

Crossing the Boundaries: Rewriting the Female Self in

Tamura Toshiko's "Ikichi" (Lifeblood, 1911)

by

ATSUMI NAKAO

M.A., Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, September 2013

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Asian Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

April 2022

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Crossing the Boundaries: Rewriting the Female Self in Tamura Toshiko's "Ikichi" (Lifeblood, 1911)

submitted by Atsumi Nakao in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the

degree of Master of Arts

in Asian Studies

Examining Committee:

Sharalyn Orbaugh, Professor, Asian Studies, UBC

Supervisor

Christina Yi, Associate Professor, Asian Studies, UBC

Supervisory Committee Member

Ayaka Yoshimizu, Assistant Professor of Teaching, Asian Studies, UBC

Supervisory Committee Member

Abstract

Women writers in early 20th century Japan were expected to write exclusively on topics considered “womanly” by the men who controlled the *bundan*, the literary and publishing world. The early fictional works of Tamura Toshiko (1884-1945), an award-winning female writer, caused ambivalent reactions among the critics of her time and in the decades since. Her provocative, sensual expressions and focus on female sexuality were considered properly “womanly,” but therefore weak, by some critics, including feminists of the time, but disturbing by others. In the 1980s Tamura’s work was rediscovered and celebrated by feminist literary scholars and has been the subject of multiple studies since then. This thesis examines Tamura’s groundbreaking short story “Ikichi” (Lifeblood, 1911), published in the inaugural issue of the feminist journal *Seitō* (Bluestockings, 1911-1916), which relates the reaction of its unmarried protagonist, Yūko, to the loss of her virginity. Previous feminist scholarship has focused on Yūko’s sense of victimhood and shame, but this thesis demonstrates how Tamura uses particular literary techniques to present a much more complex vision of a woman’s resistance toward the social and discursive pressures around female sexuality in the late Meiji period (1868-1912).

First, I introduce theories of affect and abjection and show how they aid in revealing the complexity of Tamura’s agenda. Building on Teresa Brennan’s work on affect, I identify the depiction of “raw affect”—that is, feelings and impulses that cannot be captured by language or

filtered through intelligibility—as a means by which Tamura shows her protagonist resisting both internalized and external social pressures as she tries to make sense of her first sexual experience. Next, I discuss the sequential process of abjection, as Yūko feels herself to be abjected and then in turn abjects others, to reveal the ways that “Ikichi” explores not only female sexuality and social morals, but also issues of class privilege. The analysis reveals Tamura’s use of literary techniques to expose the powers that restrict women as well as the ways women resist those powers through conscious and unconscious behaviors in their attempt to reclaim a bodily language of their own.

Lay Summary

There are things we cannot verbalize through language, and social power structures further restrict the kinds of things that are considered intelligible, so that the voices of people who are marginal are not heard. The institutions of power in Meiji period Japan (1868-1912)—government, publishing, education—promoted gender roles that centered on men being productive public citizens who contributed to nation-building and women being “good wives and wise mothers” whose influence was restricted to the home and whose sexuality was strictly policed. For women, only reproductive sexuality within marriage was acceptable. In this context female writer Tamura Toshiko (1884-1945) wrote fiction and essays that challenged this gendered division, exploring sexuality from a woman’s point of view. This thesis analyzes Tamura’s groundbreaking short story “Ikichi” (Lifeblood, 1911), arguing that Tamura’s writing offers subversive possibilities by depicting the rebellious female self and critiquing the male-centered language system of the time.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Atsumi Nakao.

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Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the support of many people. Many thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Sharalyn Orbaugh who read my revisions and helped make some sense of the confusion. Also, thanks to my committee members, Dr. Christina Yi, and Dr. Ayaka Yoshimizu who offered guidance and support.

1. Introduction: Contextualizing the Female Writer and “Ikichi” in the Japanese Literary Scene in the 1910s

1.1 Research Statement and Significance of the Project: What Is So Unique about “Ikichi”?

My research will examine how the (female) self is (re)presented in the short story “Ikichi” (1911) by Tamura Toshiko (1884–1945) in the discursive space of Meiji period Japan, by applying the affect theory of Teresa Brennan and the concept of abjection developed by Julia Kristeva. These two frameworks question the boundaries of self and other and help us see how Toshiko’s short story delineated a woman whose bodily experiences are negatively constrained by the politics of intelligible desire, and also to see how Toshiko¹’s narration manages to challenge all such forces that mobilize women’s bodies for the formation of the national subject.

The short story “Ikichi” was first published in the inaugural issue of the influential women’s journal *Seitō* (Bluestocking, 1911–1916) and has drawn the attention of feminist scholars since the 1980s. These scholars have shed a positive light on this story, unlike the literary critics in Meiji who dismissed Toshiko’s sensual writing style. The study of “Ikichi” has developed over time and its approaches offer innovative insights into critical feminist reading today. However, previous research has limitations in terms of articulating how Toshiko captures and destabilizes pre-existing power relations in her corporeal sensory writing. By employing theoretical frameworks that question our ontological system of individualization, this project will offer a better understanding of “Ikichi” and the innovative potentialities of alternative ways to undertake feminist critical

¹ In this thesis, I refer to Tamura Toshiko by her first name, “Toshiko,” although convention would normally dictate using her family name, “Tamura.” I do this because Tamura is the family name of her partner, Tamura Gyoson, a man to whom she was not even married. Toshiko changed her penname multiple times over her writing career, yet nearly all her pennames, to the end of her life, incorporated the “Toshiko” (or Toshi) from her birth name, and I therefore honor Toshiko by increasing the visibility of her first name.

reading of literary texts.

In the following section, I will examine the background of Tamura Toshiko and the text itself in order to contextualize them in the political landscape of 1911 Meiji Japan.

1.2 Background of Gender Dynamics in Meiji: What Does It Mean for a Woman to Write?

Tamura Toshiko was a Japanese writer who had an unusual career for a female writer of the time. She spent time in Tokyo from 1908 to 1918, moved to Vancouver from 1918 to 1933, stayed in Los Angeles from 1933 to 1935, went back to Tokyo from 1936 to 1938 and led the rest of her life in Shanghai from 1938 to 1945 (Horiguchi 81). This nomadic life is a reflection of her struggles with the transitional Meiji era where Western philosophy influenced gender discourse in Japan. In this context, female bodies were scrutinized and controlled by discursive social forces.

After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Western ideas of enlightenment and democracy were rapidly imported into Japan. The Meiji government paved the way for compulsory education for female and male children in 1868 (Suzuki 186). The literacy rate of female children increased from 18 percent in 1875 to 72 percent in 1900, and it had increased to 97 percent by the year 1911 when the “Ikichi” was first published (Ericson 22). While education for women was ostensibly democratized, the morals imposed on them were severely restrictive, and that led to women being denied social status and opportunities compared to men. For men, the idea of *risshin shusse* (meritocracy) was encouraged; thus, men were required to study hard and be socially successful for the sake of a better nation. On the other hand, a woman was expected to be a good wife and wise mother (*ryōsai kenbo*); thus, higher education for women was limited to subjects relating to domestic science and housekeeping (Imada 37-40, 108). Civil Law was revised in 1898 and also enforced unbalanced gender power relations by articulating male superiority over females in

inheritance and divorce (Suzuki 187).

As such discrimination against women intensified, an attraction toward the Western world became more prominent among young women. Those women sought a new foreign world where they were not chained down by restrictive gender roles (Wu 204). Tamura Toshiko can be counted as one of those who strived for liberty and autonomy in the face of the predicaments experienced by women.

While Japanese feminist activism had already been apparent since the 1880s along with the *Jiyū minken undō* (Movement for Civil Rights and Freedom), as we can see from the examples in Yajima Kajiko's Women's Christian Temperance Union, it was still pushed towards the periphery and made little progress toward attaining the designated goals (Lowy 10). It was through writing that women could enter sexist social and cultural institutions and cause turbulence in terms of the fixed constructions that stood in the way of women (Watanabe 13). Influential Meiji-period feminist and *Seitō* editor Hiratsuka Raichō contended that the revolution of the internal self is the only way to overcome obstacles in the real world (Suzuki 188). From this contention, we can see a surge of hope that Raichō envisioned as being possible through woman's writing. "Ikichi" is not a straightforwardly feminist novel since writing is always to some extent bound by the dominant gender discourses of its time and place. We thus need to understand what social pressures surrounded the creation of "Ikichi."

The time when Toshiko published "Ikichi" was a momentous period for Japanese literature because of the encounter with Western-style literature. As Tomi Suzuki explains, from 1906 to 1910, the Japanese Naturalist movement flourished. In Naturalist works, writers sought individual identity (*ko*) through the direct expression of the self. As Suzuki explains, this was possible only because of a particular approach to reading in which readers believed that the written text was a transparent description of the inner account of the author (2). After the publications of *Hakai* (The

Broken Commandment, 1905) by Shimazaki Tōson and *Futon* (The Quilt, 1907) by Tayama Katai, Naturalism became the dominant style in the Tokyo literary scene (Horiguchi 84).

As this idea percolated at the time when female writers started to gain citizenship in the literacy field with improvements in female education, they were expected to write without reserve, to be precise, to spill out their true “womanly” self (Mitsuishi 126). However, since literature was formed in the male realm, anything women wrote was considered to be a copy of men’s work. As an example of this, Japanese literature scholar Rebecca Copeland introduces a roundtable discussion held in 1908 by the Japanese literary journal *Shinchō* (New Tide, 1904-present), where Japanese male writers discussed how woman writers should be in quest of their own womanliness and criticized some women writers who were not “womanly” enough (22). Women writers were expected to write only about the issues surrounding them, such as oneself, the household, and children—the so-called housewifely arts (23). If a woman writer wrote about topics that concerned men, then she was said to be a monkey that was emulating humans (36). As literature was standardized by male terms, women’s writings were always marked and pushed towards the periphery.

1.3 Location of “Ikichi” in Toshiko’s Career and the Women’s Journal Seitō

In this section, I will position Toshiko and her short story “Ikichi” in the context of women writers as explained above, and in the context of her lifelong writing career, in order to contextualize the rupture that Toshiko brought about with this work at that time and suggest possible ways to unravel its complexity.

Tamura Toshiko, originally Satō Toshi by birth, was born in Asakusa in 1884 and had several different pseudonyms over the course of her life of authorship, starting with Satō Roei taken

after her mentor Kōda Rohan (Yamasaki 9–11). Before Toshiko had obtained the name Roei, she was an avid reader of Ozaki Kōyō (1868–1903), who influenced Toshiko's writing style —a style in which a writer captures the intricacies of human nature through how they are presented in reality (Yamasaki 25–26). We can see the shoots of Toshiko's attempts at this honest approach to perceiving nature in her early writings in the classic (*bungo*) style under the name of Roei (Yamasaki 64–65). Her perception of inner human nature truly flourished when Toshiko started to write in the *genbun'itchi* (modern vernacular) style with the pseudonym Tamura Toshiko in the 1910s. Toshiko's distinctive writing style will be explained at length in the section on affect theory.

