

ASIAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES

Journal of the Department of Asian and African Studies
University of Ljubljana – Faculty of Arts

Japan: Transformations in Society and Literature

Volume XV, Issue 3
Ljubljana, December 2011

ASIAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES, Volume XV, Issue 3, Ljubljana, December 2011

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Published by: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani/Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

For: Oddelek za azijske in afriške študije/Department of Asian and African Studies

For the publisher: Andrej Černe, Dean of Faculty of Arts

Ljubljana, 2011, First edition

Number printed: 200 copies

Graphic Design: Mare Kovačič

Printed by: Birografika Bori, d. o. o.

Price: 7,00 EUR

ISSN 1408-5429

This publication is indexed in the Cobiss database.

This journal is published three times per year.

Yearly subscription: 18 EUR,

(Account No.: 50100-603-40227)

Ref. No.: 001-033 ref. »Za revijo«

Address: Filozofska fakulteta, Oddelek za azijske in afriške študije, Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija

tel.: +386 (0)1 24 11 450, +386 (0)24 11 444

faks: +386 (0)1 42 59 337

This journal is published with the support of the Slovene Book Agency (JAK).

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji

Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

930.85(520)"19"(082)

316.42(520)(082)

JAPAN : transformations in society and literature/

[guest editor Nataša Visočnik]. - 1st ed. - Ljubljana : Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete = Faculty of Arts, 2011. - (Asian and African studies, ISSN 1408-5429 ; vol. 15, issue 3)

ISBN 978-961-237-480-8

1. Visočnik, Nataša

259617280

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Nataša VISOČNIK

Introduction	v–x
---------------------------	-----

Social Transformations

Tomoko KUBO and Yoshimichi YUI

Transformation of the Housing Market in Tokyo since the Late 1990s: Housing Purchases by Single-person Households	3–21
--	------

Beata M. KOWALCZYK

Invisible (Tokyo Station) City of Transformation: Social Change and its Spatial Expression in Modern Japan	23–38
---	-------

Reflecting Transition

Tamae K. PRINDLE

Easing Transition with Metaphors: A Case of Transsexuality	41–58
---	-------

Rodica FRENTIU

Contemporary Japanese Literature in Its Transition Towards the New Postmodern Humanism: Haruki Murakami	59–68
--	-------

Past Inspirations and Present Explorations

Jeff KINGSTON

Contextualizing the Centennial of Japanese Colonial Rule in Korea	71–94
--	-------

Maya KELIYAN

<i>Kogyaru</i> and <i>Otaku</i>: Youth Subcultures Lifestyles in Postmodern Japan	95–110
--	--------

Fusako INNAMI

The Departing Body: Creation of the Neutral in-between Sensual Bodies	111–130
--	---------

UDK: 339.97(520)

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Introduction

Nataša VIŠOČNIK*

Today's world is facing rapid changes, opening borders, exchanging ideas of economy and politics. In addition to the various problems ensuing from the recent situation, we have to recognise that we are entering a new age of lifestyles in which, in everyday life, we are exposed to new social situations with more diversity, ranging from foods and lifestyle to arts and information. The transitions between different historical periods and social regulations can be complicated and often frustrating.

These phenomena may be viewed in the context of Japan's globalisation, internal and external, which began as soon as Japan opened its ports and began its modernization project since the Meiji Period (1886–1912). Many economic, political and cultural changes that Japan has gone through since then resulted in great changes in lives of the Japanese. Externally, modern Japan's globalization began, when Japan began to establish itself as Asia's imperial power by acquiring control of neighbouring countries. The internal globalisation is shown in the changes of society within itself with the influx of foreigners since the Meiji period. Turning to more recent times, from the end of the twentieth century through the early twenty-first century, Japan has been going through a series of convulsive transformations. The economic changes came with the newly evolved corporate culture that places profit over workers welfare. (Befu 2008, xxii) Economic prosperity has encouraged a middle-class orientation, and the increasing interest for higher education resulted in the higher number of college students and the shortage of high-school graduates who could fill the unskilled labour market. The

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family system has also been going through various transformations. The marriage age is going up for both males and females, and the number of single persons has increased, too. Reasons for this may be found in accelerated urbanisation, resulting in new behaviour patterns in all segments of the changing society. Inevitably, Japan is also dealing with the problems of the decreasing birth rate. Numerous government interventions have been ineffectual in reversing the trend.

Nevertheless, in the contemporary world influenced by the process of globalization, the idea of homogenous and egalitarian society is in contrast to the reality, characterized by diversity, heterogeneity and multiculturalism. The complicated process of globalization leads to hybridization which results in the mixture of socio-cultural, political and economic powers. Japan is consequently in the stage of metamorphosis. The transformation started at cultural boundaries and is currently spreading across the country. When new forms of social relationship are interpreted, multiculturalism, transculturalism and intercultural dialogue come to the fore. They are becoming more important also in international dialogues and politics, as well as in methodological research in humanities and social science. (see Befu 2008; Sugimoto 2009) Lately, these ideas have been emphasized and revisited and have shed more light on the internal variations and stratification in the Japanese society. A very rich subculture has been emerging, not only from various ethnic groups and regions, but also in dimensions of gender, generation, education, and so on. The subcultures resulting from lifestyles of certain layers of population illustrate the wealth and diversity of the Japanese society that often seems difficult to pinpoint for foreign observers.

In order to illuminate certain aspects of globalisation in the last hundred years and more, the present volume explores a wide range of transformations happening in the Japanese society. It deals with the pluralisation and diversity of lifestyles in Japan and social changes related to other shifts and trends, such as demographic changes, urbanization and socio-economic developments. This interdisciplinary edition will appeal to anyone interested in Japan and its contemporary social issues. With articles from sociology, literature, political science, and philosophy, the edition provides an overview on Japan from different perspectives. The value is particularly apparent in case of complex, multifaceted socioeconomic issues, where the juxtaposition of multiple theoretical and empirical perspectives can provide a deeper understanding on the society in transition. The same transition can be found also in literature with several distinctive features, related to the role of literature in Japanese culture as a whole. In every era, the Japanese have

expressed their thoughts in concrete literary works, where they could show their social background, their view of life, death, religion and philosophy.

The first part of this edition is focused on the transitions in society, which can be reflected on many levels of society. Housing is certainly such a phenomenon that has fundamental impacts on issues as diverse as family life and gender roles, social justice and distribution of wealth, community dynamics, social cohesion, public health and patterns of daily life. The opening article by Tomoko Kubo and Yoshimichi Yui well portrays the transformation of the housing market in Tokyo. The authors try to point out the correlation between the transformation of the Japanese housing market and the increasing number of single-person households of condominiums, which appeared in Japan since the late 1990s. They also examine the diversification of the Japanese household structure reflecting also the consumption-based lifestyle. Beata M. Kowalczyk in her research offers a very interesting approach to the study of social change and spatial expression within the context of modernization and globalization in Japan. In analysing and observing the urban space such as Tokyo Station City, she shows the main direction of changes in the “society in transition”.

The following two articles in a second part to a certain extent touch upon the transition in the field of literature in the period of postwar Japan. In many ways, post-1945 Japanese literature differed dramatically from that of the pre-war with the defeat in the Second World War and the Allied Occupation. Huge literary issues were hotly debated. The young writers of the 1980s and 1990s rejected the problems of national identity in favour of anything “trans-”: transnational, transhistorical, transgender, transsexual. The present-day writers are reshaping Japanese literature once again. Speaking for their own generation, their fictional worlds are inundated with mixed ethnicities, high-tech, paranoia and alienation, violence, information overload, economic globalisation and depression, radical shifts in time and space and upheavals in “normative” sex and gender performances. (Cornyetz 2009, 287–290)

Tamae K. Prindle thus metaphorically traces the transition of Japanese culture since World War II. Through the analysis of Yūji Usui’s novel *A Grass-Carp on a Tree* (1993) and its film adaptation (1997) by Atsushi Ishikawa, she deals with sensitive issues in sex/gender change, which in itself is a metaphor of a larger transition of Japanese culture. Theoretically, the approach is corroborated with the use of Zoltán Kövecses’ study of metaphor and Michel Foucault’s similar but

more sociocultural metaphysics of “interior,” “outside,” and “diagramming.” The next author dealing with the transition in literature is Rodica Frentiu, who elucidates some very interesting point about the contemporary Japanese literature in its transition to the new postmodern humanism. With the study of a bestselling author, Murakami Haruki’s work that invented quirky, trans-temporal dreamscapes in dispassionate narrative style, she tries to review and complete the inventory of the postmodern characteristics in Murakami’s works.

The inspirations for the creations of present habitus come also from the past. However, Japan as every other country has many past experiences that are rather concealed than to be discussed in public. Especially, unsettled issues of the wartime era marked Japan’s postwar, postcolonial relationship with the governments and people of other Asian nations. The most complex postcolonial relationship was that with Korea. Facing oppositions from many different sides, governments could not negotiate the Treaty on Basic Relations until 1965. This agreement was finally recognized by the Republic of Korea (South Korea) as the sole legitimate Korean government. (Gordon 2009, 293–294) But serious tensions persist up to today as discussed in the paper of Jeff Kingston where he examines the 2010 commemoration of the centennial of Japanese colonialism in Korea. Prime Minister Kan Naoto’s apology generated controversy, exposing the longstanding domestic divide within Japan over the imperial past. The politicization of history, apologies and acts of contrition impedes reconciliation between Japan and its Asian neighbours. It remains difficult for the Japanese government and people to erase the distrust held by many Asians. Despite fence-mending efforts with neighbouring countries, apologies and acts of contrition may not be sufficient to advance reconciliation, but remain essential elements of process of reconciliation.

On the other hand, present exploration of the contemporary society in this volume is focusing on the lifestyles of youth subcultures in Japan. Lifestyle or *seikatsu* generally means livelihood, everyday life or a wide range of life activities (Sugimoto 2008, 8). Maya Keliyan’s article looks into the lifestyle of two significant groups of youth subcultures *kogyaru* and *otaku* and she presents them as examples of postmodern changes in the dissemination and perception of fashion trends, hobby activities, and innovative products. The causes of their emergence and growth are related to the general problems facing postmodern Japan: its economy, educational institutions, family, and value system. The subcultures represent a trend of counter publics in 20th-century Japan through which young

people are able to articulate and create their own notions of community and desired lifestyles though they occupy a marginal position between generations and genders.

Sensuality is further discussed in the last article of this edition, where Fusako Innami investigates the Japanese concept of *ma/aida*, the space in-between from the Roland Barthes' point of view on the space in-between as the Neutral, not signifying the medium of the opposite poles but the bare existence. The article first analyses how the discourse of contiguous relationships and the space between others have functioned in modern and postwar Japan, and further employs the works of the Japanese female writer Matsuura Rieko as counterexamples, with particular emphasis on the space between the sensual and the sexual. It provides a fresh view toward conceptions of space and indirectness between and within the body through the analysis of several philosophers.

In spite of modern technology and less communication barriers, and the demand for cooperation and alliances, people seem to be less united and in disagreement, seeking their identity, heritage, uniqueness and symbols. All this resulted in some fuzzy areas that call for a new order in the twentyfirst century, the legitimate place in the world and not exclusion from the society. In a broader sense this calls for a new definition of "Japan" where hybrid areas are accepted as legitimate, where marginalised groups become part of society without the sense of exclusion. We may quickly come to the conclusion, that the survival in the twentyfirst century demands the invention of the new way of life often referred to as *kyōsei* (symbiosis). It also calls for the radical modification of homogeneity habitus. This can be said for all countries in the world. According to the fact that Japan has been most skilful in merging the foreign and domestic elements, the problems mentioned should not be too difficult to solve in the future.

The images of Japan have been changing through time within and outside the country under the influence of various intellectual contexts. The portrait of Japan with its economy and international status kept swinging between acceptance and rejection. The theoretical frame of analyzing Japan moved between two extremes, on the one hand being particularly labelled and on the other universally generalized, so these new insights show us that there can be also another way of studying Japan. Bringing together a number of perspectives on the transformation of the society in Japan since the end of the 19th century to the contemporary Japan this volume provides a comprehensive, challenging and theoretically developed

account of the processes of transition during a period of unprecedented social and economic change in one of the enigmatic social, political, and economic systems of the modern world.

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Social Transformations

UDK: 316.334.56(520)

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Transformation of the Housing Market in Tokyo since the Late 1990s: Housing Purchases by Single-person Households

Tomoko KUBO and Yoshimichi YUI *

Abstract

This study aims to clarify the correlation between the transformation of the Japanese housing market and the increasing number of single-person households in Japan, with a special focus on the supply of compact condominiums. In order to achieve the above-mentioned purpose, the changes in the Japanese housing market and diversification of the Japanese household structure are described. Finally, the features of the supply strategies of condominium suppliers, which reflect the diversification of the household structure and increasing need for condominiums by single-person households in central Tokyo, are examined.

Keywords: transformation, housing market, single-person households, condominiums, Tokyo

Izveleček

Študija skuša razjasniti povezavo med preobrazbo japonskega nepremičninskega trga in naraščujočim številom samskih stanovanj na Japonskem, s posebnim poudarkom na ponudbah kompaktnih lastniških stanovanj. Da bi to lahko dosegli, so v članku opisane spremembe v japonskem nepremičninskem trgu in diverzifikacija japonskih gospodinjskih struktur. Nenazadnje pa raziskuje članek tudi prihodnost ponudbene strategije lastniških ponudnikov, ki odseva raznolikost gospodinjskih struktur in naraščujočo potrebo po lastniških samskih gospodinjstvih v Tokiju.

Ključne besede: preobrazba, nepremičninski trg, enoosebno gospodinjstvo, lastniško stanovanje, Tokio

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1 Introduction

Changes from suburbanization to population recovery in central Tokyo caused a dramatic transformation of not only urban land use but also in people's lifestyle. People moved into central Tokyo in order to enjoy the diverse cultural lifestyle.

After the 1990s, there are notable changes of housing market in urban areas in Japan: diversification of housing market occurred corresponding to new housing needs from increasing small-size households in central Tokyo, they have been marginalized in the Japanese housing market since the 1950s. Condominium supply contributed to drastic changes in central Tokyo (Yabe 2003; Tomita 2004), which led to increased homeownership by single-person or dual-career couples. Since the late 1990s, the diversity of the housing market in central Tokyo has contributed to residential segregation, thereby resulting in a marked transformation in this area's residential structure (Miyazawa and Abe 2005).

This study's goal is to clarify the correlation between the transformation of the urban housing market and the diversification of the household structure in Japan, with an in-depth focus on increased condominium supply and homeownership by single-person households. In order to clarify the above-mentioned issues, this study first, describes the changes in the Japanese housing market as well as the diversification of the household structure since the 1950s. Second, changes in the household structure and features of homeowners, as well as homeownership by single-person households, are explained. Finally, the features of the supply strategies of condominium suppliers, which reflect the diversification of the household structure and the increasing desire for condominiums among single-person households in the central area of Tokyo, are examined. The following section of the study reflects information collected from interviews of members of "major developers," the largest condominium suppliers in Tokyo.

2 Changes in the Japanese Housing Market

2.1 Beginning of the Urban Housing Market

From the 1950s to the 1960s, there was a drastic demographic shift from rural to metropolitan areas in Japan. This caused a serious scarcity of housing in metropolitan centers. In order to soften the effect of the demographic shift and to address this issue, the Japanese government established various housing programs.

In 1950, the Japanese Housing Finance Agency began financing home ownership for high-income households. The Japan Housing Corporation (now the Urban Renaissance Agency) was established in 1955 to develop collective housing estates for middle-class households. Rented houses and public housing were also provided for low-income households (Japan Federation of Housing Organizations 2002; Kageyama 2004).

The ideology of homeownership has increasingly gained greater currency (Hirayama and Ronald 2007). The rate of homeownership at the beginning of the 1960s—and continuing into recent years—was 60%, compared to 22% in major cities in 1941 (Ronald 2008).

Since the 1960s, because escalating housing prices caused a scarcity of affordable housing in most urban centers, housing estates were developed in suburban areas (Hasegawa 1997; Matsubara 1982). Detached houses in the suburbs attracted an increasingly large volume of middle-class nuclear families with similarities in income, life-stage status, and housing preferences (Yui 1991). Those who commuted to city centers tended to move after the occurrence of various life events, e.g. marriage, and relocated to the suburbs when they purchased housing (Kawaguchi 1997). Householders who did not own properties in metropolitan areas, and who moved from the countryside, rushed to the suburbs, thereby causing a rapid spread of suburbanization in Japan (Tani 1997). Small households, such as those comprising single women, have long been marginalized in the suburbs as well as in the Japanese housing market (Kageyama 2004).

Soaring land prices in the 1980s, and the so-called “myth of real property,” strengthened the preference for detached houses in the suburbs (Japan Federation of Housing Organizations 2002; Van Vliet and Hirayama 1994), while condominiums were considered temporary residences to be bought prior to the purchase of detached houses.

According to the “Housing and Land Survey (Statistics Bureau of Japan 2008),” housing construction increased rapidly from 1970 to 1995, the commonly-named “suburbanization and bubble-economy period.” In this period, the supply of detached houses was dominant, followed by that of rented apartments. As many people experienced living in apartments in the 1960s, the percentage of people who purchased condominiums steadily increased (Statistics Bureau of Japan 2008).

Condominiums are relatively new form of residence in Japan: they were developed as a form of luxury residence in the late 1950s, and because of the various strategies adopted by condominium suppliers, condominium supplies were divided into two segments. The first segment comprised expensive condominium supply in metropolitan centers and prefectural centers developed by some major condominium suppliers, e.g. Daikyō Co. Ltd. The other segment comprises the affordable condominium supply in the suburbs developed by the private railroad enterprises, e.g. Tōkyū Corporation, presently Tōkyū Land Corporation. (Matsubara 1982).

2.2 Increase in Condominium Supply after the 1990s

Land prices in Japan fell after the collapse of the “bubble economy” in 1992. Consequently, large pieces of land, originally used for company housing or factories, were sold and purchased by urban developers, including condominium suppliers.

In order to soften the effects of a prolonged recession, the government adopted policies designed to promote housing construction, e.g. low interest rates. Moreover, liberalized housing loans and lowered housing taxes helped prospective homebuyers to afford such properties (Nakazawa 2006). Private developers preferred to oversee a healthy supply of condominiums, rather than housing estates (mostly comprising detached houses in suburbs), since properties in the heart of cities were frequently sold and purchased during this period. This supply was triggered by redevelopment projects around core stations, as well as the on-site development of factories, commercial areas, and leisure centers (Real Estate Economic Institute 2002).

This type of urban development focused on new condominiums that had both attractive and unattractive dimensions (Hirayama 2005). The attractive residential areas were concentrated in metropolitan centers, central areas of local cities, and suburbs. After the late 1990s, the most sought-after residential areas tended to cluster where the condominium supply was the highest.

According to case studies conducted in the central areas of local cities in Japan, there are three types of condominium residents: (1) young, married couples with children, who tend to have grown up in neighboring areas and are expected to inherit real property from their parents; (2) single-person households (mainly

single women), who wish to achieve independence by purchasing housing; (3) middle-aged or retired couples, who move into condominiums in convenient areas after their children have left home (Sakakibara et al. 2003; Hirose 2000; Otsuka 2005; Kagawa 2007; Kubo 2008).

Basically, condominiums are preferred by small-sized households in Japan, e.g. single-person households, married couples without children, and elderly couples. With the diversification of household structures and lifestyles in Japan (Aero 2006), the role of the condominium is becoming increasingly important in the Japanese housing market.

3 Changes in Household Structures and Condominium Supply in Tokyo

In this chapter, the diversification of household types in Tokyo is examined. Changes in condominium supply, related to the diversification of the features of household types in Tokyo, are then clarified.

3.1 Diversification of Household Structure

From 1985 to 2005, the Japanese household structure underwent change. The number of nuclear families and married couples with children decreased gradually (see Figure 1); however, married couples and single-person households increased at a rapid pace. During this period, there was a diversification of household structure, particularly among single-person and married-couple households.

Surveys conducted by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (2001 and 2003) relating to condominium residents in central Tokyo revealed the following statistics related to the household structure of residents: married couples without children (33.4%), nuclear families with school-age children (20.0%), and single women (19.5%). According to the same survey, the previous residences of condominium owners were primarily located in either the same ward as their current residences at the time of the survey (32.2%) or in the peripheral wards of Tokyo (31.3%); moreover, most of the residents had moved within the 23 Tokyo wards.

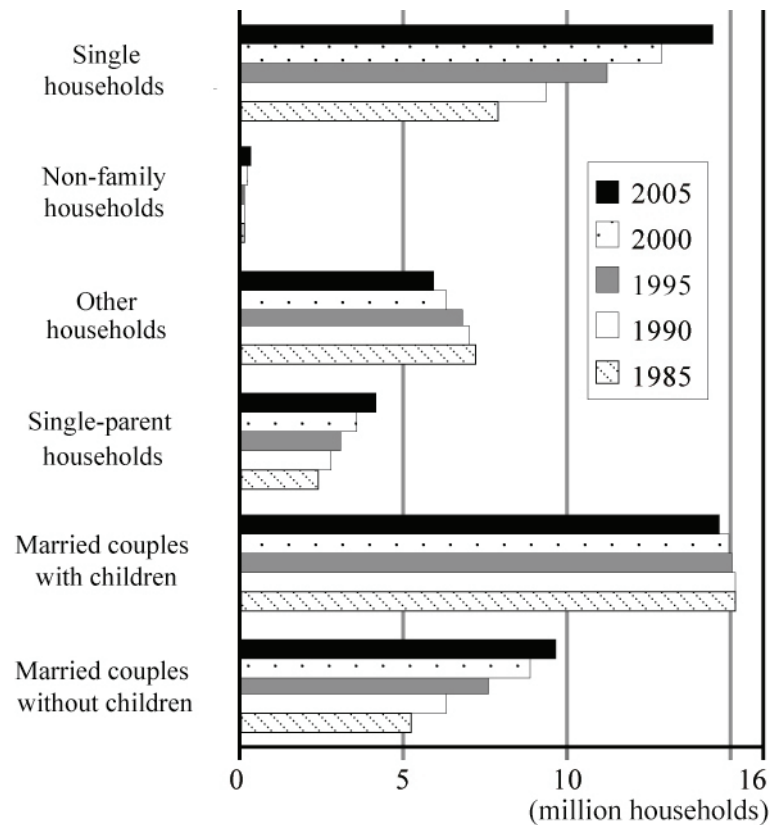


Figure 1: The number of households by household types, 1985–2005. (Source: Statistics Bureau of Japan “Population Census 1985–2005”)

In the beginning of the 2000s, households comprising single people in their late 20s and 30s have begun moving into central Tokyo. From 2000 to 2005, there was a dramatic increase in the number of single women in their 30s and early 40s who bought homes (Kubo and Yui 2011a). Although single men in the same age group and same time period also showed a remarkable increase in such activity, the volume was not as high as that in the single-women category.

The large number of single-person and nuclear households in five core Tokyo wards (Chūō, Chiyoda, Minato, Shinjuku, and Shibuya wards) in 2000 and 2005 indicated a clear population increase in all core wards, as well as a dramatic increase of single-person households in Shinjuku, Minato, and Chūō wards. With regard to the condominium supply in this period, Figure 2 provides an important correlation between increasing population and condominium supply. Shortly after the collapse of “the bubble economy,” the supply of condominium decreased.

From 1999 to 2005, when young single-person households in their home-purchasing phase increased in central Tokyo, condominium supply also increased dramatically; a portion of this single-person group is believed to have purchased condominiums. During this period, the average price per square meter fell down, but the condominium supply in the five core wards increased; thus, it may be inferred that affordable condominiums in convenient locations were being sold.

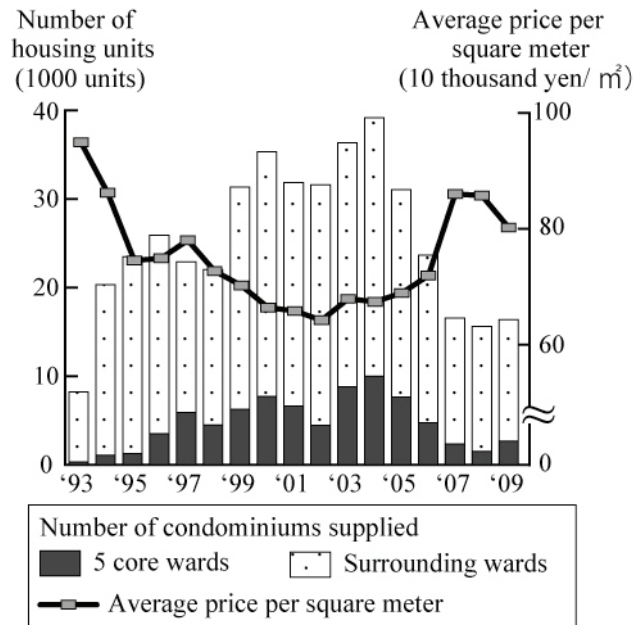


Figure 2: Number of the condominiums supplied and their average price per square meter in central Tokyo, 1993–2009. (Source: Real Estate Economic Institute, “Condominium Market Trend Search, 1993–2009.” Revised version of Figure 1 from Kubo and Yui 2011a) Note: Surrounding wards denote 18 wards excluding 5 core wards (Chūō, Chiyoda, Minato, Shinjuku, and Shibuya wards) in Tokyo.

4 Supply of Compact Condominiums and Condominium Purchase by Single-person Households

Since the late 1990s, and corresponding to the diversification of household structures in central Tokyo, various types of condominiums have been supplied. In particular, the supply of “compact” condominiums—comprising small-size living spaces, such as studio and/or small-sized, owner-occupied housing units—has increased.

Originally, compact condominiums were supplied for single women in their 30s or 40s, who had been marginalized in the housing market in Japan. Since the late 1990s, studio-type condominiums were sold by middle-sized condominium suppliers for single-person households, and approximately 70% of them were purchased by single women (Yui 2000). Single women who purchased the condominiums were not necessarily rich and professional workers. They chose owner-occupied residences because the monthly rent of their previous residences was so high that occasionally the monthly mortgage payment was less than, or equal to, the rent. Thus, they wanted to improve their living condition by purchasing their own house. Moreover, they must have also evaluated the facilities available in condominiums as compared to those of rental apartments (Yui 2003), and concluded that condominiums have better provisions.

In Japan, there have been a limited number of residences suitable for the housing needs of single-person households since the 1950s onwards; therefore, condominiums tended to better fulfill their needs for security and ease of commuting (Kamiya et al. 2002). Wakabayashi et al. (2002) considered the residential choices of single women in their 30s in the Tokyo metropolitan area and found that they purchased condominiums for the purpose of asset formation and retirement preparation.

Yui (2003) clarified that single-women who purchased condominiums were mainly in their 30s, and that their annual income ranged from five to seven million yen. They saved approximately 20% of their funds for purchasing houses, and this enabled them to make a decision to purchase condominiums—they used their saving for purchasing condominiums, and their monthly loan repayment was as much as the rent for their previous residences (Kubo and Yui 2011a). High rent in central Tokyo also stimulated homeownership by single women in their 30s or 40s.

As condominium purchases by single women became an extraordinary phenomenon, major condominium suppliers also began to sell compact condominiums in central Tokyo.

5 Supply of Compact Condominiums by the Major Developers

In this section, supply strategies of compact condominiums by the major developers are examined. First, basic characteristics of major developers in

Tokyo's housing market are examined. Then, their compact-condominium supply strategies are clarified.

5.1 Characteristics of the Major Developers in Tokyo's Housing Market

“Major developers” is a group of eight, large-sized condominium suppliers who occupy the largest share of the condominium market in Japan (Real Estate Economic Institute 2009). These suppliers are Daikyō Incorporated (Daikyō), Mitsui Fudōsan Residential (Mitsui), Sumitomo Realty & Development Co., Ltd. (Sumitomo), Nomura Real Estate Development (Nomura), Mitsubishi Estate (Mitsubishi), Tōkyū Land Corporation (Tōkyū), Tōwa Real Estate Development Co., Ltd. (Tōwa), and Tōkyō Tatemono (Tōkyō T.).

