever they like. But it's just that you mothers, you should take pride in your shining, rising breasts. Take pride, and put them there in the open. Put them out there and give your overflowing breasts to your children. That's the way I see it.*

## 乳やらずの縁

景戒です。

草木が繁りすぎるのです。煩惱、執着、そういうものがカタチをとるとしたら、この、草木の繁りかたがそれでしょう。わたくしの生まれ育った紀伊の国の名草の郡のあたりでは、草木は虫みたいに殖えるし、蛇みたいに這いまわる。草木は人の家の中にも入りこんでくる。秋になり、それから冬が来ても、草木は死にません。色が褪せて、無口になっていくばかりです。

しかしそうじゃない冬もあるのだと、ある日寂林がいました。寂林は同郷の、年上の友人です。先日、修行の遍歴から帰ってきました。おどろくほど薄汚い男になっていました。

諸国を経めぐって、北のほうに行くと、秋の終わりには、植物の命が、死んで、はらはらとはがれていくのを目の当たりにするのだよ、やがて何もかも死に絶えて、まっしろの雪に埋もれて、そこにぼっかりと幽霊が浮かぶ.....

そうして彼が話しはじめたのが、この話でありました。

宝亀元年（七七〇年）、加賀の国の畝田で、そういう秋の暮れになり、ひと冬そこにとどまった。まだ日づけまで覚えているぞ、冬の十二月二十三日、すっかり雪に埋もれていたころだ。わたしは、夢を見た。

夢で、わたしは、斑鳩にいた。目の前には、聖徳太子の宮があった。正面に大きな鏡が置いてあるよと思ったら、それは鏡じゃなくて、道なのだ。まっすぐな道が一本、ま東の方向に延びていた。わたしは、その道を歩いていった。両側は、この名草で見るような、もうもうと繁った藪があった。ふと、女のものよふ声が聞こえたので、わたしは、繁みの中をのぞいてみた。

そこには、裸の女が、うずくまって、うめいていたのだ。

色の白い、ふとった女だった。その乳房が、尋常じゃなく大きくて垂れていた。よく見るとそれは、ただ大きいのではない、まっ赤に腫れあがっていた。黒ぐろとくびれた乳首の先端から、膿汁がしたたり落ちていた。女の苦しげな声は、その乳房のせいと、わたしは見とった。

女はひざまずいて、たるむ肉をたふたふと渡うたせて、膝頭をもみしだき、腰をゆすり、痛みをこらえていた。乳房を、にぎりしめたり、そっと撫であげたり、そんな動作をくりかえしながら、によふ声を、じつに苦しげにもらしていた。

夢のことだったから、わたしはちっともおどろかず、平然として、そこいらの婆のシャクをおこしたのに声をかけるような調子で、「どうしました」と声をかけた。女がこちらを向いた。それが、めったにいないくらい好い女だった。

「おっぱいが痛い、痛くてたまらないの」と、女の声は、もう、なんというか、甘ったるくて、愛らしくて、しかも惜しげもないすっ裸だ。そして、わたしをひしと見つめて、わたしに、ぺろんと、その、おっぱいを差し出して、見せた。

「ほら、こんなに腫れあがって、熱があるの。膿が、いくらでも出るの。吸ったり、しぼったり、してみたけど、どんなにしても、楽にならない、自分のからだだというのに、何もできないの」

手当してあげようとわたしはいった。いや、夢といえども邪心はなく、というか、夢だからこそ邪心はまったくなく、わたしは、どれ、と片膝をついて、女のそばにしゃがんで、乳房に触れようとすると、女はかなしそうに頭をふって、わたしの手をさえぎった。

「あたしは、なりひとの母なんです」

それがどうした、と戸惑うわたしを後目に、女は話しはじめた。

「末のなりひとが、あかんぼだったころに、男に狂いました。子どもらをほったらかして、男にあいにいきました。さんざん、さんざん、くながひして、さて子どもらのもとに帰ってみれば、ほったらかしておいた子どもらは、汚れて、飢えていて、でも、あたしを見ると、かあちゃんかあちゃんと、うれしがって駆け寄ってきて、べとべとのお手々をひろげて、抱きついてくるんです。おっぱいをぺろりと出してやると、あかんぼだったなりひとは、よだれまみれでしゃぶりついてくるし、大きな子たちも、肩や膝にのってきたり、なりひとが吸ってるおっぱいにおずおずとさわってきたりして。こんな幼いものたちを、どうしてほったらかしにできたかと、そのときは自分でもあきれてしまうんですけど、またす

ぐ、男にあいたい男にあいたいと、そればかりが頭のなかに渦巻いて、渦巻きよりほかはなんにもなくなり、なりひとにお乳をやるのもうわのそらで、男のこと、男のまらにあたしのくぼに入れること、そればかり考えていて、子どもらのことも、人がうわさしてるのも、もうどうでもよくなって、もう、いてもたってもいられなくなって、ちりりちりりとあおり立てられるようで、あたしは男にあいに、うちを出てしまうんです。

お乳をやらないと、おっぱいが張るんです。まらでくぼをいっぱいにして、むちゅうであえいでいるような最中に、おっぱいがひとりでに張ってきて、もりあがり、かちんかちんに硬くなり、男が、ゲーなんだこれは、人間じゃねえ、などといって気味悪がります。それでもそのまんまつづけて、ああもういきそうってことになりますと、そのかちんかちんのおっぱいから、ひとりでに、白い生臭い温かいお乳が、ぴううと弧を描いて飛んでいきます。

それで、男が、おいおい汚い、気がそがれるよ、だから子持ちはつまらねえなどといってまらを引き抜いてしまうものですから、あたしは泣きました。

まらにつつつかれながら、ああ死ぬ死ぬという思いを何度もしました。そうして死んでしまうのと、くぼをからっぽにして自分もからっぽになって消えてなくなるのと、どっちが良いのかなあなんて、考えました。

あたしは、出て行って、男にあわないでは、おれなかったんです。くぼを、まらで、ふさいでおかずには、いられなかったんです。でないと、自分が、足元からくずれていってしまうようで、からっぽのくぼがすーすーして、そこからあたしがもれ出ていってしまうようで、いてもたってもおれなかったのです。

それから、まもなく、あたしは病気で死にました。死んだとき、あたしのくぼは、からっぽでした。死ぬ死ぬというあの思いとぜんぜんちがって、もっと苦しくてあっけなくて、そうしてくぼなんかよりもっとずっとからっぽなものだということを知りました。なりひとは、まだ乳離れしてませんでした。あの子が、どんな苦勞をして育つたろうと、思わないときはありません。

あたしは、いま、おっぱいの腫れるむくいを受けて苦しんでいます。腫れて、膿がたまって、ぐつぐつ煮たって、熱くなって、ぐりぐり中で何かが動くのです。そこが、やりきれないくらい痛むので、切り開いて、わるいところを取り除けばいいのかと思うほどです。

これは、男と寝たむくいだはない、男にあいたがったむくいでもない。幼い子を乳に飢えさせたむくい、そう知っています。むくいとして、あたしが受けなくちゃいけないものなんですから、取り除くことはできないのです」と、女はうめいて身もだえして乳房をもんでしごいた。だらだらと煮えたぎった膿汁がしたたった。

「おねがいです、なりひとに、このことを話してください、なりひとがゆるしてさえくればあたしは」と女がいったところで、わたしは目が覚めた。

目覚めてみれば、あいがわらずそこは畝田の村の、寝泊まりしていたボロ小屋のなかで、おもてに出ると、いちめんの雪野原、藪も、木も枯れはてて、女の身を隠すようなところもなかったのだ。

女の話をつよりに、里をたずね歩いてみると、やがて、わたしがなりひとですが、何のご用でございましょうという男に出会った。背の低い、愛想のない、あの母とはうって変わって、口の重たい男であった。わたしは次第を語ったが、「いやー」と、母に早く死に別れた男はもごもごと口の中で、「母の顔も覚えてないし」

しかし、見かけほど不愛想でない証拠に、なりひとはわたしを、事情を知っているという姉の家まで、案内してくれた。裕福そうな構えの家であった。

姉が出てきたとき、わたしはおもわず、その乳を見た。衣服の下で、しょんぼりと、しなびて垂れているのが見てとれた。顔立ちは似ていたが、あの母の持っていた、たった今、男とくながひしてきたばかりという表情は、この姉は持ち合わせていなかった。たいして笑うことのない暮らしだろうと感じさせる女だった。なりひとよりかなり年上だった。夢の中の死んだ母よりも、ずっと年上だった。

わたしが話しはじめると、しなびた姉は、目をみひらいて、口をあげ、話に聞き入っていたが、聞き終えると、うつむいてだまってしまった。なりひとがうながすと、重たげに口をひらいた。

「母でございませぬ、母に、ちがひありません」

姉はまただまりこみ、やがて、ため息をひとつついて、一気に語った。

「寂林さまの、おっしゃるとおりです。母は、評判の器量よしで、男に好かれて、男の出入りもはげしかったものです。人には多淫だ多情だと陰口をたたかれていました。幼いわたしたちを置きざりにしてどこかへ行ってしまったこともしばしばでした。母の帰ってこない家で、いちばん年上のわたしが、弟妹の面倒を、こづいたり泣かせたりしながら、見てました。まわりの方がたすけてくれましたけど、子どもは子どもなりに必死で虚勢はって、待っていました。かあちゃんおそいなあと思っている、いつか帰ると信じていたし、帰ってきさえすれば、母は母でした。きれいで、やさしくて、あたたかくて、おっぱいがやわらかくて、垂れていて、臭いのかかぐわしいのかわからないようなにおいがしました。かあちゃんのおいがする、と思ひながら母に抱かれて眠った覚えがありますが、ほんとはそんなことはとくに忘れていて、ただ、なりひとがそうされてるのを見ていたから、自分になぞってみただけなのかもしれません。でもそのにおいは今でもときどきふっと嗅ぐんです。

寂林さま、たしかにわたしたちはほったらかしにされました。なりひとは、お乳をもらえなくて泣いてたこともありました。でも母は母でした。恨むなどと考えたこともございませぬ。母は母でした」

そう語った姉は、ああ、ああと声をあげて、子どものように泣きだした。なりひとは、姉のまわりでおろおろした。

わたしは、それから、その姉弟をたすけて母の供養をしてやった。姉のことばで、母の苦悩は解決したんじゃないかと思ったが念のためだ。

しばらくして、またあの母が、わたしの夢にあらわれた。このたびもまた、一糸まとわぬ裸体であった。いったい地獄というところには衣服はないのかと、夢ながら、わたしは思ったものだ。

「罪は浄化されました」

女は、はればれとした、きれいな顔でそこに立ち、ぴかぴかかがやくむき出しのおっぱいを、両手で重たそうに揺すりあげて、かき消えたのだ。

子がゆるすも何も、恨みに思っていなかったというのだから、母がなんのむくいを受けたのか、よくわからなかった自分は、未熟であると思った、雪が消えしだい、修行の旅をつづけなければと思ったわけだ、と寂林はいいました。

わかります。わかります。うちにも乳飲み子がいるのでわかります。在俗の生活を送っている景戒はいつもそれを後ろめたく思っていました、こういうときには役に立つ。

こういうことです。母たちはいくら男と、とついででもいいんです。しかしこれだけは、母たちよ。ぴかぴかにもりあがる乳房を、誇りなさい。誇って、乳房を、むき出しなさい。むき出して、子らに、あふれる乳をあてえなさい。．．．．． そういうことだ、とわたくしは思います。

Itô stresses that one of the many issues that attracted her to Kyôkai's stories is his earthy use of language, his straight-forward use of the old terms *mara* and *kubo* to denote the penis and vagina, body parts that are difficult at best, according to Itô, to convey in modern literary forms. For Itô, returning to the old idiom that Kyôkai employed becomes a form of innovation: through her repeated use the word *kubo* (vagina), for instance, which literally means depression or cave, Itô insists on the legitimacy of this term, both the pleasures and darkness that it implies in this work. Linguistically linked with caves and grottos, the term "grotesque" itself is originally derived from *grotesche*, and, as such, is "associated with the womb as well: a hollow space with the potential of protecting or producing life, and conveying the sense of birth or rebirth." And yet, as Li points out, "the cave-like womb could become a site or cause of death; infants and women could die during birth...the cave is further associated with excrement, the underworld, and hell among other things" (31). In "*Chichi yarazu no en*," Itô demystifies the term by repeating its name several times, and yet, at the same time, the vagina retains its dark, all-consuming power. Indeed, the close affiliation between pleasure and death could not be more

pronounced in this poem, for, as Itô implies, not only is life without pleasure death, a loss of self, but the deepest pleasure *is* death:

*"When he was thrusting his penis into me, all I could think was that it was so good that I wanted to die. I thought about which was better, dying with this feeling or my vagina becoming empty, I, too, becoming empty and disappearing.*

*"I couldn't help going out to meet my lover. I couldn't help putting his penis in my vagina. Not going out, I felt so anxious, my empty vagina so cold. It was as though I was leaking out from my vagina, and so I didn't know what else I could do."*

Foregrounding sexual terms such as *kubo*, Itô inscribes the very language of "*Chichi yarazu no en*" with the fearless sexuality of its protagonist. Like "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*," "*Chichi yarazu no en*" is a multi-vocal text that presents the tale from a variety of perspectives. In addition to the voices of the narrator and the protagonist, the mother's children also have their say, and in fact become the agents of their mother's forgiveness and salvation. Also, as in "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*," Itô provides the protagonist of "*Chichi yarazu no en*" with a sexuality that is largely absent in the original text. Just as she breaks down the distinction between the proper and improper "uses" of the breasts, Itô imparts both the close bonds between death, the utter abjection of nonexistence, and the womb and the vagina that it encompasses, as well as its pleasures. So doing, Itô once again stretches the boundaries of gender like skin over the belly and breasts of one who will soon give birth. Searching out what is new and evocative in the oldest forms, Itô reminds us of the sheer elasticity of both the gendered boundaries that she challenges and the cultural boundaries of the old texts she is so drawn to. Breaking down the distinction between good and evil that *setsuwa* so often suggest, in "*Chichi yarazu no en*," Itô foregrounds a woman who dies painfully for her sins, but also embraces

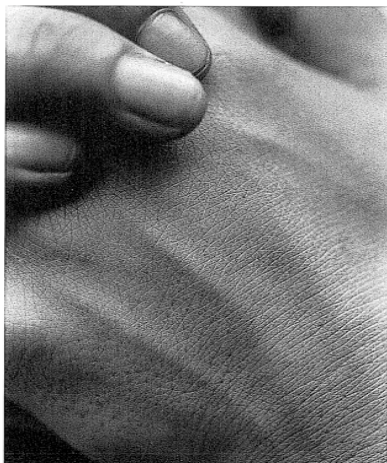
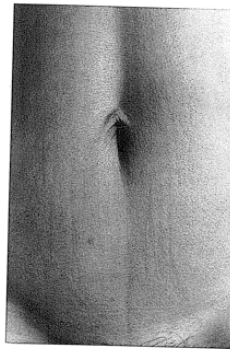


the pleasures of life, and who is, miraculously enough, *forgiven*, and even encouraged to "take pride" in her "shining, rising breasts," to "put them there in the open" (23).

## Appendix 2

Images from *Ashi, te, niku, karada*, photos by Ishiuchi Miyako, see Itô, 20-21 and 42-43.