“Ikichi” is said to have been written at the height of Toshiko's career, the time when she was most known for her feminist awakening as an *atarashii onna* (a New Woman), and it is this period that is the subject of most recent scholarly discussion (Hasegawa 438). Although Toshiko's later writings in the pan-Pacific region do not draw as much attention from literary researchers as the ones from 1911–1918, in her later career Toshiko ardently dedicated herself to writing to oppose oppression over the issues of gender, race, and class, including in more obviously political journalistic forms and activist languages. Toshiko published numerous articles and columns in local newspapers in Vancouver, wrote essays and short stories for literary magazines in Tokyo, and became the editor of the journal *Josei* in Shanghai to advocate for the rights of working-class women till her death in 1945 (Sokolsky 122–125, Horiguchi 88–89, Wang 5, Yilin 70). As previously noted, Toshiko used various pseudonyms over her nomadic journey, yet her philosophy ceaselessly centred around the prevailing power – including that which she was entitled to —and this leads to the theme of this thesis, “Ikichi,” a story that is understood to be Toshiko's revelation of the power relations between men and women that existed in the wake of a new era in Meiji Japan.

There is a consensus among literary scholars that from the time that Toshiko started depicting *danjo no sōkoku* (the rivalry between men and women) in “Ikichi,” it became the

prominent overarching theme in her career from 1911 to 1918 (Kurosawa 98, Hasegawa 438). Kurosawa Ariko, a literary scholar who breathed new life into Toshiko's works by validating them from a feminist perspective in the 1980s, questions the reason why the protagonist, Yūko, developed animosity towards the man she had slept with, Akiji, even though heterosexual romance (*ren'ai*) was an imported concept that middle-class men and women were supposed to wish for at that time (Kurosawa 98–99). The symbolic asymmetrical image “Ikichi” presents us with—smirking man and weeping woman—demonstrates the conflicts and tensions that young intellectuals went through in the dynamics of the ideological transformations the Meiji government imposed on women. Kurosawa asserts that this conflict permeated not only literature but also the actual lives of those *atarashii onna* (New Women), the female writers of *Seitō* (Kurosawa 99, Horiba Kiyoko 51). The awareness of the struggles “Ikichi” brought to light resonated with other women writers in *Seitō* retrospectively. However, it is necessary to examine how “Ikichi” fits within the other works in *Seitō* to grasp its impact and reception at that time.

Toshiko's “Ikichi” was first published in the inaugural issue of *Seitō* (Bluestockings, 1911–1916), the first feminist journal in the early twentieth century, which was founded by Hiratsuka Raichō, who was two years older than Toshiko and an alumna of Japan Women's University from which Toshiko had also graduated (Kurosawa 427). While there were women's journals before 1911, the majority of the contributors had been male; therefore *Seitō* was the first to attempt to unite women writers and deliver their voice to the male-centered literary circles, and the first issue in which Toshiko participated set the tone for what those women endeavored to problematize.

“Ikichi” is often compared with the other two short stories in the first issue of *Seitō*: “Shi no ie” (The House of Death, 1911) by Mori Shige and “Tanabata no yoru” (Night of the Star Festival, 1911) by Mozume Kazuko. While the other two short stories openly address how the system of marriage hinders women's life courses and feature depictions of female selfhood (*jiga*,

jiko) that validate their struggles and criticize the patriarchal structure, “Ikichi” is understood to have focused more on the sexuality (*sei*) of women and how their selfhood was still underdeveloped (Fujiwara Maiko 54–56, Lee Sang-bok 103, 105, 108). Unlike the other two stories whose issues pivot around a family relationship, “Ikichi” delineates the protagonist Yūko's inner struggles after a night spent with her lover Akiji without any description of her family or marital status. This rather simple plot obscured scholars’ discernment of “Ikichi” as an explicit critique of patriarchy and the protagonist's resilience is not evident on the surface.

Resonating with this view, critics at the time of the publication took “Ikichi” as *kankaku-teki* (sensory) and *kannō-teki* (sensual) with its extremely delicate descriptions of sensuousness (Mitsuishi Ayumi 46). This anchored Toshiko as a female writer who excels in sensory illustrations, which linked her to the gender dichotomy of woman as sensory and emotional versus man as rational and political. This tendency can be observed in the way “Ikichi” was trivialized as a story that portrays one aspect of a hysterical woman (Han Wei 160). When Tamura Toshiko was perceived by critics as a woman writer who could depict a woman character whom men are unable to depict (Wu 190), Toshiko was pinned to an essentialist discourse and could not be validated outside that framework. Moreover, the cultural critics of Meiji pointed out how ignorant Toshiko was of her own awareness and selfhood (*jikaku, jiko*) as an author and denigrated her writing for the way it indulged in sensual pleasure rather than the actuality of life (Mizuno 44, Nakamura 5). The detailed reception of “Ikichi” from Meiji to the present will be explained in the following literature review section.

To shed light on what has been dismissed by previous scholarship, this thesis looks into how “Ikichi” questions selfhood with sensibilities that cannot be captured by the Meiji discursive landscape and critiques the system of power by implicitly applying theories which question the boundaries sustaining the self and the other, namely those of affect and the abject. This examination

will bring about a better understanding of how prominent and critical Toshiko's philosophy was to politics at the time of Meiji as well as to literary scholarship and feminist literary criticism.

1.4 Chapter Summary

Chapter Two begins with a consideration of the reception of “Ikichi” at the time of publication and Toshiko’s ambivalent position in the literary journal *Seitō*. The second half discusses how literary scholars since the 1980s have reconsidered Toshiko’s “Ikichi” from different perspectives with the development of the feminist movement. I then explain how this thesis fills a gap that previous studies have missed. Then I explain affect theory and the concept of abjection in the rest of Chapter Two.

Chapter Three is my analysis of “Ikichi,” which will be two-fold, based on the two focuses of affect and abjection. Since the first half of the story focuses on the protagonist Yūko’s interiority, I will discuss how affect theory enables us to understand Yūko’s proximity to the event of the previous night to which she is reacting throughout the story. In this process, we will see the way Yūko’s affect emerges in the landscape to disturb our idea of self and the other. The second half unfolds the story of Yūko and her companion Akiji’s interaction with people in Asakusa and inside a show tent. I will apply the concept of abjection to read Yūko’s power relations with other people. We will understand Toshiko's critique of stable subjectivity as it is embedded into the double structure of the story.

In the last chapter, I summarize the findings of this study and illuminate the contribution the research has made to literary scholarship as well as our understanding of Tamura Toshiko, and leave suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review of “Ikichi” and Theoretical Approaches

2.1 Contextualizing Tamura Toshiko’s “Ikichi” in Her Career and Literary Studies

In this chapter, I will explain the previous studies on “Ikichi” from the time of its first presentation in *Seitō* in 1911 to the present day to understand what has been recognized as its contribution to the literary field, especially from the perspectives of feminist writing, and what is needed to fill in the gaps. To do so, I would like to briefly describe the plot of “Ikichi.” Although the plot may fail to represent Toshiko's delicate textuality that critics have paid most attention to, it serves to show how the story centers around Yūko's loss of virginity.

The story starts at the inn where Yūko stayed overnight with her lover Akiji. As she contemplates what happened the previous night alone, she impulsively stabs a goldfish swimming in a bowl and throws it into the inn’s garden. She contemplates in flashbacks some of the events of the previous night. Later, leaving the inn, Yūko and Akiji stroll about the Asakusa district of Tokyo and enter a show tent. Of all the different acts, one by a young woman acrobat in male trousers seizes Yūko’s imagination, and soon thereafter she sees a bat crawling on the show tent. After leaving the show tent with Akiji, she pictures a young woman having her lifeblood sucked out of her by a bat.

The earlier Meiji and Taisho critics were divided on reviewing Toshiko's “Ikichi”; as noted in the previous chapter, the ones who celebrated “Ikichi” focused heavily on its textuality and how its “sensual” (*kankaku-teki*) writing brought the sentimentality of womanliness to the surface. Other critics who unabashedly denounced Toshiko's work spoke of the lack of female awareness or selfhood (*jiko, ji-ishiki*) that would meet the criteria of the *atarashii onna* (New Woman). Some of these receptions still resonate with the reading of “Ikichi” today: literary scholars since the 1980s have attempted to build more constructive criticism on the earlier reviews and bring to the fore a more meaningful understanding of “Ikichi” to destabilize the essentialist framework forced upon

Tamura Toshiko as a female writer (*joryū sakka*), which will be explained later in this section.

The earliest and most cited review which set the tone for the following perceptions of “Ikichi” is the one in the September issue of *Mita bungaku* (Mita Literature, 1910–present) by an unidentified author. They claimed that through “Ikichi,” Toshiko delineated sex operated only through the five senses (*Kugatsu no shōetsu to geki*, 235).² Interestingly, the same author dismisses the short story “Tanabata no yoru” (Night of the Star Festival, 1911) by Mozume Kazuko, which was in the same issue of *Seitō*, as being a “far cry from a completed work” (236).³ As explained earlier, contemporary researchers find “Tanabata no yoru” to more apparently critique the system of patriarchy and evaluate the work for its explicit self-awareness (Maiko 54–56, Lee 103, 105, 108). These two conflicting evaluations suggest that Toshiko's writing was worthy of attention inasmuch as women's writing was attributed to bodily senses rather than to rational philosophy (*shisō*) among literary critics, which is substantiated by the way the unidentified author claims “the writers of *Seitō* must excel in these sorts of sensual expressions” (236).⁴

This body/mind dualistic undertone stems from the Meiji literary discursive space where the prevailing belief dwelled on how women's writing needs to offer emotions and female sensitivity, not the intellect (Tanaka 6). Women were thus bound to the realm of the body which

² “五感の働きのみによって生きて行くセックス——それを描くのに女史は質に鮮やかな筆を持って居る。(Sex run solely by the five senses ——is something she paints with a brush of great quality).”(unknown, 235, translation mine). Similar critiques were made by Iwano Hōmei and Kobayashi Aiyū; they compare Toshiko with other male contemporaries and praise Toshiko's text as more “*nikukan no aru*” (voluptuous) (Homei 67) or “*hifu ni oite ebin de aru*” (having a sensitive skin) (Mizuno 1138).

³ “未だ到底物になつてみない (still not quite the complete quality)” (unknown, 236, translation mine).

⁴ “記者は『青鞥』の諸子が如何に感覺的優勢に向かつて競ひつゝあるかを認めざる能はざるものである (The reporter cannot help but notice how the illustrious masters of *Seitō* are competing with each other for sensory superiority)”(unknown, 236, translation mine).

became a referential point as the Other in relation to the intellectual male Self who, contrariwise, dominates the mind and modern rationality (Kitagawa 153). We can understand more clearly how Toshiko is configured in this framework when looking into the harsher criticisms of Toshiko's works. Mizuno Michitarō wrote at length that the common reception of Toshiko's sensual expression is a way for Toshiko to hide her blindness to her self-awareness (*jikaku*); therefore, the superficial writing comes about purely from Toshiko's lethargic attitude towards her own inner self (41–42). Hiratsuka Raichō, the founder of *Seito*, agreed with Mizuno's perception of Toshiko and dismissed Toshiko as by no means *atarashii onna* (a New Woman) but as rather a *furui Nihon fujin* (an old-style Japanese woman) (Hiratsuka 110).⁵ As discussed earlier, Toshiko's theme was considered neither critical nor rational by scholars, and here we can reaffirm that Toshiko's literary style may not have met the expectations in Meiji, one aspect of which, her approach to sexuality, differed from the philosophy of members in *Seitō*, an issue which will be discussed more in the discussion section.