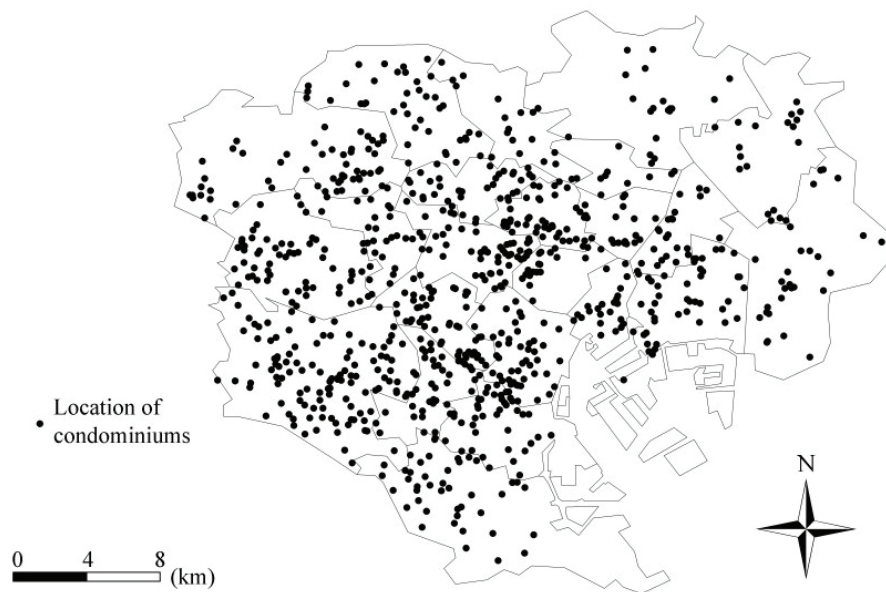


Figure 3: Condominiums supplied by the major developers in central Tokyo, 2000–2009.
(Source: Real Estate Economic Institute, “Condominium Market Trend Search, 1993–2009”)

Although each company dominates certain areas in the Tokyo metropolitan area, the major developers build condominiums in all areas of central Tokyo and are the dominant real estate developers in terms of both volume and quantity

(Figure 3). Daikyō and Tōwa prefer developing condominiums in the surrounding wards or the suburbs of Tokyo. Sumitomo, Mitsui, Tōkyū, and Mitsubishi predominantly develop condominiums in the central areas of Tokyo; while Nomura and Tōkyō T. sell in all areas of the city.

Figure 4 presents the percentage of condominiums sold by the major developers from 1993 to 2009 as compared to the entire condominium supply in central Tokyo. As indicated by the figure, commencing in 2002, the percentage of condominiums sold in the five core wards exceeded 15%, and the trend remained strong from 2006 to 2007. This reflects the time period in which the major developers began building compact condominiums in the central areas of Tokyo.

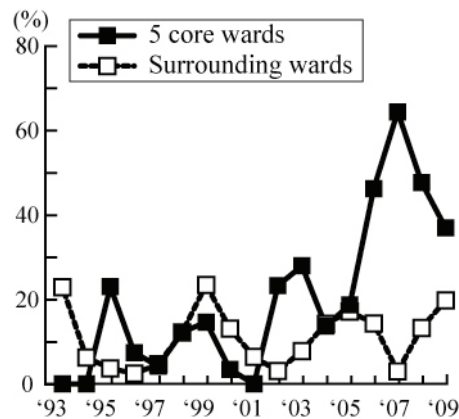


Figure 4: Percentage of condominiums sold by the major developers in the total supply of condominiums in central Tokyo, 1993–2009. (Source: Real Estate Economic Institute, “Condominium Market Trend Search, 1993–2009”) Note: Surrounding wards denote 18 wards excluding 5 core wards (Chūō, Chiyoda, Minato, Shinjuku, and Shibuya wards) in Tokyo.

6 Supply Strategies of Compact Condominiums by Major Developers

Major developers built a special brand of compact condominiums. Tōkyū Land Corporation was the pioneer in this endeavor and began selling its compact-brand series “QUALIA” in 2002, with a total of 1,718 housing units sold from 2002 until 2009; this activity was followed by developments built by Tōkyō T., Nomura, Mitsubishi, and Mitsui (Kubo and Yui 2011a).

Initially, single women in their 30s and 40s formed a prime compact-condominium target market group; however, major developers struggled to fulfill the housing needs of this group. The following aspects were preferred by single women: (1) protection of their privacy during their house-hunting tours, or when they consummated their sales transactions; and (2) acceptance of and adherence to their housing requirements, and modification of the details of their respective housing units accordingly.

Major developers embraced women's housing needs by cooperating with interior shops that were popular among the young women, and by modifying the interiors of the housing units to meet, accommodate, and satisfy the young women's individual aesthetic housing needs.

Figure 5 indicates the distribution of compact condominiums sold by the major developers. Compact condominiums tend to be built in Tokyo's core wards, with "Ochanomizu," "Ebisu," and "Ginza" being the most popular areas. These are well-established areas with a mature culture and a wide selection of restaurants and bars that cater to single women.

In order to get the price down of each housing unit, developers tend to build small-size condominiums in high-price areas. By reducing the utilized space, housing prices can remain affordable, particularly for single women. In addition, single women pay strict attention to security; they prefer that their residences be located close to busy, well-lit streets and situated near restaurants and other similar establishments that remain open well into the evening. Since the developers, as well as single women, are able to satisfy their respective needs in central Tokyo, compact condominiums play an important role in the housing market in this area of Tokyo.

However, after 2005, the condominium market witnessed a decline owing to the recession in the U.S., thereby resulting in the average price of condominiums exceeding the budgets of single women. Moreover, during the same period, central Tokyo was reevaluated and declared to be a residential area; thus, its popularity among nuclear families, single men, and young and elderly couples increased.

According to Japan's 2005 population census, women tended to live in the western part of Tokyo, such as the Meguro, Setagaya, and Suginami wards. On the other hand, men had a tendency to live in the eastern part of Tokyo in the Ōta and Sumida wards. Thus, in view of this gender-based distribution, compact

condominiums tended to be sold in the western part of Tokyo, or in some attractive areas in Eastern Tokyo. As single men start to purchase condominiums, however, the supply areas of compact condominiums expanded within central Tokyo as a whole.

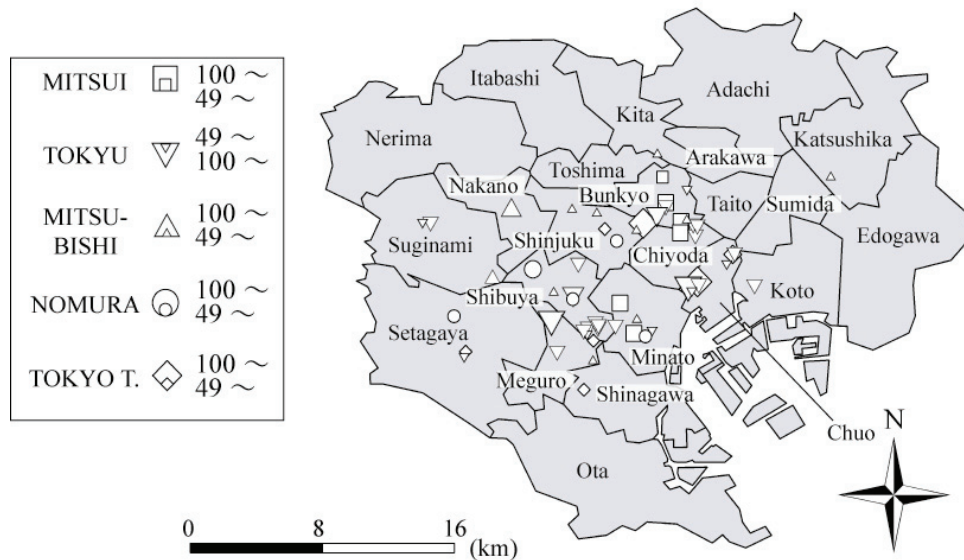


Figure 5: Location of branded compact condominiums built by the major developers in Tokyo, 2000–2009. (Source : Real Estate Economic Institute, “Condominium Market Trend Search, 2000–2009.” Revised version on Figure 7 from Kubo and Yui 2011a.)

Under these circumstances, the major developers adopted three types of supply strategies, and condominium supply in Tokyo diversified in terms of prices and location.

First, some suppliers, who mainly sold luxurious condominiums in central Tokyo, e.g. Mitsui, made their special brand of luxurious compact condominiums. Single women, rich and special profession workers, purchased them to enjoy cultural lifestyle and reduce commute time.

Second, some developers started to supply affordable compact condominiums in Tokyo’s peripheral wards, e.g. Tōwa. These condominiums were purchased by lower middle-class, single people who lived on the outskirts of Tokyo. Tōwa also sold compact condominiums in Yokohama city, Kanagawa prefecture.

Finally, the sale of tower-type condominiums began in the 2000s, and continues to date. These condominiums comprise large and small housing units, as well as luxurious penthouse suites. The suppliers sell a variety of housing types in one tower, with single-person household opportunities as well. This strategy was implemented and utilized by Nomura Real Estate Development Corporation (Nomura).

Compact condominiums were originally sold to single women; however, gradually developers accepted residents of many types in terms of household structure, life-stage status, income, and/or location. Each company of major developers had different goals and strategies that fit their individual identity and goals; hence, each selected the most appropriate strategy in implementing their respective objectives. Ultimately, major developers were able to supply a multitude of different types of compact condominiums in central Tokyo.

Diversification of the supply strategies of major developers has directly contributed to the positive transformation of Tokyo's housing market and this has led to the metamorphosis of the residential structure in central Tokyo.

7 Conclusion

The objective of this study was to clarify the correlation between the transformation of the Japanese housing market and the increasing number of single-person households in Japan, with a special focus on the supply of compact condominiums. In order to achieve the above-mentioned purpose, the changes in the Japanese housing market and diversification of the Japanese household structure were described. Finally, the features of the supply strategies of condominium suppliers, which reflect the diversification of the household structure and increasing need for condominiums by single-person households in central Tokyo, were examined. The following part of this conclusion contains a discussion on the transformation of residential structures in central Tokyo, using the results from this study.

Condominiums are a relatively new form of owner occupation in Japan, having first been sold in central Tokyo in the 1950s as luxury residential structures. From the 1960s to the 1980s, suburbanization occurred in Japan, thereby resulting in condominiums being built in the suburbs as affordable residential structures. During this period, private railroad developers also supplied housing estates along

their railway lines. Middle-class residents moved into suburban housing estates, which included detached houses and affordable condominiums.

After the 1990s, land prices declined in central areas, and large pieces of land, which were originally used for company housing or factories, were converted into condominium developments. In central Tokyo, small pieces of land were used for the development of compact condominiums, and with the enrichment of their residential functions, these areas were reevaluated by diverse types of residents.

Single-person households, particularly single women, have long been marginalized in the Japanese housing market. Therefore, there were limited possibilities for women to purchase houses that suited their housing needs. The results from this study indicate that major housing developers attempted to conform to the needs of small-sized household, including single women, thereby providing single-person households with the opportunity to satisfy their individual ideal housing needs in central Tokyo.

Due to the diversification of supply strategies by major housing suppliers, the housing markets in central Tokyo have been transformed, thereby resulting in a wide range of alternatives for owner-occupied housing in central Tokyo that fully meet homeowners' needs, demands, and expectations.

Ultimately, it is important to note that Tokyo is a unique global city. In other metropolitan areas in Japan, the supply of compact condominiums is limited; conversely, Tokyo offers ample job opportunities and accepts diversity of lifestyle (Kubo and Yui 2011b).

In addition, the transformation of the urban residential structure in Tokyo differs from that which has occurred in many Western cities. Central areas are evaluated in Western countries, and the discussion of gentrification, or "livable city," is increasing its importance (Ley 1996; Lees 2008). When wealthier, in other words gentry, people move into low-income and working class communities, gentrification occurs. Compared to Western countries, the residents of compact condominiums in Tokyo are not always wealthy or professional workers.

Basically, the housing real estate market in Tokyo is characterized by a weak, second-hand market—less mobility after purchasing the house and less diversity of ethnicity or class. In addition, housing customs, based on the traditional patriarchal family system, still affect the decision to purchase housing in many

local cities. A future study is planned for examining and fully addressing these remaining issues.

Acknowledgments

A portion of this study was revised and modified by Kubo and Yui (2011a, b), authors of this document. This study was financially supported by a JSPS Grant-in Aid for JSPS Research Fellow (Kubo Tomoko, 23/7412) and a Grant-in Aid for Science Research by JSPS (Yui Yoshimichi, 20300295).

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UDK: 316.334.56(520)

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Invisible (Tokyo Station) City of Transformation: Social Change and its Spatial Expression in Modern Japan

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Abstract

Within the context of modernization and globalization, processes which Japan has been undergoing since Meiji era, reorganization of the urban space and appearance of new “(semi)-public” spaces, such as railway station, share certain elements in the transformation of everyday life of the Japanese society. This paper will attempt at showing main directions of changes observable in the “society in transition” through analysis of inner order of Tokyo Station, known already also as Tokyo Station City.

Keywords: transformation, Tokyo Station City, *sakariba*, consumption, human interaction

Izveček

Znotraj konteksta modernizacije in globalizacije, procesov, s katerimi se sooča Japonska vse od obdobja Meiji naprej, se v reorganizaciji urbanega prostora v nove »pol-javne« prostore, kot je železniška postaja, odseva preobrazba vsakodnevnega življenja japonske družbe. Ta članek poskuša prikazati glavne smernice sprememb, ki se jih opazuje znotraj »družbe v tranziciji« skozi analizo notranjega reda postaje Tokio, že znane kot Mesto tokijske postaje.

Ključne besede: preobrazba, Mesto tokijske postaje, *sakariba*, potrošnja, medčloveške interakcije

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1 Introduction

The discourse on social change or social transformation can be organized around the problem of railway stations, like those with relatively long history, such as Tokyo Station (*Tōkyō-eki*) perceived as a symbol of movement, transition or liquid modernity (Bauman 2000) in terms of world constituted by constant and chaotic flow of people, material and abstract products of cultures. Railway stations play a role of a medium through which all these ideas, thoughts, lifestyles, trends, objects are imported from one place into another, thus stations become an important vehicles of change (Richards and MacKenzie 1988). Ultimately, central railway stations are witnesses of their times, mirrors reflecting social, historical and cultural transformation in their infrastructure, arranged in a meaningful, rational and artistic shape. Functions denoted by railway stations as well as the stations' symbolic implications are readable and decodable, providing us with information about the culture and the history of the society these constructions belong to (Lynch 2001, 131–134). It is in this sense that this paper sets to explore and (re)construct the image of modern Japanese society in transition as seen through symbolic history, present infrastructure and functions of the Tokyo Station, which itself is undergoing a process of transformation in order to become a city, as suggested by the name of the reconstruction project: Tokyo Station City¹.

This paper is thought as an idiographic (Babbie 2003, 45–49) description of general tendencies in transitions of social and cultural life in contemporary Japan from the perspective of spatial characteristics of Tokyo Station. It is based mainly on sociological, cultural and anthropological concepts developed by Japanese as well as Western researchers. In addition to that, the analysis will be supplemented by spontaneous, irregular observations I conducted at Tokyo Station during my four years stay in Japan and information I have searched on seven websites, where facts are presented not only about Tokyo Station, but also about its various commercial attractions. The main purpose of this research has an explorative character and was planned as an attempt at drawing a sketch of social changes as seen through an analysis of public space—Tokyo Station (City).

There are two main reasons underlying the choice of the Tokyo Station. The first one is connected to the long, complicated history of the station, including the

¹ The project called “Tokyo Station City” was created in 1999 upon an agreement signed by JR East Corporation and the Governor of Tokyo—Ishihara Shintarō. Then modernization started in 2004 and its accomplishment is planned for 2013. (Fukada 2008).

political background of its construction and national significance of the building. The second reason concerns the present condition of *Tōkyō-eki* and its broadening functional use, the process closely related to such changes as: modification in time consumption patterns or reorganization of the social structure. Hence, Tokyo Station City connotes all three meanings of the center as in a definition proposed by Manuel Castells, namely, a sphere playing a symbolic and community-forming role, secondly, an assembly of governmental and economic institutions, and finally, a central stage of ludic and consuming pursuits with all the possibilities of choices it offers (Castells 1982, 281–283).

I shall argue here that the past and the present of Tokyo Station form a meaningful context, where certain social transformations stem from, while others have influenced the shape of this context. In other words, almost one century long coexistence of the station and its passengers resulted in the transformation of *Tōkyō-eki* on one hand and in changes in passengers' behavior and habits associated with the station on the other hand. The station itself is considered here as a modern type of *sakariba* (Yoshimi 2008; Kanzaki 1993; Terui 2005), an emic² category which I interpret in terms of a specific form of “public space”. Both terms require further explanation.

The simplest way to describe *sakariba* would be to say that it designates the busiest parts of the city, like an amusement district or entertainment quarters. My Japanese interlocutors when inquired about *sakariba*, associated it mostly with *hankagai*, small and narrow shopping streets radiating from the station, a sub-centre of the city. According to *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten* (2008), *sakaribas* in big towns in Edo period (1603–1868) were formed spontaneously in open spaces either initially intended for refuge in case of a fire (*hirokōji*), or next to big bridges in Edo, the predecessor of Tokyo, where a transshipment of merchandise occurred. Some kinds of markets were also formed, for example around Ryōgoku bridge, on the Sumida river side (*kawara*). Third pattern of the formation of *sakariba* includes entertainment infrastructure around temple gates (*monzenmachi*) and here examples of Asakusa and Ekōin can be quoted. These spaces drew masses of visitors, owing to the broad range of attractions offered by various people³. What

² This term is used here to stress the very originality of the Japanese concept expressed by the word *sakariba*, for which an appropriate equivalence in Western languages can hardly be found. A broader explanation of the idea of *sakariba* appears hereinafter. For further readings about the definition of “emic” and “ethnic,” refer to Kuwayama 2009.

³ Yoshimi (2008, 163) mentions: *yose* (“comic show,” “vaudeville”), *misemonogoya* (“a provisory stage for small spectacles” that shows sometimes with the uncanny of human physiognomy as the

constituted *sakariba* were two elements, as in the semantic composition of the word itself, namely, people swarming in a joyful atmosphere which can be linked to the meaning of the adjective *sakanna* (vivid, prosperous, vigorous, active). The second prerequisite condition of *sakariba* was the place *ba* and its infrastructural organization: stalls, street artists, tea rooms, and today these are also pachinko parlors, drinking bars, gambling places and the like.

Having a general image in mind, we can ask now if there are any aspects of *sakariba* which enable us to regard it as a form of public space, and if so, what they would be like. Everything depends, of course, on our definition of the latter term. For the purpose of this paper, I define public space—in opposition to the private space—in terms of these parts of the city, such as streets, parks, squares, where no paid tickets or fees are required for entry, nor are the entrants discriminated on the basis of age, gender, race or social background. Yet public space is not free of regulations or social norms, structuring the co-existence of actors within its boundaries and imposing restrictions on potential obnoxious behavior. Reconsidering the aforementioned question, I shall argue that the concept of *sakariba* implies the idea of public space or, to be more precise, a semi-public space⁴ (Jałowiecki and Szczepański 2006, 423), especially when recalling the notion of traditional streets in Western and Japanese culture. Needless to say, both *sakariba* and public space, or let us say the public space of *sakariba*, enjoys today much less freedom and democracy, sacrificed for the sake of public safety.

A railway station may be analyzed in categories of (semi)-public space, of a similar kind as *sakariba*⁵. The process of transformation of a railway station into *sakariba* was enabled mainly by the development of railway transport on an unprecedented scale, solving the commuting problem on the one hand, which propelled suburbanization process on the other hand. Increasing land prices in Tokyo accounts for a reason, among others, why people were forced to seek dwelling in its suburbs, a process observed as well in large Western cities. Nevertheless, no matter how perfectly the transportation system functions,

main attraction, like midgets for instance), stalls with medicines and other goods or tea houses some of which also functioned as geisha house and the like.

⁴ The term semi-public space is used in relation to shopping malls for example, where some constitutive principles for the public space function inside a private property. In this way, anyone is allowed to the shopping mall, but activities unrelated to the purpose of shopping are not unlimitedly permitted.

⁵ “With the development of the inner Tokyo railways there began a new developmental stage of *sakariba*.” (Linhart 1998, 233)

commuting from suburbs statistically means for *sarariman* sometimes two hours both ways (Tōkyō Toshiken), which then influences his or her disposition of time, namely leisure time. Sepp Linhart in his essay about “Popular leisure”, quoting the data from a comparative research conducted by *Rengō Sōken*, the research institute of Japanese trade unions’ association, concludes that “While Germans enjoyed 4:15 free hours on an average working day, the Japanese had to cope with only 2:28 hours, or nearly two hours less.” (Linhart 2009, 221).

With scarcely two or three hours of freedom between work and family life, one cannot afford strolling around the city in search for a proper *sakariba* suiting one’s preferences. On the other side, no long exploration is necessary any more, since nowadays modern *sakariba* is located around big Tokyo terminals. Furthermore, the plan of ongoing reconstruction of *Tōkyō-eki*, prepared by the JR East Corporation, goes as far as to provide commuters as well as all the other passengers and visitors with the miniature of the city itself. Consequently, recent working and commuting patterns have led to a progressive transformation, notably of big terminals, from simple transfer points into *sakariba*-like spaces, where the client can, not only entertain oneself, but also repair shoes, learn English, relax in a spa and so forth. Along with the appearance of a new public space came a set of habits, behaviors, social norms, giving birth to a particular culture depicted by Katō Hidetoshi within the phrase of “terminal culture” (Linhart 1998, 223). In other words, a new physical setting of the modern *sakariba* sprawling inside and outside of the station with its new socially constructed “terminal culture”, establishes a particular social environment where we may witness manifestation of significant processes of social transformation. Hereby, reinterpreting public space of the *sakariba* covering the area of Tokyo Station City, I would like to briefly delineate the image of Japanese society in transition.

2 Social Norms in Transition

French philosopher Roland Barthes travelling to Japan in the sixties could not help the feeling of astonishment at the Japanese railway stations and tried to bridle their topographical chaos in these words:

The station, a vast organism which houses big trains, the urban trains, the subway, a department store, and a whole underground commerce—the station gives the district this landmark which, according to certain urbanites, permits

the city to signify, to be read. The Japanese station is crossed by a thousand functional trajectories, from the journey to the purchase, from garment to food: a train can open onto a shoe stall. Dedicated to commerce, to transition, to departure, and yet kept in a unique structure, the station (moreover, is that what this new complex should be called?) ... (Barthes 1982, 38–39).

From Barthes observation results in a conclusion that Tokyo's railway stations usually become a center of the city district (Barthes 1982, 38). This is also true for Tokyo Station (City), composing a well-organized microcosm and a miniature of the capital itself. Locating modern *sakariba* in the central part of the city district has its consequences. Traditionally, *sakariba* was situated at a certain distance from the residential district, and rather on the outskirts of the city (Kanzaki 1993, 202). It used to be considered a liminal phase related to *kehare*, a chaotic interval of time between *hare*—sacred time of formal celebrations performed during festival and *ke*—time of work and everyday, routine life (Kanzaki 1993, 11). While the pair of *hare* and *ke* denotes predictable, conventional time, *kehare* indicates a moment of passage from daily duty to prayer and rest time. Thus *kehare* closing *hare* set of rules and regulations in order to open the *ke* one, recalls a notion of the *ma* interval (Berque and Sauzet 2005, 29–30), a space suspended between two orders, a chaotic space of uncanny and unpredictable affairs. *Kehare* aspect places *sakariba* on the margin of social and official regulations and in this sense *sakariba* was channeling people's frustrations, social dissatisfaction, anger or refusal to conform the authority of existing world order, into various kinds of leisure activities. That is why power-wielding officials in Edo or Meiji era (1866–1912) were very careful when interfering through law into *sakariba*'s inner life (Yoshimi 2008, 192–205).

Modern *sakariba* of Tokyo Station City has kept the *kehare* traits of an intermediate sphere squeezed between work (*ke*) and home (*hare*). Yet, central localization of *Tōkyō-eki* terminal and privatization of larger parts of this *sakariba*, both result in implicit and explicit norms which are more strictly applied to actors' behavior, particularly those staying within zones inside the ticket gates. These regulations fall into two general categories: the official social code determined by the company, the owner of the station, that is JR East, and social norms elicited in a process of social exchange and social coexistence. The first category of rules is surveyed by the police and other apparatus of official power, while norms belonging to the second category come under the execution of the society itself. A ticket required to get into passengers zone inside the ticket gate can stand as an

example of official code. Restrictions imposed on the following demeanours, e.g. treading on other passengers' heels, pushing them, eating while walking, littering, staring at others, could serve as examples of socially created norms.

Basing on my observations, I could also think of a case when a social norm is enforced or replaced by an official regulation, since the social awareness of the first one is so low, that appropriate manners are hard to exact from a person. As a reaction to some unwilling behaviors, posters appeared inside of the Yamanote line's trains few years ago, informing about what should be avoided on the train. Passengers find out for instance that carrying a large luggage—I believe this might *inter alia* concern foreign students who use the train for moving—or applying makeup are not necessarily actions to be performed on the train. The need to officially regulate passengers' manners in such a detailed way might mean that moral bonds in the society have weakened and hence a critical eye kept on the Other no longer has its regulative power. I shall even argue that within the space of such a huge organism like Tokyo Station City, the Japanese feel more at ease littering, thronging while getting on the train or buying a sweet souvenir at one of the stalls in an underground tunnel of the station. Admittedly, the Japanese society has elaborated a strict etiquette in order to eliminate demeanors which could hinder close social coexistence of masses of people on a rather limited land. However, some kind of deterioration of manners observable at *Tōkyō-eki* proves Yi-Fu Tuan's theory, according to which etiquette designates only one way to regulate human relations in the crowd. The other one would be a pinch of discourtesy (Tuan 1987, 82) expressed towards the other. Both strategies help avoiding contact when a threat of unbearable intensity appears.

If the normative question remains open in case of the definition of modern *sakariba*, it is because one of its underlying principles presuppose constant negotiating or playing with regulations and social norms. This is possible owing to the fact that a variety of people gathering and flowing through the *sakariba* of the Tokyo Station City is unprecedented anywhere else in Japan. Only here can homeless be visible and homelessness directly experienced. Only *sakariba* creates a space where small talk between men run seamlessly without the necessity of the exchange of visiting cards, an act which predefines social situation, roles of participating actors and proper language. Within the urban throng floating through and through the tunnels or shopping streets of Tokyo Station City, one will surely meet a great—for Japanese standards—number of foreigners, as well as Japanese coming from different corners of the country. If it is difficult to have people obey

the official regulations at the *sakariba* of Tokyo Station City, this is just because many of the actors have the status of a stranger and presumably have not had enough time to learn new codes, while those who should be aware of official regulations and norms may easily pretend to be travelers from outside of Tokyo. Eventually, meetings between people of different age, gender, nationality or social class provide umpteen chances for spontaneous (re)placement or (re)negotiations of existing social rules to adopt them to changing situation. It is in this sense that *sakariba* may be declared a type of rift, where questioning traditional order ushers into a transformation of the culture this order belongs to.

3 Tolerance of a Tourist

One result of cross-cultural meetings at the *sakariba* of Tokyo Station (City) can be a partial release from stereotypes about other people and other cultures, enabled by the possibility of direct verification of their real contents and this may enhance tolerance towards foreigners. A factor facilitating this process is the fact that visitors at the station, particularly those, whose purpose of arrival at the station has been simple travelling—I will discuss later in this paper other purposes, like shopping, eating out, participating in seasonal events etc.—have an equal status of a tourist. Moreover, equalizing all actors hanging around the platforms and shops inside the ticket gates of *Tōkyō-eki* in a role of a tourist helps overcome the cleavage of we, the Japanese, or they, the foreigners. In other words, a situation of being a tourist may likewise be regarded in categories of the Japanese emic concepts such as *soto* and *uchi*, indicating at the multinational level the distinction between the Japanese society and the rest of the world. In a temporarily formed group of tourists, international and social distinctions are blurred, because all members of this group are equally expected to refrain from some demeanors and one set of rights authorize them to undertake some actions. At last, both codes are applied to all passengers, regardless of any further socially created disparities, with the exception of people privileged due to health problems or age. In an environment of such an almost perfectly democratic public space, human relations are redefined in a way that the communication temporarily occurs directly between two individuals and is not intermediated via social forms, regulating human interactions in the world of profession or family, for instance.

The situation of a tourist creates a need to define oneself as an individual and this individual is required to possess a unique way of expressing one's self when initiating communication with the other individual, a pursuit where habitual forms of contacting one another are not legible anymore. The illegibility of forms becomes a natural consequence of a fugitive character of interactions, disabling an actor to explain his or her social role played on a daily basis to the partner in conversation. Hence, so-called tourists passing by the *sakariba* of Tokyo Station City might as well remain themselves, that is, display some traits of their *honno*, which I mean here the "inner self", as opposed to the *tatema*—the "outer mask" having its name printed on one's visiting card.

A similar process, whereby a group of people (re)unifies and (re)integrates their community in a context different from everyday, mundane situations, is analyzed by Ben-Ari (2002). The author focuses on an example of a corporate drinking occasion, explaining through a detailed case study how effects such as stress release or group solidifications are achieved by a sequence of pursuits conducted in an environment, distanced, as regards both time and space, from working hours, working place or home. Similarly, *sakariba* space and *kehare* time, two characteristics of the Tokyo Station (City), frame a context for more spontaneous and more natural human relations, initiated in an environment irrelevant to socially determined network of interdependences, thus having a healing effect on actors. Namely, it releases stress accompanying everyday meetings with colleagues, family and all these people with whom the Japanese are tied by relation of dependence and which might play a decisive role in the trajectory of their life. An enjoyable accidental conversation with an unknown person may have a positive influence on relations at home and work, presenting them in a brighter light.