読んだことも聞いたこともない。でも悪い気はしなかった。あなたはそれを考  
 えている。でも時間がない。じつさい、あなたは詩人をタクシーからおろすつ  
 ぎの客を乗せる。こんど詩人があなたの車に乗りこむのはいつかわらない。あ  
 なたのかける電話は10玉いっこだ。あなたの貴重で奇妙な経歴表を聞く  
 時間がそもそもないじゃないの。と詩人はいつているが、あなたは夢みることを  
 やめない。  
 それからあなたは土地を買った。いい場所がある。掘りおこし  
 た墓場。田の穂の野原。刑務所の跡地。ただの荒地。タクシードライバーは  
 それらの土地を自分のものにした。そこで降りた客は、一人もいない。でも  
 タクシードライバーはそこをなん人も通過した。人を乗せて、あるいはただ流  
 して置いて、いちばん好きなのは、刑務所の跡地だ。建物は壊されている。高い  
 塀がぐるりをめぐっている。塀の中でなにか息づいているように土地だ。とあ  
 なたは詩人に話して聞かせた。何か水と木の間に飛び交うん。こんな白い  
 肌をばいて、おれを夕暮れどきにつかまえてらん。連れていってやる。白とい  
 う色は、夕暮れの中で舞立つ魚だ。向こうがわへ、わたづいてける色なんだ。白  
 い印があとで見える。とくに夕暮れどきに。誰がその意味を知るだろう。  
 塀の中には、水がある。丸く大きく映っている。その下でおれは本を読む。塀





#### Appendix 4

Please access this link to listen to the attached sound recording of Itô Hiromi performing the first section of "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*":

<http://files.me.com/leefriederich/0dwuyz.mp3>

Divided into three parts, this recording includes Japanese, followed by English for each of the three parts. Slightly longer than twenty minutes in all, the recording was collected from the CD included with *Nihon gendaishi no rokunin* (Masters of modern Japanese poetry: six distinctive voices of the postwar era), published by Watchword Press in 1999.

## Chapter Five

### Strangling the House: Semiotic Displacement and the Animation of Abjection in Isaka Yôko's Poetry

#### Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, contemporary Japanese women poets have come to define their relationship to abjection not only in terms of their subject matter, but aesthetically as well, through their linguistic experimentation. Indeed, the contemporary model of abjection from which both Itô and Isaka Yôko draw demands that the poet reinvent her relationship to language so that which is unspeakable can be represented. Isaka's poetry can be seen in relationship to the experimental aesthetics of L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E poetry that has swept the current generation's international poetry scene, a movement that, as early as the 1970s, began to "reject...a speech-based poetics and consciously rais[ed] the issue of reference" (Silliman, intro. xviii).<sup>82</sup>

Offering a definition of the language poetry movement that has lent so much to the current trajectory of contemporary poetics, Ron Silliman writes in his *In the American Tree: Language, Realism, Poetry*, "this new direction would require poets to look...at what a poem is actually made of--not images, not voice, not characters or plot, all of which appear on paper, or in one's mouth," but at "language itself" (intro. xviii). Turning away from a poetics of reference, language poetry makes use of words to brush up against the chaos of the extra-linguistic, often tempting the reader to step off the deep end of language into new, unfamiliar zones that language can also suggest and "represent." In many ways, Isaka's poetry--both in terms of its subject matter and style--celebrates this

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<sup>82</sup> In his introduction to the anthology *In the American Tree*, Ron Silliman cites Robert Grenier's statement "I hate speech" in his 1971 essay "On Speech" in the first issue of the new magazine *This* as the inception of language poetry, "a breach--and a new moment in American writing."

movement away from reference. As Leith Morton writes, Isaka embraces a "poetry of dislocation" in which "the reader may find it difficult to establish normal categories of meaning" (*An Anthology of Contemporary Japanese Poetry*, intro. xxi). If abjection can be seen as that which is expelled from the body, the reader, too, may find herself awash in the unfamiliar space of the abject; expelled from the "common sense" of linear narrative in these poems, at times, we are buoyed by Isaka's refreshing use of language. On the other hand, we can also drown there, submerged in the dark psychological spaces her poems also embody. In some sense, too, we might consider language itself as abject, as something expelled from the body, like breath.

In many ways, Isaka's is a poetry of metaphysics, continually testing the limits of the body as it pushes beyond the boundaries of language as a symbolic system. In some cases, the human body is fantastically transformed by technology, or by other, more mysterious means, to accommodate the expansive desires of the body, or, conversely, to better express its most debilitating dilemmas, revealing a poetics that draws close to, and in places, overlaps with the popular contemporary forms of *anime* and *manga*. Referencing these ever-present cultural forms allows Isaka to approach that which cannot easily be discussed in society at large, including not only child abuse and violence among children, suicide, and mental illness, but also the impulse to kill.

Some of the additional techniques that simultaneously cloak even as they reveal the intricacies of these devastating realities include Isaka's highly-idiosyncratic form of animated surrealism and the fantastic, her use of not only super-human narrators, but of narrators who possess an uncanny ability to become the abject subjects that they observe, and finally, Isaka's formal experimentation with longer, more prosaic forms. These

poems, which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter, typically open with a highly-poetic prefatory meditation on the brutal suffering that will follow, allowing Isaka the multi-positional approach that even a partial comprehension of the heinous acts of some of her most unforgivable abject subjects require.

### I. Setting Out: The Burden of Metaphysics

In a 2002 roundtable discussion with poet/critics Arai Toyomi and Kawazu Kiyoe, Isaka concurs with Arai's assertion that her repertoire includes a good many poems that "distort reality," and goes on to claim a "metaphysical," rather than a consciously "social" use of I (*watashi*) (12). In many ways, we can see the ironic ways in which Isaka's statement dovetails with that earlier roundtable discussion alluded to in the introduction to this dissertation among the *Shinchô* critics who agreed that women's writing was nothing short of "lying." While it should be clear that the postwar and contemporary poets discussed in this dissertation "distort reality" by adopting persona as a means of revealing "truth," it is interesting to note the accuracy of their statement, despite its condemnatory tone.

Although I will argue throughout this chapter that Isaka's use of a *metaphysical* "I" does not preclude the strongly *social* aspect of the realities that her poetry captures (enumerated above), her poetry *is*, above all else, a poetry of suggestion, so often marking the suggestive contours of the body, for example, rather than the "body itself," as Kawazu puts it. Contrasting Isaka's approach to that of Itô's more direct depiction of the body as subject,<sup>83</sup> Kawazu goes on to explain, "Isaka does not expose the body--

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<sup>83</sup> Itô's portrayal of her own body, in *Te, Ashi, Niku, Karada*, for example, is an evocative instance of her "frontal" approach to the body. As noted in the previous chapter on Itô, however, I would like to

rather clothes...become a kind of fetish, indirectly expressing the body, touching on the parts that are not exposed, the shell or the cast off skin of the body" (12).<sup>84</sup>

Isaka delineates this preference for the "shapeliness" of the body, as well as her proclivity for metaphysical surrealism, through a compelling portrayal of the body's clothing in her brief, but highly lyrical poem "Ho" (Sail), the opening poem of her 1994 *Chijô ga manbennaku akarunde* (Thoroughly brightened earth). In this poem, Isaka ironically suggests the burden and even the impossibility of such a metaphysical approach in the postwar era in which fantasy or escape from the body and the physical environments in which it lives is not tenable.<sup>85</sup> In "Ho," clothing becomes the means by which the heaviness of the absent physical body is remembered, or even, memorialized. Vanishing one night, the speaker of the poem returns to the "elements," leaving behind only her "clothes," which still carry the heavy scent of her past. In this way, clothing becomes a remnant of the body that cannot be discarded:

**Sail**

**帆**

It was a night I returned alone  
that I vanished  
Disappeared, yes, but  
my clothes stayed behind  
Because I had come to embrace scent  
more deeply than people

ひとり還っていった夜だ  
蒸発して  
いなくなったとはいえ  
服は残っている  
においも  
人よりも深く抱いてきたから

---

reiterate that Itô's presentation of herself in this work must also be seen in terms of photography's capacity for creating an illusion or effect, an image, likeness or representation of the body. That is, the provocative photographs that appear in this book more often than not create a fragmented version of the body and are juxtaposed with highly experimental texts whose shifting narrators suggest the poet's playful interest in approaching and representing experience from a variety of personae and points of view.

<sup>84</sup> This three-way conversation between Isaka, Arai Toyomi and Kawazu Kiyoe appeared in the February, 2002 special edition on women's poetry published by *Gendaishi Techô*.

<sup>85</sup> Arai puts forth this argument in her discussion of Isaka in her 1994 *Joseishi Jijô*, see *Joseishi Jijô* 42.

they became a bit heavy

すこし重くなっている

In another place but  
the same day, the same stroke of  
the second hand

別の場所 だが  
同じ日同じ秒針の針がつける  
いっしょに

*You go on together* (Whose voice?)

いっておいで (誰の声?)

It was the night I returned to the elements  
with the babies who had died  
released from the hands of one called mother

亡くなった赤児たちといっしょに  
母と呼ばれた人の手もとから  
元素に還っていった夜だ

There is not even time to spread the sail  
still wearing this skin of clothes

帆をはる暇もない  
肌の服のままで

(*Chijô ga manbennaku* 10-11)

The location of the speaker of "*Ho*" is highly ambiguous: She vanishes, and yet, remains as a bodily presence, wearing the "skin of clothes" mentioned in the final line. Even as the speaker announces in the opening lines that she has performed a disappearing act of sorts, Isaka suggests in this ending the impossibility of metaphysical escape from the body, and so doing, enacts Arai's notion of the postwar poet's mistrust of such fantasy (*Joseishi Jijô*, 32). The clothes that "stayed behind" not only represent the sensuality of the body, embracing its deep scent, but in fact, by the end of the poem, become an outer layer of the body, a second "skin" (*hada no fuku*) that holds the spirit in.

The mysterious, and yet highly suggestive fate of this narrator, who vanishes unexpectedly with babies "the same day, the same stroke of the second hand," only to be "returned to the elements" is highly emblematic. One is tempted to compare this poem to Ishigaki Rin's poem "*Aisatsu*," discussed in the first chapter, in which the poet encounters, by means of a photograph, the burned bodies of those who died during the bombings of Hiroshima. Doing so, however, one can only infer, as one of many possible interpretations, that the narrator, who "returned to the elements/ With the babies who had died," might have joined those who vanished during the atomic blast, as a referent



submerged beneath many postwar texts. Here, however, the referent is so generalized that any attempt at direct interpretation becomes solipsistic. Without naming her subject, Isaka brings into focus this issue of reference that, as Morton suggests, defines her aesthetic approach, an approach that allows Isaka to evoke the "unspeakable" darkness within which the suffering of twentieth century Japan is enshrouded.

Indeed, try as she might, the poet-narrator cannot transcend the body. Though she appears to have temporarily abandoned her body, in the end, she still clings to the body's clothing, as though it were her own skin. As I will argue, Isaka is a poet who yearns toward a profoundly metaphysical poetics in which the imagination reigns above all else and, in some cases, offers itself as a kind of solace to those who occupy the position of the abject. While we can in no way definitively claim that this poem is set within the frame of Hiroshima or Nagasaki, an eerie sense of calm emanates from our knowledge that those who died "returned to the elements," "released" from the infinitely gentle "hands of one they called mother." Even though the speaker herself finds no lasting sense of release in her own circumstances, it is the poet's yearning for a metaphysical existence that makes this poem so poignant, her conviction that the physical body, and what happens to it, cannot be denied, or abandoned: "Still wearing this skin of clothes," however, the narrator cannot spread the sail of metaphysics into which she has momentarily vanished.

This hesitancy on the part of contemporary Japanese poets to define the precise circumstances of their subjects correlates with the highly-contested shifting ground on which historical interpretation exists in postwar and contemporary Japan. In an evocative example of this gradual destabilization of interpretation after the war, Orbaugh points to

the surprise with which random Japanese listened to the responses they had given to Occupation interviewers about their impression of events immediately following Japan's surrender some forty years earlier. As Orbaugh explains, "the interviewees had unconsciously, and probably very gradually, over the course of the fifty years since the war, rewritten the narrative of their wartime experience to fit the later paradigms of recovery and democracy." It is not surprising that Japanese poets would so thoroughly embrace the postmodern rejection of "interpretation," given, for instance, the ways in which the representation of history is so strongly contested in the culture at large. Perhaps Isaka's poetry, which offers complexity in the face of definitive interpretation, a plurality of interpretation that embraces, even as it pushes away, the fantasy of metaphysics, must be seen as one poet's nuanced response to what Orbaugh describes as history's "valorization of the of the hermeneutic code" (16).

## II. Semiotic Storms: "*Arashi*"

The failure of metaphysics is the subject of "*Arashi*" (Storm), and yet, unlike "*Ho*," "*Arashi*" resonates with a feeling of triumphant celebration for all that the narrator desires, rather than lamentation for all that she cannot become in her attempt to transcend the ordinary boundaries of existence. Also appearing in *Chijô ga manbennaku akarunde*, "*Arashi*" features a narrator who appears as a "fantastic being" (*igyô no mono*) and embodies what Napier describes as the "ideological alien," especially in her desire to "exult in the mind's ability to create a haven for itself" (127).<sup>86</sup> As Napier explains,

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<sup>86</sup> For an example of this tendency of the "ideological alien" to ensconce itself in its own imagination, Napier points to Murakami Haruki's *Hard Boiled Wonderland*, in which the protagonist "*Boku*" chooses to "stay inside his mental fantasy world because it is his 'responsibility,'" see Napier 127.

"power is...an explicit issue in works dealing with the ideological alien," whose presence "disrupts consensus reality as much as possible, to forcibly place alternatives to it in the reader's vision" (129). "Highly public, glorying in their exposure," ideological aliens subvert reality "through a celebration of the monstrous, the marginal, and the outsider"(129). Whereas at the end of her poem "*Kurashi*," Ishigaki's narrator momentarily views her world "for the first time" through the tears of a beast (*kemono*), Isaka's narrator moves through her world flaunting her beastliness, her uncanny ability, as an ideological alien, for boundary transgression and metamorphosis. Testing her own abilities to transcend the physical limits of the world, the narrator of "*Arashi*" surreptitiously refers to the ways in which she had transgressed the boundaries of nature: without explanation, her "engagement to marry a grove of trees" has passed. The storm, too, literally transgresses the boundaries of the narrator's body, which courses with electricity:

### Storm

My engagement to marry a grove of trees  
 has also passed  
 Wind and rain lash the slender limbs  
 The shaking descends the trees  
 but without letting up in the least  
 the scanning line advances  
 Television waves invade the brain  
 sway slish-slosh down to the stomach  
 If I return again to the time  
 the ring a toilet has marked on my butt  
 this mark of belonging to one family  
 that fades  
 Even having become such a fantastic being  
 would they not notice me?

Pounding the earth with both feet

### あらし

木々との婚約時代もすぎた  
 風雨が細枝をちぎり  
 震動が木を降りるが  
 間断なしに  
 走査線は運ばれてくる  
 テレビ電波が脳髄に侵入し  
 たぶたぶ揺れ 腹をくだっていく  
 便座で尻の輪をつける 一家族の  
 するしが  
 すれる時刻にまた帰ってくれば  
 異形の者になっても  
 気づかれないか

地殻を両足で踏んで

I walk to the pleasantness of the rising  
vibration  
I take to the untamed wind in my own way  
I get to the port  
but can conceive of nothing  
This is the poverty of no Messiah chorus  
I go into a shop  
and put steamed clams into my mouth  
but not because I am hungry  
The shop's watchdog is sitting  
in the candlelight that falls to the ground  
There is one collapsible bike  
folding itself neatly  
in the dark entrance

I want to look at the rough sea with the dog  
With the obedience of facing  
the throes of death  
he ordinarily takes a lap around the narrow  
garden  
without complaint  
He is absorbed in chewing the legs  
of a grasshopper  
With you who never despairs of  
anything  
I wrap myself in the earth holding  
my breath  
While I wait for the epiphany  
the storm will pass  
When the wharf birds that appeared from  
another stratum of air  
wheel wildly overhead  
and are absorbed by the morning light  
we will hear the single fierce *gya*  
of those crying birds together

震動がのぼってくる快さに歩く  
ざんばらの風を私流にうけ  
港まで来てみるが  
なにも考えられない  
メサイヤコーラスのない貧しさだ  
店に入り  
蒸したアサリを  
食欲のせいではなく口に入れる  
燭台のあかりが床におちるあたりに  
店の番犬がすわっている  
組立自転車も一台 あがりかまちの  
暗がり  
きちんと身を折って

犬と 荒れた海を見たいと思う  
断末のくるしみと向き合うときの  
従順さで  
ふだんは狭い庭を一周し  
文句を言わず  
バッタの足など夢中で噛んでいる  
だろうが  
倦まないお前と  
息ひそめて降臨を待つ間  
あらしは通りすぎるだろう  
埠頭の鳥たちが違った空気の層から  
うまれ  
攪乱し  
朝日に吸収されていくとき  
一回だけつよく  
ギャーと啼く声をいっしょに聞く  
のだ  
(*Chijō ga manbennaku* 36-39)

"Pounding the earth" as she walks through the storm, the narrator yearns for a metaphysical existence in the form of an "epiphany." But this epiphany is a gift that never arrives. Instead, this poem evokes an exhilarating sense of displacement as we are catapulted through its landscape. Each object in the poem seems to disintegrate as we

rush beyond it: from the "limbs of trees" to "scanning lines" and "television wires" that "invade the brain;" from "the ring a toilet has marked on" the narrator's "butt" to the "poverty of no Messiah chorus;" from "steamed clams" she puts into her mouth to a dog "chewing the legs of a grasshopper." Invading body and mind, the storm leaves the things of this world to bob uprooted from their ordinary contexts, including gender and identity, neither of which can be clearly discerned among the seemingly random objects strewn across this landscape. Despite this sense of upheaval, the end-stopped lines of this poem are eerily linear, eerily technological, and eerily efficient in their declarative Japanese grammar and precise use of *kanji*. If the narrator is to glean an "epiphany" from her experience in this poem, it comes in the form of this rush of random objects, objects that do not signify the clarity of the universe, but celebrate its chaos.