Toshiko's works had to wait for re-evaluation until the 1980s when feminist reading gained citizenship in the literary field and “Ikichi” was taken as a progressive feminist narrative. “Ikichi” appeared in the *Tamura Toshiko zenshū* (The Complete Works of Tamura Toshiko, 1987–1988) and that was the beginning of scholarly attempts to resuscitate Toshiko's works. To illuminate the previous contributions to the understanding of “Ikichi,” I will map them thematically, which leads us to three major streams in these analyses: “Ikichi” as a narrative that 1) critiques the asymmetrical gender power balance, which could be categorized under the tradition of *danjo no sōkoku*; 2)

⁵ Among literary scholars, there was a dispute around the contention that Toshiko failed to be an *atarashii onna* (New Woman) which defined by Hiratsuka Raichō as “The new women hope to destroy the old morality and laws that were made for men's convenience” (Horiguchi, Diss 77-83).

delivers female sexual (queer) desire that would destabilize the gender expectation of women's chastity in Meiji; and 3) expresses the transformation of the self through corporeal sensibilities. I will briefly synthesize each discussion to show how this thesis could fill in the gaps and offer new insights.

Firstly, as discussed earlier, since the 1980s, Kurosawa Arika was the earliest scholar to claim “Ikichi” as a representative piece of the zeitgeist in Meiji and her instrumental discussion of *danjo no sōkoku* inspired subsequent literary studies, not only about “Ikichi” but also about Toshiko's other literary works (Lan 25, Hasegawa 438). While the Meiji government was promoting education for young women, the sociopolitical situation of women was still positioned below men and this systematic power imbalance is vividly present in the sexual relationship in “Ikichi.” Suzuki Masakazu reads the final image of the bat and the young woman in male trousers as symbolizing the distorted inequity between men and women, revealing that women's reality is drastically different from that of men in the ideological Meiji sociocultural space (14–15). Similarly, Seon Yeong Kwon paid particular attention to the bat and how it also appears figuratively in the term for a Western-style umbrella, *kōmori gasa* (a bat-style umbrella), which is used as the symbol of male protection of women in Kwon’s analysis. Through this symbolic reading, Kwon notes that “Ikichi” has shown how male exploitation of women was drawn even though male protection was necessary to Yūko (410–413). The latest studies that align with these interpretations are done by Han Wei and Wang Shengqun. In their discussions, the visual image of the bat sucking the young woman’s lifeblood implies the broader social injustice inflicted on women at the time of publication (Han 167–168, Wang 102–103). By assessing these studies, it becomes clear that unlike critics in Meiji who disregarded the symbolic reading of “Ikichi,” more recent scholars shed light on Toshiko's use of metaphorical images and opened up the possibilities of reading the story as a critique of the female predicament and double standards regarding sexuality in Meiji Japan.

Secondly, scholars since the 1990s have found a way to read “Ikichi” as a story of a woman's awakening of sexual desire and pleasure, which casts light on the potentialities of “Ikichi” as a subversive text vis-à-vis the male-centred language system in Meiji. Mitsuishi Ayumi argues that the enigmatic destructive emotions internally vented in Yūko were representative of the hatred caused by women being alienated from sexual activities at that time. Mitsuishi (1996) understands that Yūko's sensuality (*kannō*), expressed in adverbs such as *natsukashisa* (nostalgia) or *atatakasa* (warmth), challenges the patriarchal literary space (Onna sakusha, 56–58). Following these concerns, Takata Harumi explores Yūko's act of penetrating the goldfish as a way for Yūko to awaken her sexual pleasure—the pleasure too immense to be handled by a man, pleasure that would menace society (25–29). Akimoto Kaoru offers a slightly different angle based on the scenes where Yūko interacts with the woman in male trousers as a moment when Yūko realized her sexual desire for a person of the same sex. Therefore, “Ikichi” is a story of a young woman finding it difficult to reconcile her heterosexual relationship and recognizing her actual sexual orientation over the course of the events (148–150). With the affirmation and embracing of female sexual pleasure as empowerment by the efforts of feminist movements since the 1980s, once considered a “hysterical” story, “Ikichi” could reclaim its subversive power against the imposed ideal of female chastity in Meiji in the views of these critics.

Thirdly, since the 2000s, researchers have conducted a feminist reading of “Ikichi” through an analysis of its language, seeing it as an attempt to present a new self not restricted by an androcentric language system. It is understood that Toshiko's sensory expressions are validated and attributed to feminist writing to capture female corporeal realities (Furugōri 122, Yamasaki 142). Furugōri put a strong emphasis on Toshiko's bodily sensitivities as a radical critique of the enacted language system and imposed meaning of the female body preceding the actuality of that body (132). Yamasaki Makiko also stresses the significance of the exclusive world view of Yūko in

which the story pivots on Yūko's voice. It suggests that women are regaining "I" pronouns that align with the philosophy of *Seitō*, and it is Toshiko's strategy to depict a body not bounded by the male voice (148). Similarly, Fujiwara Maiko contests the crucial meaning of blood in Meiji moral discourse that deemed that women's blood would become "impure" (*kegare*) if she has intercourse with a man outside of marriage. Yūko's intense discomfort is expressed throughout the text since it is the way "Ikichi" questions the stability of self-identity (*jiko dōitsusei*) (54, 56) and shows how identity is fragile in the face of coercive discourse. The intimate relationship between language and the self was rediscovered in these studies, and their arguments enable us to see the potential of "Ikichi" to critique an ontological understanding of the self pivoting on the hegemonic (androcentric) language system of Meiji. This is the very philosophy and critique Toshiko offers, which literary critics in Meiji failed to understand.

We can now address questions about these new insights offered to our understanding of "Ikichi" to broaden the potentialities and critiques of the story. First, as for *danjo no sōkoku* (the rivalry between men and women), "Ikichi" indeed reveals the asymmetrical power balance of women and men, and that is done by the symbolic imagery in the text. However, we should not miss the context when Yūko notices the bat, which is in the show tent. To be more specific, Yūko encountered the bat after roaming around in Asakusa. How does this background play out towards the climax of the end? Is it only the gender power relationship that "Ikichi" presents or are any other power dynamics explored in the story? Second, in terms of Yūko's pleasure, I especially wish to pay attention to Akimoto's argument on desire for women. Yūko gains pleasure through her gaze towards the woman in the show tent. What is the nature of this pleasure exactly? Is it something we can blindly embrace and celebrate? If so, why was Yūko in terror and bewildered in the show tent? Does this tell us something about the politics of the gaze? Thirdly, for the sensory expressions to claim the actuality of the self and body, this position is a prerequisite to the concept of selfhood

(*jiko*). Reclaiming a different selfhood free from the Meiji language system affirms the construction of subjectivity that may entail the exclusion of the other. “Ikichi,” in my view, critiques the very structure where such a boundary between subject and object is reproduced. Based on these questions and concerns, my thesis applies the framework of affect and abjection. Affect theory helps us see how the boundary between self and other is a mere fiction, so fragile that it requires repetitive maintenance. The concept of abjection comes from the same horizon, viewing subjectivity as a mere illusion, which sustains itself through abjecting the other. Looking at “Ikichi” through the lens of abjection allows us to see power relationships other than the one between Yūko and Akiji and explains where the pleasure comes from in the text.

As we shall see, when we reconsider “Ikichi” in the light of affect theory and the concept of abjection, and we turn our attention to a close reading of the protagonist’s thoughts and actions, it will become clear that previous studies of “Ikichi” have overlooked the text’s intricate power-relationships, the pleasure of the gaze, and the fictionality of self and other. My study will fill in those gaps.

2.2 Affect Theory and the Meiji literary Landscape

Affects are hard to define. They are coded through societal morals and norms, yet they are not entirely artificial or socially constructed, and whatever their definition or origin they sink into one's psyche. In this thesis, I draw particularly on the affect theory of Teresa Brennan in her influential study, *The Transmission of Affect* (2004). Brennan notes that the term affect comes from *affectus* in Latin, meaning passion and emotion, yet she expands on the original meaning of the term (3). In Brennan’s view, passion, emotion, and feeling are stimuli and sensations *that find the right match in words*. That is, affect is not just a matter of sensations but also a matter of language through which they are acknowledged, and filtered (5–6). Sensations or feelings alone are material,

physical, present and unprocessed through language. Sensations cannot be considered “intelligent” as they are accompanied by bodily changes (5). She gives the example of walking into a room and immediately feeling the emotional atmosphere, which, she says, “alters the biochemistry and neurology of the subject. The ‘atmosphere’ or the environment literally gets into the individual. Physically and biologically, something is present that was not there before ...” (1) It may not be possible to put a name to the accompanying sensation, but its physical and emotional effects are nonetheless present. Another way of expressing this is to consider the means of understanding the world described by Ferdinand de Saussure. As Saussure claims, objects do not enter the world with their given names, but they are named in order to locate them in the language system of “reality” — namely, names are assigned after their acknowledgements (Turner, 10–12). It is we humans who cut the gradational world into pieces and put them into labeled categories such as feelings and emotions. What I am interested in in this thesis are sensations, emotions, that cannot be, or at least have yet to be captured and coded by language. Departing slightly from Brennan, I will call these unnamed or unnamable sensations “raw affect.”

To address all the things that are opposite to raw affect, the labelled things, I will frequently use the term “intelligibility.” This word characterizes all the entities that have been given a name so that they will fit into and not disturb coherent society (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 22–24, and *Bodies that Matter* 70). Reading “Ikichi” as a story of young woman mourning her loss of virginity would not disturb the coherency and continuity of the social norms of Meiji Japan. I argue that in “Ikichi” there are moments and sensations — raw affect — that cannot be captured by pre-existing emotional labels. Coded feelings are also inserted into the narrative: sadness, smirking, wrath and so on. However, more importantly, corporeal sensitivities, raw affects, are also interwoven in the story. In my analysis I unfold the text to reveal the uncapturable fractures that Toshiko delivered in “Ikichi.”

As briefly touched on before, writing the self was only possible through the acquisition of a Western-style phonocentric writing system. The *genbun'itchi undō* (the movement advocating unification of the written and spoken forms of the Japanese language) reflects such Western literary influences in the Meiji era. This seemingly more unmediated literary language affected people's way of thinking in the literary world. Karatani Kōjin is one of the scholars who has examined how this new writing system created a boundary between self and the other due to its creation of “interiority.” Karatani notes that, through *genbun'itchi*, Japanese literature has obtained the illusion of a writer expressing the self, direct from the inner account (82). Karatani takes Kunikida Doppo as an example. In Kunikida's novel, there is no distance between the self and text, which proves that he is able to describe his self without any seeming interface (76). Toshiko started to write in the *genbun'itchi* style from the time of her serialized novel *Sodezugin* (Sleeved Hood, 1907–1908), which appeared in the *Tokyo Daily Newspaper* under the name Satō Roei. By the time *Seitō* was first published in 1911, the *genbun'itchi* style had become predominant as Japan's literary language (Iida 14, Yamasaki 65).

What is most significant in Karatani's argument, on reading “Ikichi,” is that the depiction of landscape comes from self-consciousness (36). Karatani equates landscape to so-called “reality” and suggests that what we call “reality” is really an account of interiority (29–35). In this reality, the fictionality of the landscape is completely forgotten, and it is considered to be something a priori and given. Object (*kyakkan-butsumo*) and subject (*shukan*) or self (*jiko*) are constructed within this landscape. Namely, the cognition of subject and object are not indisputable fact, rather a creation that is only possible after the discursive establishment of landscape (36). What we see as objective/object is actually a reflection of interiority. Karatani reiterates the word “system” (*seido*) to refer to an interiority which did not even exist in the early Meiji era (81). Landscape is the extension of such a systematized interiority. What is suggested here is that the relationship between

subject and object is a constructed entity based on landscape and its origin in interiority. This argument assists our understanding of affect in that Toshiko's writing of landscape is not a mere description of the outside world, but is speaking to us about the protagonist Yūko's raw affect, which is not intelligible through the androcentric Meiji language system.