Furthermore, apart from aforementioned fugitive encounters taking place on the way to a platform or already on a platform, Tokyo Station City provides various kinds of drinking bars and customers have many occasions for drinking stops and unexpected one-evening-friendship bound over a couple of beers. If the passer-by decides to come back to the place and continue with the friendly relation from the previous time, then a small drinking community might be formed, sometimes across the social ladder, for a collective entity consisting of people of diverse social status and possibly even of different nationality.

Ultimately, all these human interactions blurring borders between social classes in the “democratic” space of the modern Tokyo Station City, *sakariba* can be perceived as a relic of the “classless capitalism”, symptomatic for the postwar Japan (Slater 2011, 106). The end of the idea of the Japanese society as one middle class was marked by the crisis of the bubble economy in the nineties and deregulation of the labor market introduced afterwards. The decline of the “lifetime” work system (*shūshin koyō*), the growing number of part-time workers, “freeter” who change job frequently (Slater 2011, 113) or “neets” (a term indicating young people who are neither in employment, nor in education and not on the training), have consequently deepened social disparities and led to return of classes (Slater 2011, 111–114). A rhetoric question may be asked about the condition of tourist as regards all these people who fall today into a newly emerged *karyū kaikyū* (“lower class”). Can they afford spending time at modern *sakariba*, like the one spreading around Tokyo Station City? The most probable answer would be as follows: First of all, they do not have many chances to cross the station. Secondly, even if they do visit the station quite often, to fulfill their part-time duties in one of the *sakariba*’s facility, they would also need funds to stroll around the underground streets of Tokyo Station City, in order to fully participate in its main attraction, namely consumption.

4 Individual Consumption

As I have already argued, the plan to transform Tokyo Station into Tokyo Station City is based on the potential of this place constituted by a large number of people crossing this area every day and its rich infrastructure. The station is meant to be repositioned from a mere transfer point into a huge, lucrative “consumption paradise”. Manifold goods offered on the stalls or shops inside the station or outside of it, in adjacent shopping centers, become catnip enticing not only regular commuters, but also other denizens of the Tokyo area, who arrive at the station to spend their leisure time inside the city of the Tokyo Station. Behind the choice of the Tokyo Station City as a target of entertainment lies a prosaic reason: it is easily accessible and it offers a wide range of attractions. The offer can be quickly googled using “Tokyo Station” as a keyword. Internet search will display hundred thousands of results, most of which are closely related to newly constructed facilities, located within Tokyo Station City area (GranTokyo Towers, Sapia Tower, Metropolitan Marunouchi Hotel or renewed Daimaru Department Store

etc.). However, those who search for a train timetable might spend some more time before they finally acquire necessary information.

Underground tunnels at the station have been arranged into alleys and passages. Some of them by name and structure recall traditional Japanese *hankagai* (ex. *Kurobei Yokochō*), others are recreated in conscious emulation with Western patterns (GranSta passage). Drifting along the stalls and shops is driven by a “mobilized gaze”, which means that consumers do not move following a route planned in advance, but instead they let themselves be seduced and conducted by the rhythm and the order of consumption (Rewers 2010, 677). A great range of products from newfangled foreign goods to traditional Japanese sweets enable customers to consume various lifestyles, depending on the mood. The action of choosing and hovering around stands filled up with goods may be interpreted as a substitute of travelling abroad and this feeling is enforced by the fact that this consumption takes place within the station and that consumers already have the status of tourists.

The consumption offer in the Tokyo Station City includes not just material goods, but also abstract ideas, such as the Meiji Restoration (1868–1912) and reunification of the Japanese as a nation, symbolized partly by the historic red-brick building, preserved on the western side of the station, called Marunouchi. In addition to the historical past, the present stereotypical image of Japan also becomes a subject of consumption, exported abroad and equally sold inside the country in the form of traditional Japanese craftwork or cuisine. Promoting a certain image of Japan outside and inside of the country⁶ can be analyzed as a part of political strategy. Manipulating with the content of the common image of Japan, its culture, society and history might as well serve to achieve political goals, be that gaining trust, a key factor in economy, by presenting Japan as a country carefully cultivating traditional values of *bushidō*, a way of life and code of conduct cultivated by Japanese samurai, oriented toward values like mastery in martial arts, frugality, self-immolation, loyalty to one’s master, honor unto death.

Consumption—understood here mainly as eating out and also shopping—seems to hold one of the top positions in the ranking of leisure activities (Linhart 2009, 225). The reason underlying this phenomenon is a progressive slackening of Japanese economy (especially after the Lehman shock from 2009 and the

⁶ We should bear in mind that among visitors at the Tokyo Station City there are also foreigners seeking for typical Japanese souvenirs.

disastrous earthquake from March 2011), longer working hours and thus shortage of free time and financial possibility to take up other hobbies. In these circumstances, consuming goods in the joyful atmosphere of crowded *sakariba* may be an option.

Undoubtedly, developing an infrastructure with shops, restaurants, banks, post office, hotels, museum, spa, offices, private schools and universities around the main terminal station renders *sakariba* an easily accessible place and helps saving time, which an average working Japanese does not have much anyway. Yet, replacing the city by its substitutes located around big terminals, discussed here with the example of Tokyo Station (City), leads to changes in the urban landscape and urban life. As it is in the case of shopping malls in big polished cities for instance, the appearance of *sakariba*-like-terminal-stations shifts the flow of citizens. Masses of people concentrate around the station, leaving small shopping alleys, e.g. *hankagai*, almost empty, which leads to a destructive impact on local trade.

Furthermore, even though *sakariba* creates a great number of opportunities for encounters, relations initiated at the station are considered to be fugitive and ephemeral, unlike ties unifying members of a small local community, who meet on a daily basis at *hankagai*. Concentrating leisure time within railway stations loosens local networks and consequently acts against the phenomenon of neighborhood. In this way, human frustration, stress and anger are channeled into the act of consumption and are rarely expressed in one voice of a group. Terui claims that those youngsters who gather at Harajuku or Shibuya do not rebel. Nor do people at Shinjuku, a district which used to be a cradle of anarchic ideas from the wartime period until the late seventies (Terui 2005, 11).

Eventually, running across different people at the station and sharing its space with them may help to get accustomed to the presence of strangers and hence to become more tolerant toward other cultures. Nevertheless, tolerance, which is not embedded in deeper relation, solidified in a process of getting reciprocal knowledge about each other, can be only declared an introduction to conscious acceptance of people with dissimilar cultural background.

5 Conclusion

A railway station can be perceived as a salient source of social change. Trains transport people, objects and ideas from various parts of the country and different corners of the world. This would be the first reason to observe trends of social transformation from the perspective of the urban space. Another reason to use analysis of the railway station in the discourse about changes in contemporary Japanese society is the fact that main Tokyo terminals have progressively become important points on the map of social interaction. Easy access and dense flow of people induced development of the infrastructure at the big railway stations, such as Tokyo Station, Shinjuku, Shinagawa etc., in order to keep passenger inside the station longer or attract potential customers. The goal has been successfully achieved, partly because people's longer working time and longer commuting time do not leave much space for leisure. The station has taken over the role of entertaining area, due to its convenient location on the way from work to home. This paper focuses on Tokyo Station mainly for its historical meaning and for the plan to transform *Tōkyō-eki* from a simple transfer point into an almost independent organism, Tokyo Station City—the city of the cities.

The reorganized and refreshed intricate complex of the Tokyo Station City falls into Foucault's category of *heterotopia*, a place of places, an assembly of almost all kinds of institutions and organizations which are usually found in the city: from a convenience store, to a bank, a hospital and a post office up to a spa, museums and universities. The customers moving around the underground passages walk along the streets (Keiyō Street etc.), alleys and even traditional Japanese *hankagai*. Given the nature of the place, namely the fact that this is a station, people gathering here may be considered as tourists. The status of a tourist implies a sort of democratic and equal status of individuals categorized in this way. This includes equality towards official regulations which restructure the inner life of *Tōkyō-eki*, as well as equality in relation with the Other. The latter means no more than reciprocal contacts besides social markers such as name, type of work, family situation, age and the like. The Japanese at the railway station can initiate spontaneous relations without the need to exchange visiting cards.

Semi-democratic, joyful atmosphere—people without proper funds are excluded from the full participation in the life of the Tokyo Station City—, gathering of people, and rich infrastructure assuring an array of leisure, these three conditions allow us to analyze this space in an emic category of *sakariba*, treated

here also as a concept which might be identified with the Western idea of public space, or semi-public space, since the space of the Tokyo Station City *sakariba* cannot be accessed without limitations. Besides, *sakariba* sprawling around the area of the Tokyo Station City is actually a private space with the appearance and atmosphere of what the sociologists used to define as traditional public space.

In this sense, Tokyo Station City recalls a shopping mall or a shopping center, a large assembly, manifold servicing stations and shops arranged in a form of emulation with streets, passages or alleys of a city. Concentration of urban activities in certain places, such as the one analyzed in this paper, *sakariba* sprawling around the *Tōkyō-eki* area, leads to transformation of the spatial and social structure of the city which then changes citizens' life. The purpose of modern *sakariba* in the city of Tokyo Station seems to be consumption, a medicine for all the sufferings of contemporary Tokyo's denizens, be it stress connected with work, decaying of local communities or enduring working and commuting time, leaving hardly any space for hobby and other leisure. Actors who cannot actively participate in *sakariba*'s "reality show" are automatically excluded from the center to the margins and classified as the watching public. Thus on one hand *sakariba* at the Tokyo Station City or those areas where no tickets and no fees are charged for entrance, can be considered as a space open for anyone who wishes to become a part of it, even only in role of a passive watcher, but on the other hand the "democratic aspect" of *sakariba* renders social inequalities, which have been sharpened since the bubble economy, which has become more visible, because excluded watchers are within reach of a hand, sharing the same space with *sakariba*'s main actors.

This paper consists of a theoretical analysis and proposes to study an urban complex such as Tokyo Station City as one of the key factors in the process of modern transformation of socio-spatial structure of the city and changes in denizens' life the station elicits. Clearly, this idiographic description has its limits and should be considered more in terms of an introductory stage to a detailed research and an outline indicating some tendencies which characterize the process of transformation in modern Japanese society of the last six decades, rather than a completed set of conclusions.

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Reflecting Transition

UDK: 821.521

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Easing Transition with Metaphors: A Case of Transsexuality

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Abstract

Using Yūji Usui's novel *A Grass-Carp on a Tree* (1993) and its film adaptation (1997) by Atsushi Ishikawa as metaphors, this paper traces the transition of Japanese attitudes towards sexuality. The novel and the film work as vehicles that “map” what is actually taking place in Japan and how the transition is felt by Japanese people.

Keywords: transsexuality, transition, metaphor, sexuality, Japanese culture

Izveček

S pomočjo romana Yūjija Usuija *A grass-Carp on a Tree* (1993) in njegove filmske adaptacije (1997) avtorja Atsushija Ishakawe kot metafor, članek sledi tranziciji japonskega odnosa do seksualnosti. Roman in film delujeta kot modela, ki začrtata, kaj se pravzaprav dogaja na Japonskem in kako tranzicijo občutijo Japonci.

Ključne besede: transseksualnost, tranzicija, metafora, seksualnost, japonska kultura

1 Introduction

The title of Yūji Usui's novel *A Grass-Carp¹ on a Tree* (1993) flaunts an oxymoronic ring, for carps do not climb a tree. This semantic stunt shares

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¹ This fish belongs to the carp family and is a herbivore. The technical term for this fresh-water fish is *ctenopharyngodon idella*. In Japanese, the name is written with two ideographs denoting “grass” 草 and “fish” 魚 and pronounced as *sōgyo*. The Japanese name probably comes from the fish's fondness for grass. It lives in lakes, ponds, pools, and backwaters of large rivers. It grows to about a

something in common with the word “transsexuality.” Sex and gender² are commonly conceived of as fixed at birth. They were not to be transferred, transposed, or even transcended. Gender differences used to factor in the discussion of labor exploitability (by Marxist and socialist feminists), familial psychodynamics (by psychoanalytic feminists), women’s proximity to nature (by ecological feminists), women’s independence, rights, and power (by radical feminists) and the like. Japanese academia was one of many which avidly swallowed these Western insights. Unique to *A Grass-Carp on a Tree* is that it trumpets the advent of the age to see sex and gender as alterable. The time has come for carps to climb a tree.

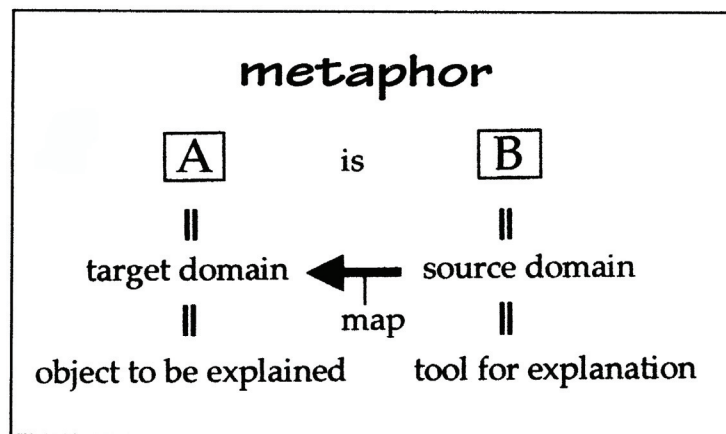


Figure 1: A metaphor. (Source: Deleuze 1988 and Kövesces 2002)

If metaphor is “understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain” (Kövesces 2002, 4), that is the tool Usui uses to explain the delicate shift of cultural values. He subscribes to Zoltán Kövesces’ basic formula of “A is B,” with the “A” being the object to be explained, and the “B” being a tool of the explanation. Kövesces calls “A” a “target domain” and the “B,” “a

meter and a half long. Since the English name is long and difficult to pronounce, I will call it “grass-carp.” All the translations of Japanese texts without special notations are mine.

² John Money reports that “sex” used to belong to the genitalia and procreation as male or female and “gender” used to belong to philology and grammar until the second half of the twentieth century, and that the humans show the least evidence of hormonal difference compared to other primates. (Money 1995, 101) His definition of gender is the private experience of social role called gender role, with the gender role being the public expression of gender identity. (Money 1995, 25)

source domain.” (Kövecses 2002, 29) The “source domain” “maps” the “target domain.” The source domain, that is, speaks the language we know.

Similar to Kövecses’s scheme is Michel Foucault’s study of “outside” and “internal.” (Deleuze 1988, 87) The Foucaultian “internal” is a force to be affected by “outside.” (Deleuze 1988, 72) So, the “outside” is from where the Foucaultian force “diagrams” the “internal.” The Foucaultian force is a spontaneous, receptive, informal element that integrates power and knowledge, (Deleuze 1988, 81-82) and its power is nothing oppressive in the way the neo-Marxian (patriarchal capitalism) or the neo-Freudian (law-giving) ways are, but produces and affects another’s subjectivity. (Faubion 1994, xix) His “internal” may be a personal sentiment or that of the society one belongs to, and the “outside,” everything else that is new or foreign to the “internal.” Thinking takes place when the “outside” “eats into the interval and forces or dismembers the internal.” (Deleuze 1988, 87) So, the “internal” is a compound of select forces that have already been brought in from “outside.” The more receptive the “internal” is of the “outside,” the more open-minded is a person.

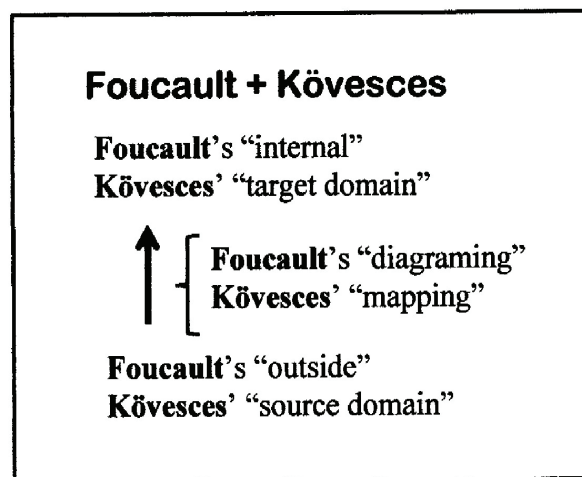


Figure 2: Foucault’s and Kövecses’s perceptions of the world. (Source: Deleuze 1988 and Kövecses 2002)

The first part of this paper studies how Usui’s novel disburdens the concept of sexuality from the weight of socioculturally entrenched stigma by dint of the

working of metaphor, and its second part, on how Atsushi Ishikawa's film adaptation of Usui's novel diagnoses the major characters' "internal."

2 Yūji Usui's novel *Grass-Carp on a Tree* (1993)³

By the time Yūji Usui's novel *Grass-Carp on a Tree* (*Ki no ue no sōgyo* 木の上の草魚 1993, henceforward *Grass-Carp*) was published, a significant number of individuals had undergone surgery or taken other medical measures to change their legally registered gender⁴; they, with the support of the Japanese media, pressured the Japanese government to issue a law that would approve change of an individual's officially registered gender⁵. Usui took it upon himself to metaphorically explain the psycho-dynamism behind sex change.

Usui names a 22-year-old transsexual (a person born with both sexual organs) in this novel Hiroshi (before he becomes a female) and Hiromi (after a sex change) Toriiyama. Toriiyama relies on his male friend, Wataru Ikegai, for moral support during and immediately after his sex change. It would not be wide of the mark for us, readers, to assume that Wataru's slow reaction to his friend's change reflects the average Japanese person's reaction to a matter such as this. Usui uses five objects to metaphorize Hiroshi and Wataru's psychodrama: i.e., (1) a crossbar telephone switchboard, (2) crossword puzzles, (3) the pond in which a huge grass-carp lives, (4) a cherry tree by the pond, and (5) a grass-carp. The crossbar telephone switchboard belongs to the telephone company Wataru works for; the crossword puzzles are Hiroshi's hobby; the pond is where Hiroshi and Wataru first talk to each other; the cherry tree talks to Hiroshi as he relaxes on it; Hiroshi and Wataru have seen the legendary grass carp.

The crossbar switchboard with 200,000 circuits is managed by half a dozen experienced technicians including 26 year-old Wataru Ikegai. The sound of the incessantly connecting and disconnecting circuits of the switchboard collectively hums like a horde of winged insects, bringing to Wataru the "warm, calm, yet

³ This novel hit the "best seller" list, and it received the Yoshikawa Eiji Literature New Writer Award.

⁴ Among many, Katsuki Harima 針間克己 and Saeko Sōma's 相馬佐江子 *The Coming-out of 30 Gender-identity Disorder Patients* (性同一障害 30 人のカミングアウト) (Tokyo: Futaba-sha, 2004) gives a realistic sense of the quantitative change.

⁵ A law named the *Act on Special Cases in Handling Gender for People with Gender Identity Disorder* (*sei dōitsu-sei shōgai tokurei-hō* 性同一性障害特例法) was issued in 2003.

tense” feeling of a successful human communication. Undoubtedly, the switchboard is a metaphor of human communication as well as Wataru’s “internal.” Things like the countless lights in the night-sky of Hakodate City in Hokkaidō, for instance, make him wonder if the whole world might be a vast switchboard.

Hiroshi’s favorite pastime, meanwhile, is solving crossword puzzles. It is as integral to his “internal” as the switchboard is to Wataru’s. Both “crossbar” and “crossword” cross things but the former is for communication and the latter, for non-communication. In actual life, Hiroshi’s female friends have abandoned him because he did not pay them the kind of attention other boys did, and his male friends left him because he showed no interest in girls’ sexuality. Each crossword puzzle of 300 x 300 black and white boxes is a map of his unresolved relationship with the massive “outside.” His current problem is: “Which would make more sense for me to be, a complete woman or an incomplete man?” The answer floats somewhere in between his “internal” and “outside.” Left alone, he has only himself to ask: “Who is there to share my penis problem?”

The episode of Hiromi taking Wataru to a parking lot shows Hiromi’s obsession with the black boxes. She asks Wataru, “Doesn’t this look like a crossword puzzle?” For Wataru, the similarity ends where the white grid lines on the cement align with the black boxes in crossword puzzles. Wataru asks, “Did you bring me here just to show me the lines?” Hiromi desperately yells, “This used to be that pond.” By “that pond” Hiromi means the place where Wataru saw a huge grass-carp and tried to catch it. Hiroshi saw this from a branch of a cherry tree, jumped down, and cut Wataru’s fishing cord as well as his hand with a knife.⁶ The two boys wrestled in the water and Wataru, a nationally rated *judo* player, threw Hiroshi onto the ground. Hiroshi landed on his own knife, stabbing his chest with it. Wataru carried Hiroshi to the nearest road and called an ambulance. Hiroshi told the police that he fell off a tree. Because this was different from Wataru’s testimony, Wataru was arrested and suspended from school. The incident derailed the stellar student from a career course and turned him eventually into a switchboard operator. The hospital, meantime, discovered that Hiroshi was equipped with two sex organs. Because Hiroshi’s parents died soon afterwards, deranging the maid Shino, Hiroshi had only his doctor and a nurse to share his

⁶ Hiroshi had a knife to cut the sweet potatoes used as bait for the grass-carp.

secret. Much like a crossword puzzle, the incident stagnates in Hiroshi's checkered "internal."

The pond beyond an iron fence near Hiroshi's house lies "outside" the community's culture. Hiroshi's father and his maid Shino had told the little boy never to go beyond the iron fence, for the Master of the pond would eat him if he did. The kindergarten child confuses the word *nushi* (master 主) with *sushi* (寿司) and draws a parallel between a cultural phallus with his biological penis⁷:

How does the Master look? It may be like a giant *oinari-san*⁸. Or can it be like *tekka-maki*⁹? Oh, I got it, it's *kappa-maki*¹⁰; I've heard that the *kappas*¹¹ live in ponds. The ideas made him laugh. A cucumber-face cannot be handsome. Maybe it looks like a pee-pee. (Usui 1993, 4)¹²

The phallic power persists in Hiromi's "internal" even after she has lost her penis and the *nushi* has been buried under the hard and flat cement.

Meanwhile, the cherry tree "maps" or "diagrams" Hiroshi's "internal." The way Hiroshi has the tree by the pond transplanted in his house shows how important it is to Hiroshi's "internal." The gentle voice from the tree—which is first low like a man's and later high like a woman's—keeps "diagraming" Hiroshi from his kindergarten days onward. It lures the boy with a blizzard of small petals and a friendly call, "Come over here!"; scolds him when he urinates on it, "Your pee-pee is going to come off"; encourages him to climb it, "Don't be afraid, you can do it"; tells him once he has climbed it, "You are going to change slowly from now on. I'm going to help you." It advises Hiroshi, "Catch the grass-carp and eat it"; "You should make friends with Wataru"; "Tell Wataru about your penis"; "Don't hold on to the thing you cannot use"; "Become a woman"; "Don't be afraid to become a woman"; "Kill the man in you." As Foucault has predicted that the "outside" collapses when it is fully integrated in the "internal" (Deleuze 1988, 87), the voice bids farewell shortly after Hiroshi loses his penis. After that, Hiroshi is

⁷ J. Laplanche and J-B. Pontalis explains the difference between phallus and penis: "In psychoanalysis, the use of this term underlines the symbolic function taken on by the penis in the intra- and inter- subjective dialectic, the term 'penis' itself tending to be reserved for the organ thought of in its anatomical reality. See: Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 312.

⁸ *Oinari-san* is cooked fried soy-bean bag stuffed with rice.

⁹ *Tekka-maki* is raw tuna wrapped in rice and seaweed.

¹⁰ *Kappa-maki* is cucumber wrapped in rice and seaweed.

¹¹ *Kappa* are mythological amphibian creatures shaped like human beings. They are believed to eat cucumbers.

¹² All the translations of Japanese texts into English are mine, unless stated otherwise.

left with the voices of urologist Kageyama, his nurse Natsue, who is another transsexual, and Wataru. Kageyama and Natsue have already revealed to Hiroshi the danger of holding onto two genitals; Wataru finds a job for Hiroshi at the switchboard, helps him solve his crossword puzzles when possible, accompanies Hiromi to Hokkaidō to see his detached but very much missed penis, and ultimately satisfies Hiromi's female carnal desire. Solving Hiroshi's crossword puzzle questions, above all, is a metaphor of Wataru's crossbar telephone switchboard diagraming Hiroshi's crossword puzzle. Gradually, Wataru becomes Hiroshi/Hiromi's indispensable confidant.

The cherry tree and the grass-carp play a tug of war, so to speak. No matter how friendly the cherry tree may be, Hiroshi has trouble giving up the glamorous grass-carp. He is confused:

That *sushi* has been appearing in my dream lately. Did you drop this gold penis? Yes, the gold penis was mine. Don't lie. It's this iron vagina that you dropped. The *sushi* gets mad at me and sinks down in the pond with the penis and the vagina. (Usui 1993, 214)

Hiromi is not sure what genital she is left with, let alone which one will serve her better. Soon, she covets Wataru's penis. "I'm just being frank. I'm confused," says Hiromi.

Sometimes I want to get rid of my femaleness, yet again, I don't want to go back to the manhood. I'm lost and worn out. It's true that I'm glad I came all the way to Hokkaido to meet my old penis. It makes sense. I got to talk with you a lot, too. But the thought of seeing my penis tomorrow confuses me again. Am I a man or a woman? Which will I be tomorrow? I started drinking to blow away my anxiety. Then the grass-carp and *sushi* made fun of me. So, I took a good look at my naked body in the bathroom. Then my female body aroused my male-me. It was sickening. I felt, that you may be able to make me a true woman. Both grass-carp and *sushi* agreed with me.

"So, you grabbed a hold of my dick?" Wataru asked.

"Please don't talk dirty like that."

"Is there a decent way to grab a dick?" Wataru made himself sound insensitive. He could not restrain himself otherwise. The person standing in front of him, wrapped in a blanket, was a plant of the rice-plant family, and Wataru was the grass-carp. He wanted to swallow the plant. If he talked gently, he would lose self-control. What would happen then? (Usui 1993, 243–244)

The metaphor of a plant and a fish has a hierarchy of values and power as Kövecses' "great chain of being metaphor" (Kövecses 2002, 123–126) explains, and Hiromi as a plant is offering her soul and body to a carp, but Wataru is no more than a switchboard operator or a "diagrammer" of "internals." He is not a grass-carp, master, or a phallus.

Hiromi's problem is seeing the penis as a "phallus" or a "master-signifier" (Connell 1995, 70), as earlier generations have done. So, she tells the urologist Kageyama that a penis is more fundamental to human existence than any other human organ. But Dr. Kageyama has a broader "diagramming" circuit. He replies:

My patients tend to take the ailing part of their bodies to be the key to human existence. A heart, stomach, lung, kidney ... there is no organ that is not basic to human existence. The patient who just died had cystitis cancer. A bag to store urine can be the key to existence. (Usui 1993, 214)

Kageyama does not give a penis a "phallic" power or let it cause an identity crisis.

What really is it that *Grass-Carp* tells us? A clue is that cherry blossoms are one of Japan's two¹³ national flowers. So the philosophy they espouse can be a metaphor of Japan and Japanese culture. And the novel suggests that Japanese culture is going feminine¹⁴. Wataru's co-worker, Togasaki, recaps a magazine article to endorse the feminization supposition as he polishes his wife's cigarette lighters:

The birthrate in Japan is noticeably dropping especially in cities. A random sampling of male city dwellers reveals that they hardly produce sperms. This tendency is rapidly increasing. The cause, according to the article, is a stressful life. (Usui 1993, 93)

The conclusion of this "Come on Mr. Penis" story is that the penis, as well as masculinity, is getting to be burdensome for Japanese men. As with Togasaki, more men are happily polishing women's cigarette lighters. Dr. Kageyama also speaks in his usual *sang-froid* tone:

¹³ The other is chrysanthemum.

¹⁴ Mitsuyoshi Hayashi defines femininity as something that rests on feeling, resonance, and sensitivity, such as what music conjures. The sentiment is individualistic, temporal, and concrete, unlike the abstract and logical ideologies men rely on. For details, see: Hayashi 1983, 116. We may also expediently borrow Kimi Komashaku's description of *onna rashisa* 女らしさ ("femininity") "passive and quiet" (*Junnō de otonashii koto* 順応でおとなしいこと). See Komashaku 1984, 34.

Human males used to exaggerate gender differences when they tried to attract the female's attention. Examples range from penis worship in ancient Athens to the middle school students' preference for acting tough. They grew beards, developed muscles, and gave a masculine tone to their language and clothing. The smell of perspiration and some degree of uncleanness used to symbolize masculinity. We don't see those nowadays. (Usui 1993, 122)

The urologist sees the penis as a caricature/metaphor of Japanese culture: "I think Japan—I often wonder why the Japanese archipelago looks like a penis—is losing its penis," (Usui 1993, 124) and goes on to offer his hypothesis:

Suppose this is in fact evolution, it must be towards the direction of doing away with, or at least, doing with less males. The evolution may be preparing humans for an environment of several thousand or tens of thousands of years later. (Usui 1993, 124–125)

If the disappearance of the grass-carp from the pond is a metaphor of a transition of Japanese culture, Hiromi's sex change must be a part of the evolution. The cherry tree has navigated her through the rocky road. A Japanese magazine named *Bessatsu Takarajima 112: Otoko ga abunai 男が危ない!?* (*Supplement Treasure Island 112: Males Are in Danger* 1990) supports Dr. Kageyama's hypothesis by reporting how manly jobs—such as the police and the self-defense army—have lost recruiting power; new employees come with little motivation; what used to be "manly" opinions and behaviors are oftentimes disliked; statistically, more men than ever are going to cosmetic clinics; stereotypical male characters on televised dramas are pushed around by women, and so on.¹⁵ This is what *Grass-Carp* is about.