Indeed, this poem imparts the powerful sense of "potentiality" that displacement can inscribe. Vividly evoking this state in his review of Kristeva's first published book, *Semiotik (Semiotics)*, Roland Barthes writes, "I have been made to feel again....the force of her work. Force here means displacement. Julia Kristeva changes the order of things: she always destroys the latest preconception, the one we thought we could be comforted by, the one of which we could be proud: what she displaces is the already-said, that is to say, the insistence of the signified..." (qtd in *Moi* 1). Despite the sense of disorientation that we feel in the world of the fantastic creature we encounter in the poem, the surrealism of this poem allows its landscape to take anything into its seamless folds, so that displacement can also be seen as a mechanism for the exhilarating feeling of "completion" so often inscribed in Isaka's works, in the final screeching "gya" of the wharf birds wheeling overhead at the end of "*Arashi*," for instance. The "rough sea" that

the narrator wishes to gaze into becomes a metaphor for the ever-expansive language of desire that haunts this poem, the narrator's peculiar power to name the unnamable sense of inspiration, or epiphany, that she seeks, "wharf birds" that appear out of nowhere, "from another stratum of air."

The narrator of "*Arashi*" is clearly larger-than-life, and yet, at the same time, she is also an identity at risk. Though she has taken on the form of a "fantastic being," she is very much isolated in her fear that she may, despite her transformation, escape the notice of others. Ironically, it would seem Isaka's creation of this fantastic being further signifies her "mistrust of fantasy," to refer again to Arai's assertion: That is, occupying a space outside the purview of others, the speaker asks, can her existence as this unique creature even be recognized? ("Even having become such a fantastic being/ would they not notice me?") The underlying force of Isaka's poetry is the readiness with which language instigates desire, while at the same time calling the meaning of identity itself into question. Unmoved by her invisibility to others, the persona "take[s] to the untamed wind" in her own way. Isaka's exploration of the rapidly fluctuating nature of identity through this larger than life, fantastic being overlaps strongly with qualities of anime that Napier points to: "Moving at rapid—sometimes breakneck—pace and predicated upon the instability of form, animation is both a symptom and a metaphor for a society obsessed with change and spectacle. In particular, animation's emphasis on metamorphosis can be seen as the ideal artistic vehicle for expressing the postmodern obsession with fluctuating identity" (12). Indeed, the tenuous nature of being would seem to animate Isaka's narrator's desire "to be," even if her only companion is a distractible canine: She wants only "to look at the rough sea with a dog...who, never

despair[ing] of anything," is currently "absorbed in chewing the legs of a grasshopper."

One might think of the poet's occupation as a similarly comic pursuit: If we think of the narrator's visit to the port as a means of opening herself to inspiration, her vision, despite her status as a "fantastic being," is nothing more than the "poverty of no Messiah chorus." The narrator is "waiting for an epiphany" she knows will never come: the moment of inspiration that will pass with the brief storm that envelopes her, with birds that "appear from another stratum of air" *that does not include her*. And yet, perhaps most significantly, the narrator is not alone at the end of this poem. She waits out the storm huddled in a hole with the dog, who, by proxy, becomes a stand-in for anyone else tempted to enter the tumultuous landscape of "*Arashi*."

Indeed, this sense of disorienting completion that the ending of this poem imparts may well be taken as a very apt metaphor for the semiotic project. As Michael Riffaterre explains in his *Semiotics in Poetry*, for all of the semantic inconsistencies (or "ungrammaticalities" as Riffaterre puts it) that the semiotic text produces, a new system of signification emerges: "The ungrammaticalities spotted at the mimetic level are eventually integrated into another system" (qtd in Solt, 248), a new paradigm whose meaning will no doubt vary among individual readers. To quote leading American L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E poet Bruce Andrews' discussion of the contentious issue of "meaning" in language poetry, "meaning is not produced by the sign, but by the contents we bring to the potentials of language" (qtd. in Morton xx).

### **III. The Displaced Narrator: On Object Objects, Belts and Mannequins**

The notion of "identity in flux" that permeates not only the theoretical worlds of

Butler and Kristeva, but popular media such as anime as well, takes on new meaning in other poems in which Isaka's speakers, while closely identifying with the abject subjects they describe, remain displaced, carefully observing them from afar. In these poems, the "identity" that emerges is an identity that fluctuates between that of narrator and the abject other she describes. Asserting the profound difficulty of positioning oneself between self and other, as well as the *necessity* of this approach, Kristeva writes, "discourse will seem tenable only if it ceaselessly confront[s] that otherness, a burden both repellent and repelled, a deep well of memory that is unapproachable and intimate" (*Powers of Horror* 6). As this section will highlight, through Isaka's narrators' intense, almost microscopic attention to their subjects, the abject can, at times, become a surprising occasion for comic relief. We can sense this animated quality of play in a pair of poems about belts that appear in her 1987 *Baiorin zoku* (*Violin tribe*). These poems appear sequentially early on in the collection under the heading "*Beruto nihon*" (Two belts). Tonally, the poems function as mirror images of one another: While "*Randana beruto*" (Idle belt) maintains an iota of humor in the sheer intensity of its animation, the surreal qualities of the second poem, *Junjôna beruto* (Pure-hearted belt) take on truly comic overtones. Indeed, in the opening of "*Junjôna beruto*," the narrator would have us believe that the belt itself is even writing, if not narrating, the poem, selecting, or "trying on" the types of metaphors that it would apply to itself. Perhaps worn by a customer at the vegetable market, the belt examines the "rumps of Chinese cabbage" at eye-level, comically suggesting its positioning on the human body, its close proximity to the buttocks, or the "rump" (*shiri*):

**Pure-hearted Belt**

純情なベルト



The rumps of Chinese cabbages are piled  
 under the market's cloudy sky  
 Even though  
 this "rumps of Chinese cabbages" metaphor  
 is used by a belt  
 without stepping on even one leaf of cabbage  
     tossed down to the sidewalk  
 or the wing of a fallen angel  
 the shoulders of the belt  
 slip through a gap between the clouds and  
     shutters  
 to a mass of shrinking roads  
 A number of them become convoluted  
     like the membrane of the inner brain  
 then disappear  
 A belt licking the toes of a person  
 is blinking its eyes on a veranda  
 where it is kept as a pet  
 Just like when it hangs its head  
 between meals  
 scolded by the chiding voice of the lady  
     of the house  
 teased at the nose by the years ahead  
 hell  
 shows up one day  
 suddenly like clockwork  
 When everything takes the shape of vanishing  
 and loss  
 and all else has failed  
 on the sidewalk slick as an old bald head  
 an eternal murmuring to oneself  
*When will this ever end?*

曇り空のマーケットに  
 白菜の尻が積まれている  
 白菜の尻という比喩の使用は  
 ベルトのもの  
 なのに  
 歩道に飛ばされた菜の一枚、墮天使  
     の羽根一枚も踏まずに  
 ベルトの肩が  
 雲と鎧戸のはざまをぬけて  
 収縮する道をいき  
 何本かは蜘蛛膜下のように入り組ん  
     で余絶える  
 人の足指をなめるベルトが  
 飼われた縁側で目をしばたたかせ  
 食事と食事の間に  
 女主人の声を追い叱られて  
     うなだれる  
 みたいに 鼻先の歳月に  
 からかわれている  
 地獄は  
 ある日  
 ふいにやってくる  
 きまって消失、紛失という形が  
     とられ  
 術もなくなったところに  
 老いた頭のようにつるつるの  
     歩道で  
 自分に向かって永遠に呟いている  
 いつか 終わってくれる  
     だろうか、と。  
 (*Baiorin zoku* 22-24)

As in "*Arashi*," Isaka anchors the surreal qualities of this poem in the sure  
 movement of the poem's protagonist--in this case, a meandering belt--through the shifting  
 environments of this poem. While it is impossible to track the exact movement of the  
 "pure-hearted" belt, whose shape is also in constant transformation, its movement is the  
 one thing that can be counted on: "Slip[ping]" with the belt "through a gap between the

clouds and shutters," we eventually find the belt "licking the toes of a person/...blinking its eyes on a veranda/where it is kept as a pet." The forward motion of the belt makes its unexpectedly bizarre transformations seem matter-of-fact, so that we might interpret the final utterance of this poem-- "*When will this ever end?*"-- as the words of the belt itself as it slithers sideways over the pavement to its next destination of "vanishing and loss":

*Round and round it goes, continuing circuitously beyond the borders of the poem.*

Indeed, *where it will stop, nobody knows*, least of all the readers of "*Junjôna beruto*."

This narrative strategy of providing a modicum of recognizable space for the belt to wend its way through leaves room for readers as well to move about in this poem allows us to extract meaning from this poem that comments so brilliantly upon the "hellish" situation of constant, indeed, compulsive transformation. The belt, despite its best "pure-hearted" efforts, cannot avoid humiliation, loss, or its ironic "beating," the "chiding voice of the lady of the house," all of which define its varied existence by the end of the poem. It would appear that the belts that Isaka describes do not find solace in the metaphysical worlds they are in fact able to enter; rather, these worlds are full of the suffering that humans are inevitably bound to. Bound to, or unbound by their humans, the belts, too, suffer.

Ironically, the "idle belt" of "*Randana beruto*" (Idle belt) becomes the agent of not only humiliation and loss, but murder as well. In this case, the belt's powers of transformation become the means by which it achieves complete control of its environment, which, while hardly static, remains a constant throughout the poem. That is to say, unlike the wandering belt, or belts, of "*Junjôna beruto*," this belt remains in the one environment of the house, which it dramatically transforms. Moving by means of its

murderous intent, the belt makes a beeline for the object of its desires, taking nothing less than the whole of the house into its strangling grip:

### Idle Belt

The black belt was hanging down inside  
the shelf like a snake  
ringing its buckle, hoping to coil around  
something  
When I look at it in my hand mirror  
as if to halt breath it cinches tightly  
Using the luster after shedding its skin  
it strangles the one a.m. house  
The further up it goes, the redder it becomes  
The ceiling is red and hazy  
but each time the blood streams away  
from the heart's contracting pump to the arteries  
the grain of the wood becomes distinctly visible  
Several evil intentions which gain their breath  
from strangulation  
The reckless, wanton release of time  
the black that does not move from that place  
the bound point  
changes according to this release  
makes the shriveled thing as raw red again  
as a pomegranate  
Elastic  
it bulges but  
cannot squeeze even the blue mold  
from my heart  
nor the sinister motive from the flesh  
of the giant woman Saraghina  
Weeping is another ceiling

### 懶惰なベルト

黒ベルトは蛇のように棚の中で垂れ  
下がり  
まきつくことを願って金具を鳴らし  
ていた  
手鏡でみると  
息をとめるみたいにきつくくい込み  
ぬけ殻をはいだあとの艶  
午前一時の家を  
それで緊める  
上の方へいくほど朱色になって  
天井はあかくぼんやりと だが  
心臓の収縮ポンプから動脈へ  
血の流れるたびごと 木目が  
はっきりと見える  
その場所を動かない黒  
緊縛点は  
緊めることで息づく何体かの悪心や  
むやみでいたずらな時間の放出  
その放出によって変化し  
しばむものを  
さらに ざくろのように赤むけに  
させる  
弾力をもって  
盛りあがるが  
私の心臓の青かびや  
巨女サラギーナの肉の悪心までは  
絞れない  
哭くのは別の天井だ  
(*Baiorin zoku* 18-20)

The menacing playfulness of "*Randana beruto*" is apparent from the poem's opening, in which the belt is "ringing" its own buckle, "hoping to coil around something." The visual image of the snake-like belt, in combination with the aural image of "ringing," recalls the snake that coils ready to strike around the bell of *Dôjôji* Temple, a singularly resonant

image of female rage that gives the "disembodied" belt free-range in an already very powerful literary context.<sup>87</sup>

Like the pure-hearted belt, the "idle belt," too, is animated from the start: Viewed by the narrator from behind, through a hand-held mirror, this so-called idle belt "cinches tightly" "as if to halt breath." (The lack of an object here prevents us from determining that it is in fact the narrator's waist that the belt cinches. In addition, the fact that she views the belt through a hand mirror suggests that the belt is acting upon a different "object.") The murderous intent of the belt becomes clear when it uses its own "luster" to go on to strangle the "one a.m. house." As the narrator notes, "the further up it goes, the redder" the bulging wound of the living house becomes. If the house was sleeping before, it, too, is now awake and fully animate, complete with blood, a pumping heart and arteries. It is at this point in the poem that the transformative qualities of Isaka's surrealism induces a slightly comic effect: The scientific detachment of this observant narrator leaves us in a kind of suspended animation; that is, transfixed by the imagery of this living house, we might temporarily forget the crime scene before us: that of a fully-animated belt taking a house into its strangling, boa constrictor-like grip.

We can also read the coldness of this microscopic observation, however, as a form of confession: Although it is the belt that performs this act of violence against the house, the lack of response to these actions on the part of our unflinching narrator betrays the closeness with which she identifies with this belt's murderous intent. In fact, we might say that her cold-bloodedness goes far beyond the murderous capacity of the belt, for this belt truly is "idle" when it can no more "squeeze...the blue mold" that has

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<sup>87</sup> *Musume Dôjôji* is a well-known *kabuki* play that recounts the spiteful love of a woman-turned-snake for a priest.

gathered around the narrator's heart than it can the "sinister motives" of the large-bodied Felini prostitute Saraghina.<sup>88</sup> Mysterious and suggestive, the emotionally-laden final lines of this poem--"weeping is another ceiling"--(*naku no wa betsu no tenjô da*)--must finally be deciphered by Isaka's individual readers. One thing is sure though: this scene of strangulation does not induce tears in the narrator's eyes. Perhaps the poet is suggesting that if it is the "feminine" response of tears that readers desire, they will have to look up at another ceiling, not this murderous scene that has so vividly captured the narrator's imagination.

Perhaps, as in the *Dôjôji* story, the murderous, snake-like belt is best seen as the embodiment of female rage. But unlike this oft-performed legend, the male figure, who functions as the object or target of female rage, is absent in "*Randanna Beruto*." Rather, it is the snake-like belt that is foregrounded. As a contemporary incarnation of women's constricting *obi*, what weapon could be more suitable to destroy the haven of feminine ideals, the home itself? While there is no male present in this home, the home, or family system in Japan, so often denotes a male presence, even if that presence is only an economic one. While the phenomenon of the "absent male" that this poem presents is consistent with the situation of many homes in Japan, perhaps he is not entirely absent in this poem, after all, if we view the seemingly human blood that traverses the veins of this house as his blood, the "shriveled thing as raw red again as a pomegranate," his penis.