2.3 Abjection: Unceasingly Distancing Myself from the Repulsive Me

This section clarifies the definition of the abject by providing the background of how the abject has emerged in the realm of psychoanalysis and contributed to feminist readings of cultural texts—the crux of abjection relates to its role in the maintenance of the affirmation of the subject. In the end, we will see that the pivot of the approach for “reading for the abject” is a hope to challenge the repressive power structure that upholds the system of the abject.

Julia Kristeva developed the notion of the abject in her book *Power of Horror: Essays of Abjection* (original in French 1980, translated into English 1982), which drew significant attention in the field of psychoanalysis and philosophy. Feminist scholars also found potential in the abject as a critical conceptual framework for conducting feminist research and vigorously applied the concept in criticizing misogynistic structures in both textual and social systems during the 1980s and 1990s. The immediate appeal of the abject to feminist intellectuals lies in the maternal role embedded in Kristeva's Lacanian understanding of subject formation (Tyler, Imogen 78–80).

Noelle McAfee explicates Kristeva's version of subject formation in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Following the Freudian understanding of the emergence of ego, Lacan proposed that an infant develops its sense of self through the mirror stage, in which the infant identifies itself in its reflected image in the mirror. The infant finds a unified, ideal self-image in this reflection, even though this is in fact a misrecognition of self, in the sense that the actual subject is not harmonious, though it is factual, and depends on the linguistic other. Kristeva found this theory of

the formation of the self during the pre-symbolic and pre-Oedipal stage insufficient, calling it “secondary repression.” She offered a preceding concept of “primary repression,” which starts in the place where an infant cannot distinguish itself from the mother, the world, and other beings: “the state of being one with all” (McAfee 117). In Kristeva’s formulation, the infant forms a subject by spitting out—ab-jecting—the undifferentiated self, beginning with its mother, and creates a securely skinned autonomy (McAfee 117–118). The expelled “not I,” the abject, is neither subject nor object because one cannot define it as a whole different being as it is deeply related to the self (Wannamaker 28). It is too repulsive to admit the abject as an object, which invites us to be “ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it” (Kristeva *Stranger to Ourselves* 2). The abject threatens our skinned boundaries with its uncanniness and draws us to the place where we have no subject, in the realm of the Imaginary, where “meaning collapses” (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 2).

This abjection process is not a single event in pre-Oedipal time, and our subjectivity is permanently challenged by fleeting encounters with the abject throughout everyday life; in other words, our subjectivity entails the constantly reiterated radical exclusion of the abject to secure its stability (McAfee 118, Tyler 80). Cultural texts such as visual media and literature assist this incessant definition of the self by reiterating the “primary repression” we experienced to differentiate what should be expelled outside our bodies and what should remain inside.

The abject is what the symbolic order cannot accept—corporeality, the maternal, and feelings associated with disgust and fear—as the abject reveals the precarious boundaries of subjectivity. Elizabeth Grosz draws on Kristeva to argue that the abject denotes a cultural limit, existing outside the boundary of a society’s tolerance for the human body’s corporeal leakiness and mortality. Considering the differentiation of self from the mother in the primary repression, the maternal and feminine are the most significant exemplars of the abject. The maternal, feminine, leaky body is located in opposition to the paternal, rational, symbolic order (Grosz 89–93). The act

of abjection, spitting the intolerable part of self outside the subject boundary, rejects the identities that threaten intelligibility, the identities that threaten the normativity that the law recognizes (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 192).

Duncan Shields et al. focused on this structure where the scrutiny and repudiation of the abject identity arises, not only within individuals but amongst groups and society. Identity that does not abide by expected gender norms is also violently reduced to an “abject identity” (Shields et al. 216, Kimmel 35). This abject identity dwells in the “constructive outside” instituted through the repetitive naming and rejection of the abject identity (Butler, *Bodies that matter* 188; Pascoe 14). Abjection operates beyond the gender spectrum; all those who are liminal to or outside of the boundary established by the community fall into the category of the abject (Kwon 84).

It is important to stress that reading for the abject is not a mere affirmation of the residue of oppression in literature; there is also hope—hope to destabilize and demolish the structure that sustains exclusion. In being a threat to the predominant norm, the abject holds power to challenge the privileged boundaries and present alternative values (Tyler 82–83).

3 Discussion and Analysis

3.1 Naming the Unnamable: “Ikichi” and the Fictionality of the Subject/Object Dichotomy

This analysis is organized into two sections, somewhat corresponding to the narrative structure of “Ikichi.” In the first section, in the inn, the focus is on Yūko’s affective immersion of herself into the landscape that asserts her interiority as Karatani argues. From this affective immersion we can see the fictionality of the subject-object dichotomy; and, more importantly, recognize that fictionality reveals the fragility of the gender ideology of the “impure woman.” In the second section, after the inn, the focus shifts towards the structure of the abject, where we see Yūko’s abject state shifting so that she becomes the one who “abjects” the other and then how this leads to the crucial final image of the bat sucking the lifeblood of the young woman at the end of the story.

To start, in “Ikichi,” there are ubiquitous depictions of how Yūko senses the world along with the landscape delineated from Yūko’s interiority. For example, in the opening scene:

In every corner of the garden, red and white flowers lolled their heavy eyelids beneath a dimly glowing sky that cloaked the inn, much as the gossamer [*usumono*] had draped her reclining figure the previous night before being rudely stripped off. (“Lifeblood” 348)

In this passage and elsewhere in this section of the story, Tamura uses what has been called the “middle voice”: that is, a literary version of the grammatical possibility wherein subject and object are one and the same, so that questions of agency and activity versus passivity are hard to resolve. In this integration of subject and object within middle voice, the presence of the subject is invisible in motion; in the other words, the action occurs without explicit identification of subject (Morita 12, 64-68) For example, writing in the middle voice, Toshiko depicts the light of the sky as though we were at Yūko’s bedside; the slight light of the sky is still clinging onto her as a veil.

The word “*hagu*” (to strip off)⁶ indicates an act of taking off something that touches skin/surface. Hence, we easily see that the gossamer-light is covering Yūko’s body, yet, as it centers on Yūko’s senses, it is expressed the other way around. Namely, the light can be seen to emerge out of Yūko’s bodily reaction. The landscape does not occur “objectively” exclusively from Yūko, rather it rises from her interiority. From around the time of the 1910s, people wore “*usumono*” (a light garment) when they slept; the sentence also signifies Yūko’s mind is still in a daze, as if she were in the bed. The reader is drawn to the scenery which has “leaked” from Yūko’s self for this very personal narration. As for the flowers, they are personified by the expression “loll[ed] their heavy eyelids.” Nonetheless, we can promptly understand that the one who is lolling the eyes is Yūko in line with the sequential scenes: a “silky breeze caress[ing] the sole of Yūko’s foot” (“Lifeblood” 348). The depiction arises from Yūko’s sensory, the inner pulse that delivers the mood of Yūko. Again, we can sense that Yūko is the one who directs the landscape. Her vision and feeling are shaped in the landscape. There are no passive/active objects in the narrative; rather, things emerge within Yūko’s interiority. In this sense, the middle voice is used in Toshiko's work as a way to demolish the object/subject boundary (Morita 130).

Through weaving the interiority of Yūko into the landscape, Toshiko destabilizes the divide between the outer world and the inner self—in other words, object and subject. Toshiko points out the fictionality of such dichotomous relationships, which dominated the literary scene in those days. In a world in which the distinction between subject and object is fundamental to the common conception of personhood, differentiating the self from the surrounding environment is considered

⁶ In Fowler’s translation, “*mada hagikiranai yōna*” まだ剥ぎ切らない様な (not yet stripped off) is translated into “before being rudely stripped off” (“Lifeblood” 348). However, the gossamer (*usumono*) has *not* been stripped off. Therefore, the nuance of this scene is very different from that in Fowler’s translation.

necessary, axiomatic. As Brennan explains, this (incorrect) conception of subjectivity is based on idea of the subject using their own free will to act upon on the passive object (which lacks free will) in order to maintain the illusion of the self-contained subject and to make that subjectivity the center of all definition (Brennan 92–94). This differentiation of self from the rest of the world can be perceived in the Naturalist literature that flourished around the 1910s in which the surrounding environment is marked as an estranged entity from the self (Karatani 30). In Toshiko's writing, in contrast, we can barely see such a distinction of subject and object. Rather, the environment arises from Yūko's sense of self, emphasized by the use of a sort of literary middle voice. This is not only observable from the depiction of the landscape, as the literary critics acknowledged, but Toshiko also draws a contour of emotion with vibrant sensory expressions. According to Yamasaki, since the Naturalist method of depicting the landscape in as visually detailed a way as possible was prevalent at that time, Toshiko sought instead to depict the world through sensory expression (Yamasaki 62). Toshiko's method is structurally similar to the way Brennan describes the lack of boundary between active subject and acted-upon object, given that both entities are acting mutually upon each other and are literally entering the body-space of the other and causing physiological changes in the other (Brennan, *passim*).

By focusing on affective, sensory expressions, Toshiko extricated herself from the necessity to “objectively” capture the world. We can see this in every corner of her writing, for instance:

“The smell of a man ...” The thought made her shudder. Whereupon she felt something pulse through her body and leave her trembling from fingertips to toes.⁷ (“Lifeblood” 349)

In this passage, Toshiko expresses Yūko's sensory stimuli in order to deliver an affect that cannot

⁷ In Japanese, “「男の匂ひ。」ふと思つてゆう子はぞつとした。さうして指先から爪先までちりちり何かゞ傳はつてゆく様に震へた” (*Tamura Toshiko sakuhinshū 1* 189).

be verbalized, what I am calling a “raw affect.” Through this depiction, readers re-experience what Yūko went through. According to Brennan, the boundary between the self and other is untenable when it comes to the material process of affect (92–94). I argue that Toshiko not only dissolves the boundary of self and other but also transmits the raw affect of Yūko to readers through corporeal expressions so that the readers do not read it but sense it. What Toshiko delivers is not labelled pre-existing emotions, but a raw affect that has not been interfaced with language, so one can only sense it bodily.

The mystery of “Ikichi” remains since these expressions of affect, especially raw affect, are necessarily enigmatic. Yūko's feelings are indirectly depicted through symbols such as goldfish, a bat, and landscape, as explained above. Meanwhile, a strikingly stereotypical image of an exploited woman and dominating man also surfaces in the foreground. The politics of the loss of virginity entangles the narrative here. As previously discussed, some scholars consider Yūko to be a woman who has internalized the imposed social gender role, as if Yūko is a simple receptacle of womanliness and a true victim of the male-dominant society. However, when we take the fictionality of the subject/object division into consideration, different scenery emerges. This is because there is not an essentially marked *body* (the self/subject), only the *discourse* of victim, whore, immoral woman. The significance of the text lies in what such discursive codes cannot herald.

Once again, we need to reconsider the social context of 1911, the year when “Ikichi” was published, in terms of female sexuality, as the theme of the text is Yūko's loss of virginity. The 1910s are sometimes referred to as the age of sexuality (*sekushuaritī no jidai*), corresponding to the period when Western sexology was introduced into Japan (Watanabe, 22). This increased interest in sexuality resulted from a perception that Japanese youth were adopting Western morals and departing from traditional views of sexual relationships (Kubota 55). However, this was a false

assumption as there was no such thing as a “traditional value” before Meiji. The conservative male/female relationship was established in line with the invention of the *ie* (patriarchal household) system during the Meiji period, as part of the construction of a modern state. The *ie* system was designed to establish male superiority over females in society, and the term “traditional” was often brought in to justify it. In this specific context, youth were often labelled deviant so that their sexuality, especially women’s, could be scrutinized and regulated under the name of moral control.