3 Atsushi Ishikawa's film *A Grass-Carp on a Tree* (1997)

Yoshiko Kanai declares in her *Postmodern Feminism*:

The hermaphrodites or bisexuals refuse to espouse either one of the female or male gender. They introduced an awareness that is outside the sex/gender canon. Nonetheless, they have not managed to liberate themselves from the binary concepts of male and female. Theirs is a deconstructive sexuality with a gendered tail attached to it. They will not be able to shake off the tail unless they recognize others within themselves. (Kanai 1989, 171)

¹⁵ These are my summary of the topics in the magazine.

Without using the word “metaphor,” Kanai talks about the “internal” and “outside” of human awareness in the way Foucault does. What Kanai sees as a quest for diversity within the “internal,” and the “internal” itself resembles Julia Kristeva’s “love,” whose dynamics is “established not by the designation of a reference that is reducible to being, but by the relationship the speaking subject has with the Other during the utterance act.” (Kristeva 1987, 274) Kristeva means that there should not be a culturally fixed or predictable “mapping” route from a source to its target domains. There should not be a culturally prescribed channel between the feelings of Hiromi and Wataru. Wataru should let circumstance dictate his relationship with Hiroshi/Hiromi. Kanai and Hanazaki Kōhei call their Kristeva-like approach “the *epochē* エポケー approach,” (Kanai 2002, 28) or “suspension of judgment” approach. There, the analyst would sit close to the patient, listen to his/her story, and most importantly, create the patient’s space in his own mind/soul before analyzing the situation. (Kanai 2002, 29)

Rather than rushing to the mapping process, the film *A Grass-Carp* first introduces Wataru’s maleness (*otoko-rashisa* 男らしさ).¹⁶ It opens with a medium shot of Wataru throwing one judo player after another in a practice hall. His partners come forward with the phrase *onagai shimasu* お願いします (“please drill me”) only to be thrown on their backs instantly. Some twenty others wait for their turns sitting formally on the floor. Katō Takehiro’s active camera cross-cuts between the athletes’ torsos and legs to express the young power and fervor. The large practice hall is decorated with award certificates the high school has earned. This opening shot identifies Wataru as the epitome of the three traditional types of “manliness” by Itō Kimio’s standard: i.e., superiority (prowess), sociocultural power (heroism), and possessiveness (the awards). (Itō 1995, 80)¹⁷ Wataru in high school was a phallic man.

Hiroshi, on the other hand, is a loner who would silently observe Wataru’s practice at the doorway to the hall. Yet he is clad in a *kendō* outfit—for the sport that makes one hack another with a sword. The two protagonists’ encounter at the pond shows that Hiroshi conceives himself above Wataru, and in fact sits on a tree branch above Wataru’s head. He responds to Wataru’s friendly inquiry, “Are you

¹⁶ In order to feature the Japanese sense of “manliness” versus the Western conception of “masculinity,” I will use the word “manliness.”

¹⁷ The three concepts in Japanese are “*yūetsu*” 優越, “*kenryoku*” 権力, “*shoyū*” 所有.” (Itō 1995, 82)

Mr. Toriiyama's son by any chance?" with "Go home already" "don't piss there," and "don't come back!" from a branch of his favourite cherry tree.

The film holds the Toriiyama parents accountable for Hiroshi's self-absorption. Hiroshi's father, Toriiyama Shōgo, adheres to the old fashion "manliness" complex *à la* Makoto Hosoya: (1) he nurses a pathological fear against losing in a competition, (2) he is insensitive to another's feelings, and (3) he is likely to burn out or perish from illness. (Hosoya 1995, 69–70) Shōgo keeps himself in the political forefront by serving as the Chair of the City Council and is now campaigning for reelection. His name, Shōgo ("illuminate one's own path" 昭吾) is self-serving. In Wataru's father's words,¹⁸ "He maintains an ostensibly moderate political stance, yet he is known to land a blow with the knife made of his wealth on his constituents." This swordsman image metaphorically corresponds to that of Hiroshi in the background of the judo practice hall. Mrs. Mitsue Toriiyama is Shōgo's ally and victim.¹⁹ Shōgo's unusual display of exhilaration at a male baby's birth, for instance, robs Mitsue of the opportunity to tell him that their baby is a hermaphrodite, and makes her hysterically secretive of Hiroshi's abnormality. Mitsue first attacks the nurse Natsue, "So, you saw it? I don't want you here. I haven't even let my husband know it. We don't need a nurse to get in our business." And Mitsue demands that Dr. Kageyama stop "fooling around with" (*ijikuri makuru* いじくりまくる) Hiroshi's body. She is a sentinel for Shōgo's self-indulgent "internal." Hosoya Makoto's prediction hits the mark and the overworked Shōgo crashes his car while driving to the hospital where an ambulance has taken Hiroshi. Mitsue who was already hospitalized also passes away in shock shortly afterwards. There is black-box-like ominousness about this family and house. Part of it is Shōgo's total absence from it as well as the screen. The swinging and rustling tall trees around it command Wataru to halt and renew his resolve to go in each time he visits it. Like the black boxes in crossword puzzles in Usui's novel, the trees resist social interaction. The interior of the ostentatious house is large but hollow. Basic facilities for living, such as a kitchen, dining table, and living-room furniture are missing. Hiroshi's maid Shino serves her favorite mango juice on the bare wood floor.

¹⁸ Shin'ichi talks about Mr. Toriiyama while Toriiyama is still alive.

¹⁹ Hosoya (1995, 69) and Itō (Itō 1995, 80) agree that the old type superiority complex, power complex, and possessiveness show more prominently in his relationship with women than with men.

Wataru's home, on the other hand, reminds us of the humming of the telephone switchboard in Usui's novel. His father Ikegai Shin'ichi, is a new type of "ideal man," (Hosoya 1995, 73) who strives to live in harmony with others. His name with the characters for "progress/growth 伸" and "unity —" goes well with his personality. Even in a contest with Shōgo for the City Council Chairship, he takes a totally different approach. The physical laborer's uniform he wears when he first enters the frame matches his slogan, "Ikegai Shin'ichi appreciates the citizens' perspiration,"²⁰ which is written on the side panel of the party's campaign van. Unlike anyone in the Toriiyama family, Shin'ichi avoids confrontation. In an *actualité* scene of Wataru and Shin'ichi resting from jogging on a riverbank, Wataru mentions anecdotally that he is working with Hiroshi at a video rental shop. A medium shot catches Shin'ichi's face until he completes his chopped and drawn-out utterance, "Oh? With Mr. Toriiyama's son? I see," and reflexively gives its place to another medium close-up of the back of his head. The stillness of his head and the disappearance of the children and their voices from the background suggest that Shin'ichi is bearing up.

Unlike Shōgo, Shin'ichi plays the roles of both parents in his single-parent family. Metaphorically speaking, he is a hermaphrodites/bisexual without a gendered tail attached to it. His deceased wife is not left out of the love in Kristeva's sense. Her photograph is framed and put on a bureau, at which Wataru and the camera cast a warm gaze. The father hangs the wash, wipes the dining table, takes care of his potted plants, and gives Wataru two cans of beer when Natsue pays a surprise visit. The background props—of a rice cooker, food, drinks, and spices—suggest that the father and the son have a familial bond.

The name "Wataru 廻" (go around) shows the young man's potential to get in touch with cultural "outsiders," the like of Natsue, Togasaki, Dr. Kageyama, Dr. Komine, and Shino. Natsue is the key "diagramer" who links various insiders and outsiders. She asks Wataru to assist Hiroshi, asks Dr. Kageyama to call Dr. Komine to warn him that Hiromi and Wataru are coming to see Hiromi's detached penis. It was Natsue who notified Dr. Kageyama of Hiroshi's abnormality and tried to do the same to Wataru, has Dr. Kageyama talk to Wataru, and helps Hiroshi culturally and legally changes his gender. Natsue's compassion for Hiroshi comes from her own identity of being a MTF (from male to female). She has, in fact, seriously considered suicide more than once. She knows Wataru since eight

²⁰ This word stands for hard work.

years earlier when he and his father frequented the Citizen's Hospital to see Hiroshi with the self-inflicted wound. Her hope is to have Wataru play the role Dr. Kageyama did for her during her troubled days. She visits Wataru's house and tries to awaken the man's carnal desire by kissing him. The kiss is not really for Wataru, but a hint for him to do the same for Hiromi.

The film expresses Natsue's "outside"-hood and in-between-ness with her dress code. As an offshoot of a certified medical institution, and a former male, her outfits are always—except for once²¹—black or white and their cut is a variation of the men's business suit. Another motif of her outside-ness or in-between-ness is her proximity to windows. She stands by the window in Kageyama's office, opens the curtain in Hiromi's bedroom, and sits on the small balcony by a window in Wataru's apartment. She likes to ventilate the "internal" with "outside."

The doctors Kageyama and Komine are outlandish. Their names, "hidden mountain" (*kage-yama* 影山) and "a small mountain ridge" (*ko-mine* 小峰), put them in a good vantage point for watching other people's lives. The former has given Natsue a sex change operation, helped her overcome her intersex-related confusion, dated with her, been jilted by her, hence believes that only Natsue can help Hiroshi.

The clinic of Dr. Kageyama's friend Dr. Komine is visibly outlandish. Wataru uses his motorcycle and a ferry boat to get there. The two-story solitary building sits on a barren plot of land. The exterior of the building is stained by the weather, laundry dances in the wind on the rooftop, a plastic bag of garbage, an abandoned bathtub, some scraggy plants, and other sundry objects lie by the entranceway. Indoors, live roosters and their chicks walk around on the nurse's counter and the floor. Komine's greeting to Wataru is friendly. As his voice fades off-screen, the camera leisurely cuts to a stuffed deer head, a couple of pheasants, and an owl. They are as dead as the penises the doctor collects. The doctor's asynchronous voice keeps talking: "I have penises that came off on account of a traffic accident, rotted by a rubber band, or excised because a disease enlarged them." Komine is a collector of defunct penises, not a phallus. He does not fight for his own power, either. So, he lets Hiromi run off with a cooler box that contains her old penis. He tells the nurse after Wataru runs after Hiromi, "How can we stop someone who

²¹ She wears a greenish striped blouse when she reminisces the critical time in her life with Dr. Kageyama.

wants it?” His relaxed voice, sparse white hair and beard, a towel around his neck, wrinkled face give off the ambiance of a mountain hermit.

Another peculiar “outsider” is Togasaki, a namesake of the man who keeps polishing his wife’s cigarette lighter in Usui’s novel. Togasaki in the film is the owner of a video rental shop and Wataru’s employer. This character actor and a secondary role comedian brings humor to the story. His “strongly female” language,²² eurhythmic body language, the way his right hand tends to stay near his mouth while his left hand props his right elbow, the way he calls Hiroshi and Wataru with the “-chan” suffix, his high pitched “Ike-chan, *matte!* 池ちゃん待って (Please don’t go, Ike-chan)! *Sutenai de* 捨てないで (Don’t dump me!)” as Wataru runs out of the shop to quit his job, parody a certain type of Japanese women.

Another “outsider,” Shino, becomes demented when the Toriiyama couple passes away. She can no longer tell people apart. She asks first-time visitor Wataru, “You came yesterday, too, didn’t you?” and asks Natsue, her houseguest of at least a week, “I’m sorry to bother a stranger, but would you please ...” All she makes is mango juice and serves it to people who are not there, greeting them pleasantly. At times, she sits on a chair by the Toriiyama couple’s photographs—on which the camera does not focus—and stares at the void in front of her eyes. She is the farthest removed from so-called reality. Diversity is all around Wataru.

Hiromi’s confession to Natsue reveals her struggle within her “internal”: “That tree is very special to me. It talks ... my penis came off that night.”²³ Since then, I have gone to the tree every day to apologize.” Japanese psychiatrist Kimura Bin helps us understand that Hiroshi is schizophrenic:

Schizophrenic patients rather commonly suffer from an auditory hallucination, but hardly from a visual hallucination. What takes place is that the patient sets up an “outsider” where there should be “me.” The subjective “I” alienates his/her own objective “me.” Because “me” is society within the self, “I” sees “me” as an “outsider.” This split is prompted by a pampered upbringing that stalemates the child’s ability to analyze situations. A schizophrenic is unable to acknowledge his/her own actions as his/her own. (Kimura 1976, 143)²⁴

²² The “*no yo のよ*” and “*wa わ*” endings, for example, make sentences “strongly female.” For details, see Okamoto 1995, 301.

²³ Hiromi means the first day she visited the pond and urinated on the tree.

²⁴ This article was written jointly with Yūjirō Nakamura, but this part was written by Kimura.

The symbiosis of two incompatible sexes and two genders in one body and one mind respectively turns an individual schizophrenic. The cherry tree's voice is Hiroshi's own, which was originally implanted by his parents and their spokeswoman Shino. The cherry-tree's Freudian "super ego"-like and Lacanian "father's No"-like voice persists, splitting Hiroshi's "internal." Another psychiatrist rephrases the situation: "When all external stimuli are blocked out, human senses become hypersensitive to the smallest impact from outside, and they detect the activities of one's own mind as hallucination." (Oda 1976, 201–202) Having shut himself off from the physical "outside," Hiroshi had built a hallucinatory "outside," the tree's voice, within himself.

It takes time for Wataru to accept Hiroshi's sex change. When asked by Natsue to help Hiroshi, he flatly refuses, "No thank you. ... Hiroshi's fine the way he is." He impatiently walks out of Dr. Kageyama's office, when the doctor shows him Hiroshi's X-ray. He thinks the sex change is absurd even after Hiromi has lost her penis, registered as a female, and dressed as a woman. The camera describes the tension. Natsue and Wataru, sitting on either side of the picnic table, turn toward the camera but slightly off left. Hiromi comes out of the dark interior of her house where the gazes of her two friends meet. The camera leads the girl up to the picnic table. The next cut is to an establishing shot with Hiromi and Wataru facing each other and Natsue in between. Still in this position, Hiromi asks, "How do you like this?" Natsue's eyes quickly swing over to Wataru to solicit his friendly remark. The montage, meantime, moves to a shot/reverse-shot to catch the anxiety on Hiromi's face and disgust on Wataru's. The two sets of eyes veer away from each other slowly but simultaneously. Only Hiromi's gaze revisits Wataru as she says, "I put on makeup." Her eyes that are wider open this time show her determination to give Wataru a second chance. Wataru from Hiromi's point of view almost looks back at her but not quite. Natsue enthusiastically chimes in, "Isn't she terrific? I was amazed when I helped her put on the makeup." In the next establishing shot from another angle of the table, Wataru turns his head further away from Hiromi and mumbles, "So, this is a triumph of technology, I guess." At Natsue's remark, "Doesn't she look charming? I chose the outfit," Wataru lets out, "Are you going out like that?" Hiromi asks, "What do you mean?" Wataru's voice—"I wondered if you are going to walk in public in a female outfit"—is low and grumpy. Hiromi drops her gaze again and runs to her car. Later that day, Wataru goes to the parking lot where Hiromi had told him that the pond used to be there, feels the warmth of the ground, leans against a wall, and

eats the jam roll his customer at the video shop had given him. His shadow appears on the building wall as if to show that his mind and body have split. The customer had told him that she had two-thirds of her stomach removed in surgery and the lost stomach craves the jam roll. For Wataru, it is Hiromi that makes him eat a jam roll. It is obvious that Hiromi as an outsider has stepped in Wataru's "internal." Wataru's first kiss takes place on the boat back from Kawasaki²⁵ to Tokyo. His effort to take the cooler box away from Hiromi, shouting, "Throw it away! That belongs to Toriyama Hiroshi. You are Hiromi!" turns into a physical battle. Hiromi's blouse comes loose and exposes the scar from the battle at the pond. Wataru's passionate kiss on it obliterates the line between "internal" and "outside." This escalates into Kristeva-style love, the provisional love, or love by circumstance. As Dugald Williamson has observed, sexuality and sexual differences are "never natural givens, but are effects constructed in signification and cultural relations." (Williamson 1992, 113) It has taken encounters and circumstances to make Wataru "love" Hiromi who was once Hiroshi.

4 Conclusion

The destination of Japanese culture, according to Asada Akira is "de-coding (*datsu-kōdo* 脱コード)," meaning, "the center disappears; God dies; the king is decapitated; the father's words lose authority." (Asada 1982, 166) *Grass-Carp* metaphorizes the death of the carp, master, and the phallic power together with Asada's God, king, and the father's words. *Grass-Carp* is about the transition of Japanese attitudes towards sexuality and culture at large.

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²⁵ In the film, Dr. Komine's clinic is in Kawasaki, rather than in Hakodate in Hokkaido.

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UDK: 821.521

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Contemporary Japanese Literature in Its Transition Towards the New Postmodern Humanism: Haruki Murakami

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Abstract

Although Japan recorded no specific literary movement in the 1980s, in any classical sense of the term, we may say that today we are witnessing, in terms of our historical sensibility, a condensation of narrative viewpoints upon the present or, in other words, the transposition of the criteria of the present to another time, which is undoubtedly a consequence of the so-called “postmodern” will to reject grand narratives. This study aims to review and complete the inventory of the postmodern characteristics that specialised literature has identified in Haruki Murakami’s works, seen from the perspective of what the author of the present paper considers to be the “new postmodern humanism.”

Keywords: transition, postmodernism, new humanism, contemporary Japanese literature

Izveček

Čeprav v Japonska 80. letih 20. stoletja ni zabeležila nobenih specifičnih literarnih gibanj, v kakršnemkoli klasičnem pomenu besede, lahko rečemo, da smo danes, v smislu zgodovinske senzibilnosti priča kondenzaciji pripovednih pogledov na sedanjost, ali drugače rečeno, transpozicijo kriterija sedanjosti na drugi čas, ki je brez dvoma posledica tako imenovane »postmoderne« volje po zavrnitvi velikih pripovedi. Ta študija preučuje in dopolnjuje popis postmodernih značilnosti, ki jih je specializirana literatura identificirala v delih Harukija Murakamija, gledano iz stališča, ki ga avtor sam imenuje “novi postmoderni humanizem”.

Ključne besede: tranzicija, postmodernizem, novi humanizem, sodobna japonska literatura

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*“Clouds make rain, and rain makes clouds.
The environment makes man,
and man makes the environment.”*
—*Multiple Designs* by Kobayashi Hideo 1995

1 Introduction

The literature of an epoch may be said to capture not only the present of creation, but also the present of culture, retrieving thus, a certain face of the past, as preserved in the memory of posterity or as resuscitated by that particular epoch; in this sense, Japanese postmodernism appears today both as a “return to Japan,” or a *rethinking* of traditional Japan, and as the expression of the need for “internationalism,” for assimilating new international cultural forms. Against this background, Haruki Murakami may be read as an emblematic author of his time, being considered a Japanese writer who has managed to swiftly assimilate and adapt the postmodern literary practices, *overcoming* the cultural frontiers that Japanese traditionalism has strictly enforced throughout time.

Founded on the aesthetics of the fragment, on the art of sight and, generally, of perception, postmodern fiction captures, in anti-mimetic manner, the difficulty of perceiving and understanding the contemporary world: it conveys a disquieting state of incompleteness deriving from the equally disquieting characteristics of the surrounding universe. Contemporary writers may also invent new meanings in the world and create new myths of completeness and determination.

An excellent observer of daily life, but also a subtle analyst of the banal and the commonplace, Haruki Murakami grounds his literary work on detailed knowledge of the mythology of the ordinary, whence he extracts cases that become relevant and emblematic, due to either internal or external circumstances. Living in sync with his time, Haruki Murakami tries to reveal this simultaneity and concomitance. He is a contemporary man who attempts to survive the alienation of his own epoch.

Haruki Murakami’s option for literature is similar to a rite of passage comprising three dialectical moments: desire, search, and overcoming failure. The desire to write is followed by a period of experiencing literature, when he moves from fascination to deception. Like any initiation journey, which is waylaid by darkness, delusions and downfalls, Murakami’s “progress through literature” has

occasioned him to encounter both full admiration (for Western literature) and contestation (of Japanese literature), an experience the writer has overcome by discovering a *new humanism*, focused upon the human being, who is grasped in the most concrete, physical-sensorial functions, *here* and *now*, but also upon moments of lights and shadows, pointing towards the realm of *beyond*.

2 The Postmodern Literature in Japan

The development of postmodern Japanese literature was occasioned by the gradual disappearance of influential models: Junichirō Tanizaki in 1965, Yukio Mishima in 1970, Naoya Shiga in 1971 and Yasunari Kawabata in 1972. Even if after Kawabata's demise the modern tradition of "pure" literature could still be sensed in the works of writers like Masuji Ibuse, Kōbō Abe and Kenji Nakagami, after their death (Nakagami in 1992, Ibuse and Abe in 1993), Kenzaburō Ōe was the only one left to defend this type of literature, which amounted to "teaching" rather than to "entertainment" (Strecher 1998b, 373).

Therefore, Japanese postmodernism appears, on the one hand, as a "return to Japan," namely the "return to Japan" as described in Yasunari Kawabata's *Snow Country*, with its world being limited to *feeling* (Beauty), and, on the other hand, it verges on "internationalism" (Karatani 1989, 45), given its attempt to lay the foundation of *feeling* (Beauty) at the junction between *knowledge* (Truth) and *will* (Good). Haruki Murakami once confessed that as a child he had rejected the idea of becoming a writer after having read Tanizaki and Kawabata, whom he saw as holding literature "in good hands" (Strecher 1998b, 375); however, today he is considered to be the author who has brought postmodern Japanese literature to the forefront of contemporary critical appraisal.

Kenzaburō Ōe considered that "pure" literature must have a certain social responsibility and should essentially be a didactic model, an attitude which has, to some extent, prevented the development of postmodern literature in Japan (Strecher 1998b, 372). He stated once that Haruki Murakami's work failed in its attempt to address the intellectuals, in a broad sense, since it did not succeed in providing "models" for the present and the future of Japan (Rubin 1992, 499). In a similar manner, the critic Masao Miyoshi dismisses Haruki Murakami, accusing him of displaying an exotic Japan, "in an international version for foreign purchasers," which discourages any attempt to approach his work critically, with

possibly only a few exceptions: “only a very few would be silly enough to get interested in deep reading” (Miyoshi 1989, 153).

However, without paying any tribute to concession, Haruki Murakami remains interested in describing a society that is obsessed with comfort, renewal, and crazy consumption, a society experiencing convalescence after the demise of great ideas and ideals, sickened by overproduction, a society whose connection with the past and tradition is getting weaker and weaker, which engenders a sense of loss that is connoted negatively, as the source of both pessimism and nostalgia.

The Japanese generation of the 1980s, whose representatives include Haruki Murakami, faced the necessity to chart new pathways into the novelistic space, by either approaching new themes or attempting to explore new territories. Postmodernism, which appears as a result of the phenomena generated by the society of information, and is seen as the cultural logic of late capitalism, determines a split in the unity of personality and gives rise to an identity crisis. Moving the emphasis from centrality to marginality is likely to confuse values, cultivate indeterminacy, overbid relativism and foster continuous de-structuring. Nothing is stable any longer, anything is possible and may evolve in any direction: *shōsetsu*, the Japanese type of novelistic creation, becomes, to some extent, more similar to “annals” than to “narrative history” (Miyoshi 1989, 153):

Without doubt, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* #8 was a story told by Cinnamon. He had put sixteen stories into the computer under the title *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, and it just so happened that I had chosen and read #8. Judging from the length of one story, sixteen such stories would have made a fairly thick book if set in type. What could “#8” signify? The word “chronicle” in the title probably meant that the stories were related in chronological order, #8 following #7, #9 following #8, and so on. That was a reasonable assumption, if not necessarily true. They could just as well have been arranged in a different order. They might even run backward, from the present to the past. A bolder hypothesis might make them sixteen different versions of the same story told in parallel. [...] I had no way of telling how much of the story was true. Was every bit of it Cinnamon’s creation, or were parts of it based on actual events? [...] Still, it was conceivable that some of the details were based on historical facts. [...] From the stories he had heard repeatedly from his mother, he derived further stories in an attempt to re-create the enigmatic figure of his grandfather in a new setting. He inherited from his mother’s stories the fundamental style he used, unaltered, in his own stories: namely, the assumption that a *fact may not be truth, and truth may not be factual*. (Murakami 1997, 350–351)

The rhizomatic logic which characterises postmodern narrative is governed by the principle of “connection” and “heterogeneity,” which means that any point on the rhizome may be linked to anything else:

As he began to understand language, Cinnamon asked me to tell him the story again and again. I must have told it to him a hundred, two hundred, five hundred times, but not just repeating the same thing every time. Whenever I told it to him, Cinnamon would ask me to tell him some other little story contained in the main story. He wanted to know about a different branch of the same tree. I would follow the branch he asked for and tell him *that* part of the story. And so the story grew and grew. In this way, the two of us went on to create our own interlocking system of myths. (Murakami 1997, 297)

It reunites disconnected forces and impulses, which are not only distinct, but may also originate from completely different orders. Moreover, the rhizome never builds permanent structures, but perceives the life of things as a continuous change, as a permanently renewed “movement” away from fixed forms and towards new possibilities. The rhizome operates through variation, expansion, conquest or interception.

A rhizomatic perspective does not allow for a complete separation of things. Accordingly, Haruki Murakami perceives the world as being composed of organised bodies which, paradoxically, are reminiscent of “the body without organs,” as the foundation of forms of organisation:

“Who are you?” I asked. The faceless man handed me the flashlight as if passing a baton. “I am the hollow man,” he said. Faceless face toward me, he waited in the darkness for me to speak, but I could not find the right words. (Murakami 1997, 384)

Haruki Murakami belongs to the generation of writers of the 1980s, who intended to capture the electrical and eclectic style of the life of Japan’s great cities. (Strecher 1998b, 354) His postmodern fiction tries to express, in anti-mimetic fashion, the difficulty of perceiving and understanding the world, outlining a disquieting state of incompleteness that derives from the equally disquieting characteristics of the surrounding universe. (Pavel 1989) Through his creation, which promotes the aesthetics of the fragment, the art of sight and the art of perception, of aural perception in particular, Haruki Murakami considers himself to be, first and foremost, a Japanese writer:

The opinion that my books are not really Japanese seems to me to be very shallow. I certainly think of myself as being a Japanese writer. I write with a

different style and maybe with different materials, but I write in Japanese and I'm writing for Japanese society and Japanese people. So I think people are wrong when they are always saying that my style is really mainly influenced by Western literature. As I just said, at first I wanted to be an international writer, but eventually I saw that I was nothing but a Japanese writer. But even in the beginning I wasn't only borrowing Western styles and rules. I wanted to change Japanese literature from the inside, not the outside. So I basically made up my own rules. (Gregory 2002, 115)

The evolution of his work in modernity could be compared to the trajectory of Zenon from Elea's arrow, which *vibrates, flies yet it does not fly at all*, in other words, it hints at no objective destination.

Contemporary writers may invent new meanings in the world and may create new myths of completeness and determination. Speaking about his generation colleagues, Banana Yoshimoto and Ryū Murakami, Haruki Murakami (Gregory 2002, 116) appreciates the honesty they write with, their letting loose of any tormenting thoughts or emotions experienced about the new world of Japan today. This is also what preoccupies *boku*, the protagonist from Haruki Murakami's debut novel, *Kaze no uta o kike* (1979) (*Hear the Wind Sing!*). For him, writing has become a way of life, attempting to salvage, through his own language, a strip of the real. However, sincerity in writing is by no means easy to achieve, not only because of the desire to conceal the truth at times, but also given the difficulty of reaching the linguistic accuracy necessary to reproduce precisely the authenticity of living and feeling:

Still, it's awfully hard to tell things honestly. The more honest I try to be, the more the right words recede into the distance, I don't mean to rationalize, but at least this writing is my present best. There's nothing more to say. And yet I find myself thinking that if everything goes well, sometime way ahead, years, maybe decades from now, I might discover at last that efforts have been my salvation. (Murakami 1994, 6)

In Haruki Murakami's fiction, modernity relies on assuming the real and exerting the rights of an unlimited subjectivity: "But you don't belong to that world, sorry. The world you belong to is above that or below that." (Murakami 1997, 37) Selfhood has imposed itself vigorously, but has been contested as well, to the point of identifying with alterity. Postmodernism entails change, but also seeks a synthetic, integrative vision of the world, which is momentarily marked by uncertainty. In a context where history is threatened by the loss of meaning, everything must be reconsidered with a view to providing memory with a new

self-image and fostering a new project of reconstruction and prospection. This is the moment of a dialectics of the “eternal present,” of the relativity of knowledge, of lags, dissymmetry, the pluralism of interpretations, fragmentariness and discontinuity, the de-ideologisation of discourses.