This tendency toward what I call displaced identity, in which the narrator expresses her desires through objects within her environment, becomes the fertile ground on which some of Isaka's most evocative poetry takes place and is central to her poem

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<sup>88</sup> La Saraghina (the Sardine Lady) dances a beachside rhumba for pubescent boys in Federico Felini's 1963 film, *8 ½*.

"*Tsuki no deku*," which I have translated as "Mannequin from the moon." And yet, as this poem so clearly demonstrates, while the narrator necessarily inhabits the position of "other," it is the intensity of her identification with her subject that forms the emotional center of "*Tsuki no deku*," which appears as the final poem of *Baiorin zoku*. In contrast to "*Arashi's*" extraverted "ideological alien," "*Tsuki no deku*" deploys what Napier describes as an "internal alien." As Napier explains, "Stories revolving around the internal alien tend to be profoundly psychological. Often using the motif of the double, they delve into the protagonist's inner states which are usually characterized by a sense of vulnerability and paralysis against another unknown power, be it guilt, heredity, sin, or simply one's alter ego" (112). The complexity of this dance between self and other intensifies when we consider that Isaka acknowledges many of her personae, while by no means autobiographical, as "*bunshin*," as her offshoots or doubles.<sup>89</sup>

By the end of "*Tsuki no deku*," the narrator has become the idiot mannequin's double, laughing at the television, dissolving into chaos, just as her subject has before her. The poem reads as nothing less than a paranoid science-fiction fantasy in which the mannequin (*deku*), who has rolled from the womb of a "Guilt Monster" (*tsumi kui*) waits for her captors to come surging toward her from some point in the future:

### **Mannequin from the Moon**

1.  
Only blinking a few times a day  
this one with the languid eyelids  
possesses me so easily  
Forcibly controlling my field of vision  
she tries to fill in the hollows of my eyes  
But all this while I have wanted to look at nothing  
In the light cast from a desk lamp

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<sup>89</sup> Isaka expressed this idea in an interview I conducted with her December 2, 2008.

insects of ink  
harden at the edge of the page of an opened book  
The roughness of the yolk-colored paper spreading outwards  
Without letting up  
she wants to connect up the images at the back of my retina  
The vapors of memory  
are like the shadow of a prison's disciplinary stick  
I turn off the light and go out to the garden  
The branches of different kinds of trees overlap  
I gaze, as though shamed, at the chronic disease  
of the shadows cast by overlapping branches  
of different kinds of trees  
Always stashing the same shackling crown  
hastily away  
under the cover of darkness

Will they come to capture me? My days under the roof of the "Guilt Monster" are slowly coming to an end. Both that night I rolled from the monster's womb, and those several months I was sick from the monster's home-cooking, I passed the time staring out of a window.

They do not surge forth from the past (If that were the case I could escape), but come from the future, blocking me from the front.

Because the tender poison of the "Guilt Monster" flowed through my body, there is a smile that continually rises up my cheeks.

Even if they do come for me, because I have already crossed beyond fear, they will be wasting their time.

The hazy forms of things lighten, then darken, a mimosa flower opens and closes, a swarm of gnats passes freely before my eyes.

The gecko is a friend of many years. I love his each and every movement as he clings to the screen door, peeping inside. The gecko crawls up my arm. It is so coolly refreshing when he places his foot on my lower eyelid. He falls with a thump to the back of my eyesocket, and this time, crawling up from the inside, sticks its pomegranate tongue out from my socket, taking aim at its catch.

Will they come for me,  
even though I am already just like some drawing room object that someone has tidily cleared away?

2.  
380,000 kilometers away  
it's as though the moon is reflected in her body  
The light waves are mixing together  
in confusion with the radio waves that carry her voice  
The idiot mannequin is in front of the tv again  
Even though I try to get her attention  
my heart falters

When I recover my balance  
half of me says "never mind," giving up  
My weakness begins to multiply  
and those cells borrow the form of a parasite  
Eventually my cells are completely supplanted  
Before long, my body is full of darkness  
I watch the tv laughing  
in total chaos

## 月の木偶

### 1.

一日に数回しかまばたきをしない  
気の長いまぶたをもった者が  
私の身をやすやすとかぶり  
強引に視界を決めて  
目のうろを  
埋めようとする  
が私はさっきから何も見たくはない  
スタンドの光に照らされた  
インクの虫が  
開かれた本の頁のはじめに固まって  
卵黄色の洋紙の凸凹がひろがっている  
ひっきりなしに  
網膜の裏に像を緒ぼうとする  
おもいで的气体は  
牢獄の心張棒の影のようだ  
スタンドを消して庭へ出る  
種類の異なった木の枝々が  
重なりあってつくる影の  
宿痾を恥じ入るように眺め  
いつもと同じ頭寇のかせを  
暗にまぎれて  
そそくさとしまいこむ

彼らは私をつかまえにくるだろうか。「罪食い」のもとに寄宿してからというもの、事態は緩慢に収束に向かう。その手料理で病気になった数々月の間も、その胎を転がり出た生誕の夜も、窓から外を眺めて過ごした。彼らは過去から押し寄せるのではなく（それなら逃げることも可能だ）、未来からやってきて私の正面へ立ちはだかるのである。

「罪食い」の優し毒がまわったせいで、私の頬には絶えず微笑みがのぼってくる。つかまえにくるとしても、恐怖の限度を超えているので、彼らとしても甲斐がないだろうと思う。



事物の靄めいた象が薄くなり濃くなり、ミモザの花がとじひらきし、私の面目を羽虫が自由に通過する。

やもりとは永年の友だ。網戸にへばりついて中をうかがう動作のいちいちが私の好みにかなっている。私の腕を這い上がってきて下まぶたに手をかける冷たい快さ。眼孔の奥へストンと落ち、こんどは内側を這い上がってきて眼孔からざくろの舌を出して獲物を狙っている。

彼らは私をつかまえにくるだろうか。

すでに私は何者かの手で整然と片付けられた応接間のようなものであるのに。

## 2

三十八万キロメートルの彼方にある  
月が肉体の中に映っているらしい  
その光の彼と  
声のぼってくる電波とが  
入り乱れている  
ふぬけの木偶がまたテレビの前において  
ちょっかいを出そうにも  
こころは腰が弱い  
体勢をたて直そうとすると  
半分は「もういいよ」と諦めている  
弱さが繁殖をはじめ  
その細胞は寄生の形を借りているがいずれ  
本家をのっかってしまうのである  
肉体はそのうち形だらけになる  
テレビをみて笑っている  
入り乱れている  
(*Baiorin zoku* 109-115)

Even early on in "*Tsuki no deku*," when the narrator is quite distinct from the mannequin, we detect not only the blurring and even merging between this narrator and her subject, but we also witness an interesting reversal of roles between the two. Indeed, it is as though the observing narrator becomes the intense focus of the subject's devouring gaze, and not vice-versa, as we might expect. In the opening lines of this poem, the narrator admits that she is fully possessed by the mannequin: While the mannequin can blink only a few times a day, it is the narrator's field of vision that is controlled by the

mannequin: "Only blinking a few times a day/ this one with the languid eyelids/  
possesses me so easily/ forcibly controlling my field of vision/ She wants to fill in the  
hollows of my eyes/ But all this while I have wanted to look at nothing." As these lines  
suggest, this reversal of roles reveals an antagonistic intimacy between the two in which  
the mannequin forces the narrator to experience the same sense of abjection under which  
she herself suffers. It is as the subject's double then, a "*bunshin*" twice removed from the  
poet, that the narrator chronicles the life of the "abject," the uninhabitable space between  
action and desire in which she, too, is suspended and imprisoned, as the mannequin says,  
watching "a swarm of gnats pass freely" before her eyes.

Perhaps, following Napier's prompt to read this poem through the psychological  
lens of the "internal alien," we should view the abject state of paralysis in which both the  
mannequin, and, implicitly, the narrator--if not the poet, too--live, as the result of their  
consumptive guilt as women. "Guilty" by virtue of her birth by a "Guilt Monster"  
mother, read here as a prototypical mother whose actions toward others who are in her  
care are motivated by guilt. The mannequin describes the guilty blood she inherits from  
her "Guilt Monster" mother as "poison," but her blood is also "tender," a gift from mother  
that in fact produces what appears to be the pleasure of comfort, a "smile" in the face of  
danger: "They do not surge forth from the past (If that were the case I could escape), but  
come from the future, blocking me from the front./ Because the tender poison of the  
'Guilt Monster' flowed through my body, there is a smile that continually rises up my  
cheeks."

More so than the "Guilt Monster" mother, it is an enigmatic gecko who brings  
warmth and sensuality to the mannequin. Entering the mannequin's hollow body, in a

potentially grotesque action that would signify an uncompromising degree of abjection, the gecko makes a fortress of the mannequin, whom he lovingly defends: As the mannequin explains, "The gecko is a friend of many years. I love his each and every movement as he clings to the screen door, peeping inside. The gecko crawls up my arm. It is so coolly refreshing when he places his foot on my lower eyelid. He falls with a thump to the back of my eyesocket, and this time, crawling up from the inside, sticks its pomegranate tongue out from my socket, taking aim at its catch." Since the gecko performs these actions even as he "clings to the screen door," there is a distinct possibility his movements take place entirely in the narrator's imagination.

Locked within their separate, unblinking gazes, both narrator and her subject possess the passive ferocity of the guilty mother--or, looked at from another direction, her ferocious passivity--whose agency is more often than not expressed through the unlikely animation of the inanimate, through the dead wood of this doll, for instance, *deku*, as Isaka has explicitly indicated the pronunciation of this word. While the term *deku* suggests various types of wooden dolls, including not only the idiot mannequin of the storefront window variety, but marionettes and the traditional puppets of *bunraku* as well, the most narrow use of *deku* denotes the fragments of wood from which *ningyô* (dolls with a human form) are made. Indeed, it is the lifelessness *and*, once again, the *potentiality* of the wood itself, that Isaka implies through her use of this strikingly resonant term.

The roots of puppet theater are in fact steeped in ancient religion: puppets were carried door to door to ward off evil spirits that may have lurked within houses, and mechanical dolls, *karakuri ningyô*, were believed to embody the spirits of the deities

when carried on special festival floats (*dashi*) (Bolton 744). As Christopher Bolton illustrates in his essay "From Wooden Cyborgs to Celluloid Souls: Mechanical Bodies in Anime and Japanese Puppet Theater," the early puppets of Chikamatsu's *jôruri* were brought to life not only by the skilled hands of operators, but by internal mechanical means as well, and in this way prefigure the technological cyborg figures that he goes on to explore in contemporary anime. As Bolton explains, the automated mechanism of *karakuri* was originally used in stage machinery or robots who entertained audiences between the scenes of plays, but gradually found its way to the bodies of *jôruri* puppets as well. It is this "gradual internalization of technology" that becomes the "central trope of the cyborg [of contemporary anime] and is the key step in blurring the line between bodies and tools, or humans and machines," and as Bolton's article shows, between past and present forms of entertainment (741).

The blurring of boundaries between the human body and the technological force-fields that surround the body is a major trope in Isaka's poetry as well, a theme that also overlaps with anime, in particular, "cyberpunk," a genre of anime, as Napier explains, that focuses "on dystopian futures in which humans struggle in an overpoweringly technological world where the difference between human and machine is increasingly amorphous" (*Anime* 11). Not only do "light waves...mix...together/ In confusion with the radio waves that carry" the mannequin's "voice" in "*Tsuki no deku*," but in "*Arashi*," too, the energy that sets the "fantastic being" into motion is technological as well.

Early on in "*Arashi*," technology invades the body in such a way that its distant drumbeat becomes increasingly audible, almost militaristically so: "The scanning line advances/ Television waves invade the brain/ sway slish-slosh down to the stomach."

The effects, however, produce a surprisingly "pleasant" physical sensation, a response on the part of the narrator that tends toward the utopian, rather than the dystopian: Soon, the protagonist is "Pounding the earth with both feet/...walk[ing] to the pleasantness of the rising vibration," and then, empowered by the invisible forces of technology, "take[s] to the untamed wind" in her "own way." Not only does this "invasion" of the body allow the protagonist to thoroughly transgress the boundaries of human identity, as mentioned in the previous section, but we can also see in her all of the potential of the quintessential feminist cyborg that Donna Haraway describes in her 1985 "Cyborg Manifesto." As Bolton explains, Haraway asserts in her manifesto "that the cyborg's transgressive combination of the organic and the mechanical will challenge the dichotomy between natural and artificial, promising to free the subject from imposed categories of biology, gender and race" (Bolton 730).

We cannot extract such a hopeful message from "*Tsuki no deku*," however, which ends with a parasitic invasion of the narrator, who resigns herself to the same fate as the guilt-ridden mannequin by the end of the poem: "My weakness begins to multiply/ and those cells borrow the form of a parasite/ Eventually my cells are completely supplanted/ Before long, my body is full of darkness/ I watch the tv laughing/ in total chaos." And yet, Isaka's use of the *deku* to illustrate a particular variety of procreative female guilt that is typically surrounded by silence--indeed, the *deku* becomes a representation of this inherited *inexpression*--becomes an ironic strategy for giving voice to that which is defined by the mother's silence. In many ways, the *deku* becomes for Isaka that which the female puppet was for Chikamatsu. That is, as Bolton points out, while Chikamatsu saw the female puppet as possessing the capacity to say what "real women" could not,

through her strange portrayal of women trapped in the bodies of *deku*, women at once literally paralyzed and controlling, Isaka foregrounds not only what cannot be said by "real women," but calls into question that which defines "real women." Like the *bunraku* puppet who must be larger than the women she represents to be seen on the stage, the persona Isaka creates is also larger than life. Isaka, like many of her contemporaries working in anime and *manga*, makes use of the twin lenses of technology and fantasy to push against the boundaries of the body to explore that which lurks menacingly beneath softer, more familiar images of femininity in the culture.

#### IV. Resonant Memos: Approaching the Violence of Childhood

A school teacher early on in her career, Isaka addresses the physical and emotional violence that so many Japanese youth encounter on a daily basis in forms that no doubt widen her potential audience. Not only does she make use of the voices of children and young adults in poems such as "*Kyômei*" (Sympathy, or Resonance, as I translate it here) and "*Nibanme no memo*" (The second memo), but she also, on occasion, makes use of the popular *manga* form in her collaborations with artist Yamada Murasaki.<sup>90</sup> Steering clear of the "saucer-eyed heroines in saccharine plots," as Frederik Schodt puts it, that typifies much of the *manga* produced by and for women, Yamada's *manga* drawings are "minimalist, streamlined, and smooth, with few backgrounds, lots of white spaces, and fine lines" (155-56). "*Kyômei*" does not feature speech bubbles or even illustrations that directly address the actions of the poem, but rather impressionistically suggests the physical and emotional world in which its teenage speaker lives: a cat here,

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<sup>90</sup> Yamada Murasaki passed away during the spring of 2009.

laundry billowing in the wind, a decapitated doll's head, makeup, faces, hands, a foot stepping out of a room there.<sup>91</sup> Not only does Yamada's work possess "a refined sense of poetry," but she, too, is a poet, and collaborated with Isaka on their full-length *Yume no maigo-tachi: Les Enfants Reveurs* (The lost children dreamers), 1995.<sup>92</sup>

Appearing within the first third of *Baiorin zoku*, "Kyômei" stands out in this collection not only because it is accompanied by Yamada's delicately-lined drawings, but because, unlike the rest of the book, which is printed on standard, white paper, the several pages that comprise "Kyômei" are printed on a thin, slightly glossy sky-blue colored stock. In addition, while most of the poems in the book appear with the typical single line of white space between each stanza, the short 1-3 line stanzas with which "Kyômei" opens float like small islands of print on the light blue paper, a quality that enables the poem to resonate as a "space apart," a safe space in which the narrator can meditate on the challenges she faces in her life as a student, painfully isolated within the throngs:

### Resonance

Did something go wrong today?  
That face was a little worrisome  
a gloomy face, any yet...