The journal *Shinkōron* (New Public Discussion, 1900–1929) featured a collection of articles on the burning topic of *seiyoku-ron* (theory of sexual desire), in September 1911, the same month “Ikichi” was published. In the article “Seiyoku to jinshukaizō” (Sexual Desire and Racial Eugenics), Unno Yukinori asserted that the male was designated as the sex for sexual pleasure (*kairaku toshite no sei*) and the female as the sex for reproduction (*seisan toshite no sei*) (10–17), which precisely aligns with the introduction of Western sexology by Mori Ōgai in 1901 (4–5). This idea worked to the advantage of men, in the approval of licensed prostitution, while women were alienated from sexual pleasure (Mitsuishi 53). The role given to women was in becoming mothers and raising loyal Japanese imperial subjects; women who sought out sexual pleasure were considered “whores” and deemed immoral. Thus, the sexuality of women was only permitted within the marriage system and for the purposes of reproduction: some scholars have referred to this as maternal feminism (*bosei shugi feminizumu*; Watanabe, *Josei bungaku*, 22), in which women were valued for feminine virtue. Under these circumstances, it was thus the first and foremost task for women to keep their virginity before marriage. In this context, women's virginity loss became a highly controversial topic. Even in the literary journal *Seitō*, famous for advocating for women's rights, losing one's virginity before marriage was subject to harsh criticism (Muta 100). While the value of virginity was highly praised, losing virginity was deemed impure and morally reprehensible. This Madonna-whore dichotomy constituted the morality of female sexuality in 1911; thus, writing about the loss

of virginity was highly problematic.

Throughout Toshiko's story, we see this fixed gender ideology at work. What drives Yūko into self-dramatization with a sense of loss and its subsequent sadness is the gender ideology that tells her to behave like a victim. If Yūko positively perceived and experienced the loss of her virginity, she would be labelled as a woman who enjoys sexual pleasure —a whore. Yūko's entanglement and negotiation with such gender ideology may cause discomfort to the reader, yet that is the very strategy Toshiko is aiming for in the text.

Toshiko attempts to delineate what is not marked or named by society through her fruitful sensory expressions. As mentioned in the literature review above, this makes her still significant and effectual to a contemporary feminist reading. Toshiko's work explores the persistent issue of woman's internalization of ideologies of gender, which often leads to low self-esteem. However, Yūko is neither a literary victim of the story nor subjugated to expected gender roles. Yūko does not become a simple receptacle/object in the story because Yūko's interiority is extended to the outer world, more precisely, the whole diegetic world emerges out of Yūko; therefore, we directly see her sensual movements and reactions within the narrative. Those sensual expressions tell us what Yūko is actually dealing with. I will argue that there is nothing that can be considered internalization or identification in the story; instead, Yūko shows us how she plays with and performs the discursive gender ideology of her time that controlled women through stigmatization.

The first scene of the text begins with Akiji leaving Yūko alone in the room. Yūko confronts last night's incident on her own and gives meaning to it. Yūko's attention flows from what is below: the flowers in the garden, her feet touched by a silky breeze, and the goldfish bowl in front of her; then, her consciousness closes inwards as she folds her body. The reader follows the movement of her consciousness: it was outward while she was staring at the garden, and then she starts to see the memory of the event last night when Yūko finally confines her focus within herself. While

Yūko is looking down, a meta image emerges in her eyes.

Her thumb pressed against the corner of her eye, skewing it upward

*A woman bites down on the scarlet crepe border of a mosquito net. She is crying. Her companion gazes out the window at the street lamps, a breeze-blown Iyo blind rattling against his back. "There's no use fretting about it now," the man says with a smirk.*⁸
(“Lifeblood” 349, ellipsis and italics in original)

There is no single reference to what this image signifies in the story, yet the reader can assume this happened between Yūko and Akiji the previous night. Kim Young-soon (2007) acknowledges that Yūko and Akiji had sexual intercourse before this scene and points out the contrast of the crying woman and smirking man as a reflection of the social norm of the sexes at that time (Kim 763, Kurosawa 98). It signifies an apparent reflection of unbalanced gender power indeed, yet I contend that Yūko did not recall the incident as it was. It is instead a process of Yūko receiving the ready-made meaning of the loss of virginity, which struck Yūko’s mind as a pain that makes Yūko’s eye skew upward as though she has just felt a headache. The meaning is something unpleasant and foreign to Yūko. It does not belong to her. The image of a man enjoying the privilege of having sexual pleasure over a woman who is shedding tears of sorrow and regretting her eternally lost virginity is a straight-laced image that conservative society wants her to identify with. It is a societal demand for Yūko to see herself in a mirror that reflects the image of such an exploited, victimized woman. The pain she felt is a signal that a disgusting outer force—“she felt something pulse through her body and leave her trembling from fingertips to toes” (Lifeblood 349)⁹—has affected her. This is

⁸ “緋縮緬の蚊帳の裾をかんで女が泣いてゐる。男は風に吹きあほられる伊豫簾に肩の上をたしかれながら、町の灯を窓からながめてゐる。男はふいと笑つた。そうして、「仕方がないぢやないか。」と云つた”(Tamura Toshiko sakuhinshū 1 189).

⁹ “ゆう子は (中略) 指先から爪先までちりちり何かと傳はつてゆく様に震へた”(Tamura Toshiko Sakuhinshū 1 189).

the physiological depiction Toshiko imposed on Yūko's corporeal sensation because such a violent meaning attachment process cannot be not verbalized by socially intelligible words: it is a raw affect. This bodily experience contrasts with what is visually intelligible to the reader: the clearly outlined picture of man exploiting a woman, wherein Yūko falls into the taboo category of "a whore." In the subsequent scene, Toshiko beautifully and cruelly delineates the process of Yūko struggling against this societal pressure.

"No! Stop! Stop it!" Ah, to grab a sharp object and lash out at something – anything! ... How many times had the urge seized her since last evening?¹⁰ ("Lifeblood" 349)

Again, Toshiko depicts a raw sensory image with the word "seized," yet she does not clarify *what* Yūko wants to lash out at. It is the societal force that is imposing a negative value onto her private experience and the pain that she cannot fully feel herself as her experience is rendered into a socially intelligible shape.

No scholar neglects discussing what Yūko's penetrating the goldfish means, mainly in terms of what the *kingyo* (goldfish) symbolizes in the story. It appears there is a consensus that it connotes Yūko (Suzuki 4, Wan Ko 76, Takada 19, Han 162, Akimoto 136). Previous studies talk about either how Yūko is reiterating what happened to herself the previous night by penetrating the goldfish or Yūko is eradicating her unclean self-image. What concerns me here is that Yūko is taken as a woman who acknowledges herself as literally defiled. As I have been suggesting, Yūko is very aware of the outer forces that define her feelings. It is hard to say that Yūko identified herself as a defiled woman; instead, she is suffering from such social definitions imposed from the outside. In the goldfish scene, Yūko is indeed reproducing sexual intercourse in general by penetrating the goldfish, which symbolizes a woman. I would

¹⁰ “「いやだ。いやだ。いやだ。」刃を握って何かに立ち向かひたい様な心持——昨夜からそんな心持に、幾度自分の身体を掴みしめられるだらう”(Tamura Toshiko *sakuhinshū* 1 189).

like to focus on what happened after the incident.

Yūko held the fish up against the light for a time and then hurled it into the garden, where it landed on a stone step. The early morning sky, brightening with each passing moment, spread its light in all directions and enveloped the fish in a faint white glow.¹¹ (“Lifeblood” 350)

We can notice from this depiction that Yūko’s attention also scattered when she threw away the goldfish. Yūko sees this behavior; the intercourse itself is superficial and not worthy of much attention. The movement of the light surrounding the goldfish is a projection of Yūko’s self. She experimented with how she felt about sexual intercourse by taking the penetrator role in this pretend play. It is not as significant as society claims for her. The societal demand that women should feel bad about having sex with a man before marriage as it eternally alters her body into an unclean one was dominant in Meiji society. Bodies of women at that time were colonized by this coercive intervention and they were expected to fear losing their virginity. However, Yūko treating this ritual as something insignificant, something that does not carry the power to alter her identity, suggests a critique of this taken-for-granted gender expectation. This is a rejection by Yūko of adopting this societal demand, and she does not let it have hegemony over herself. The depiction of Yūko’s throwing the fish away to show that it does not hold her attention together with the brightening light are Toshiko’s way of revealing Yūko’s repudiation of something that attempts to chain her down.

When Yūko sits in front of the large mirror, she sees herself and starts crying once she inserts her finger—bleeding from where she stabbed it when she pierced the goldfish—into her mouth.

¹¹ “ゆう子は其れをしばらく翳して見てみたが、庭へ抛り投げてしまった。丁度飛石の上へ乗った金魚の骸へ、一と瞬きづゝ明けてゆく空の光りが、薄白く金魚をつつんでは拡がるやうに四方へちらけてゆく”(Tamura Toshiko *Sakuhinshū* 1 190).

Yūko pressed the sleeve of her kimono against her face and wept. No matter how much she cried, her sorrow would not abate. Yet a kind of sweet nostalgia flowed with the tears, shed in the manner of a woman pressing her cheek affectionately against the breast of a long-lost love. “I can feel the warmth of my lips on my own finger when I suck it – why should that seem so very sad?” Yūko thought to herself in the midst of her sobs.¹² (“Lifeblood” 350)

Upon sitting in front of the mirror, as Akimoto also notes, Yūko starts to display narcissistic and histrionic behavior (137). It seems narcissistic because Yūko is playing the role of a victim here. Seeing herself in the mirror’s reflection, Yūko misidentifies herself as a woman crying from her loss of virginity. After the scene above, Yūko’s emotional climax comes as she projects herself in the mirror by theoretically phrasing her state as “If only she could weep until the bitter end, shed all the tears that could be shed, and then breathe her last, strangled by the dew that clung to the lotus blossoms shrouding her in her final sleep – how happy she would be then! Oh, hot tears!” (“Lifeblood” 350). While playing the role of a trampled victim in the mirror for the audience, herself and society, Yūko sheds a tear feeling her warm finger. She does not know why that makes her so sad. This is because Yūko faces the only material or tangible reality of her body in this overwhelmingly discursive state. The contrast between her corporeality and fictional performativity is very prominent in this scene; what belongs to her—the warmth of her lips on her finger—and what the gender expectation/ideology of the time demands her to internalize.

One more important note in this scene is how she describes the defilement. In this regard, the English translation is missing a particular critical nuance so I would like to refer

¹² “ゆう子は袂を顔にあてゝ泣いた。泣いても、泣いても悲しい。然し、自分の頬をひつたりとなつかしい人の胸に押あててゐる時のやうな、そんな甘つたるさが涙に薄すりと色を着けてながれる。「いま指を含んだとき、自分の指に自分の唇のあたゝかさを感じた、それが何故かうも悲しいのであらう。」 ゆう子は然う思ひながら、喘ぐやうに泣いた” (*Tamura Toshiko sakuhinshū I* 190).

to the Japanese version.

毛孔に一本々々針を突きさして、こまかい肉を一と片づゝ抉りだしても、自分の一度侵つた汚れは削りとることができない。

(*Tamura Toshiko sakuhinshū 1* 191)

Even if you were to stick a needle into each pore and dig out a small piece of flesh, it is impossible to remove the defilement once she had violated her body (my translation).

