

**JAPANESE WOMEN WRITERS WATCH A BOY BEING BEATEN BY HIS  
FATHER: MALE HOMOSEXUAL FANTASIES, FEMALE SEXUALITY AND DESIRE**

by

**Kazumi Nagaike**

**B.A., Kitakyûshû University, 1994**

**M.A., University of Alberta, 1997**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses narrative texts by Japanese female writers and popular *manga* artists\* that deal with fantasies of male-male sex. It applies a variety of psychoanalytic theories (Freudian, Kleinian, feminist and so forth) to demonstrate how fantasies about male homosexuality may be analyzed in terms of the psychological orientations of the many Japanese women who are the readers of this narrative genre. I also discuss a variety of themes that often accompany and appear to support female fantasies of male homosexuality: the concept of '*l'homme fatal*' in Mori Mari's male homosexual trilogy; sadomasochism in Kôno Taeko's "Toddler-Hunting"; the decadent aestheticism of Okamoto Kanoko's "The Bygone World"; postmodernism in Matsuura Rieko's *The Reverse Version*; and the concept of pornography as it relates to *yaoi manga*.\*\*

In attempting to analyze the discursive aspects of female fantasies of male homosexuality, I begin with an examination of Sigmund Freud's article, "A Child is Being Beaten," in which he refers to the female scopophilic impulse. Several Japanese female writers—Kôno Taeko, in particular—provide clear examples of narratives that parallel Freud's model of the beating fantasy. This female scopophilic desire to watch a male homoerotic 'show' is activated by a psychological orientation such as that defined by Klein's model of projective identification: female characters and readers project their 'unbalanced egos' onto male homosexual characters, and this enhances the processes of identification with and (scopophilic) dissociation from these characters—which in turn create the possibility of regaining psychological 'balance.'

One of the main themes of my analysis is the development of subconscious female

desires to access the bisexual (simultaneously masculine and feminine) body. I discuss the idealization of the *shōnen* (boy) identity (in “Toddler-Hunting” and *The Reverse Version*) and the image of the ‘reversible couple’ in *yaoi manga* as specific forms of a sexual discourse that presents possibilities of escape from the arbitrary, socially-constructed, but institutionalized concepts of the female body.

\**manga*: narrative comic books for readers of all ages

\*\**yaoi manga*: a subgenre of comic books by and for women that feature male-male eroticism

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## INTRODUCTION

*Leo cast his eyes down, and then glanced upward at the man: "Don't...Don't do it anymore." Leo held his chest with crossed arms that were like wings and looked at Guylan. Then, he unfolded his arms, folded them again behind his neck, showing his armpits, and his malicious eyes looked at Guylan and smiled. Suddenly, Guylan's arms reached out, Leo was rolled in his arms, the two men's bodies became entangled into a snake-like rope, and again they fell down onto the bed.*

—Mori Mari, "Kareha no nedoko" (The Bed of Withered Leaves).<sup>1</sup>

In an article based on psychoanalytic research written over eighty years ago, entitled "The Relation of Beating-Phantasies to Day-dream," Anna Freud, the daughter of the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, explored the fantasmic mechanisms of the infantile psyche that her father had previously developed in his famous article, "A Child is Being Beaten."<sup>2</sup> Anna Freud describes one of her female subjects' interesting daydreams, which she calls "The Knight and a Noble Youth." This narrative constitutes a significant contribution to the important contemporary debate about female sexualities, particularly with regard to female fantasies of male homosexuality. I would therefore like to cite part of this

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<sup>1</sup> All English citations from Japanese materials, except as otherwise indicated, are my translations.

<sup>2</sup> Rachel B. Blass analyzes the mechanisms of beating fantasies, comparing Anna Freud's reading of such fantasies with that of Sigmund Freud. See Blass's "Insights into the Struggle of Creativity: A Rereading of Anna Freud's 'Beating Fantasies and Daydreams,'" *The Psychoanalytic Study of Child Development* 48 (1993) for further details.

daydream:

[T]he girl accidentally came upon a boy's story-book; it contained among others a short story of which the action was laid in the Middle Ages. She went through it once or twice with great interest; when she had finished, she returned the book to its owner and did not see it again. Her imagination, however, had already taken possession of the various figures and a number of the details described in the book. She immediately took up the thread of the story, continued to spin out the action and, retaining it henceforward as one of her 'nice stories,' she behaved exactly as if she were dealing with a spontaneous product of her own imagination....The subject of the story was as follows: A medieval Knight has for years been at feud with a number of nobles who have leagued together against him. In the course of a battle a noble youth of fifteen (the age of the day-dreamer) is captured by the Knight's henchmen. He is taken to the Knight's castle and there kept prisoner some time, until at last he gains his freedom again. Instead of spinning out and continuing the tale (as in a novel published by installments), the girl made use of the plot as a sort of outer frame for her day-dream....Thus there was no logical sequence in the working out of the whole tale. She was free at any moment to choose between the different parts of the tale according to her mood....In this comparatively simple day-dream there are only two really important figures....One of these main figures is the young prisoner, who is endowed in the day-dream with various noble and pleasing character-traits; the other is the Knight who is described as harsh and brutal....the Knight nearly goes as far as to torture the prisoner, but at the last moment he desists. He nearly kills him through imprisonment in the dungeon of his castle, but has him nursed

back to life again before it is too late for recovery....And while he is apparently bent upon doing harm to the youth, he actually grants him one favor after the other....the prisoner accidentally goes beyond the boundaries of the castle; the Knight meets him there, but does not punish him by renewed imprisonment, as he would have expected. Another time the Knight discovers a similar transgression on the part of the prisoner, but he himself saves him from the humiliating consequences of the deed. These experiences then serve to heighten his enjoyment of some luxuries granted to him by the Knight. All these dramatic scenes were enacted very vividly before the imagination of the girl.<sup>3</sup>