The characters from Haruki Murakami’s first novels seem, indeed, to lack social commitment and the awareness of belonging to a place, but they evolve and turn from isolation and social irresponsibility to political and civic consciousness. Similar to *boku* from the novel *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, whose shadow was let loose, Haruki Murakami also seemed, at the time of his debut, to be much more detached from the culture and society that had created him:

I don’t write political novels—or at least when I write I don’t think of politics except subconsciously. But I agree with you that all my books, even the early ones, have all involved political factors; it’s just that these factors were never treated directly. So these political issues were present in my books only in the background; even though it is undeniable that politics and economics have helped produce the circumstances that my characters find themselves in, I have never been interested in writing about such things directly. (Gregory 2002, 117)

One more point about writing. And this will be the last. For me, writing is extremely hard work. There are times when it takes me a whole month just to write one line. Other times I’ll write three days and nights straight through, only to have it come out all wrong. Nonetheless, writing can also be fun. Compared to the sheer difficulty of living, the process of attaching meanings to life is altogether clear sailing. (Murakami 1994, 9)

On attempting to surpass the traditional judgement that has always surrounded terms like “serious” and “popular,” “mimesis” and “formulaic” (“full of formulae, clichés”), postmodernism illustrates the idea that the *entire* literature is just a continuum between the two poles of inventiveness and conventionalism: “Of course, the mimetic and the formulaic represent two poles that literary works lie somewhere between.” (Strecher 1998b, 356) Haruki Murakami plays a sort of structuralist game with his readers, as he creates texts that are obviously “formulaic,” although displaying goals and results that are truly “postmodern” in nature.

Haruki Murakami also becomes postmodern by reshaping the concept of “freedom,” which, he argues, is not “natural” or “true” for human nature, but represents an ideal, an intellectual construct.

The predictability of a formula—"I'm very interested in structure," Haruki Murakami admits (Gregory 2002, 113)—such as the adventure novel, the SF novel or the love story, juxtaposed with the unpredictability of the contemporary world, in other words, the infusion of mimetic in what is, by definition, non-mimetic literature may help Haruki Murakami's fiction transcend, in a "postmodern" direction, the aesthetic canons which delineate "pure" from "consumerist" literary creation: "(...) in this combination of the mimetic and the formulaic, and consequently of 'high art' and 'mass culture', Murakami produces a quintessentially postmodern tone in his literature." (Strecher 1998b, 370)

More exactly, the Japanese author's writing does not fail to achieve "pure" literature (*junbungaku*), but suspends the opposition, affixed at the beginning of the twentieth century in Japan, between "high" and "mass" literature (*taishū bungaku*).

Conveying meaning that is concealed between the lines, sometimes rather difficult to decipher, and at other times displaying "story-less stories," Haruki Murakami's fiction fascinates because it oversteps the boundaries of the world we call "real," moving beyond into a surreal and even hyperreal world: "Murakami experiments with language, genre, realism, and fantasy, in order to explore the outer limits of postmodern expression." (Strecher 1998b, 356) Postmodern literature is characterised not only by a paradoxical reclusion in the area of silence, but also by complementary displacement into unidentified regions of the fantastic.

Haruki Murakami's literary creation focuses upon the problem of achieving a valid form of the self in a fictional world where it becomes ever harder for oneself to arrive at self-definitions. The "normal" condition of the postmodern man, this "weak being," as Nietzsche might call him, is to be located in a world where intensified communication (liberated either at the "technical" or at the "political" level) opens a gateway towards an actual experience of individuality as multiplicity. In this context, the Japanese writer's novel provides the imaginary with a formal caution against the real, imparting it at the same time with the ambiguity of a double sign, both real and verisimilar, since it is believed that "the true is supposed to contain a germ of the universal or, to put it differently, an essence capable of fecundating by mere reproduction several orders of things among which some differ by their remoteness and some by their fictitious character." (Barthes 1987, 56) The mission of literature becomes thus to put on a mask and designate it at the same time. To create fiction is, in fact, a way of

eluding reality and especially of annulling the notion that reality is truth. Consequently, fiction could also entail the creation of an autonomous reality, after the model of the real world and still different from the latter. The reference is specific: it may be that of self-referentiality or of internal reference, as opposed to external reference. Haruki Murakami's fictional worlds replace the illusion of knowing the reality "here" with the dreaming of another world, from "beyond." No longer decorative or prudent, the humanism of the postmodern age proposes a different moral of the "joy of living." The new humanism no longer loves man against his body, the spirit against its language, values against facts, but speaks in a sober and chaste tone about man and about spirit, about the way in which man and spirit emerge through the movement whereby "the body becomes gesture, language becomes creation, and coexistence becomes truth." (Eco 1989, 272)

Lifted from the abyss in which thought seemed to soar gleefully above words, the Japanese novel writing of the twentieth century passed through all the stages of gradual solidification: it was at first an object of sight (Yasunari Kawabata), then of action (Kenzaburō Ōe) and, eventually, of crime (Yukio Mishima), experiencing a new avatar today: absence (Haruki Murakami). In this last type of writing, characterised as "neutral" and also called "writing degree zero," one may easily detect a tendency towards negation and the incapacity to fulfill it continuously, (See Barthes 1987, 52) as if, having attempted for an entire century to relocate its contours into a shape with no ancestry, literature would only be able to find its purity in the absence of any sign, in white writing.

What does Haruki Murakami represent for contemporary Japanese prose? An apathetic observer who over the years has become an ever more active participant in political and social life. A writer who has erased the border delineating the "high" and the "pure," traditionally characterising Japanese literature, and had made the "common" and the "ordinary" possible thematic "pretexts" for literary creation in the novelistic genre. This does not mean, however, that Haruki Murakami only writes about quotidian experience. As a matter of fact, his performance resides in trying to grant every moment its price, in the hope that there is always something "beyond" appearances. This is not the extinction of a tradition, but perhaps its rebirth: "Far from heralding the death-knell of Japanese culture, we might choose to view this merely as a new chapter in the fascinating story of Japan's cultural evolution." (Strecher 1998a, 69)

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Past Inspirations and Present Explorations

UDK: 325 (520)
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Contextualizing the Centennial of Japanese Colonial Rule in Korea

Jeff KINGSTON*

Abstract

This article examines the 2010 commemoration of the centennial of Japanese colonialism in Korea. Prime Minister Kan Naoto's apology generated controversy, exposing the longstanding domestic divide within Japan over the imperial past. The politicization of history, apologies and acts of contrition impedes reconciliation between Japan and its Asian neighbours. Apologies and acts of contrition may not be sufficient to advance reconciliation, but remain essential elements of that process. Japan's legalistic position based on the 1965 Basic Treaty may protect it from further compensation claims, but also precludes the grand gestures that are essential to reconciliation.

Keywords: Japan, Korea, colonialism, reconciliation, apology

Izvilleček

Članek preučuje komemoracijo ob stoletnici Japonske kolonializacije Koreje, ki je potekala leta 2010. Opravičilo predsednika vlade Kana Naotoja je sprožilo polemike, saj je razkrilo dolgoletno delitev znotraj Japonske o imperijalni preteklosti. Politizacija zgodovine, opravičila in kesanja ovira spravo med Japonsko ter njenimi azijskimi sosedi. Opravičila in kesanje morda ne bosta zadostna za napredek k spravi, vendar ostajata esencijalna elementa tega procesa. Japonska legalistična pozicija, ki temelji na sporazumu o odnosih med Japonsko in Korejo (Treaty of Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea) iz leta 1965, bo Japonsko sicer obvarovala pred nadaljnimi odškodninskimi zahtevki, a ji hkrati preprečuje večje geste, ki so bistvene za spravo.

Ključne besede: Japonska, Koreja, kolonializem, sprava, opravičilo

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1 Introduction

The 100th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Annexation in 1910 between Japan and Korea commemorated in August 2010 illuminates the state of bilateral relations and the politics of history. Although colonial rule ended in 1945, the scars have not healed and Japan's relations with Seoul and Pyongyang remain vexed by history. Numerous apologies by Japanese politicians and Emperor Akihito have been sabotaged intentionally by discordant voices of denial and unrepentant justification. These conservative voices are small in number, but disproportionately influential because they operate from within the political and intellectual mainstream. Public opinion polls show that the majority of Japanese are not in denial about history or shirking responsibility, but the media focuses on the shrill voices from the right, generating a misleading image. The mixed messages from Japan about its colonial era explain why some Koreans remain unconvinced by Japan's sincerity and are unwilling to put the past behind them.

And yet, beneath the fiery rhetoric and testy exchanges there is also a wellspring of compassion. South Korean charities raised over \$52 million for disaster relief in Japan, a record sum that speaks volumes about the reservoir of benevolence among Koreans towards a nation that is often vilified for colonial oppression. Donations dropped dramatically, however, after Japan reasserted its claim to sovereignty over the disputed Dokdo/Takeshima islands in new middle school textbooks, approved at the end of March 2011 and in the Diplomatic Bluebook 2011 issued on April 1st by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This, in microcosm, is the nature of the rollercoaster relationship between these "frenemies." And so the former comfort women resumed their weekly protests outside the Japanese Embassy and the media furore revived a sense of betrayal rooted in sharp differences over shared history. Tsunami relief amidst ongoing territorial spats reminds us that growing grassroots-level goodwill triggered by exchanges, tourism and popular culture remains hostage to episodic conflict at the government level. The good news is that such rifts are not as paralyzing and all encompassing as they once were, indicating that history is not what it was. (Park 2011, 39–54)

2 Kan's Apology

On August 10th, 2010 Prime Minister (PM) Naoto Kan issued a Cabinet endorsed apology to South Korea regarding colonial rule, expressing deep regret over the suffering inflicted, stating, “The people of South Korea at the time were deprived of their nation and culture, and their ethnic pride was deeply harmed by colonial rule that was against their will.” He added, “...those who render pain tend to forget it while those who suffered cannot forget it easily.” (Statement 2011) Although more specific about Japanese transgressions in Korea, and helpfully forthright on the issue of wounded ethnic pride, the apology was to South Korea alone, neglecting North Korea.

The apology was issued before the August 29th centenary of Japan's annexation of the Korean peninsula and August 15th, a day when South Koreans celebrate independence from colonial rule. The timing suggests that the Japanese government decided to sidestep days when the apology might get overlooked, distorted or somehow inflame public opinion on days “reserved” for outpourings of nationalistic fervour. In addition, this pre-emptive, forthright apology took the political heat off the South Korean government and lowered the temperature of media coverage about the centennial, an anniversary that was bound to remind Koreans of past depredations. Yet, it fell short of being a cathartic moment in either country.

The South Korean foreign ministry responded, “We accept the prime minister's statement as the Japanese government's resolve to overcome that unfortunate past between South Korea and Japan and to create a bright South Korea-Japan relationship in the future.” The ministry added that, “South Korea also takes note of Kan's mention that colonial rule had been done contrary to the will of the Korean people, and that those who inflicted sufferings are likely to forget while those who suffered do not forget easily.”

Navigating the legal minefield, Kan spoke carefully when broaching the subject of Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910) court protocols, called the Joseon Wangsil Uigwe, that were in the possession of the Japanese government. Consistent with the Japanese government's legal position that the 1965 Basic Treaty normalizing bilateral relations settled all matters of compensation, Kan explained at a news conference that he wrote “transfer” rather than “return” in his statement promising the handover of the royal artefacts that the South Korean government has been demanding. Kan also promised that Japan will continue its ongoing humanitarian

cooperation with South Korea, including efforts to recover the remains of Koreans who died during the occupation, and support war-displaced South Koreans left behind in Sakhalin (a Russian island near Hokkaido that was held by Japan 1905–1945).

Through his apology Kan hoped to put historical issues behind the two countries and focus on ways to enhance future ties with South Korea in addressing bilateral and regional issues, including those related to North Korea's nuclear ambitions and its abduction of Japanese nationals. Emphasizing Japan's ambition of nurturing future-oriented ties, Kan attempted to draw a line under history, although ensuing developments indicate how difficult this remains.

In November 2010 the two governments agreed on the scope of what royal records would be included in the "transfer". Altogether this includes 1,205 volumes of Korean archives, constituting the Joseon Wangsil Uigwe, a meticulous record of royal ceremonies and rituals in 167 volumes that has been kept at Japan's Imperial Household Agency. The deal over the looted royal protocols ran into a speed bump, however, when the government sought Diet approval. Members of the opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) criticized the agreement as being one-sided and demanded that Seoul reciprocate by returning historical Japanese documents now held by South Korea and also sought to link the return to ongoing controversies related to the Dokdo/Takeshima islands. This nationalistic posturing was mostly about ensuring the agreements would not generate untainted good will. Finally, having poisoned the well, the LDP-controlled House of Councillors in the Diet ratified the treaty in May 2011 authorizing the transfer of the South Korean archives. The archival transfer was finalized by Kan's successor, PM Noda Yoshihiko, in December 2011.

3 Apology Divide

Kan's statement draws heavily on the 1995 Murayama Statement, one that has become a mantra for subsequent Japanese expressions of remorse about its rampage through Asia ("Murayama Statement"). In his statement, PM Murayama apologized for Japan's, "...colonial rule and aggression, [that] caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations." The 2005 Koizumi Statement issued on the sixtieth anniversary of the end of WWII is similar and during his tenure when he stirred up controversies

centred on Yasukuni Shrine, PM Koizumi Junichiro often invoked the Murayama mantra.

Given that Murayama was the head of a coalition government dominated by the LDP and Koizumi was LDP party president when he issued his apologies, the LDP's peevish criticism of Kan for his contrite remarks smacks of hypocrisy and politics. By acknowledging Japan's transgressions in Korea while overlooking its contributions, Kan's apology proved an unacceptable version of empire for conservatives. The apology is symptomatic of a more fundamental battle over interpreting Japan's colonial rule; was it relatively beneficial or was it mostly malign. Former Prime Minister Abe Shinzō (2006–07) of the LDP took off the gloves, ridiculing Kan's statement as "foolish and ignorant", strong criticism from someone who speaks with authority on both charges.

Abe during his brief tenure as premier became an object of derision when he quibbled about the level of coercion involved when recruiting tens of thousands of teenage Korean girls as comfort women and a national punching bag when he tried to rewrite the history of the Battle of Okinawa and the role of Japanese troops in instigating group "suicide" by Okinawans.¹ Perhaps Kan felt vindicated that he offended a leading air brusher of history and proponent of patriotic education. Other politicians also criticized Kan's apology including LDP President Tanigaki Sadakazu who complained that he thought the statement was backward looking and agreed with Abe that it might revive the issue of further reparations. Hiranuma Takeo, President of the tiny party Tachiagare Nippon ("Stand Up, Japan"), also pointed out the dangers of raising Korean hopes for reparations and criticized the apology for being excessively masochistic. In contrast, the Komei leader Yamaguchi Natsuo praised the emphasis on future-oriented relations while Fukushima Mizuho of the Social Democratic Party welcomed the apology.

Despite efforts at rapprochement, the perception gap remains a chasm, with a July 2010 NHK/KBS poll indicating that 62 percent of Japanese have positive attitudes toward South Korea, while 70 percent of South Koreans have negative attitudes toward Japan. It is revealing that Japanese associate South Korea with a

¹ The Battle of Okinawa was one of the bloodiest in the Pacific War. The US suffered 50,000 casualties while Japan lost some 100,000 soldiers. It is estimated that some 125,000 Okinawan civilians, about one quarter of the population, were also killed in the conflict. This battle is a bitter memory for many Okinawans who resent that Japan used them as a sacrificial pawn to buy time to defend the inner islands. Oral testimony of eyewitnesses implicates the Japanese soldiers in some of the group suicides. See "Army's Okinawa Role" 2008.

now-popular soap-opera actor (stage name Yon-sama (Bae Yong Joon)), while South Koreans cite colonial overlord Itō Hirobumi when they think of Japan; light-hearted pop versus heavy history.²

4 Revisionism Rekindled

Abe and like-minded conservative ideologues are called “revisionists”, those who are eager to revise what they see as a masochistic history imposed on Japan following WWII. They favour instilling pride in nation through a more favourable assessment of Japan’s colonial and wartime actions and bridle at repeated apologies since the early 1990s that they feel tarnish the nation’s honour and endorse an unacceptably negative narrative. In response to Kan’s apology, the conservative press called for a more balanced and less self-flagellating history, pointing out that Japan’s colonial rule was not only negative and contributed to the modernization of the peninsula. (Harris 2010)

Tobias Harris observes,

As Kan himself noted, there is nothing cowardly about frankly acknowledging one’s transgressions without hedging or equivocating. And while the list of apologies to Japan’s neighbours is lengthy, it is precisely because conservatives question the legitimacy of those apologies...that prime ministers are compelled to keep issuing new ones. The revisionist right believes that a “proper” and “truthful” historical perspective are critical for national pride, which it believes to have been corroded by left-wing academics and media personalities and pusillanimous politicians. While they claim to be interested only in historical fact, their selective reading of history belies a blatantly opportunistic approach to Japan’s imperial past that belittles the claims of Japan’s victims and presents a blatantly self-serving narrative in which Japan was not a colonizer, and even if it was, it was a benevolent one that hastened the demise of those wicked European empires. (Harris 2010)

Harris adds,

Since Abe’s downfall in 2007 the revisionists have been increasingly marginalized in Japanese politics, their influence virtually non-existent under the DPJ despite having sympathizers within the party. Indeed, their influence

² Itō was Japan’s first prime minister (1885–88) and was Resident General of Korea from 1906–09. In November 1909, four months after he stepped down from that post, a Korean independence activist named Ahn Jung Geun assassinated him in Harbin, Manchuria.

may be inversely proportional to the amount of noise they are capable of generating through various media outlets. (Harris 2010)

Perhaps, but Abe's dubious legacies in Japanese politics continue to haunt Japanese-Korean relations. He is most responsible for politicizing the fate of the abductees (Japanese nationals kidnapped by North Korea agents in the 1970s and 1980s), and stoking media hysteria over the issue. (Morris-Suzuki 2009) In addition he promoted legislation in 2006 mandating patriotic education. The battles over history do not look to be abating anytime soon because new teaching guidelines for patriotic education come into effect in 2012 as a result of this 2006 legislation.

Indeed, in August 2011 the Yokohama school board adopted a controversial history textbook for junior high schools citywide (in 2009, 8 of 18 wards adopted it) that overlooks the atrocities that accompanied Japan's imperial expansion. Korea and China have criticized this text prepared by an offshoot of the rightwing Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o Tsukuru Kai*), published by Jiyūsha and approved by the education ministry, because it justifies and glorifies Japan's wartime actions. Until now the two nationalistic junior-high history texts with Tsukuru Kai links published by Jiyūsha and Fusōsha commanded less than 2% of the national market, but the Yokohama decision is a big boost as this is the first time a major city, population of 3.67 million, has adopted one of them citywide. It appears that the revised Fundamental Education Law (2006) calling for more patriotic education played a role in the selection. In spring 2012 new teaching guidelines in support of the revised law require teaching patriotism and respect for Japan's culture and traditions were issued. Supporters of the text overcame spirited opposition by arguing that of all the textbook options, the Jiyūsha textbook is most consistent with the new guidelines, ensuring that over the next four years, approximately 100,000 Yokohama junior high school students will use the text.

Nurturing patriotism in this manner, however, risks sparking controversies with neighbours by embracing a narrative of history that ignores sensitivities and neglects important lessons of history. As Kan said, those who render pain tend to forget it and these patriotic texts and guidelines represent an organized forgetting that won't be acceptable, or forgotten, in Korea and China.

5 Nullification?

Intellectuals and civil organizations in Japan and Korea lobbied Kan to declare the 1910 Treaty of Annexation illegal, promise official reparations and apologies for forced labourers and comfort women, and to also apologize to North Korea and normalize relations with it as part of a more comprehensive process of reconciliation. Nullification would render the entire colonial era illegal and thus also invalidate the 1965 Basic Treaty since it is based on recognizing the colonial era as legal (but not just). Proponents campaigned for this agenda in 2010, drawing significant support on the Korean peninsula, although their efforts attracted little media attention in Japan. Koreans and some Japanese maintain that the annexation treaty was never valid principally because it was negotiated under coercion, involved bribery and is marred by procedural flaws and discrepancies.³ The Japanese government maintains that the treaty was valid at the time it was signed until Korea's liberation in 1945.

Wada Haruki, professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo known *inter alia* for his prominent role in the Asian Women's Fund, has played a key role in pressuring the Japanese government to nullify the 1910 treaty of annexation, but to no avail.⁴ During 2010 prior to the centennial he along with colleagues in Japan and South Korea gathered over 1,000 signatures of intellectuals from each nation on a joint statement calling for official recognition that Japanese colonialism in Korea was illegal. In doing so, the hope was to open the door for individual compensation and heighten awareness about the specific crimes of colonial rule in Korea among Japanese while igniting a wider debate about colonialism. The petition, delivered on July 28, 2010, also called on the government to normalize ties with North Korea in order to end the Cold War stalemate. Hopes for an inclusive East Asian community rest on ending the isolation of Pyongyang. (Ryū 2010, 127–151)

The nullification movement received mixed reviews, as its principled aims were not effectively promoted. Historian Alexis Dudden states that,

... the point isn't whether or not the annexation was legal or illegal, but rather to understand what constituted "legality" in 1910, thus, even though it is possible to demonstrate that the annexation was legal at the time, that doesn't

³ On the illegality of annexation see Park 2010, 13–41.

⁴ The Asian Women's Fund (1995–2007) was an ill-fated attempt to indirectly and unofficially compensate former comfort women for wartime sexual enslavement that promoted more recriminations than reconciliation. See Kingston 2011, 197–205.

mean it was “good.” Japan’s annexation of Korea was legal because forced and forged treaties, assassinations, bribes, and deceit were the colonial game. In the summer of 1907, the world sided with Japan to agree collectively that the Koreans were “unfit to rule themselves.”⁵

And thus Korea was abandoned to Japanese violence and ambitions.

Peter Duus, another historian, sees little hope in the nullification movement, arguing,

The recent movement to have the Japanese government declare the annexation treaty “null and void” from the start seems quixotic at best, and questionable as a matter of international law unless there is evidence that Yi Wan-yong, the Korean prime minister at the time, was bribed or signed the treaty at gun point. All the major world powers, US included, accepted the treaty as legitimate, and most thought that Korea would be better off under Japanese guidance.⁶

Andrew Horvat, Director of the Stanford program in Kyoto, is equally sceptical, describing the nullification movement as the polarizing equivalent of Jane Fonda going to Hanoi during the Vietnam War.⁷ Horvat argues that reconciliation depends on forging a consensus within Japan about the colonial era, one that will lead to concrete acts of contrition. In his view, the nullification movement polarizes domestic actors in Japan and prevents any consensus, thereby derailing reconciliation initiatives.

Another expert requesting anonymity adds, “For a movement with overt political aims, its organizers dizzying lack of political acumen on multiple fronts will likely yield unnecessary backlash to a worthy and necessary aim: historical understanding between Japan and Korea.”

⁵ Interview August, 2010. Subsequent statements attributed to Dudden draw from this interview. Alexis Dudden is author of *Japan’s Colonization of Korea* (2005) and *Troubled Apologies* (2008).

⁶ Interview August, 2010. Subsequent statements attributed to Duus draw from this interview. Peter Duus is emeritus professor of history at Stanford University and author of *Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea 1895–1910* (1998).

⁷ Interview July, 2010. Subsequent statements attributed to Horvat draw on this interview. Andrew Horvat previously served as Director of the Asia Foundation’s Tokyo office and sponsored and participated in numerous conferences on reconciliation between Japan and Korea.

6 Beyond Apology

The Kan Statement aims to put historical issues behind the two countries and focus on the future, but there is little chance that Koreans will let Japan off the hook of history even if they do appreciate the sentiments. Kan admitted the injustice, but not the illegality of colonial rule, leaving Koreans (and some Japanese progressives) dissatisfied. No apology could ever be enough, as Koreans cling to past injustices as part of their national identity and value actions above words. Christian Caryl, contributing editor to *Foreign Policy* argues that, "...part of the problem is a Korean nationalism that is built around a deep-seated notion of Korean victimhood. Koreans need to get over this if they're ever going to have a healthy relationship with their neighbours."⁸

Few Japanese seek refuge in the glorifying narrative favoured by conservatives, understanding there is little dignity in denial. Former ambassador to the Netherlands (and grandson of wartime Foreign Minister Tōgō Shigenori) Tōgō Kazuhiko states,

I don't think that Japan suffers from apology fatigue nor is the Japanese people's willingness to do more exhausted. There is a big hole in the Murayama statement. He acknowledged that Japan did bad things including aggression and colonial rule, but did not determine who was responsible and as long as this issue remains unanswered, reconciliation will not proceed.⁹

A Japanese expert on Korea, requesting anonymity, observes that, "Japan must be made to perpetually apologize and there can be no resolution and no gesture can ever be enough." As the victim, the Koreans are in a position to decide about how to deal with the colonial past and see few incentives in reconciliation. Given that apologies are offered, but shunned, and gestures of contrition never quite measure up, the odds against reconciliation are high. Rather than seeking a dramatic breakthrough, several experts recommend that Japan pursue concrete measures dealing with outstanding issues such as forced labour, the comfort women, textbooks, Yasukuni Shrine and the disputed islands of Dokdo/Takeshima. Advancing this agenda is the best chance for giving some momentum to a healing process that eventually may create an opening. Not to do so will only prolong the stalemate.

⁸ Interview August, 2010. Subsequent attributions to Caryl draw from this interview.

⁹ Interview August, 2010. Subsequent attributions to Tōgō draw on this interview.

7 Compensating Forced Labour

Tōgō contends that the Japanese government and companies now have a chance to live up to their moral responsibility regarding claims for forced labour compensation. He states,

In May 2007 the Supreme Court ruled that neither the Japanese government nor companies bear any legal liability and are not criminally responsible for forced labour, but I think that this opens up an opportunity to consider the moral point of view. It behoves Japan to establish a joint fund by government and the private sector to provide individual compensation to victims...but the problem is determining the criteria and which victims are eligible.¹⁰

Seizing this chance may not be easy, because it has implications for Chinese forced labourers, POWs and others who seek individual compensation, but in 2010 Mitsubishi agreed to compensate some 300 conscripted Korean women workers at its wartime Nagoya aircraft factory. According to William Underwood, a historian who has conducted groundbreaking research into the forced labour issue, this decision,

...is potentially Copernican. The big factors were the committed demonstrations against Mitsubishi in Seoul and Tokyo and well-coordinated transnational activism at the community level. Then there was a petition signed by more than 130,000 South Korean citizens and 100 members of the National Assembly, and talk of a boycott, that put this effort over the top. It is hard to see how Mitsubishi will now draw a line between the *teishintai* (Conscripted Women's Brigade) and other Korean citizens conscripted into working for its various companies. A Mitsubishi program for compensating its former labour conscripts would up the ante for other companies to follow suit."¹¹

Underwood also finds it encouraging that in March 2010 the Japanese government finally provided, "...the long sought civilian name rosters and payroll records that the South Korean government needs to carry out in its own program for compensating former conscripts and their descendants." The list has 175,000 names of Korean forced labourers and details about some \$3 million of their money held by the Japanese government. (The Hankyoreh and Underwood 2010) Why it took sixty-five years to turn over this list reveals much about Japan's mishandling of reconciliation and why Koreans remain so resentful.

¹⁰ Interview August, 2010. Subsequent attributions to Tōgō draw on this interview.

¹¹ This and subsequent statements attributed to Underwood draw from an interview in August 2010. Also see: Kim and Kil 2010.

Standing in the way of compensation is the low awareness and denial in Japan concerning forced labour and abuses. (Underwood 2008) It is astonishing, Underwood says, that,

Prime Minister Asō (2008–09) could contend with media support that the 10,000 Koreans at Asō mining (his family’s mining business) were well-treated and not unduly coerced. The Japanese media, which rarely covers the vigorous activism within Japanese society that seeks to resolve historical issues... barely covered the Mitsubishi announcement. It is also amazing that Keidanren (Japan’s leading business federation) has been able to completely ignore the myriad claims upon Japanese industries by taking a *mokusatsu* (“ignore with contempt”) stance, especially in this age of corporate social responsibility and despite Keidanren’s charter on ethics valuing human rights. (Underwood 2008)

Underwood also points out that a comprehensive settlement of forced labour compensation is complicated by claims of conscripts from North Korea with which Japan does not have diplomatic relations. Unlike with South Korea, there are no treaty waivers.

8 Enshrinement

Koreans are also incensed that some of their countrymen have been enshrined without permission at Yasukuni Shrine, Japan’s ground zero for unrepentant, bellicose nationalism. Before the end of WWII, 415 Korean conscripts were enshrined at Yasukuni, but beginning in 1958, an additional 21,000 Korean souls were enshrined without permission from, or notification of, bereaved families. Curiously, Japan’s Ministry of Health and Welfare provided the list of war dead to this private religious facility that was used for their enshrinement. The government’s evasive justifications notwithstanding, its role in facilitating deification breached Article 20 of the Constitution regarding separation of religion and the State while also, in many cases, offending bereaved families.