What we need to pay attention to is the subject: who caused the defilement? Yūko says “jibun no ichido okatta [sic] yogore 自分一度の侵つた汚れ”. In the Japanese sense, it is Yūko (*jibun*) who caused the defilement. If it were Akiji, it would have been simply: “ichido okasareta yogore 一度侵された汚れ” (defiled once) in the form of the passive voice. The English translation misunderstood the relation of the subject and object since it is translated into “Once defiled, she would never, ever be able to rid herself of the taint,” suggesting that Yūko was defiled by Akiji (350).

Toshiko used her words strategically. The implied truth is that Yūko subjectively went through the whole event. Because the subject is Yūko, she must have intended to obtain “the defilement” which brings her to an irreversible place. There is no woman whom a man defiles in this narrative, rather, this passage delineates the situation where Yūko is not playing the “role of whore” which the Meiji institution set up for a woman who has had sex before marriage. She has been performing the “role of a victim” in accusing Akiji of everything that happened, so the story will not be as controversial as it could have been. More importantly, by playing the victim, Yūko could expose its fictionality.

When they start to stroll along the streets in Asakusa, Yūko’s body falls into a limbo where she can neither leave Akiji nor have any intimate feelings for him.

I have to leave him now. I just have to. Yūko turned the same thought over and over again in her mind. I need to get away from this man. I need to be alone for a while

*and think carefully about what happened last night ... Her mind was racing, but she could not bring herself to say a word to him.*¹³ (“Lifeblood” 352; italics in original)

Yūko “needs to” reflect upon the previous night and feels it as if this is some kind of duty she has to go through. A similar thought comes up in her mind later: “She dimly recalled that she had been grieving and that she ought to be grieving still” (“Lifeblood” 355). Ostensibly, there is something she “ought to” keep grieving for, which can be easily derived from the earlier context: she has to feel sad about her loss of virginity. This appears in the form of an obligation, as in “need to” or “ought to.” It thus clearly shows this feeling is crashing in from the exterior, not from Yūko’s interiority. Yūko also feels physically constrained while she wants to leave Akiji. She is chained to the image of a good woman who thoughtfully and obediently walks along with a man. If Yūko were to slap Akiji and walk away, that would degrade her with the image of whore, the woman who used Akiji for her own sexual pleasure. What constrains Yūko’s body is, therefore, social gender expectations, and Toshiko successfully visualize the power restriction through physical expression.

What is essential in this scene is the way Yūko describes Akiji. Again, the English translation takes a lot of liberties here so I would like to refer to the original version.

「自分に蹂躪された女が震へてゐる。口もきゝ得ずにある。そうして炎天を引ずり廻されてゐる。女は何所まで附いてくるつもりだらう。」

だまつてる人は其様ことを考へてゐるのぢやないかとゆう子は不意と思つた。¹⁴
(*Tamura Toshiko sakuhinshū I* 193)

¹³ “もう別れなければ。もう別れなければ。」ゆう子は幾度も然う思つた。男と離れて、昨夜の事を唯一人しみじみと考へなければならぬやうな焦慮つた思ひもする。けれどゆう子は何うしても自分から男へ口がきけなかつた”(*Tamura Toshiko sakuhinshū I* 193).

¹⁴ In English, “Look at her tremble. She’s a study in hesitation. She can’t say a word to me and just lets herself be led about under this hot sun. How far is she going to tag along?”— *He doesn’t have to say it, but that is surely what he’s thinking*” (“Lifeblood” 352; italics in original). This does not capture the nuance of “jūrin sareta onna” (woman who is trampled) and “damatte iru hito” (a person who remains silent).

“The woman who was trampled by me is trembling. She cannot even say a word. And she is being dragged around in the hot sun. How far will she follow me?”

Yūko suddenly wondered if that's what the person who was remaining silent was thinking.

(my translation)

Inside the quotation marks we see Yūko imagining how Akiji sees her. Inside the quotation marks, Yūko is coded into the image of “woman” and degraded by the expressions “*jūrin sareta onna*” (a woman who was trampled) and “*kuchi mo kikiezu ni iru*” (cannot even say a word). This voiceless trampled woman without a will, a typical victim image, is pictured by Yūko. What surfaces, on the other hand, is a man who trampled a woman and violently deprived her of voice and dragged her on the street. By degrading herself through the image of victimhood, Yūko brought into being the counterpart: an assailant. Through embedding Akiji into this gender dichotomy, he is also dehumanized at the symbolic level. Yūko maintains this structure by neither making eye contact with Akiji nor talking to him. By not letting Yūko interact with Akiji and determining how Akiji feels from a distance, Toshiko does not allow his individuality to come to the forefront in the narrative. In the story of the loss of virginity, Akiji is also objectified in this sense.

Before moving to the discussion of the abject, I need to stress the most significant point regarding Toshiko's affective expressions. We have seen the phenomenological depiction of the female self in relation to societal codes and their intelligibility. There is a distinctive difference between the scenes where Yūko plays out a (self-)dramatizing image of womanliness, the role of victim, how women “should/need to” react to the situations Yūko is in, which reveals the ideological gender value woman is imposed on in Meiji; and the raw-affect delivery where the landscape and Yūko blurs and the actuality of experience is visualized. What we need to acknowledge is that in terms of these unnamable reactions, corporeal sense itself is something very societal and what has occurred in the named circle is

not really a social matter, rather it is a conventional repetition that everyone follows. The social role brings about morals, values, meanings and emotions. Through these expected performances within the visible circle, we cannot see the meaning of society. Societal matters inhabit things we cannot address. Things we feel a sense of dysphoria about or affects that we cannot play out is the actual corporeal reaction that cannot be filtered through intelligibility. are the human social reactions. Therefore, Toshiko delivered this affect through her sensory and sensual expressions in the narrative, claiming that the female self always lacked social significance. In using this method, Toshiko successfully critiqued the very boundary—the enclosed skin—that society confines her within.

Itagaki Naoko notes that in 1911 when *Seitō* was published, there was only one option for women to unleash their own talent, which was literature. They could indirectly tackle women's issues through writing about them (66). In this vein, Tamura Toshiko has demonstrated her way of visualizing the problems women faced at that time. She reminds us that what does not have a name is the most significant matter which people should pay attention to.

3.2 A Woman Gazing a Woman: The Critique of the Intimate Abjecting Structure

Shifting the focus to a discussion of the abject, I would like to briefly go back to the beginning of the story, where Yūko is marked as abject. Right after the scene where readers are invited to witness the crying woman and smirking man in a flashback, Yūko notices the smell of fish.

The raw smell of goldfish wafted across the room. Yūko breathed it in slowly, intently, unaware of its source. Again she breathed it in. And again.

“The smell of a man ...”

The thought made her shudder. Whereupon she felt something pulse through her

body and leave her trembling from fingertips to toes.¹⁵ (“Lifeblood” 349)

Yūko’s association of the fish with a man comes from a reflection of the smell of sperm (Kurosawa 98). Sperm was typically conceived as a threat to the purity of women in the sexological discourse of the early 1910s (Kawamura 53). In 1919, the self-claimed sexologist Sawada Junjirō argued that once the sperm reach the uterus, they pass through the mucous membranes and enter the blood vessels, creating a ferment in the bloodstream. This is how it is possible to distinguish between virgins and non-virgins, he claimed (Kawamura 53, Fujiwara 51). Sexual intercourse was not merely a one-time physical act; instead, it was understood as irreversibly transformative to women in their blood.¹⁶ We have to be careful to understand this abjection process. The smell of men, sperm, does not simply mean the literal material; it symbolically functions to remind Yūko of the previous night’s incident. It connotes sexual desire and the pleasure of men. Elaine J. Lawless explains how male sexual desire is considered as “defilement” and abject, and the man therefore expels his abject lust through transferring it to the woman: “since ‘he’ cannot control his desire, he can feel cleansed if he can attack the signifier: ‘he’ can feel cleansed if he abjects it” (245). Therefore, the smell of fish emerges from the imagery of the man smirking, abjecting his desire onto the crying woman.

The smell of a man makes Yūko “shudder” and leaves her “trembling” because the abject is uncanny, loathsome, and repulsive (*Powers of Horror* 2, 9), and more importantly, the abject —

¹⁵ “生臭い魚の匂ひがぼんやりとした。何の匂ひとも知らずゆう子はちつとその臭いを嗅いだ。いつまでも、いつまでも、嗅いだ。「男の匂ひ。」ふと思ってゆう子はぞっとした。さうして指先から爪先までちりりと何か這っていく様に震へた”(Tamura Toshiko *Sakuhinshū* 1 188-189).

¹⁶ This double standard was prevalent in the debate over *karyūbyō* (sexually transmitted diseases) at the turn of the twentieth century. While those who have transmitted the diseases were primarily men, sex education for the prevention stressed women’s purity and chastity (Kawamura 197-199).

—the sperm, projected sexual desire that leads her to the abject state —reveals and threatens the borders of intelligibility. Yūko sees herself in this smell of a man with whom she experienced sexual pleasure (Takata 25–29), which invades her body and “ferments” her blood. As we have seen earlier, Toshiko captures this discursive culturally abjected image of a defiled woman through sensory expressions of raw affect and it is through this corporeal sensibility that she critiques such an oppressive structure and reclaims the body.

After Yūko’s transitional scene, the second part of the story brings us to the streets of Asakusa where we see Yūko feels “physically constrained, as though her hands and feet were in shackles” (352), which is rather a meek situation in comparison to penetrating a goldfish. To understand Yūko’s state, Jennifer Coates’s explanation of the difference between the terms “to be abject” and “to abject” is helpful. “To be abject” is the state of pre-subjecthood as in infants and post-subjecthood as in corpses. Neither condition contains subjectivity and is thus marked by “powerlessness and inability to act as a subject” (163). The condition of “being abject” is considered to be applicable by extension to those whose full-fledged subjectivity is socially unacknowledged or has been brought into question, for example, women, people who are ill, the homeless, people with disabilities, etc. Conversely, “to abject” is the act of imposing such an abject condition onto another person and excluding the body of the other from the realm of subjectivity. Coates exemplifies this abjection process in her analysis of the post-war film *Norainu (Stray Dog, 1949)*. She argues that the prostitute women are depicted as motionless, subjectless bodies in contrast with the protagonist’s vital subjectivity (164). Yūko’s situation is similarly subjectless when we read that she cannot even “say a word to him” (“Lifeblood” 352).

However, Toshiko does not confirm this abject state as it is, rather she vividly unearths the power at work in this situation. In doing so, we see the discursive nature of abject state.

Her mind was racing, but she could not bring herself to say a word to him. She felt

physically constrained, as though her hands and feet *were in shackles* (...) She desperately wished that *someone* would pluck her body off the street and heave it aside. (“Lifeblood” 352; emphasis added)¹⁷

The year following the publication of “Ikichi,” Toshiko wrote an essay entitled “*Bijaku na kenryoku*” (Frail Power, 1912) in which she claims, “In my life, a weak power constantly subordinates me. That weak power is always lightly holding down the two wings of my heart” (Sakuhinshū 3, 333). The “shackles” and the “someone” who have control over Yūko’s body are the frail continuous power that holds down women’s autonomy. Abjected individuals are to live and breathe in a way that pleases the dominant group who abject them and make them internalize the oppression as their own fault (Sensoy, and DiAngelo 50). Here, Yūko walks as Akiji leads, yet Toshiko makes visible the power that seizes Yūko, rather than merely letting Yūko follow him blindly.