When you don't want to go to school  
do you go? I stay home  
My teacher scolded me saying I had no morals but I don't care

I was clowning around on the balance beam

Please let me do it one more time!  
I approach the beam with all my energy

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<sup>91</sup> Please see the appendix of this chapter for a reproduction of "Kyômei" from *Baiorin Zoku*.

<sup>92</sup> In our interview, Isaka explained that Yamada worked with poems that had already been published in several different collections to produce *Yume no maigo-tachi: Les Enfants Reveurs*.

but roll right off

Shame, bemusement  
and happiness all mixed up

I love my imperfect self

The loneliness of being alone  
and the loneliness of being left out of the group are very different  
When I'm kept at a distance  
all of my body's most subtle emotions come surging forth

I feel cold  
But if I can get past that point, it disappears  
My heart recovers  
as though nothing happened  
But being alone  
deep down, there's a crushing sense of loss  
Since there's no physical response  
it's very much like peace

When I try to escape this loneliness  
the pain begins

Returning from Friday's lesson  
I stop in at the coffee shop as always  
My coffee came  
but I realized  
I could not drink it  
It all came back up  
I could hear so and so's constant  
*Take care of yourself kid,*  
*Don't be the wise owl pretending to be wise*

It would be nice if the world could be steeped in the color  
of milk once more

All of those half-way between life and death  
join hands at the edge of a cliff  
The small hands are sweating  
so that they might silence the large ones

With its focus on the reluctance of high school students to attend the schools in  
which they suffer, "*Kyômei*" goes to the heart of the current problem of social withdrawal



among youth. So widespread in Japan that it has been described in terms of a social panic, these "*hikikomori*" youths who barricade themselves in their rooms are often viewed as part of the larger "*otaku*" movement of youth obsessed with *manga*, *anime* and technology of all varieties. Derided for their "willful[ness] and immaturity and childishness" by their unsympathetic, and in many cases, elder critics (Kinsella 291), the *otaku* is defined as "someone who spends most of his or her time" in the home (*otaku*) he or she refuses to leave. In her analysis of the *otaku*, Sharon Kinsella points out that the honorific "o" attached to "*taku*" (residence) to suggest the polite, socially-inept distances the *otaku* maintains between her or himself in relationship to others, even "close friends," who, in healthier relationships, would be addressed in much more casual, or friendly, terms. Taking place inside the head of a girl who would just as soon stay home on some days than be ostracized by her peers, "Resonance" begins in daydream as the girl questions herself about the inscrutable expressions of others, perhaps "friends": "Did something go wrong today?/ That face was a little worrisome/ A gloomy face, any yet..."

The poem moves from this minor paranoia to explore the very real sense of vulnerability and pain that the speaker feels as she moves through her life in the outside world. Indeed, the fact that she still bravely faces the world is a sign of hope, and might lead us to think of her as someone who is either a *hikikomori* in the making, or someone whose insights--her ability to summon hope and even self love--might help her avoid a permanent retreat from the world. Despite her best ambitions, though, she fails: Running toward the balance beam at top speed, she "rolls right off." At the same time, however, she can enjoy the complexity of her feelings at this point, the mixture of "Shame, bemusement/ and happiness all mixed up," even claiming that "I love my imperfect self."

But attempting to do the normal thing after her "Friday lesson," she stops in at the local coffee shop and is unable to keep even a cup of coffee down. She vomits it right back up, bringing with it the failures of her day, the chiding voices of authority figures who suggest she should know better: "I could not drink it/ It all came back up/ I could hear so and so's constant *Take care of yourself kid,/ Don't be the wise owl pretending to be wise.*"

Vomiting--the body's way of spontaneously abjecting that which it cannot tolerate keeping inside of itself--becomes the appropriate physical response in a poem that defines the speaker's pain in such physical ways. Indeed, contrasting the feeling of pain that comes with being alone in a group and being lonely on her own, the narrator confides the sense of peace that ultimately comes from her own "loneliness," which is without "physical response." Above all, the poem demonstrates that the narrator's refusal to go to school has nothing to do with a lack of moral values as her teacher would claim: that she doesn't "care" what the teacher thinks signifies that she knows her reasons for refusing to go to school run much deeper than "morality." Indeed, the narrator is willing to risk her reputation with her teacher to do what she must to protect herself. That her morality is not the issue here is reinforced by the end of the poem in which the speaker imagines a scene of solidarity with others who also stand in the precarious place she finds herself, "*sei to shi no naka*" (as one between life and death), who join hands with "larger hands," perhaps teachers and parents, those who could potentially help her. Those with "small hands" signal their unspoken distress to those with "large hands" with their sweat, hoping to silence their reprobations about their moral failings: "All of those half-way between life and death/ join hands at the edge of a cliff/ The small hands are sweating/ so that they might silence the large ones." In many ways, this poem can be seen as the

narrator's attempt to explain her feelings to those who dismiss her actions as "immature," as a plea for understanding and support. Hovering at the edge of a cliff in this way, the narrator communicates, through this image of silence, juxtaposed against her indefatigable sense of hope, the desperate urgency of her need.

"*Nibanme no memo*" goes further into the dark side of domestic violence, exploring the mentality of child murderers, a theme that will also be discussed in the next section. While "*Nibanme no memo*" is not accompanied by *manga*, its conversational format is reminiscent of *manga*. Despite its dynamic multivocality, however, the poem also possesses certain qualities of *manga* produced by amateur artists (*dōjinshi*) known as *yaoi*, which stands for "*yama nashi, ochi nashi, imi nashi*," "no build-up, no foreclosure, and no meaning," in other words, as Kinsella puts it, "the almost total absence of narrative structure typical of amateur *manga* since the mid-1980s" (301). While this poem does not feature the male homosexual love that *manga* by many *yaoi* do, the poem's seeming lack of plot and climax link it to the features that Kinsella describes.

An appreciation of "*Nibanme no memo*" depends in part on the fact of a gruesome series of murders carried out in Scotwood, England in the late 1960s by two girls, Mary Bell, age 11, and her accomplice/friend Norma Bell. The title, which means "second memo," may refer to any one of various notes the girls scribbled about their murders, known collectively as the "Mary Bell Incident," including one written to the mother of one of their victims, Brian Howe, the three-year-old mentioned in the poem. Mary and Norma are referred to in the poem by their aliases, Faggot and Fanny (West). Another, but this time totally fictitious character appears in the poem, a small, mysterious bird-like creature named "Nahachigaru," who interrogates Fanny about her treatment at home.

True to "yaoi" form, the narrative progress of this poem is slightly skewed: in the first stanza, for example, none of Fanny's responses quite match up with the questions

Nahachigaru puts forth:

### The Second Memo

### 二番目のメモ

Your hurt face  
hair pulled out by the roots  
Where does it hurt?  
Nahachigaru asked  
*Because papa and mama grabbed it*  
Why does it hurt?  
Nahachigaru asked  
*Because papa and mama were abused*  
Why do you lie?  
Nahachigaru was angry

傷んでいる顔  
傷んでいる髪のつけ根  
どこがいたい？  
とナハチガルが聞いた  
パパとママが掴んだから  
どうしていたい？  
とナハチガルが聞いた  
パパとママが苛められるから  
どうして嘘をつく  
とナハチガルが怒る

*Papa grabs  
mama's hair  
and so I too killed*  
Fanny said  
*There will be another murder, I tell you*  
Faggot chimed in

パパがママの  
髪のを掴む  
だから あたしも ころした  
とファニーが言った  
またころしがあるぞ  
とファゴットも言った

Nahachigaru twitters  
On top of the table inside the cupboards  
outside the window  
On the other side of the window  
is a three year old boy with purple lips  
The razor blade was thrown away  
There is a note beneath a small stone

ナハチガルはさえずる  
食卓の上 戸棚の中 窓の外  
窓の向こうには  
三歳になる男の子が紫色の唇を  
している  
カミソリの刃が投げ捨てられ  
小石の下にメモがある

Your hurt face  
hair pulled out by the roots  
Where does it hurt?  
Nahachigaru asked  
*It doesn't hurt anywhere*  
Why do you lie?  
Nahachigaru was angry  
*I'm not lying*

傷んでいる顔  
傷んでいる髪のつけ根  
どこがいたい？  
とナハチガルが聞いた  
どこもいたくない  
どうして嘘をつく  
とナハチガルが怒る  
嘘なんかつかない

I'll try to ask one more time, this time, gently	もういちど聞こうこんどは優しく
Nahachigaru thinks	とナハチガルは考える
<i>I don't hurt anywhere</i>	どこもいたくない
<i>I don't want to hear anything</i>	何も聞きたくない
<i>I don't want to see anything</i>	見たくない
<i>Leave me alone</i> Fanny replied	放っておいて とファニィは答える
Faggot sucked her finger	ファゴットは指をしゃぶる
Fanny's red dress	ファニィの赤いドレス
Faggot's glass ring	ファゴットのガラスの指輪
Every night Nahachigaru chirps	ナハチガルは夜ごとさえずる
to Fanny's math book	お前たちなんか死んでしまえ
to Faggot's desk protector, covered with	お前たちなんか死んでしまえ
slashmarks	ファニィの算数の教科書に
You two, why don't you just die	ファゴットの切り傷だらけの下敷に
You two, why don't you just die	
Touching his purple lips,	紫色の唇をさわって
Fanny says	おもしろいわ
it's so strange	とファニィは言った
A second note beneath the small stone	小石の下の二番目のメモが風で飛び
flies in the wind	ファゴットは追い駆けていった
Faggot chasing after it	( <i>Baiorin zoku</i> 40-44)

As is characteristic of Isaka's poetry in general, the poem focuses less on the brutal murders than it does on the psychological state of the girls. Fanny's reluctance, or inability, to answer Nahachigaru's questions in the beginning of the poem suggests the discomfort she may feel being forced by this persistent little bird to talk about her abuse at home, which may be one of the driving forces behind the murders. The inclusion of the bird-interrogator, who, while impatient, also attempts to be "gentle," may in fact parody the therapeutic process, the "meaninglessness" of Nahachigaru's repeated, indeed "parroted" questioning in the face of the brutality Fanny apparently both suffered and participated in with Mary Bell, aka Faggot. In many ways, this poem, whose

understanding depends on knowledge of the crimes it discusses, poses more questions than it answers. The enigmatic title, "*Nibanme no memo*," remains mysterious as well. While it may well refer to any of the notes the girls wrote about their crimes, the title may also refer to the poem itself, which attempts to flesh out a new approach and understanding of these incomprehensible crimes, perpetrated by apparently parentless children who, denying their own pain and abuse, want only to be left alone: *I don't hurt anywhere/ I don't want to hear anything/ I don't want to see anything/ Leave me alone.*"

While even Isaka's insightfully compassionate poetry cannot solve the mystery of the girls' actions, it does provide a compelling, darkly-animated portrait of two children struggling within the isolated worlds of the abusive families into which they are born. Isaka goes far to capture the voices of these children in her poetry, voices that are not often heard in Japanese society. Interestingly enough, the voice of the social system that cannot help them has a place within the poem as well, in the disembodied voice of the "twittering" Nahachigaru, whose suggestive, bird-like existence can come fully into being only within the imagination of the reader. In the end, we can only provide our own *manga*-like image of this creature who leaves Fanny and Faggot to fend for themselves in the depraved realm in which they are submerged: "You two, why don't you just die/ Why don't you just die," Nahachigaru chirps, mocking the public outcry that surrounded these sensational crimes.

## **V. Night Pond: Submerged in Darkness**

In most cases, Isaka's transformation, or animation, of the object can be seen as deeply liberatory. Through her powers of the imagination, Isaka recovers an explosive

sense of agency that remains tantalizingly within reach of her abject subjects. Indeed, in Isaka, agency is so often released in the collapsed distance between narrator and subject just as the narrator comes to recognize herself in the experience of the abject. While in early works Isaka tends to approach human abjection through an animation of the inanimate, the abject subjects who appear in later works such as *Chijô ga manbennaku akarunde* and her most recent 2003 *Hako iri hyô* (*Boxed Panthers*, as Sawako Nagayasu has translated this title), take on a more recognizably human face.

As shown earlier, Isaka's approach to the abject subject is clearly sympathetic; however, as this final section will suggest, Isaka does not steer clear of the subjects whose actions repulse, and, in the end, cannot be fully comprehended: While her poem "*X no kobu no naka*" (Inside X's lump), for instance, details the profound bitterness of a woman whose inexplicable cruelty towards others finally leads to her own suicide, "*Kattaa*" (Cutter) offers a sibling's account of her brother-turned-murderer. A victim himself of cruelty and ostracism, the boy comes to act out his revenge not only on small animals, including the family dog, but on two small children as well.<sup>93</sup> This section, which will examine the multi-valenced form of prose-poetry that Isaka employs to approach these difficult subjects, will end with an exploration of her poem "*Yoru no ike*" (Night pond), a poem that recounts the suicide of a school girl.

Both "*X no kobu no naka*" and "*Yoru no ike*" feature not only the meditative poetic preface mentioned at the onset of this chapter, but also employ "documentary"

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<sup>93</sup> While Isaka confirmed our interview that "*Nibanme no memo*" was based on the "Mary Bell Incident" in England, she also suggested that "*Kattaa*" was loosely modeled after the infamous Sakakibara murders in Kobe, named for the alias of a fourteen-year-old student who carried out two murders of younger students, including Jun Hase, a special education student whose head "Sakakibara" placed at the entrance to his school. The details in the poem vary greatly from those of the actual Sakakibara murders, see "Seito Sakakibara."

techniques that widen the perspectives of both poems. That is, while "*Nibanme no memo*" makes subtle reference to a media event, "*X no kobu no naka*" and "*Yoru no ike*" incorporate outside media and media techniques into the narrative structure of the poem. "*X no kobu no naka*" makes use of X's poetic journal, while "*Yoru no ike*" is narrated in part by a teacher who investigates the suicide of her student through her interview with a boy who knew and identified strongly with the suffering of his classmate named Ayuko, a girl who travels all the way to Russia to die. As this section will show, Isaka's multi-positional approach to her latter subjects of abjection--sympathetic or not-- allows her to give language to the unspeakable acts of these subjects, imparting a small measure of comprehensibility to the suffering that they inflict.

"*Kattaa*" is far and away one of Isaka's darkest poems. Appearing in *Chijô ga manbennaku akarunde* directly before "*Arashi*," the narrator of this poem, the younger sister of a teenage boy whose violent tendencies lead to his eventual murder of two small children, in no way identifies with her brother. And yet, at the same time, she is careful to show the subtle complicity of others in these crimes of her brother, who is in fact tormented by other students at a school his mother had strongly encouraged him to enter. After repeated hazings by other students, he eventually refuses to go to school. The family is torn apart at least two and a half years before "older brother" (*oniichan*), the only name he is given in the poem by the narrator, commits his first murder. The narrator, another younger brother named Tadashi, and their mother move out of the family home after "older brother" continues to act out violently by flushing the heads of his sister's dolls down the toilet and slashing open futons with a knife. He also strikes out against Tadashi when he is punished for the destruction of his sister's dolls, and against



his mother as well on several occasions. Even though the mother is forced to work long hours to support a separate household in a one-room apartment that the three share, she chooses to do so, leaving "older brother," whose name is in fact Masahiro, his father, and the family dog, Umekichi, alone together in the house.

As difficult as it may be in these circumstances, the speaker in this poem, too, manages to confront and evoke the abject other, her own brother who, she admits "is no longer a part of the family" (*Chijō ga manbennaku akarunde* 40-41), in such a way that we can remember that he is a deeply troubled human being. She manages to carry out a cordial conversation with him when he unexpectedly stops by the apartment she shares with her mother and other brother, even complimenting him on his new perm, a detail that will come to haunt her when she discovers that the young boy he has killed apparently had a perm, too. It is not only "older brother," who had, by this point in the poem, already lashed out at family members and household objects, but the cruelty of her brother's crimes that the narrator must ultimately confront. Given this necessity, it is no surprise that it is the narrator-sister who discovers the extensive carnage she knows only her brother could have left on a hillside near the family house. Ironically, she has sought refuge in this place to alleviate her anxieties and fears.