Yasukuni Shrine asserts that the Koreans were actually Japanese at the time they died and thus remain so after they died. Alas, enshrinement is something of an ironic “consolation prize” as this logic has not helped any Korean veterans or their survivors obtain pensions after the government rescinded their Japanese nationality following WWII. The shrine maintains that the Koreans were enshrined also, “...because they fought and died believing that they would be enshrined as

deities of the Yasukuni Shrine when they die as Japanese soldiers.” Perhaps, but this argument has not convinced many Koreans about the virtues of soul snatching. Kim Hee Jong, an octogenarian veteran, was surprised in 2007 to find that he was enshrined at Yasukuni and complained to authorities that he is still alive and wanted his soul back, but apparently this is an exorcism too far. In 2001 relatives of enshrined Koreans sued the government to expunge the names and liberate the souls of their deceased relatives from Yasukuni, arguing that,

the souls of the victims, who were forcibly mobilized and killed during Japanese colonial rule, were enshrined as deities for the war of aggression-against the religion of the victims themselves and the will of the bereaved families-and have been violated for over a half century. (Northeast Asian)

This case was dismissed in 2006 with the judge falling back on the 1965 Basic Treaty and justifying the handing over of names to the shrine as ordinary administrative procedure. In 2007, relatives sued the shrine directly for inappropriate consecration and are seeking one yen as symbolic compensation and an apology. (Hongo 2007)

Taiwanese have also had no success in gaining dis-enshrinement for the very good reason that shrine officials do not want to set a precedent. In resisting pressure from some quarters to remove the Class-A war criminals, one of the main “attractions,” shrine priests maintain that deification is a one-way ticket. Purging the shrine of colonial souls might open the floodgates for other restless souls and shift attention to establishing a national war cemetery without Yasukuni’s historical baggage. (Kingston 2007)

9 Islands of Eternal Dispute

The cluster of ninety islets and reefs that are located between the Korean peninsula and Japan, are disputed territory. Japan and the Korean governments refer to them as Takeshima and Dokdo respectively. The South Koreans maintain a Coast Guard presence and an octopus fisherman and his wife permanently reside there. The Koreans and Japan all maintain that their claims are stronger and better documented, but discussion of Takeshima is relatively muted in Japan, with the exception of Shimane Prefecture which in 2005 declared February 22 Takeshima Day to commemorate the seizure of the islands back in 1905. And so on February 22nd in Matsue there are annual festivities attracting nationalists from around Japan who

try, with little success, to stir up some primordial emotions among an indifferent public that goes about its business while the deafening “hate buses,” blare out patriotic songs and exhortations.¹²

In South Korea, Dokdo is a very big deal and much more than a territorial dispute. While taking the ferry to Dokdo passengers can get in the mood by watching an anime featuring a massive robot repelling Japanese invaders. South Korea’s (and North Korea’s) assertion of sovereignty over Dokdo enters the realm of the sacred and is indisputable while Japan’s claim is profane, a groundless legacy of colonial rule and imperial arrogance. Any suggestion of submitting the rival claims to international arbitration is rejected because to do so would be tantamount, from the Korean view, to rewarding colonial aggression. While international lawyers certainly could find some merit in the competing claims, this is to ignore the vehemence that animates public discourse in South Korea about the dispute that renders legal hair-splitting irrelevant. The seizure of Dokdo in 1905 is seen as a perfidious act of Japanese colonial aggression and as such unforgivable and non-negotiable.

The Japanese government is keenly aware of Korean sensitivities and, in order to avoid provoking uproar during the fraught centennial, delayed release of the 2010 Defense White Paper because it refers to the taboo Takeshima. If this all seems a bit over the top, remember that in July 2010 a Korean threw a rock at the Japanese ambassador in Seoul and some Koreans have cut off fingers to register their anger about Japan’s conceit over Dokdo. The fact that the Japanese government maintains its claims and middle school textbook guidelines now require teaching about Japan’s “spurious” sovereignty outrages Koreans.

Tōgō, who once served as Director General of the Treaties Bureau in the Foreign Ministry, explains,

Korea’s position is that there is nothing to talk about. But in order to resolve the dispute, it is necessary to talk. Track 2 (non-official) efforts by academics and scholars can open discussions and it is possible to have good exchanges. There is room to learn from the confidence building measures (CBMs) such as fishery agreements, no visa visits and humanitarian assistance that helped change the context of negotiations between Japan and Russia regarding the Northern Territories. CBMs can help shift perspectives and allow actors to see

¹² Colleague Julian Dudden has coined this vivid expression to denote the *uyoku* (“ultra-nationalist”) buses festooned with loudspeakers that loudly circulate through city centers in Japan.

the situation from a different angle and break the impasse. They do not have to be islands of eternal dispute.¹³

Perhaps, but as Christian Caryl, editor of *Foreign Policy*, points out, “North Koreans publish their own set of Dokdo postage stamps; any smidgen of compromise by Seoul on territorial issues will immediately be seized upon by the North for its own propaganda purposes.”¹⁴

Moreover, one cannot underestimate the power of CDMs (confidence destroying measures) to undermine CBMs. As Paul Midford argues,

...history-related confidence-destroying measures on the part of some Japanese politicians, if not the Japanese state itself, have conspired to encourage, if not push, ROK administrations towards confrontation rather than cooperation with Tokyo. (Midford 2011)

In this context it is understandable that more South Koreans view Japan as a threat than China.

10 Imperial Visit?

In September 2009 President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea invited Emperor Akihito to visit on the occasion of the centennial, in the hope this would facilitate a future-oriented relationship. Emperor Akihito did not do so even though he has been a tireless envoy promoting reconciliation in the region. Imperial visits have played an important role in promoting reconciliation and the door is still open. The Japanese government is mindful, however, that the Emperor’s 1992 visit to China was premature and did little to appease public opinion or ease tensions over history. Any incidents during such a visit also carry the risk of causing a significant setback for bilateral relations.

Dudden suggests another option,

...if Japan is serious about moving on from the so-called “history problems” in productive and substantive ways befitting East Asia’s most successful democracy, the answer lies NOT in sending Emperor Akihito to Seoul, but first in having him address the Japanese nation on TV and apologizing (with a

¹³ Interview with Tōgō, August, 2010.

¹⁴ Interview with Caryl, August, 2010.

bow) to those in Asia and in Japan (in that order) whose lives were devastated by the course of the Japanese empire and war.¹⁵

Historian Kenneth Ruoff acknowledges that Japan was slow to own up to its wartime behaviour and make amends, but thinks this has changed, “...beginning with Emperor Akihito’s apology to President Roh Tae-woo during his 1990 visit.” Subsequently, in 2001 Akihito made reference to his Korean ancestry,

...a statement with tremendous symbolic importance because it mocked the notion that the Japanese are a “pure” race. A visit, if carefully choreographed by both governments might improve relations. The emperor is Japan’s national symbol after all, and it was also in the name of the emperor that Japan’s colonial policies were executed.¹⁶

11 Prospects for Reconciliation

Historian Mark Caprio believes reconciliation will not happen anytime soon and recalls that colonial officials believed it would take a century to assimilate a people they regarded as inherently inferior. (Caprio 2009) He notes that the wounds of belittling and eradicating Korean cultural identity and trampling ethnic pride remain painful and healing them could take just as long.

The flawed attempt to compensate the comfort women through the Asia Women’s Fund (1995–2007) helped relatively few victims (364) while stoking anger and disappointment in both nations. (Wada 2008) It was an equivocal effort over an issue demanding a grand gesture, thus provoking recrimination and underscoring how important a problem it remains for Japan.

Redress is hostage to domestic politics and general heedlessness. Kenneth Ruoff observes, “Although more and more Japanese have a general sense that their country’s colonial rule over Korea was exploitative, they still lack a sense of just

¹⁵ Interview with Dudden, August, 2010.

¹⁶ Interview August, 2010. Subsequent statements attributed to Kenneth Ruoff draw from this interview. He is author of *The People’s Emperor* (2001) and *Imperial Japan at its Zenith* (2011). In 2001 in his annual Speech from the Throne, the Emperor acknowledged his ancestors’ Korean ancestry, a surprising admission to most Japanese if they read about it. Only the relatively liberal Asahi Newspaper reported this part of his lengthy speech. His frank admission was aimed at improving relations in the run up to the joint hosting by Japan and Korea of the FIFA Football World Cup in 2002. Given that popular Japanese attitudes towards Koreans are fairly negative, and ethnic Koreans resident in Japan (*zainichi*) suffer from discrimination, Akihito’s assertion that “they” are “we” was not entirely welcome, especially among conservatives. See Kingston 2004, 246–250.

how dreadful it was for Koreans.” The same could be said for attitudes towards China and other victims of Japanese aggression as well. Duus notes the lack of “...a willingness on both sides to take the other’s point of view into account, but unfortunately those with extremist views often seem to speak with the loudest voices—or maybe just attract the most media attention.” Moreover, as Horvat points out, giving the Japanese their due might help, saying, “...much also depends to what degree Koreans are willing to gaze steadfast into a past in which economic progress took place in a period of national humiliation.”¹⁷

Howard French, former New York Times bureau chief in Tokyo and Shanghai, asserts that,

Japan’s acts of reconciliation have been inadequate in scope, in terms of the weight of the language or the drama of the acts themselves... never rising to the level of a consensus wholly embraced among the mainstream political class. Japanese governments have come and gone, and their ardour for reconciliation has varied considerably.... the impression this leaves others is of insincerity.¹⁸

But, he adds,

There is a responsibility incumbent on Japan’s neighbours to extend their hand of friendship, to make it easier, in effect, to make the definitive magnanimous gestures that are needed. This means giving up the cynical use of war issues and flag waving to energize the base. It means accepting the idea that real reconciliation requires generosity from all parties. It requires a willingness to expend some political capital to end an unsightly and ultimately harmful state of affairs.

12 Understanding the Politics of Apologies

During the 1990s, following the death of Emperor Shōwa (Hirohito) in 1989, Japanese learned more than they were prepared for about their history. This sudden flood released from the cesspool of Japan’s past proved shocking and unsettling to a people accustomed to a less troubling narrative. In terms of the politics of history, the conservative consensus denying, minimizing, and shifting responsibility that prevailed since the US Occupation ended in 1952 (despite the critical judgment of Japan’s wartime conduct at the International Military Tribunal

¹⁷ Interviews with Ruoff, Duus and Horvat, August, 2010.

¹⁸ Interview with Howard French, August, 2010.

for the Far East, 1946–48) was overwhelmed by a torrent of disturbing and credible revelations in the 1990s that supported progressive critiques of the war. The pendulum swung rapidly in favour of Ienaga Saburō and other progressive intellectuals who had been fighting to force the government and nation to embrace a more forthright reckoning. This is where I think Jennifer Lind, an Assistant Professor of Government at Dartmouth College, misunderstands the politics of history in Japan. (Lind 2008)

Lind asserts that Japan's official apologies and acts of contrition regarding the imperial past trigger a nationalistic backlash in Japan, provoking denials and acerbic comments by Japanese conservatives aimed at undoing the apologies. She asserts that these remarks fuel resentment in Korea and China, and thus apologies have been counterproductive. This is confusing the symptoms for the cause. The fundamental cause of discord is the disagreement in Japan about what happened, and whether Japan's actions were wrong; this controversy continues to this day and these battles precede the apology diplomacy that began in the early 1990s. In Germany, there has been no question about whether the Nazi's wartime misdeeds were wrong. Germany initially demonstrated limited contrition and introspection, focusing for many years on its own suffering just like Japan, but it was never denying or justifying what Germany did during the war. In Japan, conservatives have persistently done so while battling progressives for the past six decades over what happened and why. High profile conservative revisionists continue to assert that Japan was engaged in a noble Pan Asian mission to liberate Asians from the yoke of Western colonialism. They have contested the substance of history regarding imperial aggression and expansion, fighting a forthright reckoning. Their reactions to gestures of contrition and apologies are symptoms of the more fundamental divide over war memory and Japanese imperialism.

The politics of Japan's shared history with Asia, a longstanding battle, drive and define the subsequent battles over apologies and acts of contrition, and thus it is misleading to suggest that apologies are the source of rancour and suspicion. Japanese conservatives are upset that their narrative is losing credibility and that the progressives' candid account they managed to sideline for much of the post-WWII era has become the mainstream narrative. The apologies bother them because they represent a shift in what is being acknowledged, a revision with implications for the rectitude of Japan's actions. Apology denial is merely continuing the broader pattern that has animated conservatives' approach to troubling history. It is also important to note that Chinese and Koreans have long

resented Japanese equivocations and thus are predisposed to discount the apologies. In this sense, apology denials only reconfirm what neighbours already believe (and dislike) about revisionists' selective amnesia.

Revisionists distract neighbours from the prevailing mainstream consensus among Japanese on their shared history with Asia, one that largely acknowledges and takes responsibility for the wrongs perpetrated and supports greater efforts at atonement. (Saaler 2004) Conservative constraints on Japan's rapprochement in Asia are largely responsible for the government's dilatory and inadequate deeds of atonement, a process suffering from the absence of any grand gestures. Thus it is not too much apologizing that impedes reconciliation, but rather the government's timidity over history and reparations, one that is at odds with majority opinion. There are conservative elements in the bureaucracy and political establishment who are revisionists or pander to them. They do not represent public views on history when they obstruct bold initiatives and rethinking how to overcome rifts over history. This government fecklessness and an inability to "think outside the box" ensure that history will remain divisive in Asia.

In his centennial apology, Kan strayed from the Murayama mantra, the "approved" apology that is routinely proffered and causes no great backlash in Japan, even among conservatives. Kan went well beyond the perfunctory gesture by expressing remorse about what was inflicted, acknowledging that South Koreans were, "deprived of their nation and culture, and their ethnic pride was deeply harmed by colonial rule that was against their will." He added a *mea culpa*, conceding that the oppressor tends to forget transgressions and implying that Japan has been remiss on this score. What infuriated conservatives was not making an apology, *per se*, but the greater specificity about Japan's transgressions and the admission that colonial rule was imposed against the Korean's will. Conservatives argue that Korean leaders accepted annexation, pointing to stamps and signatures on documents attesting to this willing agreement. Kan bluntly swept aside such sophistry and further angered conservatives by apologizing for perpetrator's amnesia, meaning them. His wording could not have been a more explicit repudiation of the conservative narrative of colonialism in Korea. Moreover, it is what he did not say regarding Japan's promotion of Korea's economic development that nettled conservatives who continually invoke this as a redeeming feature of colonial rule on the peninsula. And so within hours of the apology former premier Abe Shinzō castigated PM Kan for being ignorant and stupid, this from a man who believes in sanitizing and beautifying Japan's history, and using it

to stoke patriotism and pride. This has become the usual pattern, as apologies are quickly repudiated in the ongoing fight over narrative, dignity and probity. Kan believes that only by acknowledging past transgressions can Japan redeem itself, while revisionists insist he has gone too far, besmirching national honour and pride in the process.

Apologies alone are not sufficient to heal the wounds of history, but they are a necessary part of that process. (Levidis 2010) To deny the importance of apology in reconciliation in northeast Asia, and to suggest it is an obstacle to that process as Lind does, is to ignore expectations and realities. Apologies stem from a less blinkered reckoning, and the acknowledgement of misdeeds that undermine the exonerating nationalistic narrative embraced by conservatives. Thus it is this candid evaluation of the past, not the apologies, that is the taproot of discord within Japan.

Conservative insistence on a vindicating and valorising history, rather than apologies, drives dissension within Japan and between Japan and Korea. Conservative revisionists have also been incensed by what they see as the “instrumentalization” of history in China and Korea since the early 1990s. From a revisionist view, the incessant criticism of Japan is a cynical ploy to win concessions, keep Japan kowtowing, extort apologies and undermine Japan’s global standing by tarnishing its image. To some extent the revisionists are right that Japan’s failure to promote reconciliation is not entirely its fault, but it is largely responsible for this state of affairs. As a result, contemporary disputes within the region over a range of issues remain hostage to history and the rancour it inspires, rendering resolution elusive.

13 Immunity?

The costs of the unrealistic and unrealized hopes that the Japanese government has placed in the 1965 Basic Treaty are obvious.¹⁹ This treaty has not turned the page

¹⁹ There are unrealized hopes in South Korea too. In 1965 Japan gave the South Korean government \$800 million in grants and soft loans to cover all compensation claims related to the colonial era in exchange for waiving any further government or individual compensation claims. In 2005 the South Korean government released 1,200 pages of documents about the diplomatic negotiations over the treaty that revealed the Japanese government offered to compensate individuals directly. Instead, the South Korean government received all the money and agreed to distribute individual compensation, but actually used most of the money for economic development projects, providing only small

on the past and has clearly not resolved historical controversies as discussed above involving, *inter alia*, comfort women and forced labour. Much as the Japanese government desires that the 1965 Basic Treaty serve as a lockbox for this inconvenient and damning history, it can only do so in a narrow legal sense.²⁰ But legally drawing a line under the past has not made it go away, has not freed contemporary Japanese from facing demands for a more forthright reckoning and undermines broader efforts to nurture a future-oriented relationship. Wary of subverting its legal position that all compensation claims are settled, the Japanese government refrains from the grand gestures reconciliation requires. In this sense, simply invoking the 1965 Basic Treaty undermines the Japanese government's efforts to support reconciliation and raises questions about the sincerity of its remorse.

The Asian Women's Fund, for example, was a flawed compromise between those who sought to do something for the former comfort women, however inadequate, before it was too late, and conservatives who opposed the gesture precisely because it sabotaged their denials. The arms length nature of the AWF, established as a quasi-government project to distribute public and private assistance to comfort women, is an example of how carefully calibrated gestures of atonement calculated not to compromise Japan's legal position on compensation backfire precisely because they are seen to be half-hearted.²¹

Clearly, the 1965 Basic Treaty has not convinced Koreans to forgive and forget. The emergence of democracy in the late 1980s in South Korea heated up battles over history, as a more robust civil society put a spotlight on the comfort women and forced labourers while lobbying for redress. The lifting of military repression led to a flowering of a vibrant democracy in South Korea and greater attention to historical wrongs and the absence of individual redress, let alone unequivocal apology or acknowledgement of responsibility. So, just as South Korea was awakening from the darkness of authoritarian rule, Japan too was shedding the denial and half-truths that shaped Shōwa-era (1926–1989) memories

amounts of compensation to relatively few individuals. Within the ROK some Koreans are now appealing for further compensation from their own government based on these revelations.

²⁰ In a court case in March 2010, documents emerged that show in 1965, soon after the treaty was signed, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs interpreted the claims waiver as being "legally separate from the individual's own right to seek damages". This discovery has not changed the current official legal stance closing the door on individual compensation. See The Hankyoreh and Underwood 2008.

²¹ In fact the government provided most of the AWF funding so it seemed it was outsourcing compensation. Thus, it could promote humanitarian redress without compromising its legal position. See AWF Digital Museum.

of colonial rule among Japanese. Emperor Akihito did apologize to visiting President Roh Tae Woo in 1990 for the colonial era, but this did little to quench the Korean thirst for a fuller accounting. The obscured past suddenly jumped to the fore and became the focus of intense battles both bilaterally and within Japan, especially over the comfort women. The coercive recruitment of tens of thousands of teenage Korean women at the behest of Japanese military authorities to serve as sex slaves for Imperial soldiers was a long suppressed story, one that has ignited a strong backlash among Japanese conservatives because it is one of the most damning episodes subverting their preferred narrative. Civil society groups in both nations disinterred this story and lobbied for redress. Revisionists have targeted the 1993 Kōno Statement for acknowledging Japanese state responsibility for the horrors endured by comfort women and the Asian Women's Fund precisely because these measures contradict their political agenda of "rescuing" Japanese history from the damning revelations that have accumulated since the early 1990s. Efforts within Japan and South Korea to expose more about the tribulations of the colonial past are confronted by revisionists emphasizing Japan's contributions to Korea's modernization.

The chimera of immunity from the past was never sustainable. In August 2011 the Korean Constitutional Court ruled that the government's failure to help comfort women seek compensation directly from the Japanese government violated these women's constitutional rights. (Verdict on Comfort Women 2011) The court also issued a similar ruling in favour of 2,500 Korean atomic bomb victims, adding pressure on the Korean government to seek a diplomatic resolution. The court ruling undermines the compensation waiver of the 1965 Basic Treaty arguing that it deprives victims of their basic rights and is thus unconstitutional. As a result, South Korea raised the issue of Japan's legal responsibility at a UN human rights committee in October 2011, asserting that, "...the issue of comfort women, which may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, has not been settled by bilateral treaties." Advocates also contend that since the Japanese government denied any knowledge of, or responsibility for, wartime sex slavery when the 1965 Basic Treaty was concluded, comfort women's rights to individual compensation are not covered. On the eve of his mid-October visit to Seoul, PM Noda reiterated Tokyo's position that the comfort women compensation issue was "legally resolved" in 1965 while the Korean government continues to seek talks. With only 69 of the original 234 women who chose to register as comfort women with the South Korean government still alive, redress efforts may be running out

of time, but it is doubtful their deaths will confer immunity in the court of public opinion.

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UDK: 316.723(520)

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***Kogyaru* and *Otaku*: Youth Subcultures Lifestyles in Postmodern Japan**

Maya KELIYAN*

Abstract

The article studies social-group peculiarities and lifestyles of *kogyaru* and *otaku* as significant groups in contemporary Japanese youth subcultures. They are typical for postmodern society, with its characteristic consumption, communication, and lifestyle. *Kogyaru* and *otaku* are investigated as examples of postmodern changes in the dissemination and perception of fashion trends, hobby activities, and innovative products. The causes of their emergence and growth are related to the general problems facing postmodern Japan: its economy, educational institutions, family, and value system. Their influence is considered to be an important source of growth for a large and profitable market.

Keywords: lifestyle, youth subcultures, *kogyaru*, *otaku*.

Izvešček

Članek proučuje posebnosti socialnih skupin in življenjskih slogov skupin *kogyaru* in *otaku*, kot pomembnih skupin v sodobni japonski mladinski subkulturi. Sta tipični za postmoderno družbo, s svojimi značilnostmi potrošnje, komunikacije in življenjskega sloga. Članek preučuje skupini kot primera postmodernih sprememb v širjenju in sprejemanju modnih trendov, hobijev in inovativnih produktov. Vzroke za njun nastanek in rast najdemo v povezavi s splošnimi problemi v postmoderini dobi: to so gospodarstvo, izobraževanje, družina in sistem vrednot. Njihov vpliv se smatra kot pomemben vir rasti za velik in profitni trg.

Ključne besede: življenjski slog, mladinske subkulture, *kogyaru*, *otaku*.

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1 The Sociological Concept of “Lifestyle”

The text aims to study the changes and diversification in postmodern Japanese lifestyle through an examination of the specific features of the lifestyle of two influential youth subcultures: *kogyaru* and *otaku*.

Since the 1960s, when societies began to enter a postmodern stage of development, the concept of “lifestyle” has been increasingly used, and not only by sociologists: it has taken a prominent place in the public space, in the vocabulary of the media, and in everyday conversation. Featherstone (1991, 83) rightly asserts it has become a fashionable term. Yet its wide use has not helped make it clearer and more specific; far from this, in the early 1980s a point was reached where it “included everything and meant nothing” (Sobel 1981, 1). Although Weber (1978, 180–196) and Veblen (1994, 40) differed on their view of the notion of lifestyle, the concept was a system-forming one for both of these classical authors. According to them, lifestyle defines a person’s affiliation to a specific status group; it also significantly distinguishes social-group formations from one another.

Lifestyle is directly connected with identity, and it characterizes the class, the status group, or the subculture (Zablocki and Kanter 1976, 271). Group or community identities are formed through practices related to lifestyle, and lifestyle in this sense has “identification value” (Warde 1992, 25–26), because it connects people in specific ways to their “significant others” and maintains social ties between people. The lifestyle shared by a given community enhances ties between members, emphasizes the importance of belonging to the community, and plays the role of a factor uniting and even “welding together” the community identity. This important role it plays is one of the reasons why “lifestyle” is not only a frequently mentioned term but also an important theoretical tool for the study of social-group status in contemporary theories of social stratification. Though at first glance a specific lifestyle seems to be a matter of individual choice, it actually transcends personal distinctiveness¹; through individuals may express themselves and their preferences but it is essentially a social-group phenomenon and a form of collective identity (Chaney 1996, 11, 31; Maffesoli 1996).

In our view, some of the phenomena pertaining to lifestyle are: the whole range of typical and distinctive particularities and characteristics of activities other

¹ Otherwise, it simply “remains in the obscurity of idiosyncrasy and eccentricity” (Chaney 1996, 11).

than paid labor—activities that may be freely chosen, or else pursued out of necessity, in ways specific to the individual or group—as well as all the subjective assessments, attitudes and feelings of satisfaction related to these activities. Lifestyle, although it is a product of individual choice at first glance, goes beyond the individual's distinctiveness; while individuals do express themselves and their preferences through it, it nonetheless pertains to the social-group and is a form of collective identity (Keliyan 2008, 51–57). Lifestyle creates social bonds between people and significantly delimits, distinguishes social-formations from one another. Lifestyle is structure-defining for social subjects and is among the key indicators of social-group status in postmodern society (Keliyan 2010, 24–26).

2 Lifestyle of Youth Subcultures in Postmodern Societies

Youth subcultures are acquiring an increasingly important place in the sphere of consumption and lifestyle in contemporary societies. By analogy with Bourdieu's term "cultural capital" (1984), some authors even distinguish "subcultural capital", whereby members of various youth subcultures strive to set themselves apart from the predominant culture. Subcultural capital is seen as an alternative to cultural and economic capital. It is born out of the strong desire of some young people to find their distinctive social-group characteristics outside the categories of class, gender, ethnicity, or race, and to do so, they seek them in certain tastes they share with others (Thornton 1995). But their desire to demarcate themselves often leads to the opposite of what they intended. The consumption and lifestyle patterns of youths in sub-groups become so alike as to serve as "uniforms" signaling a person's choice of fashion. This phenomenon has been referred to as the beginning of the "age of tribes" in consumption (Maffesoli 1996). In striving to be in tune with the latest fashion trend, subculture members are guided not by personal tastes and preferences, but tend to blend into what is typical for their circle, their "tribe" of "fashion followers", their shared lifestyles. This de-individualization and "segmentation by tribes" of lifestyles was typical for the late 1980s and the 1990s. And the trend has grown even stronger since the beginning of the 21st century. Present-day societies encompass "tribal societies" with respect to consumption, each "tribe" having its own specific lifestyle. The "tribal identity" of the members is linked with certain commodities they prefer, with certain social roles they chose and display, and with the social fantasies they identify with. The tribes may even decide to change their identity and choose a different lifestyle depending on the

latest fads. Youth subcultures at the turn of the 20th and the beginning of 21st century had a chameleon-like and conformist quality, choosing the lifestyle that happened to be “correct” and fashionable at the time. In this they differed from the youth subcultures and countercultures of the 1960s and 1970s, which were characterized by the desire for individuality and independence, and involved protest against, and opposition to, the status quo. That is why we now refer to youth “post-subculture,” which is active and creative only in the choice of a lifestyle most suitable for a given social and life situation (Maffesoli 1996).

In present-day Japanese society, there are numerous, varied, and dynamically changing youth subculture groups. We will restrict our discussion to two of them, which to a great degree present a typical image of the youth subculture lifestyles of the late 20th and early 21st century. Our choice of cases has been determined by the following considerations:

- First, they have a significant presence in Japanese consumer society and lifestyle. They are an important part of contemporary Japanese youth culture.
- Second, their consumption of commodities has brought about the appearance of new market niches but also stimulated the development of certain sectors of the economy and of the market in general.
- Third, their impact has long ago crossed the boundaries of the country and is influencing the consumption and lifestyle patterns of young people at the global level. In a sense *kogyaru* and *otaku* are among the biggest and most influential “products” of Japanese “cultural export” in recent times.
- Fourth, they are an appropriate illustration of the role of youth subcultures in postmodern societies’ lifestyle changes.

Although both sexes are part of these two subcultures, *kogyaru* is preferred by young women, and *otaku* by young men. These groups are concentrated in Tokyo, Osaka and other large urban centers, but in recent years their popularity has been growing in smaller cities as well.

3 *Kogyaru*

Kogyaru includes different groups derived from the so-called *gyaru*. The name comes from the English word *gal*, a familiar expression for “girl.” It first appeared

in the 1970s, taking its designation from the eponymous brand of jeans. These jeans were preferred by young women interested in fashion, asserting their sexual freedom, and preferring to remain single long enough to enjoy many sexual contacts and be able to follow the changing fads. They created for themselves the image of girls who had “preserved their childish ways” well into adulthood, and tried to demonstrate this in all possible ways. In traditional society, the ideal of femininity was connected with the child-woman, and the contemporary Japanese woman is influenced by this tradition to a great degree. She has to be *kawaii*, i.e. not only good-looking, but lovable, “cute” in a childish way, and this quality must be displayed in all aspects of her outer appearance and behavior. Young women are the chief promoters of the “culture of cuteness,” and their lifestyle and way of thinking is *kawaii* (Kinsella 1995, 795).