The part of Asakusa that Akiji and Yūko stroll through is concentrated with a peculiar population stemming from the area’s historical background of being an entertainment district from the late Edo period to the Meiji period (Maeda Ai 146), and this enables us to understand Yūko’s sympathy with the people in Asakusa. Yoshimi Shun’ya reveals that in the late Edo period, Asakusa was located close to neighbouring *akusho* (entertainment districts) such as Yoshiwara (a red-light district) and Saruwakachō (a theatre town). Therefore many actors, as well as the remaining families of *eta-hinin* (the lowest social class) from Edo, dwelled in Asakusa. Asakusa was thus known for harboring abandoned children or those who had nowhere else to go, who would end their lives on the streets (Yoshimi 247). Asakusa was the stretch of death that Yoshimi calls a window to *ikai* (another world) (Yoshimi 247–248). While Yūko is walking down the street, we

¹⁷ “けれどゆう子は何しても自分から男へ口がきけなかった。両手も両足もきつい鉄輪をはめられたように、少しも自由にならなかった (中略) ゆう子は自分の身体を誰かに摘みあげて抛り出してもらい度いような気がした”(Tamura Toshiko *sakuhinshū* 1 193).

smell death permeating the text.

She, meanwhile, felt her body – in a state unchanged from the previous night – being mercilessly exposed under the infernal sun; it emitted, she was sure, a foul odor reminiscent of rotting fish. (...) Yūko had to admit that the low esteem in which everyone apparently held them fairly matched the dismal view she had of herself. *Well, then, let them gawk at me all they want. So my flesh is tainted – that shouldn't shock the likes of them!* (“Lifeblood,” 353; italics in original).¹⁸

Yūko sees herself as “reminiscent of rotting fish,” which suggests a continuity with the association with the smell of goldfish in the previous scene, and the smell Yūko “breathed ... in” (349) again and again to recognize it as the smell of a man—the abjection happening at the level of the discourse of Meiji moral ideology, as well as delineated by Toshiko’s sensory writing. The abjected body is now rotting and tainted (*kusatta* literally means “rotted”) as Yūko loses a sense of mobility. The post-subject state—as a corpse—becomes vivid and realistic in the landscape of Asakusa because it is a place where literal corpses are witnessed on a daily basis on the streets. To complicate the matter further, from late Edo to early Meiji, Asakusa was concentrated with those located at the bottom of society. This environment caused discrimination based on class within the neighborhood (Timothy Amos 229–230). Yūko and Akiji receive stares from women and men. The women whose faces are painted in white are, as many scholars have already pointed out, sex workers in the area (Akimoto 142, S. Wang 122–123, Furugōri 121), while the men wear *amijuban* (a light mesh under-robe), which were clothes designed for labourers (*Kimono yōgo taizen*). These are the people often conceived as the lowest class in society, in other words, socially marginalized, the abjected. Yūko

¹⁸ “かうして昨夜の身体をその儘炎天に晒して行く自分には、日光に腐乱していく魚の臭気も思はれた。(中略) どうせ自分には、その人たちには珍しくない矢つ張り腐つた肉に包まれているような人間だと思った”(Tamura Toshiko *Sakuhinshū 1* 194-195).

sees no gaps between herself and them.¹⁹ While Akiji rejected their stares with annoyance,²⁰ Yūko was not uncomfortable; rather, she understood their sensibilities. While there are sociopolitical class differences between Yūko and the residents of Asakusa, her abjected marginality enables her to have more situational knowledge and a broader viewpoint than that of the dominant group, represented by Akiji.

This two-directional gazing scene shifts into the theatre where the politics of the gaze comes to the forefront. When they enter the makeshift theatre, the inside welcomes Yūko as though it is someone's teasing flesh: "[i]ts wooden pillars, cushions, and thin rush matting were all damp to the touch"²¹ ("Lifeblood" 354). This intimate enclosed space is dark, and the audience on the second-floor balcony is "engrossed [in the] performance below" as though they have found a treasure they would never find anywhere else ("Lifeblood" 354). After the little girls perform, a young woman (*musume*) in male trousers appears on the stage.

Lying face up on a stand, the girl twirled an umbrella on her toes. *Pure white forearm* guards were strapped to her slender wrists. The long sleeves of her kimono were draped over both sides of the stand. The girl spread the umbrella open with her feet, balanced its edge on her toes, and spun it around like a pinwheel. Her leggings were also *pure white*. So were her small tabi. Occasionally, the pleats of her satin trousers, part of a man's formal attire, would *fall into disarray*, and the long sleeves of her kimono would tremble. When that happened, a samisen in the orchestra offstage would strike up a plaintive, syncopated melody, alternately taut and slack, *that made Yūko's breast tug with emotion*. ("Lifeblood" 355; emphases added)

This meticulous description of the young woman indicates how intently Yūko is watching the

¹⁹ “ゆう子は然うした卑しい表情で自分たちを見ていく人と、今も自分と云ふものの上とにそれ程の隔だたりがあるやうに思へなかつた” (*Tamura Toshiko sakuhinshū I* 194-195).

²⁰ “二人はこうした人たちにぢろゝながめられた。安藝治はそれを厭はしそうにして目を避けてゐた。” (*Tamura Toshiko sakuhinshū I* 194).

²¹ “柱も薄縁も蒲団も寝汗でぬれたものを掴むやうな、粘った湿り気をふくんでゐた” (*Tamura Toshiko sakuhinshū I* 195).

woman's performance—too attentive to “rid of her mind of” her²² even afterwards (355). To understand this intense, somewhat sexual gaze, I would like to refer to another act of a “woman gazing [at a] woman” in the previous Asakusa street scene.

The apprentice geisha whom the couple had seen at the shrine overtook them and hurriedly walked past. Yūko's eyes were drawn to the nape of the girl's *slender neck*, visible from beneath her painted, bright vermilion Japanese parasol. The girl's neck, tilted forward and extending well beyond her pulled-back collar, was *eerily translucent*. The hem of her navy-blue silk gossamer kimono, dyed in a coarse, feathered-arrow splash pattern, revealed *her stark white tabi-less feet* with every step. Her purple Hakata obi was tied snugly in a shell knot, the long end pointed up. Yūko gazed wistfully into the blinding glare at this lovely, *virginal figure* whose long, sheer kimono sleeves nearly touched the ground. (“Lifeblood 352; emphasis added)

This description approximates the previous description of a young woman in male trousers in that the white, “eerily translucent” female skin is emphasized in the neck, wrist, ankle – inviting the visualization of slender, thin, feminine bodies. Then we should ask what happens when “a woman gazes [at] a woman.”

On the 21st of July 1911, an article titled “Tsūzoku kyōiku” (Popular Education) was published in the morning edition of the *Yomiuri* newspaper by a journalist using the pen name Seifū meigetsu, claiming that apprentice geisha (*sūgi*) should be banned because their virginal beauty trifles with young men's hearts and we must protect those respectable Japanese men (Seifū meigetsu 5). With the flourishing of imported Western sexology, it was common amongst intellectuals to discuss how sexual desire functioned, or more precisely, how those intellectuals defined the morals of sexuality in relation to those who would disturb those morals. In this immensely “verbose” discourse on sexuality (Foucault 33)²³, the apprentice geisha was considered

²³ Foucault discuss that in the wake of development of education in the eighteen and nineteen centuries of Europe, the sexual discourse appeared like “an immense verbosity” (33) in many forms of medium as well as institutions. That verbose discourse has shaped the civilization and knowledge (27-33). We can relate this context in this passage as it was the time sexual morality

as something desirable for her virginal beauty, which aligns well with the discourse of purity (*junketsu*); hence, she and others like her were targets of the sexual gaze. I must note that this sexualization is an abjection of the female body because the glorification of women is predicated on their dehumanization, so as to maintain the “normal, rational, intellectual” Japanese men, as Seifū meigetsu argues in the article.

The emphasis on female physical fragility and their white skin—suggestive of sexual purity—in both excerpts is Yūko’s performance of this same sort of male gaze. Yūko performs the male gaze, which brings to our attention the fact that the gaze, an embodiment of sexual desire, is a cultural code formed in accordance with the gender ideology of chastity at that time. In an influential article that comprises one of the earliest studies of female spectatorship, Mary Anne Doane asserts that so-called “womanliness” is a removable masquerade; this denies the “production of femininity as closeness, as presence-to-itself, as, precisely, imagistic” (“Film and the Masquerade” 81–82). Borrowing Joan Riviere’s idea of masquerade, Doane explains that women use the mask to hide “the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it” (Riviere in Doane, *Film and the Masquerade*, 81). Therefore, when a woman gazes at a woman, she is a “phallicized thief” (“Masquerade Reconsidered” 44). This very act of a “woman gazing [at a] woman” thus exposes the cultural, artificial, and discursive nature of male sexual desire that can be appropriated and restaged by women.²⁴ Culturally ideologically resonant aesthetics are apparent, maybe too apparent, in both Yūko’s gazing descriptions, centering on untainted skin and physical vulnerability. Female appropriation of the male gaze is a subversive

was defined and the “normality” of what one supposed to desire is formed in the pedagogical manner.

²⁴ Odaira Maiko looks into Toshiko’s performativity of womanliness as an *onnna sakusha* (female writer) in other works such as “Akirame” (Resignation, 1911) and makes a similar point to Doane’s; womanliness is only a masquerade to be performed, not an innate interiority (89-90).

gesture that reveals it as a cultural construct.

It was after the performance of the young woman in male trousers that Yūko was distracted from the male gaze. Just as Toshiko reveals how a defiled woman was a mere projection from the outer world through her affective descriptions, again, Toshiko critically delineates that being absorbed into abjection is a social obligation for Yūko:

She dimly recalled that she had been grieving and that she ought to be grieving still. “Oh, who cares?” she felt like shouting. “Let happen what may!” (“Lifeblood” 355)²⁵

Precisely the grieving is something she “ought to” feel. I argue that this signals a moment when Yūko is stepping out of this abjected state because she is no longer the performer on the stage playing for either the social expectation or her own self; instead, she is one of the spectators in the show tent. Yūko is the one who gazes at the young woman, physically and metaphorically looking down from the balcony to the young woman. What differentiates Yūko and the woman in male trousers is not mere distance but class. Toshiko herself was born in Asakusa. However, Toshiko was raised by her father who ran a business, and she entered the first and only university for women at that time, Japan Women's University (Kudō Miyoko 30–31). Toshiko’s possession of such cultural capital suggests that while Yūko may be sympathetic to those performers down on the floor, she would not identify herself with them. Within the theatrical structure to enhance the to-be-looked-at-ness of the performers, Yūko found herself engaging in the gaze, watching her as one of the fellow men.

While Yūko captures the woman in male trousers in a highly fetishized manner, Toshiko recontextualizes the gaze into something not entirely like vicissitude as Doane described female

²⁵ “自分は何か悲しまなければならぬことがあったのと思ふ傍から、「何うにでもなれ。何うにでもなれ。」と云ひ度ひ気がする” (*Tamura Toshiko sakuhinshū 1* 197).

spectatorship (“Masquerade Reconsidered” 42)²⁶ meaning that Yuko is not simply performing the male gaze as if women could simply abject the other woman but there is a complexity that needs to be examined. Just as Toshiko destabilized the literary boundary of the self and other through raw affect—the sensory, sensual descriptions that emerged from Yūko—we again see the very skinned body of Yūko collapsing as Yūko’s abjection of the young woman does not allow her to maintain her autonomy.