First noticing several dead birds, a bat, and the charred bodies of a mouse and gecko, she then finds a kitten, its four limbs tied up with a rope. When she comes across the brown lump of her family's dog, its flesh scraped from its hind legs, but its sweet face undamaged, she realizes that her older brother is the perpetrator of these crimes. Next, after a brief description of her older brother's attraction to children he entices to follow him, she discovers the body of a boy with permed hair, along with another younger boy

she at first believed could be her brother Tadashi. True to form, Isaka ends the poem with Tadashi, who has stopped by the house to see the dog, coming across its corpse as if to suggest that the killings cannot be "real" until they are discovered by those they will matter the most to. The scene of Tadashi curled like a fetus, quietly, without moving, reminds us that there will be several "living victims," as well, who will struggle to survive and, in the case of the narrator, make some sense of what "older brother" has done.

While "*Kattaa*," a ten-page prose narrative, does not include the poetic preface of the other pieces mentioned in this section, this poem, too, contains many poetic overtones, including, for instance, a refrain that punctuates the narrator's encounters with the carnage her brother leaves behind. After the "gruesome" encounter with "the kitten, each of its four limbs tied by a rope," we first encounter the narrator's description of the mound of carnage: "The darkly rising soil. Strewn at the base of a moss-grown tree" (*Chijô ga manbennaku akarunde* 44). Lacing the devastation of the scene with further gravity, Isaka repeats the brief refrain later in the poem. Indeed, this refrain carries with it a far more subdued effect than the poetic prefaces with which both "*X no kobu no nake*" and "*Yoru no ike*" begin, a small gesture that signals the failings of poetic allegory to reconcile the deeds of "older brother." Another difference between the style of these two poems and "*Kattaa*" is that both "*X no kobu no naka*" and "*Yoru no ike*" employ the documentary techniques mentioned above, further multiplying the perspectives from which their abject subjects, a woman and a young girl who both commit suicide, can be evoked. In some ways, documentary "evidence" is not required in "*Kaata*," as in the case of "*Nibanme no memo*," which originated in a highly-publicized media event, the public

had already been saturated by the "news" of the Sakakibara incident.

"*X no kobu no naka*," which appears as the penultimate poem of *Hakoiri hyô*, directly before the title poem of this collection, opens with a meditation on bees, the speaker having found a beehive inside a casing used for window shutters. The narrator's brother, who has come to visit the narrator, vacuums up the bees because they have found their way into the spare bedroom in which he will stay. The brother then releases them from the canister of the vacuum cleaner to the garden the next morning. The link between "X's" lump (*kobu*) and the bees becomes apparent when the narrator, in a lengthy description of the long-legged wasp, notices one bee that "clings idiotically to a round body, attach[ing itself]...to a useless bump-like object" in its hive (*Hakoiri hyô* 133). Gazing at this scene, the narrator tries to determine why such a "useless bump" exists, not only in the world of bees, but in the characters of people as well. She determines that such strange flaws of nature exist because, in the human world, such an anomaly graces the person with a certain deeply ironic charm (*aikyô*), because, in short, the bump "suits" them, expressing their deepest human idiosyncrasies. If this is the case, she reasons, the person can be forgiven for the spiritual defect that such a bump, or lump, denotes.

This turns out to be wishful thinking, however, when the narrator then rummages in her closets for the journal of a school friend (X) whose seventeen-year memorial service she has just attended. While it is painful to confront this diary once again--the speaker vows that she will read it only once in her lifetime--she returns to the diary after all these years with the hope that she has discovered a way of coming to terms with the troubled life of her friend, whose festering lump of emotional problems continues to

weigh on her. What is so telling about the narrator's generosity is her hopeful wish to see her friend in a new light, as well as her own determination to reread her friend's diary as documentary evidence for a new, more compassionate "reading" of the circumstances that surrounded her death.

Unfortunately, however, what the narrator finds in no way confirms this hope: She finds X's self-centeredness to be more than she can bear as she faces again the ways in which X "tears" the innocent people around her "to small pieces of flesh" in her diary, "all in a fever, telling about things that would detonate on contact" (*Hakoiri hyô* 135). What most angers the speaker is her refusal to rely on the voice of any single "I," especially when that "I" is so unreliable in her construction of events that vary radically from the ways in which they are understood by the people around her. Although X never turned her bitterness toward the narrator, all these years later, she continues to bristle at X's "rotting integrity, the feelings of 'I' repeated in...[her] high, clear, effervescent voice." Condemning X's singular perspective, one that Isaka's poetry itself so thoroughly counters, the narrator concludes, "the feeling of celebrating an 'I' that exists only inside, cannot be permitted," (*Hakoiri hyô* 136), a notion that further supports my assertion of Isaka as a *socially-oriented* metaphysical poet.

"*Yoru no ike*" adopts another "documentary" format, that of a teacher's interview with a boy who knows the young woman Ayuko, a student searching for a way to kill herself in the opening section of the poem, an act she eventually carries out after flying to Russia. In this poem, it is not the narrator who is apt to blur with Ayuko, but Yasuhiko Takase, who, as his teacher's interview reveals, is haunted by Ayuko's death: Even after her death, he feels that he is "melting together with her" (*Chijô ga manbennaku akarunde*

26). Assigning this task of becoming one with the abject subject to someone other than herself allows the interviewing narrator to see her subjects from a distance, which, in turn, enhances the clarity of the circumstances surrounding Ayuko's suicide. Ayuko kills herself in springtime, during cherry blossom season, and the poem opens with a telling description of cherry blossoms, so that, as in "*X no kobu no naka*," the latter events to be described in the poem are linked with the processes of nature, suggesting that neither of these abject subjects, Ayuko nor "X," should be seen as aberrant "freaks" of nature.

"*Yoru no ike*," like both "*Kattaa*" and "*X no kobu no naka*," is a poem that "sprawls," ("*nosobette iru yôna shi*" ) as Arai describes this variety of Isaka's prose poetry (11), a form that allows the poet to enter not only the highly metaphorical spaces of the poetic preface, but into the mentality of Yasuhiko, who identifies so strongly with Ayuko that he literally is afraid to speak of her, as well as the fantasies, fears and realities of Ayuko herself when she goes to Russia. While the poetic preface also lends support to Isaka's identification as a metaphysical poet, inasmuch as they provide a deeply metaphorical reading of the lives of her subjects, Ayuko herself also develops out-of-the-body "metaphysical" strategies to momentarily transcend, or cope with, the brutal physical beatings she encounters in her short life.

The final, long section of this poem takes place in Russia, where Ayuko eventually dies. While this section of the poem has an air of surreal fantasy to it, the violence that Ayuko encounters at the Khabarovsk Airport has roots in the ways in which she had been treated by peers at school: "I was the one beaten because it looked like I would cry...I hated those most who sat at their classroom desks, turning a blind eye." Her head pushed into a toilet at the Khabarovsk Airport, Ayuko survives this ordeal by using

the strategy she used at school: "I peel consciousness away from the body. As always, I launch myself up behind his head. Even though my body was hurt, I make myself fly up to a place without pain. If I was careless, I would return, and so I had to concentrate" (*Chijô ga manbennaku akarunde* 27).

However, as the poetic preface to "*Yoru no ike*" suggests, the suffering of the body can be alleviated, but not overcome. Both Ayuko and Yasuhiko can be likened to the calyxes of the cherry blooms described in the preface: Just as the blossoms cannot shake off their sticky secretions, neither can Ayuko nor Yasuhiko easily cast off their suffering. The ooze that emerges from the buds literally sticks to the blossoms, so that we would tend to hold these "flowers" apart, away from us, as shown here in the first one-third of the poem:

### **Night Pond**

The transparent secretion  
oozes from the calyx of cherry blossoms  
A certain number of drops drip down  
from a certain number of calyxes  
They cling without falling  
If they were drops of water they would probably fall  
(Since ancient times, people have cherished  
the beads of dew that roll down  
the tops of petals)  
But since these are sticky secretions, we keep them at arm's length  
Even the flowers want to turn away from them  
When the wind blows        they have waited so long  
the petals are rocked to the left and right but  
the sacs of fluid are as heavy as the flaws of the body  
Brushing them away is as difficult as casting off a former reality

Last year, during this same cherry blossom season, Ayuko Yashiro left home to die alone. Waiting for the black mouth of night to open, she was searching for a place to die: she went to a railroad crossing, looked up at tall buildings; turning back, she headed for her school. Her chest ached to think she had left home only to wander around her hometown. Tucked into a handkerchief, she carried a pretty green budgie that she had strangled in her fist.

She was seen walking among the closed shops, still wearing her school uniform, by a male classmate riding by on a bicycle.

*Takase*, Ayuko apparently called out.

Yasuhiko Takase turned around with a start and halted his bike, but seeing Ayuko approaching him with something she seemed to want to say, he evaded her. "Why are you afraid?" I asked, but he could not reply.

*Takase*. Even now Yasuhiko is trying to escape, as if by reflex. Ayuko and he are melting together, their body temperature on the verge of flowing into the part that is seeping together, the part than can be easily replaced. *The pitiful one is you, not me*. "Outside of Ayuko, everyone is saying that in their hearts--parents, too. Even me, your teacher, in the end, I'm the same."

*Turn on the light, the light.*

Yasuhiko was saying *rushing home, I was pulled over and scolded by the police, but at the time I felt that I had been saved.*

## 夜の池

桜の萼から  
透明な粘液がにじみだす  
ある限りの萼から  
ある限りのしずくが垂れ  
それらは落ちないでぶら下がったままである  
水滴ならば落ちるだろうが  
（水の玉が花びらの上に置かれ  
ころがり落ちる様は  
古来より多くの人に愛でられてきた）  
粘液ではうとまれる  
花としても断ちきりたいだろうに  
風が吹けば　ここぞとはかり  
左右に花卉を揺らせるが  
夜の袋は肉体の檻褻のように重く  
かつての事実のようにふり切ることが難しい

去年のこの桜の季節に、やしろあゆこは家を出て、ひとりで死ににいった。まっくろい口をあけて待っていた夜に、死に場所をさがして踏切へ行き、高いビルを見あげ、引き返して学校に向かったのだ。家を出ても、地元をうろつくしかなかったと思うと胸が衝かれる。可愛がっていたセキセイインコを掌でしめて殺しハンカチにくるんでもっていた。

制服のままシャッターの下りた商店街を歩いているのを、自転車を走らせていたクラス男子生徒に目撃されている。

高瀬クン、

あゆこは声をかけたらしい。

高瀬泰彦は振り返ってオッと声をあげ自転車をとめたが、あゆこが何か言いたげに近寄ってくるのを見てゾっとして逃げてしまった。なぜゾっとしたのか、聞いても泰彦は答えられなかった。

高瀬クン、

今でも泰彦は反射的に逃げようとする。あゆこと自分が溶けてひたひたになっている部分、簡単に入れ替わる部分に体温が流れそうになるのだろう。みじめなのはお前で、オレではないよお。あゆこ以外の、すべての人が心の中でそう言い放っている。親も。担任の私だって結局のところ、同じだ。

灯を点けろよ、灯を。

一目散に家に向かう途中、マップポにつかまって説教くらったけど、あん時、なんだかタスカッたって気がした、と泰彦は言っていた。

*(Chijô ga manbennaku akarunde 22-23)*

Moving seamlessly from the poetic preface to the teacher's report of the incident and interview with her student, we are confronted not only with the details of Ayuko's search for a place to die, but with Yasuhiko's intense identification with her, even as he attempts to escape her, both on the night he encounters her walking among the closed shops of their town, as well as during his teacher's interview. Indeed, perhaps it is through Yasuhiko's fear that we are best able to read Ayuko's troubled relationship to others. Although Yasuhiko tries to deny his connection to Ayuko, part of the teacher/interviewer's role is to help Yasuhiko see that, in a sense, while "everyone--even parents"--wants to distance themselves from the misery that caused Ayuko to kill herself, we are all, like the teacher, "the same" as Yasuhiko, wanting to ignore, or deny, our connection to Ayuko, to our own pain or misery.

This multipositional documentary strategy of the interview, in which this narrator speaks with *another* who merges with the object subject, helps Isaka to bring not only her narrator, interviewee and subject, but her readers as well, to a deeper understanding of the



suffering of those who are so often excluded from our consideration, the abject so often held at "arm's length." So doing, Isaka reveals our strong connections, by virtue of our own suppressed suffering, to the abject, suffering that, as Butler says, is necessarily suppressed, deemed a "zone of uninhabitability" that "constitutes the defining limit" of our domain (*Bodies that Matter* 3). As Butler suggests, the suppression of these connections to the abject allows us to assert our "normalacy," our superiority over the abject, which becomes a primary "function" of the abject in our lives. Revealing Yasuhiko's underlying connections to the abject subject in "*Yoru no ike*" becomes a way for Isaka to give Ayuko a "proper burial." Though, by the end of the poem, Ayuko's whole body is bruised, her "shrine stands in the snowing blossoms," buried, as she is, "in closely-packed flowers," next to the night pond, the "budgie" that she had crushed early on in the poem, "perched on her shoulder" (*Chijō ga manbennaku akarunde* 29). While the narrators of "*Kattaa*" and "*X no kobu no naka*" are clearly less sympathetic toward their subjects than this narrator is, we sense, through Isaka's choice to make their stories known, that they are no less compelling subjects, whose lives, like that of Ayuko's, are well-worth the telling.

#### Appendix 5

"*Kyōmei*," from *Baiorin zoku*, with *manga* by Yamada Murasaki, see Isaka 27-34.