In the late 1980s, the designation *gyaru* began to seem outdated and was substituted by *kogyaru* when referring especially to junior-high- and high-school girls of this subculture. *Kogyaru* emerged and became established as a subculture creating and spreading the street fashion of the mid 1990s. They wear makeup and short skirts, unlike their classmates, and assume the image of social outsiders belonging to the fringe of society. Later the negative perception of them gradually began to change, and they are now associated in the minds of people with the latest waves in street fashion. They are children trying to escape from reality into an imaginary world of fashion, and their striving for refinement and style gives them the self-confidence they otherwise lack (Keliyan 2008, 193). This social group is clearly distinguishable by indicators such as gender, place of residence, age, consumption patterns and lifestyle (Suzuki and Best 2003). *Kogyaru* are not a single subculture group; they are stratified into different subgroups comprising girls of different tastes but likewise of different financial status. It would be hard to systematize and characterize all the different trends within the general category of *kogyaru*. They are so diverse that, overall, this subculture seems rather eclectic with respect to style. What is common to them is: the wish to impress people and to always be in tune with the latest and most extravagant trends; fashion is the single great passion in their lives (Kawamura 2006).

This youth subculture is exceptionally dynamic: in it fashion trends follow one after the other, sometimes changing in a matter of days. These youths are “extreme” adherents of the idea of renewal, which is generally very important for Japanese culture and consumption. While some subgroups of *kogyaru* typically darken their faces with makeup (typical for the late 20th and early 21st century),

others make great efforts to whiten it as much as possible (popular trend among some of them in recent years). The *kogyaru* fashion trends that were most striking just a few years ago are now considered to be outmoded.

Especially prominent among the *kogyaru* are:

- *Ganguro*, who first appeared in the mid 1990s and were particularly popular in the first years of the 21st century. Their various subcategories strive to resemble in their outer appearance the “California girls” of Hollywood movies. Their faces are systematically bronzed at the solarium, or tanned with dark makeup. The makeup around the eyes is bright, and the hair is dyed blond. Falling in this category are various subgroups that differ in their style of dressing, makeup and accessories. *Manba* have strongly darkened, almost black faces, with contrasting white makeup around the eyes, and with flowers or stars drawn around the eyes, with very pale lipstick, and hair dyed very light blond. They dress in clothes with metal or neon designs and fabrics.
- *Lomanba* are a Lolita-type variety² of *manba*, but invariably sporting expensive designer clothes and LizLisa accessories. *Kokolulu* (so-called after their favorite brand name) also dress expensively. The youths in these several groups belong to middle strata families and have relatively good financial means, enabling them to buy the products typical for this fashion trend.
- *Himegyaru* are a subculture of girls who, in their desire to be *kawaii*, aim to look like fairy tale princesses. Their hair is long, painted in different colors ranging from blond to chestnut, and with romantic curls. They are dressed in expensive brand name garments and follow “refined” and elegant models of dress and outer appearance.
- *Gosurori*—The Japanese abbreviation for “Gothic Lolitas,” are among the most eye-catching of *kogyaru*. According to their style preferences, they may be “classical” Lolitas, “cute” Lolitas, “black,” “rose” or “white” Lolitas (dressed respectively in black, rose, or white colors), etc. This group emerged in the late 1990s; they have formed their own Internet community, and are connected with the *kosupure*³ movement. Their clothes are styled after the

² In Japan this is a very popular designation for teenager, taken from the name of the heroine of Vladimir Nabokov’s eponymous novel.

³ The name is derived from the English expression *costume play*: they wear the costumes and accessories of their favorite comic-book or cartoon heroes.

dolls typical for the Victorian Age and are generally more modest⁴ than those of vanguard *kogyaru* but include elements of current Gothic fashion⁵. Particularly fashionable at present is the “Alice in Wonderland” style of clothing, influenced by the illustrations of the book and by the film⁶. The lifestyle center of *gosurori* is the bridge near Harajuku Station in Tokyo, where they meet with others of their group and display their clothes and accessories⁷.

On the borderline between *kogyaru* and *bōsōzoku*⁸ (the deviant youth motorcycle bands, which, since the 1950s, have supplied young recruits for the yakuza) are the so-called *baikā* (from the English word biker). They are dressed in black leather clothes and accessories and drive powerful motorcycles. Their outer appearance includes stylized elements of the work clothes worn by car mechanics, drivers, and related professions. They belong to the lower social strata—the low middle and working class.

Some *kogyaru* members are past teen age: these are called *oneegyaru* (elder sister *gyaru*) who try to continuously live out their high school dreams. The plans of these young women are to remain in this group for several years and, once they have had their fill of freedom and independence, to return to the normal everyday life of their coevals: then they will complete their education, start work, and create a family. Usually they come from middle strata families who can afford to support them and provide them the commodities they desire⁹. The brand commodities they prefer serve as a distinctive uniform for them: Burberry scarves, Louis Vuitton handbags, etc.

The few young men and boys in this subculture are: *sentaa gai*, who dye their hair in different colors, wear white makeup around the eyes, draw various little figures around the eyes, etc.; there are also the *young aristocrats*—the gallants accompanying Lolitas, etc.

⁴ Their skirts are approximately knee-length or slightly longer, some add crinolines to the skirts, others wear high boots.

⁵ Such as black clothes, leather accessories, etc.

⁶ Of course, this is not an accidental choice: like the heroine of the book, they are afraid to grow up and want to remain children forever.

⁷ All *kogyaru*, and especially the different kinds of Lolitas, are happy to have their pictures taken by passers-by and much appreciate such attention.

⁸ The literal meaning of the phrase is “raving tribe.”

⁹ Of course, members also include some young women of lower social strata, who are even prepared to prostitute themselves in order to achieve the necessary standard required by the group.

Each of these groups is devoted to, and centered around, a certain fashion magazine¹⁰, which, starting from the age of 12–13, becomes the favorite reading of these girls. When looking for fashion models to display their garments, the magazines turn to ordinary girls from the *kogyaru* community instead of to professionals, but they also hire celebrities who follow the styles created by teenage girls. The magazines present the latest in clothes, makeup, hairdo, and accessories, articles that are the hit for a certain period or in a single issue.

Since 2005 *kogyaru* have formed an Internet cyber-community (Kawamura 2006). Thanks to this, they can quickly and regularly exchange information, which is an important resource for maintaining their leading position in the field of street fashion. *Kogyaru* are very important consumers for the producers and dealers of fashion goods.

Since the 1990s, in addition to the fashion trends introduced by local and world fashion houses, street fashion has also become increasingly influential in Japan. While the Japanese who aim at “refinement” and “elegance” generally imitate Western trends, the teenagers in question are creatively combining odd, eclectic combinations of different, often incompatible, styles, thus “creating a product” that, in turn, is copied by the leading Western and East Asiatic fashion designers (Polhemus 1996, 12). This leads to the strange phenomenon of “commercialization of street fashion” (Kawamura 2006, 785), typical for postmodern societies.

In the postmodern world the borderline between “production and consumption of fashion” is dissolving (Crane 2000). *Kogyaru* have been called “*trendsetters*,” people who create fashion outside the leading designer studios (Suzuki and Best 2003). This subculture has become a leader of youth street fashion, and their “innovations” in this field often pass from the street into the world of pop culture and even of high fashion.

Kogyaru are law-makers in matters of taste for teenagers and young women around the age of 20, and they even have a strong influence on people who are not fervent followers. Their specific impact stems from the importance attached to modern pop culture by young people in postmodern Japanese society. They have managed to establish their position due to the specific resources they have at their disposal: leisure time, money to spend, communication contacts, facilitation

¹⁰ Some well-known and authoritative street fashion magazines are: *SOS*, *Tokyo Style News*, *Cawaii*, *Fine*, *Egg*.

through the Internet. Some objective factors of their importance include: the general values of Japanese culture that prove favorable to their role, such as the ideal of a lovable appearance—*kawaii*; the frequent economic crises, which create a situation where even less expensive goods become desirable; the attention shown to them by the media (Kinsella 2000). *Kogyaru* have become modern “fashion icons” also thanks to the importance and social value attached to fashion in Japan. The country has a market always on the lookout for innovations and which knows how to profit by them, including innovations in street fashion. Japan’s leading position in the world economy provides good opportunities for *kogyaru*: once they have established their status as legislators of fashion at the local level, they are able to become such abroad as well.

4 *Otaku*

Otaku is the second large subculture we will discuss here: its members are introverts who strive to escape from society into a world of collections, hobbies, technology, the Internet, and other such, as a way of “cultural resistance” against the foundations and values of society (Kinsella 2000). They first appeared in the early 1980s; they are mostly males aged 13 to 40, usually single, and living in the large cities. The typical *otaku* dresses in a casual sports style, and his outer appearance is far from the modish trends, which do not interest him in the least. *Otaku* illustrate some typical global trends in modern youth subcultures: such groups later appeared in the US and Western Europe as well, mainly under the influence of Japanese pop culture (Eng 2006). The literal meaning of the designation is “your home,” which is a very polite appellation for the second person singular. According to some scholars, the name of the group demonstrates the alienation of its members from other groups, their desire to politely keep their distance both from the dominant culture and from the people in their own group (Grassmuck 1990). They have been described as “pathological techno-fetishists suffering from social dysfunctions” and from communication problems (Grassmuck 1990).

Otaku are addicted to some hobby or other, and this has become the meaning of their life. They devote all their time, means, emotions, and efforts to hobbies, and have therefore been described as enthused, passionate, even maniacal, consumers (Kitabayashi 2004). *Otaku* are loyal customers who buy certain goods

persistently and with utter devotion; they collect all sorts of objects, including information related to their hobby. They are extreme adherents of the Japanese idea of “meaningful leisure”: for them leisure is such only when it is devoted to a hobby. Japan is a country with a developed hobby culture and this creates a favorable environment for the spread of this trend. But in a country where 86% of the population has a hobby, it is at times difficult to tell at what point the line of the “generally accepted” norms is being crossed (Keliyan 2008, 200). *Otaku* are also a typical phenomenon for a consumer society, for a society where people want to possess more and more products, which are getting outdated in a matter of hours, not days.

Otaku have a high level of IT literacy, and they form cyber-communities that unite them as consumers of certain products. Their best-known Internet forum is the IT icon, 2channel. These people are creatures of the Net culture, living in the unreal world of their hobby, and substituting the Internet forum in place of live contacts.

Otaku is essentially a phenomenon of postmodern society, with its characteristic consumption, communication, and lifestyle patterns. The developed digital culture and cult of innovations in Japan are congenial to such consumption. It is typical for them that they are creative consumers, for “they create by themselves, or take part in the creation of their adored objects” (Kitabayashi 2004). They take part in the writing of *manga* and even of films devoted to their own way of life. In 2004 the film *Densha otoko* (*The Man from the Train*) was created, which tells about the love between an *otaku* and a beautiful young woman. This movie changed public opinion about the group—until then society at large tended to look upon them as strange or even dangerous, as suspicious. This negative image was provoked by a criminal case dating from 1989, when a sadistic psychopathic killer was described in the media as an alleged *otaku*. But the film *Densha otoko* shows that these young people are not only no worse than other people, but are even capable of greater compassion and show willingness to help out strangers in trouble. The film was based on a true story that took part in the *otaku* Internet forum, the above-mentioned 2channel.

Their creative potential is displayed above all in perfecting various IT appliances and in the creation of new products. For instance, in order to be able to record their favorite TV programs on their computer and then edit them, they have invented a TV tuner for PC. Their innovations are influencing the policy of

producers and traders, and are determining trends of development of digital appliances. In this way they are stimulating industrial innovations and, as a consumer community, are forming a market for the innovations invented by them. *Otaku* are the first and most enthusiastic consumers of new products, even when these are still expensive. Their consumption is more than a craze for collecting; it is also a creative transformation of the products, involving their adaptation to the buyer's views and needs. Producers are studying the innovations made by *otaku* and re-orienting their production accordingly, looking for new solutions that will make the product preferred by mass consumers. The lifestyle of *otaku* is designated by the 3 C's:—collection, creativity, community (Kitabayashi 2004).

Otaku can be of very different kinds, the most widespread of which are: *manga otaku* (people sharing a craze for Japanese comics); *anime otaku* (passionate admirer of Japanese animated cartoons); *kosupure otaku* (people who dress like their favorite heroes from *manga* and *anime*); *pasokon otaku* (addicted to computers and to assembling computers from separate parts); *tokusatsu otaku* (collecting different figurines of superheroes from their favorite *manga* and *anime*), etc. Recently young female *otaku* have appeared, who are mostly enthusiasts of *manga* and *anime*, and follow the “romantic boys’ love” style¹¹.

The total number of *otaku* is calculated as being approximately 1,720,000. Some authors believe they are as many as 6,460,000 (Kitabayashi 2004). The market share of the commodities they buy each year amounts to 411 million yen, while according to Kitabayashi it is much larger, 1,408 million yen. These data clearly indicate the important market created around *otaku* and the significant economic role they play for the maintenance, growth and flourishing of this market. The shift of their consumer enthusiasm from one sphere to another is connected with their participation in other fan communities as well. This leads to a “dispersion and dissolving of their *otaku* identity” (Kitabayashi 2004) and to the appearance of new trends in their subculture.

5 Similarities and Differences in the Lifestyles of *kogyaru* and *otaku*

What unites *otaku* with *kogyaru* is their passionate devotion to their favorite occupation, and their creativity. Both these large youth subcultures display

¹¹ They are called *bīeru otaku*, coming from BL, the initials for “boy love”.

creativity in the fields to which they are devoted. Both are opposed to the status quo, to commonly accepted values, norms, and rules of Japanese society. *Otaku*, unlike *kogyaru*, are individualists who communicate with others of their kind mostly virtually. They are not tempted by fashion, and generally find it difficult to communicate with the opposite sex¹².

These two youth subcultures are examples of postmodern changes in the dissemination and perception of fashion trends and of innovative products. According to G. Simmel (1971), the first to assimilate the new fashion trends are consumers belonging to the higher strata, after which the fashion trickles down the social ladder, the lower levels imitating the upper ones. In postmodern societies the situation has changed, for the creators and spreaders of fashionable and innovative trends may be “diffused” across various stratification positions – hence, the theory describing this phenomenon is called “diffusion theory” (Rogers 1995, 263–280). It is no longer necessarily true that the first adherents of vanguard trends and innovations are of a high status: the more important factor is that there be an existing social network to inform them. Also important for them is to have enough resources; they have a strong desire to experiment and are willing to break with conventions (Crane 2000, 194; Suzuki and Best 2003).

Both *kogyaru* and *otaku* demonstrate the particularities of postmodern power relationships between the dominant culture and the subcultures. The dominant one turns into “nominally dominant” and the subcultures strongly influence and even modify it. This reversal is another example of the effaced borderline between high and low culture in postmodern societies (Lash 1990). The consumption patterns and lifestyles of youth subculture groups have an increasingly strong influence on Japanese consumer society. They are visibly modeling the lifestyle centers in the large megapolises like Tokyo and Osaka.

Adherents of various subgroups of *kogyaru* shop from specific stores specialized in the respective fashion styles and offering brand name commodities from their favorite designer houses. These stores are concentrated in the neighborhoods preferred by these youth groups, such as Harajuku and Shibuya. The back streets of Harajuku—Ura Hara, are full of small boutiques selling expensive commodities in limited numbers. This urban center of “high street

¹² In recent years, as mentioned, these too have been changing; there are now women *otaku*, married *otaku*, and family couples in which both spouses are *otaku*.

fashion” has a purposely-contrived marginal style and underground atmosphere. It is specialized in presenting the difference and uniqueness of youth subcultures.

Shibuya is emblematic for a more mass category of consumption associated with *kogyaru*. Its symbols and markers are *depaato* Shibuya 109 and Shibuya 109–2 (Kawamura 2006, 786). The dream of every *kogyaru* is to work in one of these stores. The wages of shop attendants are relatively low and their work does not require special skills, but it is prestigious because they are “experts” in the field of “street fashion”. They are among the leading creators and disseminators of fashion trends and attract crowds of clients. They are the “face” and inspiration of the *kogyaru* lifestyle centers, the floors and shops of which resound with the elated cries “*kawaii*” of enthused young female clients. The store attendant girls in such stores often appear as models on the pages of the street fashion magazines.

The specialization and regional distribution of consumer and lifestyle centers of *kogyaru* have made them a site of subcultural tourism for young women living in smaller cities and remote prefectures. On non-working days they travel to see their idols and, with their assistance, they devote the day to shopping tour of the cult stores. They wear similar clothes and makeup, and “show themselves” around the urban spaces that are emblematic for the subgroup. Then come photo sessions documenting their one-day of a “new life,” and on the following day they are back in their hometowns and resume their usual social roles.

The best-known consumer and lifestyle center for *otaku* is Akihabara in Tokyo: in its streets they can find everything they need to pursue their “maniacal hobby” in tune with fast-changing trends. There also are the so-called *meido cafe*¹³, a favorite place for every *otaku*. These examples of the “dream world” first opened in Akihabara in 2000¹⁴ and were later followed by a version for women *otaku*, the so-called *shitsuji kissa* (butler café).

The popularity of these places is connected with the *amae* culture. The term *amae* is difficult to translate but approximately means “emotional dependence,” “emotional comfort,” “need for a passive love.” Doi Takeo (1981) characterizes *amae* as one of the basic principles that explain Japanese culture. Dependence on

¹³ Transliteration of the English word *maid*. The waitresses are dressed in chambermaid uniforms from the Victorian Age, in black garments, white aprons and bonnets, but with short skirts and low necklines; they often resemble characters from *manga* and *anime*. *Meido* is a word that also refers to female characters from *manga* and *anime*.

¹⁴ Under Japanese influence, such cafes have opened in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Mexico, and Canada.

the attitude, affection, and consideration of others, the emotional need to be comforted and “loved” by them, is only one reason for the growth of business of these cafes and their rising popularity among *otaku*, whose *amae* is evidently linked to a need for the atmosphere and service these cafes offer. Perhaps *otaku* would not seek them in this artificial world if they could find them in the real one. Since the atmosphere and service in *shitsuji kissa* and *meido cafe* resemble the fantasy world of *manga* and *anime*, and the staff behave and dress like characters in these fantasies, these places are sorts of “thematic restaurants” of the *kosupure* culture (Keliyan 2008, 213).

6 Subculture Lifestyles and the Problems Facing Postmodern Japan

The causes for the existence and growth of these two influential subcultures—*kogyaru* and *otaku*—are related to the problems facing postmodern Japanese society as a whole. These are the social and economic difficulties befalling the economic system, the educational institutions, and the family. The changes that have taken place in the value system are enhancing the feeling of loneliness and alienation. The strict social hierarchy, the increasingly difficult balance between working time and leisure, tension at work, the necessity for the young generations to work as hard as their predecessors in order to deal with economic problems, the high demands imposed on them by the Japanese morality of duty—all this drives *kogyaru* and *otaku* into the realm of fantasy, where the rules are completely different. The education system rears people in the duty of tireless labor, subjection to rules, obedience to the requirements of the group and society. The upcoming generations are also reared to follow the principles of harmony: to be radiant and courteous, not to express their negative feelings and emotions, to fit smoothly and without conflict into their social environment and into society, to pursue group goals even when these are damaging to their personal goals. These demands at times prove too severe and unbearable for young people. In their desire to escape from the rules and pressure of the groups to which they belong institutionally, they create new rules and informal groups of their own, which are meant to be the rules and groups of their “other self.” What is paradoxical about subcultures is that in their striving to be different, and even to oppose the commonly accepted rules, members of these groups ultimately follow rules as well, and in extreme forms at that.

Adherents of these two subcultures are like children who do not want to grow up and to leave the world of dreams and fantasies. Though fleeing from social requirements, rules, and obligations, and following their inner urges, young people at some point find they are past teen age, have entered the age of maturity, but have lost the desire and even the capacity to grow up, to create a family and to assume social responsibility.

The consumer and lifestyle centers of modern Japanese youth subcultures (Akihabara, Shibuya, Harajuku, etc.) resemble thematic parks, Disneyland, or a parade of Walt Disney characters. The streets of Shibuya and Harajuku, with the *kogyaru* and Lolitas parading around in them, recall a festive carnival, except that the holiday here is daily. These people are themselves an attraction for tourists visiting such places in order to see “live” the exotic young people, and to attend their “street spectacle.” This spectacle is part of the postmodern everyday life, of the postmodern street, in which the tirelessly working *sarariiman* (“salaryman,” white-collar worker) and the idle young people with a “strange” appearance mingle. All this illustrates the increasing Disneyfication of contemporary Japanese society, in which the imagined and real worlds exchange places. It turns out that dreams and fantasies can not only be a haven for young people but a source of growth for a large and profitable market.

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UDK: 114:572(520)

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The Departing Body: Creation of the Neutral in-between Sensual Bodies

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Abstract

This paper investigates the Japanese concept of *ma/aida*, the space in-between, discussed by French author Roland Barthes as the Neutral, not signifying the medium of the opposite poles but the bare existence. It first analyzes how the discourse of contiguous relationships and the space between others has functioned in modern and postwar Japan, and further employs the works of the Japanese female writer Matsuura Rieko as counterexamples, with particular emphasis on the space between the sensual and the sexual. It provides a fresh view on the conceptions of space and indirectness between and within the body.

Keywords: space in-between, selfhood, sensual and sexual, passivity, *skinship*

Izveček

Članek raziskuje japonski koncept *ma/aida*, med-prostor, ki ga francoski avtor Roland Barthes obravnava kot »nevtralni«, in ki ne označuje medij nasprotnih si polov, temveč golo eksistenco. Članek najprej analizira, kako je diskurz sosednjih razmerij in časa med drugimi deloval v moderni in povojni Japonski ter proučuje japonsko žensko pisateljico Matsuura Rieko kot protiprimer s posebnim poudarkom na čas med čutnostjo in seksualnostjo. Članek ponudi svež pogled na koncepte prostora in indirektnosti med telesi in znotraj telesa.

Ključne besede: vmesni prostor, individualnost, čuten in seksualen, pasivnost, »intimna komunikacija preko dotika«

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1 Introduction

“The body is this departure of self to self.”
—Jean-Luc Nancy 2008

Because your sensation is transmitted very strongly, I think that I can feel you naked when you are clothed, and when you are naked, I think that I can touch your nerves directly.

When I am together with you, my threshold of consciousness is low. Small things become a joy, a pleasure.

The I that you know becomes like a shellfish stripped of its shell. Soft, pliant, sensitive—a shellfish that has lost its shell. (Matsuura 2006, 203)

The contemporary Japanese female writer Matsuura Rieko 松浦理英子 seeks the exposed, bare body which has sensual communication with others, but also the subject and body that is not dichotomized such as the active and the passive. The body which Matsuura indicates is a bare flesh that transmits sensations, stands as it is, and resists by its own existence without confrontationally being against other bodies, in the space created between and within bodies.

This paper investigates the concept of *ma/aida*, the space in-between, which is discussed by French author Roland Barthes as the Neutral. Since the mid-19th century and particularly in the postwar Japan, the relationality of Japanese self with the other—whether it is a nation or an individual—has been problematized, in the midst of the Western individualized subject and the shadowy Japanese subject. In particular, postwar discourse on the self has focused on the lack of a solid identity in the Japanese self, such as explained by the Japanese political scientist Maruyama Masao 丸山真男; although it was almost left out after the rise of the post-modern thought in the 70’ and 80’s, which prioritized the indeterminable, schizophrenic self rather than the modern, self-contained self. However, the fact that Japan did not have severe struggle with the imported ideas of the modern subject and individualism does not necessarily mean the lack of solid identity. In other words, the struggle of the indigenous principle against new foreign thought is not the only way to encounter others. There is another mode of encounter, and even resistance, through the bare self, as suggested by Barthes and Deleuze and Guattari, which can be further expanded using the literary creations of Matsuura. This paper aims to demonstrate a mode of encounter with the other, as well as with

the bare self, in the space created between sensual bodies, the Neutral in Barthes and *aida* in Japanese.

This paper starts with an examination of mainly French literary theory and criticism which examines issues of space, the body, and the self, along with the literature on selfhood and space provided by Japanese psychiatrist Kimura Bin 木村敏 who uniquely combines his clinical theorizations of Japanese cases with continental philosophy. Then, it examines how the discourse of contiguous relationships with others has functioned in modern and postwar Japan, examining a counterexample by Matsuura Rieko, particularly looking at the space between the sensual and the sexual; and the paper reflects upon (in)direct relationship in which the body departs to the self as well as to the other's body, in the space Neutral between sensing bodies. In doing so, this paper provides a fresh view on the conceptions of space and indirectness between and within the body in the Japanese cultural context, rethinking the convention to have particularized indirectness, transformation, and mediation as features of Japanese culture discussed through modernist authors and intellectuals, and which was criticized, for example, by Japanese critic Karatani Kōjin 柄谷行人 as discussed later. This paper aims to reconfigure the issue of in-between-ness, the space which is not dichotomized into periphery and centre, but can be modulated, and which manifests not only an adjacency to externality but also to the self.

2 Creation of the Space within the Self

Roland Barthes, in *The Neutral*, based on his lectures given at the Collège de France from 1977 to 1978, raises spacing (to create a space) as the Neutral, referring to the Japanese concept *ma* 間 (between-ness)—“spacing of time, of space: rules both temporality and spatiality: neither crowding nor ‘desertification’” (Barthes 2005, 147)—to look at the relation between moments, space and objects. This *ma* is a space, an interruption, creating indirect, mediatory to some extent, relations between them. Moreover, Barthes ties this spacing to the concept of the Neutral, quoting Maurice Blanchot:

What is now in play, and demands relation, is everything that separates me from the other, that is to say the other insofar as I am infinitely separated from him... I found my relation with him upon this very interruption that is an *interruption of being*. This alterity, it must be repeated, makes him neither

another self for me, nor another existence, neither a modality or a moment of universal existence, nor a superexistence, a god or a non-god, but rather the unknown in its infinite distance. [...] An alterity that holds in the name of the neutral. (Blanchot in Barthes 2005, 147)

While Blanchot's interruption here seems to mean infinite separation, the Japanese *ma* (or pronounced as *aida* with the same character 間) to which Barthes refers does not necessarily mean infinite distance, but rather a spatial and temporal distance which can be modulated. Yet, the Neutral does not signify the middle point, the "neutral," between the two opposite poles, but rather resists being passive and submissive by its very existence. The point discussed in this article is the indirect but intimate, adjoining but weight-free, mode of communication in Japanese culture reflected upon literary creations, demonstrated, for example, by Matsuura Rieko.

Although Japanese traditional arts such as calligraphy and tea ceremony and their aesthetics embrace various examples of space and rupture, paying special attention to empty space mainly drawn from Zen thought,¹ the theorization of *aida=ma*² by Japanese psychopathologist Kimura Bin is suggestive. Kimura (1931–) has extensively worked on schizophrenia in the Japanese socio-cultural context, in relation to European philosophy such as by Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida and Deleuze. Kimura absorbs Heidegger's proposition of time into his own theorizations about the self, by reconsidering the self as "an internal difference with the self." Therefore the concept of *aida*, which meant "the space between one and the other," became internalized as "the space between the self and self." (Kimura 2007, 14) Since he analyzes schizophrenia as the pathology of temporality, Kimura writes, "The birth of the self in '*aida*' and the birth of time is strictly simultaneous," because "if there is no action for self-realization in *aida*, we cannot have concepts of 'next' and 'previous,' 'from now on' and 'until now,' and cannot understand external and internal changes as temporal phenomena." "Time is nothing other than an alternative name of the self." (Kimura 2007, 47) I should

¹ Japanese Zen scholar Fukushima Shun'ō 福嶋俊翁 writes that Zen calligraphy embraces *Kū* 空 (emptiness), associated in Japanese with simplicity or a vacuum. He explains that the vacuum does not mean nothingness or workless-ness, since it "*makes us feel the work of hand without revealing a hand.*" The blank is in effect a tense or strained part, fulfilled, with no space left. (Fukushima 1974, 105–106) Quotation translated by myself.

² *Aida* and *ma*, both represented as 間 in a Chinese character, basically convey the same meaning: space and time between plural objects. However, as opposed to *ma*, which signifies actual temporal or spatial rupture, *aida* can indicate the human relationship between the two, for which *ma* is not generally used.

note that the self in Kimura signifies an autonomous subject, as we can see from these passages. The work by Kimura is useful to employ not just because it extensively examines the Japanese selfhood in comparison with the European one, but precisely because it takes the Japanese selfhood apart and breaks down to the mapping of the self, time, and space, which allows us to see the relationality among them. As Mark Seem writes about schizoanalysis by Deleuze and Guattari that “schizoanalysis [against psychoanalysis which measures everything against neurosis and castration] begins with the schizo, his breakdowns and his breakthroughs” (Seem 1983, xvii).