She, too, felt herself drifting into a dream world, in search of something that eluded her grasp, and sensed her own head sinking – into a vision of that girl’s tiny white face and her bright red sleeve cords fanning out in all directions, growing larger as they moved.²⁷ (“Lifeblood” 355-56)

In this dreamy vision, Yūko is submerged in the imageries she has been watching in the show tent. Abjection is a way to secure one’s boundary by spitting out that which is “opposed to I” (Kristeva *Powers of Horror* 1). While Yūko was gazing at the young woman in male trousers and framing her as a pre-existing virginal sexual figure—making self by not making self—Yūko cannot completely abject the “pitiful” “woeful” “poor” young woman; instead, Yūko lets go of herself beyond the margins of the body and becomes immersed with the people down there at the imagery level, to grasp realms beyond her own borders. This is the twist and displacement Toshiko achieves in the quintessential architecture of the low social stratum of the show tent, presenting a power dynamic that intersects class, gender, age, and sexuality where people gather and enjoy “jouissance” (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 54) through abjection and creation of the Other.

²⁶ Odaira analyzes the female gaze in *Akirame* (1911) as an act that enables women to be “producers” of <female> desire among women in the context of the development of the cosmetic industry in Meiji (87-88). Inspired by Odaira’s analysis, I would like to focus on the textuality of this scene, what may be called the female gaze of Yūko.

²⁷“そうして夢の中のものを掴まうとするやうな気分におそはれながら、小さい白粉の顔や真っ赤な襷がだんゝ大きくひろがって行く幻の中に自分の額も下がってくる様な気がした” (*Tamura Toshiko Sakuhinshū* 1 197).

However, this moment of jouissance is interrupted as though Yūko wakes up from a dream when she finds a bat whose wings look like the “tailfin of a large fish” (“Lifeblood” 356). Yūko drops her fan and feels “her blood run cold” (356). This incident brings Yūko back to subjectlessness, the waste body, abjected, and it is in this state that she is being led by Akiji away from the tent, and over the bridge. And it is in this state that she sees in her mind one of the final images of the story:

The bat is sucking the lifeblood out of that poor girl dressed in men’s satin trousers. Sucking the very life out of her ... (“Lifeblood,” 357; italics in original)²⁸

This enigmatic, symbolic image has been at the center of much literary analysis, as seen in the literature review. Most read the bat as Akiji, or the exploitative patriarchal system of Meiji, except Akimoto, who sees the bat as Yūko projecting queer desire onto the young woman in male trousers (147). Both are convincing interpretations of the scene. Reading this image from the concept of the abject, however, we see a different, broader critical context of the ending of “Ikichi.”

The lifeblood the bat is sucking out, and the title of “Ikichi” have some connotations related to the abject that we should pay attention to, which help us understand the intimate, critical relationship of power. Kristeva uses the example of a mother’s milk and Grosz provides further description about the extent to which the metaphor of breastmilk forms a human’s very first traumatic experience of abjection (Grosz 90, Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 3). When a baby sucks milk, the food in the baby’s mouth is already *me*; however, the baby sometimes gets choked with or spits the milk, rejects the milk, then the milk spit out on the floor becomes *not me*, the abject. This is the way a baby shapes a sense of the self through the rejection of “corporeal limits of the self” (Grosz 90).

²⁸ “「蝙蝠が、浅黄縹子の男袴を穿いた娘の生血を吸つてる生血を吸つてる——」”(Tamura Toshiko *Sakuhinshū* 1 199).

With that explained, we can see the image of a bat sucking the lifeblood out of the young woman as the epitome of this abject structure. The bat needs the lifeblood, both the “pure” and “impure” blood of women, to form a boundary that defines what is on the other side: competitive, respectable Japanese nationals, devoted to *risshin shusse*. The role of the bat may shift interchangeably from Akiji to Yūko, patriarchal society to individual woman; as we have seen in the show tent, Yūko could also occupy the role of abjecting the other in terms of class. Although the actors change, this structure of individualization by abjection continues to be maintained. Yūko was shocked and felt her blood run cold when she witnessed the bat, suggesting the horror of the incarnation of the abject. Through delineating that fragile boundary that is always in need of the other’s lifeblood to sustain itself, “Ikichi” successfully critiqued this oppressive structure that all individuals are obligated to take part in.

In “Ikichi,” abjection is illuminated through Yūko’s bodily experience, the young women in male trousers in the theatre, and the imagery of the bat sucking the lifeblood out of the woman. However, as we have seen, it is not a monolithic, straightforward internalization or projection. Toshiko has shown us the pain, pleasure, and conflicts in the face of a force that reminds us of our very first traumatic experience that we have to face and repeat every moment to solidify and contain our boundless leaky bodies. The story ends with Yūko realizing the wrapped paper on her finger had already been stripped off and “A raw, fishlike odor assailed her nostrils”²⁹ (“Lifeblood,” 357). What we notice is that throughout the text, Toshiko does not visualize Yūko’s lifeblood with its odor, texture, or taste at the scenes when Yūko sucks her injured finger or this ending, but it is always this smell of fish – the smell of a man – that brings discomfort to Yūko. A strong sign of “not I” is highlighted in relation to Yūko’s invisible lifeblood, the “I” that is something no one can

²⁹ “生臭い匂いがふんとした” (Tamura Toshiko Sakuhinshū 1 199)

take away from her. Then we realize, at the very end, what is actually abjected is not Yūko or her lifeblood as defilement but this smell of fish, the abject male desire that needs and sucks Yūko's lifeblood.

4 Conclusion: What Is Left and What Cannot Be Left?

I would like to summarize my attempts to trace through Tamura's "Ikichi" with the following research question in mind. My question is how the self is expressed in relation to Meiji discursive power relationships. To tackle this question, I employed affect theory and the concept of abjection, both of which disturb the system of the boundary-creation and boundary-policing where individualization occurs and is maintained. The first half of the analysis was focused on affect theory, and we have seen the ways in which Toshiko creates a rupture and critique of the imposed morality of women's sexuality through her sensory expressions of raw affect that destabilize our understanding of self and the other. The self is not confined in skin, rather it is a leaky fluid entity that cannot be captured by the gender expectations, and so should not be confined within imposed gender norms. My findings filled in a gap that previous studies had missed. Previous scholars had successfully validated Toshiko's sensory expressions, once considered "feminine" writing by acknowledging that Toshiko revealed the gender oppression through the metaphorical use of bat and woman, the protagonist Yūko's sexual awakening, and offering the new female selfhood. While these understanding of "Ikichi" contributed to the feminist reading of Toshiko, there were still questions left regarding the power politics of gaze and reaffirmation of selfhood (*jiko*). My thesis opened up these complexities by pointing out that Toshiko exposed the very structure of abjection where Yūko herself could occupy the position of the one who abjects, and the power that be—the nation building of Meiji government—do need those who are abjected to maintain the subject, in other words suck their lifeblood to maintain their secure borders. I also argued that Toshiko was not establishing the "right" female subjecthood that is free from oppression, yet through her raw-affect expressions, we see the attempts to destabilize the idea of selfhood (*jiko*, *jiga*) itself that reproduce themselves through the exclusion of the other.

The latter half of the analysis centered on the concept of the abject, in which I focused on how Yūko performs an abject state, but also abjects the other—which constitutes a critique of how Japanese sexuality and nationality are individualized and consolidated in the Meiji literary landscape. However, I also pointed out how Toshiko offered a rupture at the place where abjection occurred and offered us scenery beyond the margins where Yūko found comfort in relation to other abjected subjects. This analysis added another new layer to Toshiko’s philosophy. It is often the case that previous scholars assumed the gender power relationship was the only issue explored in “Ikichi”; however, the structure of abjection shed light on the classism that was prevalent in the scenes of Asakusa and the show tent and that helped us understand the elaborated gaze in the text, which was often seen in previous readings as innocent pleasure.

It is worth noting that this line of argument has been the focus of feminist rewritings of the subject. It was developed in the process of questioning the conventional philosophy that the female body is conceived as an object and the other in order to establish the male body as subject and the standard/center (Shildrick 44–169). Shildrick also claims that we do not live within our body (skin), rather our subjectivity is neither one nor two (self and other). This argument reminds us of Karatani’s notion of the discovery of landscape as the object/outside/landscape is constructed by and within ourselves. Our subjectivity thus carries the possibility of overstepping boundaries (Shildrick 171). However, what I would like to argue with Tamura’s “Ikichi” is that we have no need to “cross” the boundaries anyway as they are illusory (*kyoko*, borrowing a word from Karatani). “Ikichi” enables us to see the scenery where such fictional boundaries are broken down. In her writing, Toshiko also gave us a space to reconsider the concept of abjection as that abjected viewpoint is the place where we can see the situated knowledge that can provide us with enriched perspectives of intricate power relationships (Haraway, 589). In this vein, this thesis contributes to this lineage of feminist studies.

The novel “Ikichi” demonstrates how a woman in a predicament plays out this fictionality of the division of subject and object. But the term “play” is too weak to describe Yūko’s entanglements and sufferings with gender norms. Watanabe Sumiko contends that sexism is at work not only at the level of social institutions, but that it also inhabits people’s consciousness, imagination, and desire. Therefore, the act of writing as a woman itself is a manifestation that objects to a sexist culture that objectifies women (14). We can see this sign in Toshiko’s writing in which the othered female self becomes visible and struggles with an imposed otherness. The most significant criticism Toshiko has received from her contemporaries is that she does not have a philosophy in her writing. I argue that it has been one hundred years since “Ikichi” was published but her philosophy has always been there and this new interpretation may bring new light to today’s feminist readings.

Tamura Toshiko once commented that she sought to write things that a man could neither write nor see (Watanabe et al., 382). I do not wish to declare that Toshiko could write an essential female figure that encompasses and speaks for every woman’s pain, yet I can relate to what she intended to say. The fictionality of boundaries is more visible and tangible to those on whom it is imposed or marked. Raw affect has no name to be addressed, it is not a solid entity that we can point a finger at and name from a distance. If it has a socially intelligible name, that is a thing someone else put upon you, not a thing born out of you. Raw affect lives in the skin, lights, smell, and noise that are impossible to verbalize. Toshiko reminds us of this beautiful fact in the story “Ikichi.”

This thesis has offered new perspective on Toshiko as a woman writer in that Toshiko was not a mere victim of the patriarchal Meiji power structure, but also an accomplice in its abjecting structure. We see this in my analysis of the scene of a woman (Yūko) subjecting another woman (the young acrobat in the men’s trousers) to her gaze. The crux of this reading is that Toshiko did

not simply depict the objectification or abjection of a woman; rather, the protagonist Yūko became immersed into the young woman who was being looked at, through which we can see the struggles and possibilities of Toshiko's positionality as a woman who was privileged in terms of her cultural and economic capital. Toshiko continued to be critical about her fortunate privilege after her departure to North America, where she advocated for the rights of Japanese Canadian female workers. In Toshiko's writings, including "Ikichi," we see the subtle distance from those with whom she could not entirely identify due to the power she was entitled to. Yūko's dreamy image in the show tent exposed the simultaneous desire and distance that Toshiko held for those Japanese women who did not even have the power of writing or voice but only remained "to-be-looked-at." While Meiji critics disregarded Toshiko as an unawakened woman with no philosophy, the thesis articulated Toshiko's awareness of the Meiji power structure that she was a part of.

Lastly, I would like to note some possibilities for future research. Throughout my analysis, I found that there is potential for affect theory to challenge the system of social abjection, and that could be further articulated in Toshiko's other texts. Studies of "Ikichi" are still underrepresented in anglophone scholarship; therefore, I hope my research will draw more attention to this beautiful text. Also understudied in Japanese literary scholarship is Toshiko's career after 1918, at which point her writing style changed. This is something I would like to develop in my future research as I live and thrive in the land where Toshiko once lived for fourteen years.

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