# 共

非波洋子

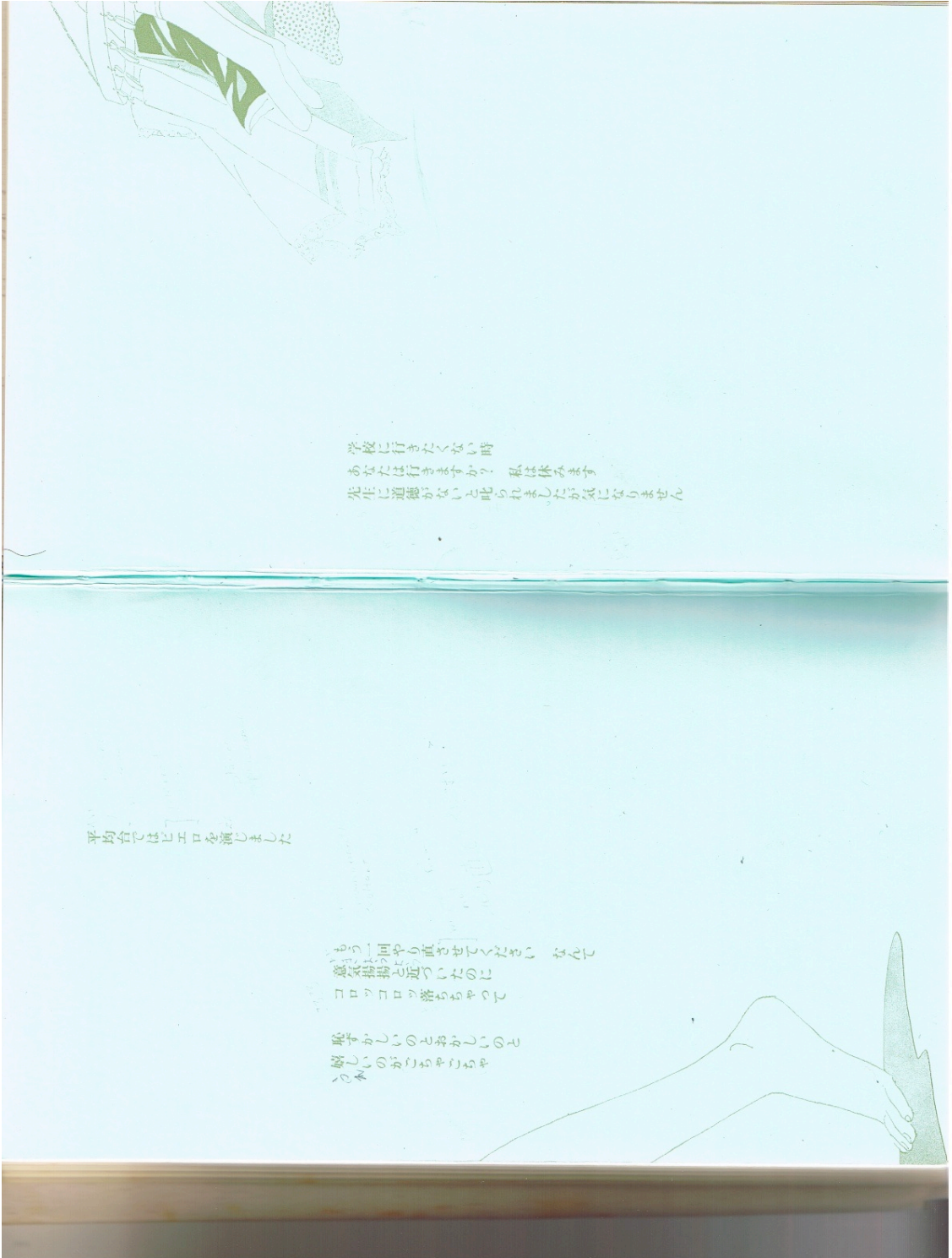


# 鳴

やまた紫

今日何かあったの？  
あの顔ちょっと心配  
暗い顔だったけど



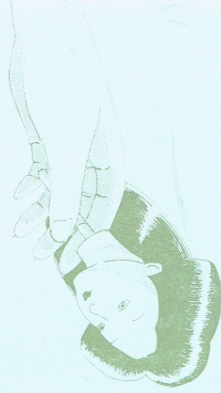


学校に行きたくない時  
 あなたは行きますか？ 私は休みます  
 先生に通報がないと叱られました。が気になりません

平均ではヒロを演じました

もう一回やり直させてください。なぜ  
 意気揚々と近づいたのに  
 コロコロの滑り落ちて

膝がかしいのとおかしいのよ  
 かわいいのかわいいのよ

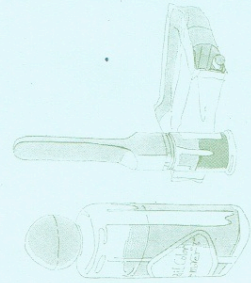


不完全な自分を愛します

ひとりしている孤独と  
集団の中のけじめ的な孤独とはずいぶん違う  
のけ者にされているときは  
全身のこまかな感情があわだる

寒く感じられるけれど  
その場を過ぎればすぐに消えてしまい  
心は回復する  
同じときもなかつたみたいに  
でもひとりしている孤独は  
喉のほうまでつれわれ喪失感があつて  
身体的不安定さは無縁なので  
やすらぎに似ています

その孤独からぬりだそうとするとき  
苦しみが起こります

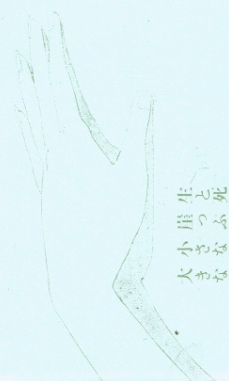




金曜のレッスンの帰り  
知らぬまに喫茶店に入って  
コーヒーが運ばれてきて  
気づきました  
私は飲みたくなかったのです  
みんなもろこしてしまいました  
「自分の健康を管理せよ  
大やぐら (りょうぶごたばか) にはなるな」って  
誰かさんの口癖が聞こえました



世界がもう一度乳色に染まればいい



生と死との間にある者すべて  
崖のふちで手をつないで  
小さな手は汗ばみ呼吸しています  
大きな手を沈黙させるために

道

**A Conclusion: Amano jaku Returns in the Guise of a Fox  
In Recent Japanese Women's Poetry**

This dissertation has considered the many manifestations of personae of the abject in postwar and contemporary Japanese women's poetry. Despite receiving their civil rights soon after the conclusion of the Pacific War--the ability to vote, own land and divorce their husbands, for instance--Japanese women did not necessarily integrate these new freedoms into their lives with ease. Indeed, the poetry of postwar Japanese women poets served as a means of grappling with--and, in many cases, getting beyond--the various ways in which women have suffered throughout Japanese women's history, within institutions of sexual slavery, for instance, in order to embrace new economic power in the home, or to transcend the highly-reified boundaries of gender set in place by the culture by institutions such as *ryōsai kenbo* and *kazoku kokkakan*. Ironically enough, one of the important new freedoms Japanese women acquired after the war was the freedom to explore these past oppression.

Addressing this past suffering through inventive personae of the abject, these poets have refused to be bound by the historical moment in which they live. Taking up the forms of old Buddhist *setsuwa* or Shinto myth, Itô Hiromi goes far to reveal the concerns of contemporary Japanese women: the sexual abuse of children in "*Watashi wa Anjuhimeko de aru*," for example, or the sexuality of the mother in "*Chichi yarazu no en*." Tomioka Taeko's "splendid," gender-changing girl in "*Mi [no] ue banashi*" transcends history as well; not only does she exist centuries before our own, but through the trickster *Amano jaku*, Tomioka expresses a prophetic sense of curiosity about gender that goes well beyond the historical moment in which she created this persona. The

future is evoked in the poetry of Isaka Yôko as well, through her use of *manga*-like characters whose bodies are continually transformed, or animated, by "invading" forms of technology, for example. Hardly a victim in these technological invasions, however, the fantastic being we encounter in Isaka's "*Arashi*" harnesses the "the rising vibration" to "take to the untamed wind" in her "own way" (*Chijô ga manbennaku* 37).

While it is true that Ishigaki Rin's octopus-like woman who painstakingly supports her family home on her spindly legs and Yoshihara Sachiko's wounded and wounding lovers each embody women's suffering, they also extend the imaginative ways in which women's experience is defined and expressed in poetry. This dramatic use of personae is a deeply *sympathetic* approach: these poets not only explore their own suffering, but that of others as well, especially that of the children who, abjected from within their own family, would turn their rage back onto the culture, as in poems by Isaka such as "*Nibanme no memo*" and "*Kattaa*." Indeed, it is through the use of dramatic personae that these voices, so often stifled within the culture, can be heard. While it would be a mistake to say that all Japanese women poets make use of such dramatic personae, much less dramatic personae of the abject, analyses of the various ways in which women poets have created these personae provide one way of accessing the dark terrain, the "uninhabitable" spaces, to cite Butler's term, on which so much postwar and contemporary Japanese women's poetry exists (*Bodies that Matter* 3).

The abject provides a way of describing some of the stylistic features of this poetry as well, the cacophony of voices intoned by the narrating *miko* in Itô's poetry, for example, or the constantly transforming objects of abjection in Isaka's belt poems. Whether a snake capable of strangling a sleeping house, or a pet "hang[ing] its head



between meals," these "abjects" defy the notion of a constant referent, a feature of this poetry that allows not only an opportunity for poetic experimentation, but for the sense of cultural *change* that this poetry seeks (*Baiorin zoku* 23). Mirroring the rupture of Anjuhimeko's body, language too, as Kristeva suggests, is capable of rupture, and, as such, becomes not only a useful metaphor for the body, but a ready conduit for these poets' reconsideration, or expropriation, of the mythic past.

While it is too soon to say definitively what today's and future Japanese women poets will inherit from the generation of postwar and contemporary poets discussed in this dissertation, allow me to trace a few of these influences on some of Japan's promising young women poets, including Minashita Kiriū, Yasukawa Nao, Kyong-mi Park and Arai Takako. While the sense of abjection that this dissertation explores can also be seen in some of the poetry that will be discussed here, in these examples, abjection is more deeply embedded in the fabric of the poem. Given the feelings of emptiness that this poetry evokes, it is possible to see the position from which these poets write as one of "post abjection," from a vacuous state of nothingness after all has been expelled from the body.

On a more positive note, however, rather than necessarily speaking from a voice of abjection, the narrators of these more recent poems will, on occasion, "talk back" to the voice of abjection from this empty space, giving us hope that, finally silencing the overpowering (if not deafening) voice of abjection, other voices will come to be heard as well. Further describing the powerful ways in which science and technology have shaped their lives, these poets also extend the sense of linguistic play that is such a strong feature of the previous generation of women poets. Indeed, this highly experimental wordplay

becomes a hallmark of their poetry, a talisman or mantra that provides a protective barrier against the abject.

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In *Gendaishi techô's* 2008 yearbook of poetry, poet Minashita Kiriû converses with Wago Ryoichi and Kitagawa Tôru about some of the sources of inspiration for young poets today.<sup>94</sup> Citing media-based sources from which she believes much current-poetry derives, Minashita mentions newspapers, internet sources and technical and scientific writing that her own poetry employs. Stressing the impact of technology on literary expression, Minashita discusses the influence of devices such as the cell phone, the thin density of texts that have been published as part of the boom in *keitai shôsetsu*, novels to be read on cell phones in Japan. Responding to Wago's observation of the minute sense of detail (*bisai*) so important to today's poetry, Minashita implies that this feature, too, can be read as one of the many influences of the technical writing that permeates the culture (10-11).

Indeed, in the introduction to her 2006 *Four from Japan: Contemporary Poetry and Essays by Women*, a bilingual edition which includes several translations of Minashita's poetry, Sawako Nakayasu notes that Minashita's experiments with *katakana* have the "effect of imposing a rather digital, inorganic quality to the text." As Nakayasu explains, "*katakana* has always been decidedly un-literary, un-poetic; it is the script of telegrams, imported words, and all things digital, virtual, or electronic." In the title poem of her award-winning 2003 collection *Onsoku heiwa* (Sonic peace), *katakana*, which traditionally conveys "an internationalized Japanese language" (8), appears intermittently

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<sup>94</sup> As Sawako Nakayasu points out, Minashita Kiriû (水無田 気流) is a pen name, with "Kiriû" "being lifted out of the middle of a phrase coined by the haiku poet Bashô, *fuekiriyukô*, which refers to the principles of fluidity and immutability central to haiku," see Nakayasu 8.

throughout the poem to reflect many different aspects of being: from the deadly  
 ordinariness of life to the iron will of the narrator or the "hydra-like" spirit "circulating  
 beneath...[the] skin." In these first several stanzas of the forty-four line poem, translated  
 below by Nakayasu, *katakana* is represented with capital letters:

<b>Sonic Peace</b>	<b>音速平和</b>
Under the sun My replaceable daily life Is comprised of UNNECESSARY THINGS	太陽の下で 交換可能な私の日常は イラナイモノからできている
What's running the show here is A will, with a recurring thermal expansion Which I'm afraid at this point is Made of a metal code	この場所を取り仕切るのは 熱膨張を繰り返す意志 おそらく現代点では 金属コードからできている
Circulating beneath your skin Like a freshwater hydra experiment Is a radiant spirit	君の皮膚の下を循環するのは 淡水系ヒドラ実験のように 晴れやかな精神
At the point where whiteness in the will boils up I embrace an unrestrained substance running wild And my thinking, riding that grammar Gets up, unsteadily (IS ALL I CAN DO IS ALL I CAN DO IS ALL I CAN DO)	意志の白が沸き上がる地点で 暴走する無拘束物質と抱き合い 文法に乗った私の思想は よろよると立ち上がる (シカナイノダシカナイノダシカ ナイノダ)
THAT WHICH exists is THAT WHICH SHOULD NOT exits	存在スルモノハ 存在スルハズノナイモノ
We are Always Betrayed by ourselves	私たちは いつも 私たちに裏切られて行く... (trans. Nakayasu, <i>Four</i> 18-19, 27-28)

As Nakayasu points out, the *katakana* transcription is delivered in Minashita's  
 poetry "with layers of (at times conflicting) meaning" (intro 8). In "*Onsoku heiwa*," the

DNA-like strands of *katakana* with which this poem is strung come to signify not only the abject boredom of a life filled with completely "UNNECESSARY THINGS" (イラナイモノ) but the metal "code" (コード) of the narrator's will as well, which must counter the sense of futility that permeates her replaceable daily life. *Katakana* becomes the medium of the will that so frantically works to overturn the sense of stasis that daily life imparts "(IS ALL I CAN DO IS ALL I CAN DO IS ALL I CAN DO)" (シカナイノダシカナイノダシカナイノダ) by "embrac[ing] the unrestrained substance" of the hydra (ヒドラ) spirit "running wild." And finally, the *katakana* script represents the sense of paradox in which the narrator finds herself, the dual existence between the dryness of daily life and the wildness of spirit, which can be mediated only by the force of her own will: "THAT WHICH exists is THAT WHICH SHOULD NOT exist" (存在スルモノハ / 存在スルハズノナイモノ).

The narrator of "*Onsoku heiwa*" is already wired with the technology that has begun to enter the "fantastic beings" that inhabits Isaka's poetry. Indeed, it is as though she has lived with this technology for awhile now and has by now learned how to use the technology to "embrace" the spirit "circulating beneath" the skin "like a freshwater hydra experiment." The sense of betrayal that is portrayed between lovers in Yoshihara's and Tomioka's poetry, for example, appears to be taking place between the very separate sides of the self in Minashita's "*Onsoku heiwa*," the will, the spirit, and the daily being. Although she says that the spirit is circulating beneath "your skin" (*kimi no hifu*), it is as if the narrator is talking to herself, and that her task is to integrate these separate entities of the self. At the very least, this casual use of "you" also serves to pull the reader in to what is, to say the least, the narrator's decidedly unique experience.

In her essay that accompanies her poems in *Four from Japan*, Minashita speaks of the power of naming in science and the connection she feels between the scientific process of naming and poetry: "If the premise of scientific thought lies in the presumption that all creation can be named, the act of writing poetry comes from a reverence for naming. I believe a poem teeters at the very edge of nothingness, at the boundary between non-existence and a state of pre-existence, the instant before an object gets named and brought into being." As we might expect, the process of "naming all of creation" has its negative ramifications as well. As Minashita points out, mega-corporations such as McDonalds and Coca-Cola lay claim to the world by the "naming" that takes place in advertising, for example. "Modernity, which Max Weber identified as the unflagging pursuit of rationality," Minashita reminds us, "continues to title the world" (trans Nakayasu 31).