These concepts of “time as the self,” “the self as temporality,” and “*aida* between the self and self” are not necessarily limited to those with schizophrenia. Kimura divides the temporality for the schizoid and the manic as “ante-festum” (the ones who always address the future in the present), as opposed to the melancholic as “post-festum” (those who address the past in the present, based on the Japanese expression *ato no matsuri* 後の祭り, which literally means “the day next of the festival” but metaphorically means the feeling of “there’s nothing to do against what’s already happened”) (Kimura 2007, 47–51).³ Moreover, “schizophrenogenic *aida* has a structure which imposes the young the temporality of the ante-festum. Therefore, those who have the basic existential structure of schizophrenia, regardless of whether they actually succumb to it, usually bear the ways of living the temporality of the ante-festum.” (Kimura 2007, 47–48) This means that, although those who have schizophrenogenic tendencies bear a specific sense of temporality that is forced by the structure, the fact that we are divided and interrupted by time, the temporal *aida*, as well as the spatial *aida*, seems to apply to our beings, including those who do not bear schizophrenic pathology. Also, considering the fact that humans are already involved in activities of foreseeing the future or reverting back to the past, which bring feelings such as of fear, concern, and regret, the difference seems not so much in the act itself but in the intensity of doing so, or the fixation to do so.

Kimura’s idea on *aida*, is not only between one and the other but also between the self and self, taking the issue of selfhood apart and breaking down the mysticism of the selfhood, as discussed earlier. And this brings me to the thoughts on space in French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (1940–). In Nancy, as well, the

³ The concepts of temporality in schizo were originally investigated in his previous book *Jiko, aida, jikan: Genshōgakuteki seishinbyōrigaku* 自己・あいだ・時間 現象学的精神病理学 (*The Self, Between-ness, and Time: Phenomenological Psychopathology*) (Kimura 1981, 122–174).

space is between one and the other, but also between the self and the self. Since a body to Nancy is not a static entity but a space to move, Nancy writes, “Bodies are always about to leave, on the verge of a movement, a fall, a gap, a dislocation” (Nancy 2008, 33). He continues:

The body is *self* in departure, insofar as it parts—displaces itself right here from the *here*. The intimacy of the body *exposes* pure a-seity as the swerve and departure that it *is*. Aseity—the *a-se(lf)*, the to-itself, the by-itself of the Subject—*exists* only as the swerve and departure of this *a*—(of this *a-part-self*), which is the place, the moment proper of its presence, its authenticity, its sense. The *a-part-self*, *as departure*, is what’s exposed.... The *a-part-self* is not translated or incarnated into exposition, it is what it is there: this vertiginous withdrawal *of* the self *from* the self that is needed to open the infinity of that withdrawal *all the way up to* self. The body is this departure of self to self. (Nancy 2008, 32)

The exposition here does not necessarily mean to display internal emotions or something hidden, since, for Nancy, the body itself is an exposition of the “self.” The exposition itself is the being, so that the body is “the being-exposed of the being” (Nancy 2008, 35). Yet, the body here is not only applied to *this* particular body since the world for Nancy is considered as the density of “(the) body(’s) places” (Nancy 2008, 39). Moreover, this space is not limited to aerial space but bears temporal dimension:

We won’t be able to stop thinking or experiencing the fact that *we destined ourselves to the place*. But neither can we ignore the fact that history yet to come—because it is *coming*—also unravels, and challenges, destinies along with endings. Because it *is coming*, it also *spaces*. We will have to ponder the spacing of time—of *time*, that is, *as a body*.... (Nancy 2008, 41–43)

The body displaced, the space created, is not only aerial but also temporal.

Kimura has been deeply influenced by continental philosophy in his work, but it is unclear if he was directly influenced by Nancy. His works on schizophrenia date back to 1965. Then he started to combine them with the concept of time in 1976, continuing to look at *aida* from temporal, spatial, and intra-personal aspects until the 1980s. During this time, he developed the theories on *aida* and the self as “an internal difference with the self,” influenced by theorists such as Deleuze and Derrida. However, since Nancy’s related works are mainly from the 80s, there is no direct reference to Nancy in the works by Kimura, at least on this topic. Conversely, there seems no distinctive influence of Japanese culture or theories in

Nancy's works, compared to theorists such as Barthes. Therefore, there may be no direct influence between Kimura and Nancy, but the conceptions of space and time *as* the body or the self (thus the time, space, and the body all depart) exist in both, probably connected through influential intellectuals such as Derrida.

3 The Passive Notion of the Self in Postwar Japan

Reading literature on the conception of the self in Japan and continental philosophy side by side ostensibly raises the argument as to whether they are applicable to each other, or whether there is any friction in applying theories. In this section, I would like to analyze the discourse on the self in postwar Japan mainly through the work of the Japanese literary critic Karatani Kōjin. Following, I will apply a gender perspective to Karatani's analysis on the subject to analyze how "passivity," if any, of the subject may or may not predicate gender roles in the rhetoric about the self in the Japanese cultural context.

After Japan's defeat and surrender in 1945, various aspects of culture from socio-political systems, education, to literature were critically examined; postwar discourse such as those by political scientist Maruyama Masao 丸山真男 criticized the absence of a solid subject in Japan and aimed for the independent individual.⁴ When postmodern thought, which criticizes such a modern, self-contained, determinable subjects in Europe and moves toward indeterminate, formless, schizophrenic subjects, was brought to Japan in the 1970s and 80s, the presence of the postwar discourse was rapidly degraded. Japanese intellectuals may have experienced a certain sense of *déjà vu*, since major characteristics of postmodern thought such as absence, nothingness, emptiness, trace, *l'écriture*, and rupture have traditionally existed in Japanese culture. Even when I read postmodern theories in the twenty-first century, I find some sort of nostalgia in a sense that "I have encountered something similar before somewhere in my own

⁴ Maruyama especially examined the particular situation in Japan in which premodern and supermodern coexisted, considering the history since Japan's opening the country in the mid-19th century. He differentiates "to be" in the feudal system (where the self used to be determined more by social class than in modernity) from "to do" in modernity (where the self is determined more by one's acts), the confusion of which had been present since the mid-19th century in Japan. He argues that in the postwar period when the wave of social confusion and shifts, westernization, cultural popularization hit Japan, the confusion that preexisted in modernity exploded. Since his critique on Japanese modern subject essentially stems from the comparison with European subject and system where European people had to strive with Christian tradition, it is worthwhile to draw on Maruyama's examination on the concept of postwar Japanese subject here.

culture,” even being aware of their structural differences. Karatani writes about this phenomenon, “[Japanese] people thought that we already had those things in Japan,” and bringing back some earlier thoughts such as by philosopher Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎, it became as if Japan was on the edge of postmodernism (Karatani 2002, 61). However, was that a healthy attitude towards new thoughts coming in?

In his chapter analyzing the short story “*Kamigami no bishō*” 神神の微笑 (“The Smile of Gods”) by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介 (1892–1927), written in 1922, Karatani focuses on the force to remodel (*tsukurikaeru chikara* 造り変える力) in Japan. Akutagawa describes a Jesuit missionary Organtino in 16th century Japan who struggles with his missions for Japanese people due to their cultural tendency to worship *Ōhirumenomuchi* 大日靈貴⁵ as their God in Japan. One day, the elder explains a short history of religion and how foreign religions had not prevailed in Japan, and says to Organtino:

Possibly, your God will change to an indigenous person in this country. China and India also changed. The West must change. We exist in trees, in a shallow stream, also in the wind that crosses over roses. We exist in the afterglow remaining on the wall of a temple. We exist anywhere, anytime. Be careful. Be careful.... (Akutagawa 2002, appendix 11)

Karatani examines this “force to remodel” from various aspects, referring to the point above that people in Japan historically transformed foreign things, such as characters and religions, in a way that they fit into their own cultural context. Karatani’s point is that the reason why Christianity in the sixteenth century Japan did not flourish was due to the violence and the suppressive power by the Japanese government (shogunate), rather than the “force to remodel” (Karatani 2002, 85–86). Therefore, although he appreciates Akutagawa’s sharpness, Karatani emphasizes that analyses of Japanese culture, including that of Akutagawa, conventionally have emphasized the uniqueness of its historical roots and regarded mere accidental past events as necessary experiences, adjoining them to its cultural particularity (Karatani 2002, 104). In other words, Karatani’s critique lies in the history of Japanese thought which enclosed their own culture by emphasizing its

⁵ = *Amaterasu Ōmikami* 天照大神, who is considered as a daughter of *Izanagino mikoto* 伊弉諾神, one of the creators of Japan, and who is appreciated as the Goddess of Sun in *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 (*The Chronicles of Japan*). *Nihon Shoki* is one of the oldest books of Japanese classical history, finished in 720 as 30 volumes, under the editorial advice of Prince Toneri, and others.

uniqueness and “Japanizing” that particularity. This critique reversely verifies the fact that people or intellectuals in Japan used imported things in a functional way in their own culture which means that people modified them. Japanese people received other cultures *as if* they have accepted them, which was not necessarily the case.

As is often stated even by Kimura, the Japanese self is not necessarily facing an absolute existence, as the traditional European subject has faced an absolute God in Christianity; as demonstrated in the *Nihon Shoki* (*The Chronicles of Japan*) and described in Akutagawa’s short story (even the title of his work demonstrates this), there have existed plural gods that are related to nature in Japan, prior to the reception of Buddhism. The self here stands towards or with nature rather than facing one absolute god, even as the Japanese representation of the “self” (*jiko* 自己) signifies.⁶ Considering the fact that European people originally believed in plural gods in the natural world, as demonstrated in Greek Myth, what did not occur in Japan was potentially the integration into or replacement with an absolute god, and the encounter with god. Therefore the issue possibly lies more on the encounter rather than only on the self. Although Japanese postwar criticism, and even some of recent academic discourse by international scholars on Japanese culture, has heavily focused on the issue of Japanese selfhood and subjectivity as opposed to the Western one, it is how one relates to the other, while being conscious about the self. The dominant critique appearing in Katarani’s essay also mentions that Japanese people did not “encounter” others, as they were never invaded, forced to speak another language or to believe in foreign religions. They blended those foreign things with their own culture and preserved them in a miscellaneous place in Japan—Karatani borrows Nishida’s term “*mu no basho* 無の場所 (the place of nothingness)” to describe this place—without severe struggle against their own solid cultural principle due to its absence. Karatani names this phenomenon a foreclosure of castration (Karatani 2002, 76–77).⁷ Therefore a solid

⁶ The Chinese character 自 signifies “naturally,” “from its own,” “from the self,” and 己 signifies “the self”. 自, “self” and “nature,” stem from the same character; Kimura explains that feelings and perceptions sensed on the body and skin in daily life are described as “self” by pulling them toward ourselves, and as “nature” by putting them towards the world. Therefore, he suggests the absence of clear-cut selfhood as well as of the otherness of nature. (Kimura 1981, 311–312)

⁷ Karatani also states that, as opposed to other parts of East Asia near China where new foreign systems such as Chinese characters replaced the indigenous systems, Japan did and did not accept such characters, since they used the characters but read and pronounced in their own way. Japanese people participated in that linguistic world, the Symbolic, (which means castration in Lacanian

identity is still shadowy, which was the postwar discourse discussed above. However, does this analysis itself not rely on the existence of the other, waiting certain pressure from external others? If this is an issue of the self and encounter, why are the people assuming to be passively contacted by others from the outside? Why are they not *touching* others to reach out the other?

As is well-known, Japanese author Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867–1916) criticized Japanese individualism as well as the rapid industrialization and Westernization in the early modern period because Japanese individualism was caused externally under the influence of Europe, rather than caused internally, so that people were always anxious, wearing mere “borrowed clothes” (Natsume 1978, 134). But Japanese postwar criticism—which emphasizes the influence of the lack of struggling communication with external forces on the conception of the self—seems to fall fundamentally into the same rhetoric Sōseki criticized: development due to an external force rather than an internal force. This is the “feminine” to be touched as opposed to the masculine to touch, in the sense of Emmanuel Levinas and others.⁸ The femininity of Japan is not only, as Japanese sociologist Ueno Chizuko 上野千鶴子 (1948–) states via the founder of *kokugaku* 国学 (National Studies) Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801), feminine in relation to China, but it is also femininized toward itself, in the wait of being touched; although we have to note that Motoori’s distinction as “feminine” is a modern construction.

Ueno Chizuko, a leading scholar in Japanese Women’s Studies, problematizes the “feminized” Japanese mind; the Orient created through European power-fantasy as the other to the Occident, as argued by Edward Said, is applied not only to the West-Japan relation, putting Japan in a passive, feminized position, but also to the China-Japan relation, “Japaneseness” constructed in the shadow of China (Ueno 2005, 225–229). Ueno writes, “Motōri adopted the strategic approach of cultural irony by postulating that ‘the Japanese mind’ is different from ‘Chinese mind’” (Ueno 2005, 227). Differentiating it from the “universal” Chinese mind, by which the Japanese mind has been affected and became a “component of the popular mind” (Ueno 2005, 227), and which is Motoori’s creation, yet still

sense), but did not participate at the same time, therefore foreclosed castration (Karatani 2002, 76–77).

⁸ The Beloved in Levinas, indicating the female, is explained as “...l’Aimé qui est Aimée” (Levinas 1969, 256 footnote). Since it grammatically determines the beloved as female, feminist scholars such as Luce Irigaray problematized the misleading grammatical usage about gender in Levinas.

admitting cultural relativism, Motoori “made the Japanese mind into a residual category of universalism” (Ueno 2005, 228). In this construction of a residual category as opposed to the Occident and China, Ueno argues that the Japanese mind is feminized, and even more so for the female figure—doubly bound as the other.

The construction of the Japanese self in the shadow of West and China necessarily renders the Japanese subject feminized. Therefore it could be said that, as Ueno suggests, the Japanese female is doubly feminized and bound. In this tendency, many pre- and postwar Japanese male writers have depicted female bodies as objects to look at, touch, and to possess, which Ueno resists. At the same time, there are exceptional cases since the prewar period in which female writers use their bodies not to be submissive but to confront males, created, for example, by Hirabayashi Taiko 平林たい子, where the body is radically exposed to others, rather than hidden in the name of preserving virginity. In the postwar period in which the academic endeavor driven by French feminist scholars as well as by an awareness of gender issues has been rapidly heightened, it is actually arguable whether the female body *can* be feminized or bound in a way that Ueno suggests. Furthermore, as continental philosophers such as Deleuze and Guattari show, the body came to be considered more fluid rather than static, mobile rather than permanently sedentary. Now, I would like to examine how postwar, especially post 80s, literature deals with issues of passivity—for the female subject to be touched rather than touching, and the space created between sexual and sensual, by examining fiction by Matsuura Rieko.

4 The Non-passive Female Subject and Sensual Space demonstrated by Matsuura

“I felt a new sense of longing. It wasn’t sexual desire, it was the desire to kiss Shunji, to ca-ress him, to be ‘friendly’ with him from head to toe.”
—Matsuura Rieko 2009

In a small number of her works, Matsuura Rieko (1958–) focuses on trying to dissolve binary thoughts such as male and female, hetero- and homosexual, and to seek love not limited through the union of sexual organs or “genital eros” (*seikiteki eros* 性器的エロス) in her fiction (Matsuura 1994, 75). She resists conventional portraits of the female body by Japanese male writers in which sensuality and actual physical interactions are not necessarily depicted but rather hidden; and in

which physical interactions such as touch tend to connote highly sexual and gendered meanings, dividing gender roles between men and women. Therefore, she writes in detail of physical relationships, of a female body which is not necessarily passive, and of a female subject which does not necessarily challenge and confront the male body, precisely because her main characters are free from sexual boundaries, fixations and weight and emphasis placed on the sexual organs. “Erotic” for her does not merely have a sexual meaning; physiological changes brought with psychological elevation are all erotic and sensual, such as sensations that are not directly connected to sexual organs, sensations where skin itches or blood vessels become tense, or sensations as if hearts are pressed against by wet hands or as if the backs of eyeballs are licked (Matsuura 1994, 74). Communications with others in her works are sensual or fleshly, rather than merely sexual. Furthermore, since her early works, sensations through touch, such as texture and warmth, and affects stimulated and illuminated by touch play an important role, regardless of whether or not the touch is between male and female, female and female, or human and animal or object. And boundaries between these relationships are not necessarily identifiable in her works. Matsuura creates a particular space of sensualness, which centers around the multiple memories of contact with others, and which demonstrates the highly sensual but sexually unbound, non-passive self, not by resisting but by having a dialogue with others. Therefore in this part, I examine the creation of the space between the sensual and the sexual in Matsuura where the subject (non-passive female subject) encounters others as well as the self, not in a confrontational manner but in a dialogue, along with theorizations by Deleuze and Guattari, of *haptic* and a bare body. And I would like to connect this sensual space with the temporal space through *skinship* where tactile memories traverse.

In her work *Oyayubi P no shugyō jidai* 親指 P の修行時代 (*The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*) in 1993, which became a bestseller in Japan, the heterosexual female protagonist Kazumi has her big toe transformed into a penis. It becomes erect and feels sexual pleasure, but is passive and does not have a reproductive function, and therefore bears the function of a clitoris. By having a big toe and meeting with other members (who possess complicated sexualities) of the show for which she is asked to exhibit a performance of her big toe P, she encounters different kinds of sexuality where erotic acts are led not only by sexual organs but also by natural desires according to physical/physiological conditions and by senses through the skin, without considering sexual organs privileged.

Even in the latest work *Kenshin* 犬身 (*The Dogbody*) in 2007 where female protagonist Fusae realizes her longstanding wish to become a dog, its physical encounter with its female owner Azusa does not imply sexual desire. Nevertheless, the communication between Azusa and the dog Fusa is dominantly and purely tactile through touching and licking. This way, protagonists in Matsuura do not necessarily aim to unite with others with sexual organs in accordance with their sex, or communicate with others in accordance with their gender. The categorical relation does not exist, since the unity can be inter-sex, gender, object, and animal; unity meant here is not limited to “sexual” unification but is a haptic interaction.

The term “haptic” was highlighted through the philosophical endeavour by Deleuze and Guattari. They questioned the divide over sense modality, for example, between touch and vision, particularly introducing the concepts “smooth” and “striated” space. Whereas smooth space is both “the object of a close vision par excellence and the element of a haptic space,” the striated is “a more distant vision, and a more optical space.” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 544) “The smooth always possesses a greater power of deterritorialization than the striated” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 530). The smooth, never being sedentary, keeps dislocating itself. Deterritorialization means not to invade others, not to possess others, as they write about the Body without Organ (BwO), “the BwO is never yours or mine. It is always *a* body.” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 182) But it may also mean to constantly dislocate itself, “deterritorialization” of the self, in a sense of departure from the self to the self, mentioned earlier through Nancy. In this aspect, the term “haptic” becomes meaningful to read Matsuura. “Haptic” for Deleuze and Guattari never dichotomizes sensual experiences; the touching as opposed to the touched, the seer as opposed to the seen. Sense-related terms such as “touch,” “see,” “look” already and necessarily connote the dichotomized relations. But “haptic” only implies tactile, or things related to touch, and it indeterminates who has an access to whom, precisely as Nancy problematizes Heidegger’s presupposition of the access to and appropriation of others in touching (Nancy 1997, 59–60). In sensual relationships in Matsuura, the active-passive role is not necessarily static, betraying the readers’ expectation.

In the early stage in *The Apprenticeship*, the protagonist Kazumi and his lover Masao possess a normative sexuality. When Kazumi’s lips and fingers move around Masao’s body, he says, “I feel like a woman,” “Because I’m lying here passively while you do what you want.” “I mean, I bet what I’m feeling right now is how girls feel in bed.” (Matsuura 2009, 51) However, since the fact that Kazumi

had a big toe P changed her idea toward sexuality, sex, and body, Kazumi cannot ignore these comments and says, “All right, you want my penis? You want me to do you?” (Matsuura 2009, 51) Having a big toe P and bearing a part of a male body makes Kazumi re-examine normative sexuality and body. On the other hand, Masao starts to have a strong sense of competition with the big toe P and asks Kazumi if she can insert her big toe P in her body, which she dismisses due to limitations of her bodily structure. Then Masao says, “Sure is a waste, though, considering the size of what you’ve got. It might be better for you than I am.” (Matsuura 2009, 54) Big toe P heightens Masao’s fixation toward sexual organ, from which Kazumi flees and is liberated. Their different stance toward the third existence big toe P creates a distance between the two. At the end of their relationship when both of them become irritated with each other, Masao says, “You’ve been getting weird on me ever since you acquired that freaky thing of yours” (Matsuura 2009, 61), and tries to cut it off with a cutter blade, which becomes the final and definitive event that determines their separation.

Deterritorialization and the renowned notion BwO by Deleuze and Guattari—explained “The BwO: it is already under way the moment the body has had enough of organs and wants to slough them off, or loses them” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 166)—does not necessarily mean to chop the body parts off. What they resist is rather organization of the body and its power which may bring value judgements (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 530). Dismantling it makes the body a bare existence, opening up a new circuit for the body. What they aim at is a bare body which will be left after dismantling fantasy and meaning of the body as organism. As opposed to the psychoanalytic body which is based on interpretation of the fantasy and on regression, the BwO intends to take away “the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 168). BwO and deterritorialization temporally and spatially displace a body from the past, and let it work on the now. However, although it makes sense to read Matsuura next to Deleuze and Guattari through the concepts of haptic, deterritorialization, and BwO since they share the intension toward bareness of the body, the difference seems to lie in the fact that while Deleuze and Guattari aim toward new horizons, resisting the regression in psychoanalysis and departing from the past, Matsuura rather cherishes the reminiscence from the past, which will be explained later.

In Matsuura’s essay *Yasashii kyosei no tameni* 優しい虚勢のために (*For a Gentle Castration*), there is the concept of “taking off the genital” or “undressing

the sexual organ” (*seiki wo nugu* 性器を脱ぐ) in her words. Although *kyosei* 虚勢 literally means castration, her castration does not signify cutting off the sexual organs since it is a *yasashii* (gentle) castration. She writes:

Even if we strip off everything, there’s still something to take off. The reason why we always suffer from dissatisfactions such as the want to ride over more or want to embrace more may be that we wear extra clothes, something other than clothes. In wondering so, our face turned red.

Then we started to take off. What? Everything extra and unclean. Maybe, innocent expectations, fixations, biased curiosities, possibly something that is naturally considered as included in love somewhere in the world. It was pleasant that we became weightless and our sensations became clearer.

And, we were undressed (genitals) when we noticed.

You undressed the (genital) which pulls over my genital from the head.

I undressed my (genital) which arranges its form with your genital...

In the end the (genitals) to take off are almost imaginary genitals which are always aware of the genitals of the opposite sex, and which wear imaginary genitals of the opposite sex, even if it is not during the sex act.

It should not hurt to dispose of the (imaginary genital).

This castration is a gentle one.

In your and my body after castration, the genital remains as a simple organ. The quiet genital is not an eyesore. It does not have a special value; it does not speak for anyone, or symbolize or suggest anything. Maybe it does not even indicate sexual difference. You and I have quitted (expression) through genitals. (Matsuura 1994, 235–238)

Her character is freed from what it should or must be, and can enjoy what it can be, by removing the genital rather than by castrating it. Thus, her protagonist, freed from the extra weight of genitals, is always free, “almost to be about to fly in the air” (Matsuura 1991, 205).

However, in the freedom which her protagonists (or in the case of *The Apprenticeship*, Kazumi’s lover Shunji as well) often possess, there is a certain reminiscence of childhood. In the beauty that Matsuura describes about someone, there is the purity, cleanliness, and sweetness of a child, possessing “the sensualness of a child to which one instinctively feels like giving a hand”

(Matsuura 1994, 80). Even in *Kenshin*, Fusae says, “Maybe I haven’t developed as a human being” (Matsuura 2007, 82–83), when she ponders upon “dog sexuality” where one “feels like being in heaven as long as one is fondled by one’s favourite human as a human fondles a dog” (Matsuura 2007, 82), which is a very basic type of pleasure.

BwO by Deleuze and Guattari works upon the now, so that it is always about experiment rather than regression, departing from the past. Meanwhile, although Matsuura’s “taking off the genital” also disposes fantasy, fixation, and meaning of the imaginary genital as BwO dismantles significances, it does not take the past memory out. In *The Apprenticeship*, Shunji, the lover, tells Kazumi about his memory of being hugged by his uncle:

“My uncle was sitting in the same room, not moving, maybe reading, and then suddenly he got up and came over to where I was. I was rolling around and bumped into his leg, which sort of surprised me, so I stayed still. Then he bent down, put his arm around me sort of hesitantly, and hugged me. I remember feeling how big his bones were.” Shunji wrapped his own arms around his body. “It made me real happy. No one ever hugged me that way again.” (Matsuura 2009, 115)

Since, especially for Shunji, touch is a way to communicate love, not limited to the sexual sense, and to show natural affection toward others, there is not much difference for him between touch for adults and that which takes place in childhood. Since the BwO is a becoming, it is “the opposite of a childhood memory” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 182). Yet, the point is that this opposition does not mean to disavow the childhood memory but rather to disavow the temporal one-way linearity toward the past as in psychoanalysis. “It is not the child ‘before’ the adults, or the mother ‘before’ the child: it is the strict contemporaneousness of the adult, of the adult and the child, their map of comparative densities and intensities, and all of the variations on that map.” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 182) Therefore, in Deleuze and Guattari as well, although they resist set significations, they don’t necessarily disavow the past in a strict sense; Deleuze and Guattari bring the past into the contemporaneity so that one quits reflecting the past in a deterministic manner. And yet, because it is “taking off the genital” in the case of Matsuura, it is not impossible to wear it again, attaching or detaching it. Thus, it is not a definitive castration but rather a “gentle” castration.

Encounter and touch in Matsuura are highly sexual, but not always and not exclusively. Touch here is more that of a soothing *skinship*⁹ that brings dislocated memory of touch even from childhood, rather than a merely erotic relationship; skinship starts with a person's birth and lasts until death, accumulating layered memories of touch: those with parents, friends, lovers, loved objects, among others. Matsuura's loved characters often bear some sort of childishness and make us remember the memory of touch in our childhood, something that is maybe underdeveloped, that is simple, but something that is remembered within our bodies throughout life. And soothing physical sensations and affection that have been experienced through the skin have wished repeatedly to renew or re-experience the memorably soothing moments. Therefore, contrary to the tendency in Japanese literature regarding touch as an erotic touch amongst adults, touch exists throughout life. And yet, as Deleuze and Guattari do not necessarily set a clear distinction between the adult and the child, fleshly experience in Matsuura is always sensual, entailing the possibility to develop toward sexual pleasure in adults.

Now, we notice that touch for Matsuura is not passive. Since *The Apprenticeship* is, simply speaking, the story of Kazumi's development, she waits to have her clothes taken off and to be touched by her earlier lover Masao in the beginning. But it changes by having her big toe P and encountering others with unique sexualities. Especially through the communication with Shunji, Kazumi starts to wish to embrace, touch, and soothe Shunji herself. Kazumi dissolves her fixation with her sexual organ by having a big toe P and becomes freed from the female gender role which implies being touched rather than touching. The childishness mentioned above is not to be a child or to regress, but to grow while maintaining a state of childishness, knowing sexual excitation, fixation with genitals, and its dissolution.

5 Conclusion

Reconsidering the space between the self and self, between the sexual and sensual, the rhetoric mentioned earlier that the sharp structure of the self as opposed to the objective other was not created in Japan due to the lack of serious friction between

⁹ The term *skinship* is a Japanese English word created in Japan, meaning the intimate communication through touch such as between the mother and child.

the two, refers to the relation between the self as the subject and the other as the object, if we borrow Kimura's framework. The point is that the gap created in the postwar rhetoric on the self is a gap between one and the other, not between one as the subject and the other as the subject but the other as the object, so that the space cannot play a role of *aida* where they both meet. "Only the relation between the subject [of the self] and the subject [of the other] can open an *aida* that is mutually subjective, and only by its participation in *aida* can the subject totally be the subject" (Kimura 2007, 128). Although critique such as by Maruyama is prominent, postwar rhetoric, in a way, created a distance with the other on the far side of the shore, which may be applied also to the Western context. However, this space is not static but should be mobile as Nancy suggests, and has a temporal dimension. *Aida* is a space where we can modulate the relation to others and to the self, to be a bare body. It is a space where one touches the other as well as oneself, and where those memories of touch traverse.

The body becomes further weightless and further mobile, untied from genitals by "taking off" the genital and freed from dichotomized relation by becoming a bare body. The Neutral which Barthes explored is not to situate oneself in between black and white, radical and conservative, or progressive and regressive. But rather the body is freed from such a dichotomy by being a bare body. And it resists through its very existence, even without saying a word. As referred to earlier, Nancy's body, or rather body-place, is "acephalic and aphallic" and a variously folded "skin" (Nancy 2008, 15). The "direct" physical relationship probably used to mean the unification of sexual organs, or at least the intended genital unification as the peak of physical and emotional exchange; "indirect," as opposed to "direct," would mean unification through something other than genitals. However, Matsuura, from the collection of her works, shows that direct physical relationship is not necessarily the genital relationship but also *skinship*. Even *skinship*, as non-genital-focused relationship, creates a sensual space, a space for different trials of touch. This space, *aida*, is the space between one and the other, but also one to one as referred to both in Nancy and Kimura earlier. In Kimura's theorizations about interpersonal communication, the simple structure of the encounter between the self as the subject and the other as the object is not formed; rather, the self as the subject encounters the other as the subject. The space *aida* in this sense does not mediate relations; or in other words, it does not prevent direct communication. The sensual experience is not to possess and swallow the other, but to excite, soothe,

touch the other as well as the self, by touching together. And in this sense, the body is always leaving toward the sensual Neutral space.

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