Indeed, as "*Onsoku Heiwa*" continues, the narrator's "daily life that has been named disappears each time it is called" (*namae no tsuita watashi no nichijō wa/ yobareru tabi ni kiete iku*) (trans Nakayasu 19). Like the previous generation of poets presented in this dissertation, for Minashita, poetry becomes the medium through which she can rename and reinvent her life, or, at the very least, avoid the reduction of merely naming. In many ways, though, the *katakana* and scientific expression through which the narrator's desires and anxieties are expressed play a key role in defining this dramatic persona whose existence on the page is every bit, if not more important, than her existence as a "voice" that can be heard. The "metal code" of her will by now dissipating, so too does the poet's use of *katakana*. Toward the end of the poem she observes that "Rain falls at sonic speed/ Drinks down my shadow that resembles unconditional

surrender" (*onsoku no ame ga furu/ mujôken kôfuku ni yoku nita watashi no kao wo nomihoshi*) (trans Nakayasu 19). As these lines so evocatively show, the collective notion of "unconditional surrender" after the Pacific War has been all but erased by "sonic peace," an ironic technological metaphor that, while hardly peaceful, resonates with an intense privacy for the author, a barrier beyond which the reader cannot penetrate. "Drink...[ing] down" her shadow, we can surmise that this image of rain is latently reminiscent of the "black rain" of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The richness of language and the finely-detailed vocabulary of science come together once again in Minashita's poem "*Shiirakansu hiyori*" (A perfect day for coelacanth). Once again, however, science cannot overcome the feelings of abject futility embedded in an environment which in no way supports the narrator's exuberance over finding "In the back alleys of AKIHABARA/ ...a store that sells/ Words made of plastic" (*Akihabara uradôri ni wa/ purasuchikku sei no kotoba wo/ utte iru mise ga aru no desu*): "Villiers del'Isle-Adam/ Followed by/ Pyridine" (*birie do riradan/ no tsugi ni/ pirijin*), which Minashita lovingly defines as a "Heteroaromatic organic compound with one nitrogen atom" (*chisso hitogenshi wo motsu...hokôzoku fukusokan kagô mono*). And, showing the ready integration between the sciences and the imagination that her poetry foregrounds, the narrator notices that the poet/philosopher "Schiller/ Is followed by/ Coelacanth" (*shiraa/ no tsugi ni/ shiirakansu*). Minashita writes that the ostensible subject of this poem, coelacanth, was "Believed to have gone extinct in the Cretaceous Period/ But in 1938 a living species...Was discovered in the southeastern waters near South Africa" (*hakuaki ni zetsumetsu shita to shinjirarete ita ga/ sen kyûhyaku sanjû hachi nen, minami afurika no nantô kaiiki de/...hakken sareta*). Deciding that today is "a

perfectly lovely day for Coelacanth" (*kyô wa sutekina shiirakansu hiyori*) the narrator says "in a loud voice" "I'll take this, please" (*kore kudasai, to/ôkoe de chûmon suru*) only to be met with the yawns of the sales clerk, who says "Oh that...I don't know when the next shipment will come in" (*aa, sore ne...jikai nyûka no yotei ha mitei desu*) (trans Nakayasu 16-17). While the narrator's enthusiasm for her find here in the back alleys of Tokyo's electronic Mecca Akihabara can hardly be described as tentative in this poem, in the yawn of this sales clerk, we feel the buoyancy of her world suddenly dissipate.

In his interpretive essay that appears at the end of Yasukawa Nao's 2006 *Melophobia*, evocatively titled "*Yûbi de bôryokuteki de karei de kageki de sensai de waizatsu de miraitekina shijin ga tonari no shiryôde niji ni naru*" (Gracefully, violently, magnificently, radically, delicately, vulgarly, the futuristic poet in the next car becomes a rainbow), Wago traces the two very different ways in which the double-edged sword of technology cuts in Yasukawa's work, and how it contributes to the sense of abject emptiness the narrator of Minashita's "*Onsoku heiwa*" tries so desperately to counter:

We often face a doubled-edged way of approximating [ourselves]: either as a super economy, information society or in fear of facing a one percent annual advance in global warming. Completely buried by our values and the possibilities afforded by our technology, we have the all-powerful feeling that nothing is impossible. We also face the reality of our emptiness, that it is impossible to gain anything. (3)

Media forms on which Yasukawa's works depend include film, and, as the title of her book (an abbreviated form of the phrase "melody phobia") implies, music.

Explaining in her afterwords that she did nothing but watch television from the time she was a middle school student until she finished college, Yasukawa's relationship to music is decidedly unromantic. Indeed, Yasukawa states that she believes only in poems "that kill off narcissistic sweetness" in this world that "loves music too much." The oversized

headphones that she describes in the title poem "Melophobia" cannot contain this "music phobia" (*ongaku kyôfushô*) that so distresses her (96). It is as though the musical phrase "marry me, marry me" she hears leaking out of "the diseased headphones" of a walkman is chiding her (52).<sup>95</sup>

Acknowledging the idiosyncrasy of her own belief system (and fear of music), Yasukawa begins her afterwords with the blunt statement, "Language that is necessary for me is a truth that is groundless for other people" (96). Although her poetry can be seen as an indictment of the pulsating rhythm of a culture that she cannot escape, Yasukawa displays a keen interest in film from the beginning of her book, which opens with a parody of John Cassavetes' 1974 film *A Woman Under the Influence* (Fukuma 1). Yasukawa states that like the French director Robert Bresson, she "does not know what other people want, so she imposes her will upon them" (96). Going on to show her sympathies for the transsexual protagonist of Werner Fassbinder's film *In the Year of Thirteen Moons*, who "resigns himself to injustice," Yasukawa suggests the similarities between her poetry and the film, which was recently described by one critic as "grotesque, arbitrary, sentimental, and cold as ice" (Canby). Indeed, the "cold as ice" disdain for sentimentality that Yasukawa's poetry sometimes exudes can also be explored through her disdain for music, which, as the annoying leaking headphones suggest, cannot be eliminated from her poetry.

Indeed, in the opening line of "Melophobia," which is strangely reminiscent of Tomioka's "*Happee endo*," with its momentary focus on a face of sand, the narrator

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<sup>95</sup> Please see this chapter's appendix for the photo, taken by Yasukawa, that appears on the cover of *Melophobia*. Simultaneously eating noodles and smoking a cigarette, the woman in this photo also has a gauged dial protruding from her throat. Read as the intersection between human and machine, the image also suggests the influx of exterior culture on the body, and perhaps on the voice, as well.



announces that this "sand peeled off the face" constitutes a "particular music." The poem, in fact, owes more to Tomioka than this single, evocative image: Many of the poems in Yasukawa's collection are delivered in the same, seemingly random form as "*Happee endo*," severing the one-to-one correspondence between words and ideas that we might expect in poetry. In many ways, though, while Tomioka's narrator seems to delight in delving into the surrealistic foxholes of the unknown, Yasukawa is less enthusiastic. The speaker of these opening lines of the title poem "Melophobia" is overwhelmed by her existence, which is evoked here in by the onslaught of information (including music) on her senses:

Sand peeled off of the face covered the face a particular music

"If existence is open information, I could vomit"

Before getting on the bus the taste of the venison I ate remains in my mouth And then there is the disease of the oversized headphones Like those times that the "marry me, marry me" music can be heard leaking out of a walkman

顔から砂がはがれてきた 顔を覆った 特定の音楽

「存在そのものが情報公開ならば吐け」

バスに乗るまえに食べた鹿肉の味が口のなかに残っている そして 大きすぎるヘッドホンが疾病であって ウォークマンの音漏れが「結婚してくれ 結婚してくれ」に聞こえるようなときには.....

(*Melophobia* 52)

Unafraid to expose her most negative emotions, the narrator of "Melophobia" enumerates the things in her life that she hates, more directly identifying what the narrator of Isaka's "Resonances" can only hint at: "Hatred of the body Hatred of the family Hatred of school Hatred of work And then in particular among the things you can't plan to hate being forced to appreciate climaxes" (*shintai e no nikushimi kazoku e no nikushimi gakkô e no nikushimi shûgyô e no nikushimi soshite toriwake yoteigai e*

*no nikushimi no naka de chôteen wo ajiwawaseru*) (54). While it might be possible to interpret this final item in the list as sexual climax, I am more inclined to see this particular hatred in terms of the narrative climax avowed by many of the poets discussed here, equating her hatred of the body and the family, school, and work (the social organizations on which so much of life is based) with a hatred of narrative climax is jarring to say the least. And yet, as one of the mechanisms through which the narrator has been controlled as a reader of "stories," including the "life story" she is expected to participate in as a Japanese woman (birth, education, the "climax" of marriage--"*marry me, marry me*"--childbirth, possible part-time job, death), stating her hatred of narrative climax is significant. Hatred for the narrative climax becomes a way of countering "what is expected" by the culture and one of the mechanisms through which Japanese women poets locate themselves on the "outskirts" of culture, as Mizuta puts it (*Nijû seiki* 1), an ironic form of self-abjection in which one jettisons oneself from the culture that repulses, though, as Naokawa's poetry shows, one can never completely remove oneself, or live apart, from culture.

While Yasukawa exhibits disdain for the ways in which her poetic voices are, whether she likes it or not, shaped by the surrounding culture, Kyong-mi Park's poetry quietly celebrates the influence of "the external." Citing the external as an important source of her poetry, Park writes, "poetry is that which is taken in from the external; it is not some kind of internal voice," (qtd. in Nakayasu 9). Park's poem "*Gakki*" (Instrument) shows the great gentleness with which the external can coax out this internal voice that the poet denies: "To strum is to grow internal/ Fingertips gently touch my internal voice/ My breath gathers pleats/ And the sound enters softly" (trans. Nakayasu 38). A second

generation *zai-nichi* Korean writing in Japanese, Park suggests the image of the "*chima*," mentioned later in the poem, the traditional pleated skirts that Korean women have worn since the fifteenth century ("*chima*"). Park's delicate use of the imagery of clothing to evoke the body, its very breath, is evocative of Isaka's use of clothing in her poem "*Ho*," for example, to express the contours of the body.

Like Tomioka, Park also displays, in her use of language, a strong affinity for the stylistics of Gertrude Stein. A poem spoken in the voice of another body garment, "The Hat Says," begins with the playful, repetitive language that, as Park points out, Stein crafted to incorporate the voice of others into her poetry<sup>96</sup>: "The bouquet woman says yes, to me./ Me, no, I say. No, and I shake my head shake my head shake my head bury my face in the bouquet." Like Tomioka, Park, too, is a translator of Stein. In her essay "My Asian Bones are Ringing," Park refers to Stein as "the mother of modernism," stating that the process of translating Stein taught her that "language was in fact a medium--a spiritual medium as well as an intermediary--and that the act of using words is that of being possessed by the words of someone else" (51).

This recognition of the poet as medium--that the poet's concerns can be expressed through her willing possession by the voices of others--is one of the striking contributions that Japanese women poets such as Park and Itô make to the legacy of late twentieth and twenty-first century poetry. For Park, who, as mentioned above, writes in Japanese as a *zai-nichi* Korean, incorporating the voices of others is deeply personal. As she writes, "There's no such thing as your 'own' language. Words that we call words all belong to

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<sup>96</sup> Park cites the work Stein did as a psychological researcher, "listening carefully to, and documenting in minute detail the speech patterns of people in various levels of society," see Park 51.

others...there is not language we are born with. Children are possessed, like a medium, by the language of whoever they first meet in their lives..." (51).

Creating a balance between the "medium" (language) and the "message" that language contains is a concern that Arai Takako's poetry asks us to consider. Despite the current attraction for the vacuous chambers of the "post-object" noted in the opening of this section, the voice of abjection is still alive and well in Arai Takako's playful "*Kitsune arawareru*" (Fox appearing). Written in the voice of a male fox who, as Japanese foxes do, comes to "possess" (or trick or cajole) a human, this poem has teeth, or at least a fox who would "attack you with my front paws." Marking his "turf" with "urine" that has "already soaked in," the object fox, is striking back at having been wronged by one who has been deemed "human," perhaps for the ways in which he has been shunned as the sly trickster in so much Japanese literature. Fully acknowledging his status as a human fox as one of many possible personae in the final line of the poem, "I stood there in disguise" (*baketa ore ga tatta no da*), the fox is both possessor ("When you get up I'll have taken over your body," *tachiagaru toki ni wa karada wo moratte iru*). At the same time, though, as he so comically says, he is "possessed! I am possessed!" (*hyôji suru , ore wa hyôji suru*) (trans. Nakayasu 83-84). This trickster who can simultaneously inhabit both positions--of the possessor and the possessed--closely approximates one of the roles of the poets that this dissertation describes. Becoming the object other, or drawing near enough to the object other to describe her plight, the narrators of the poems that this dissertation discusses, must openly inhabit the terrain of abjection as well.

In some ways though, openly flaunting his human "disguise" as one of many he could have chosen, the human can be seen as a mere accessory to this poem--indeed, the

human is "abjectionable"--since, as the subtitle of the poem, "Line-changing poem" indicates, a key feature is its wordplay, turning on itself with a new homophonic pun in (literally) every other line. The Japanese language abounds in possibility for this kind of homophonic play, and as Nakayasu points out, the real "trickery of in the poem is that Arai has translated her own poem homolinguistically, while maintaining two contrasting narrative threads" (8) Acknowledging the difficulty of translating such a poem into English, Nakayasu translates the second line of each stanza intuitively, following her more direct translation of the previous line, to create English equivalents that replicate the poem's homophonic wordplay. Take the first two stanza's of Nakayasu's "partial translation," for instance:

**Fox Appearing**

**A partial translation of a "line-changing-poem"**

**Holding his breath, a human runs down the street**

Hole in the head, and who now hunts down this tree

**Possible he can see me**

Plausibly it consumes me

狐、現わる

——行化け詩（1）

息を止めてあの路地を走っていく人間がいる

一気に飛んで、このlogicで弥次っていくには元気が要る

俺の姿が見えるのか、

「俺、No Sugar」と見栄張るが、

(trans. Nakayasu *Four from Japan*, 83 and 92)

As in Minashita's poetry, we can see the ways in which Arai makes use of the abject personae as a means of approaching her interests in language. The fox in "*Kitsune arawareru*," so reminiscent of Tomioka's shape-changing *Amano jaku*, becomes a persona, or medium, through which the poet's love of wordplay is accomplished, rather than the poet's accomplice, who expresses both the pain and pleasure of her experience as

a subject. In her poem "*Amenouzume san e*" (For Amenouzume-san), the goddess whose wild dancing lured the Sun Goddess from her cave, another poem in which Arai addresses a "traditional" subject, Arai's love of word play once again shines through as she invents a myriad of different *kanji* combinations through which to write Amenouzume's name.<sup>97</sup>

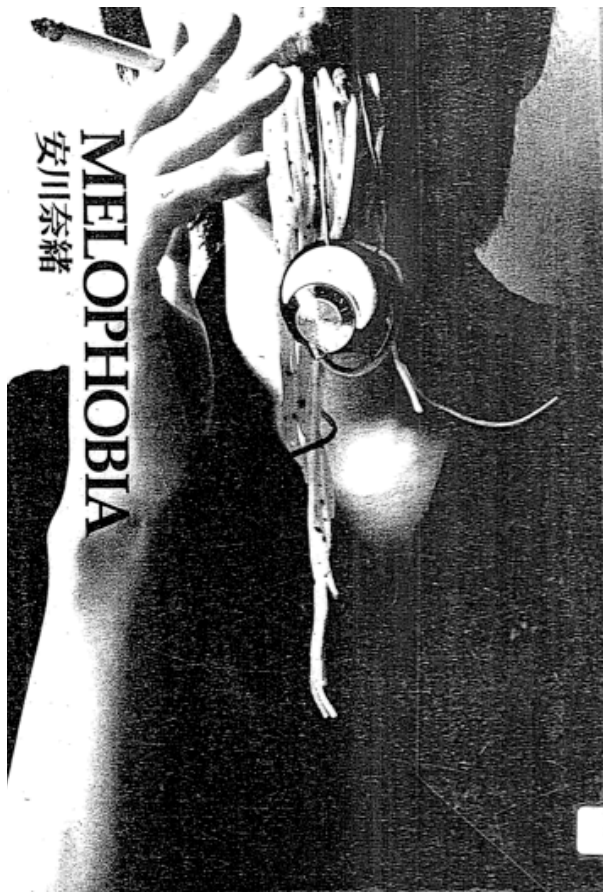
While we can certainly see a great degree of play and experimentation in the poetry of Tomioka, Itô, and Isaka, for instance, too much is at stake for the personae through which these poets speak to prioritize the love of language over their urgent messages. And yet, reading the younger poets who are now able to make that choice with ease, one can only marvel at their artistic freedom, knowing that full expression of the abject personae on the part of the previous generation plays a part in the freedoms that these poets enjoy.

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<sup>97</sup>The title of this poem is written as follows アメノウズメ賛江 (*Amenôzume san e*), so that the title, too, is a pun, *san* (賛) invented from the homophone *san* (Mr. or Ms.) and the directional particle "e" (江) meaning "to." Here, *sane*, an invented word, can be read many different ways, perhaps including "river or praise," which is appropriate for this tribute to the goddess. Amenouzume's name is written here in katakana.

Appendix 6

Cover of Yasukawa Nao's *Melophobia*, photograph by the author, see Yasukawa.



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