In this daydream narrative, the relationship between the Knight and the Youth cannot, precisely speaking, be called homosexual.<sup>4</sup> However, the dense atmosphere of homoeroticism can be clearly perceived through the Knight's ambivalent attachment to the Youth—he tortures the Youth, but at the same time forgives him and grants him favors—and the Knight's implied sadistic impulses—he wishes to 'beat' the Youth into submission.<sup>5</sup> The above quotation gives a general idea of the young female subject's act of rearranging (and retelling) the original story of the Knight and the Youth, producing limitless homoerotic narratives. This story provides significant theoretical premises by which formations of female fantasies and sexualities may be explored, precisely because girls/women in the

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<sup>3</sup> Anna Freud, "The Relation of Beating-Phantasies to a Day-Dream," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 4 (1923), p.94-95.

<sup>4</sup> It seems that Anna Freud does not pay much attention to the relationship between the two men in the girl's daydream. She thus fails to question why the Knight and the Youth should be fantasized by girls/women as male characters, rather than as a mature man and a fifteen-year-old girl, for example.

<sup>5</sup> I do not mean to suggest that homoeroticism is always expressed through sadistic/masochistic impulses or relationships. As we shall see, however, in Japanese female fantasies of male-male homoeroticism, sadomasochism is often an important narrative element. I will discuss the implications of this later in the text.

contemporary era (over eighty years after Anna Freud's research was published) still dedicate themselves to acts of fantasy similar to those of the girl in Anna Freud's article, producing fantasmic narratives of male homosexuality/homoeroticism.

In the early 1970s, many Japanese women started writing/reading novels and comic books that featured narratives of male-male romance and/or eroticism, and nowadays this genre of male homosexual narratives, commonly called *yaoi*, has been publicly acknowledged as a significant component of Japanese popular culture. *Yaoi* narratives in various genres and media—from 'high-brow' literature by women authors to 'pornographic' comic books produced and distributed by amateurs—have attracted the attention of literary and cultural critics, as well as anthropologists and sociologists in recent years.<sup>6</sup> While exact figures are impossible to come by, Akiko Mizoguchi suggests that there are at least half a million hard-core fans of *yaoi* narratives in various media, and more probably a million Japanese women who consume *yaoi* materials occasionally.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The amount of Japanese analytical research on (Japanese) female fantasies of male homosexuality is too large to consider fully in detail. For instance, Ueno Chizuko, a well-known sociologist and scholar in gender studies, discusses *yaoi* narratives from a sociological perspective in *Hatsujō sōchi: erosu no shinario* (The Mechanisms of Excitement: Erotic Scenarios) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1998). Outside Japan, Tomoko Aoyama was one of the first researchers to study male homosexual and homoerotic narratives written by Japanese female writers, and Sandra Buckley is the first to analyze *yaoi* narrative types in English. See Aoyama's "Male Homosexuality as Treated by Japanese Women Writers," in *The Japanese Trajectory: Modernization and Beyond*, eds. Gavan McCormack and Yoshio Sugimoto (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Buckley's "Penguin in Bondage: A Graphic Tale of Japanese Comic Books," in *Techno Culture*, eds. Constance Penley and Andrew Ross (Minnesota and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), for further details.

<sup>7</sup> Mizoguchi arrives at these figures through the audience studies done by Kurihara Chiyo ("Otokodōshi no ai ni shōjotachi ga kataku suru mono [The Fantasies Girls Project on the Love between Men], in *The Tsukuru* [March 1994]) and personal communication with Higashino Junko, editor at one of the major *yaoi* publishers. See Akiko Mizoguchi,

The question thus arises: why do a significant percentage of Japanese women exhibit a longing for male homosexual/homoerotic fantasies? As Nakajima Azusa, a literary critic and (under the name of Kurimoto Kaoru) one of the most renowned creators of male homosexual fantasies in Japan, says:

When I brought (the manuscript of) *Mayonaka no tenshi* (Midnight Angel) to the Bungei shunjû publishing company for the first time, I was primarily in a state of fear, wondering: 'What publishing company on earth would ever accept such a work?', and 'I may be classified as a *hentai* (perverted) writer forever, if I publish such a private fantasy.' I didn't know much about this very specialized field, but I had never seen a novel in which things such as men loving each other, a man who loves a boy, physical love expressed through anal sex, and rape and murder are naturally described....[*Midnight Angel*] represents part of the narrative of my 'private fantasy' and 'private eros,' so I thought that there were no other people in the world, apart from myself, who were interested in anal sex between men; however, that couldn't be helped, because I really wanted to write about it. But the most important question for me at that time was what attracted me so much about depictions of anal sex between men, together with intense sadomasochistic fantasies.<sup>8</sup>

Later, Nakajima/Kurimoto confesses that, when she first realized that her daydreaming was

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"Male-Male Romance by and for Women in Japan: A History and the Subgenres of Yaoi Fictions," in the *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 25 (2003), p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> Nakajima Azusa, *Komyunikêshon fuzen shôkôgun* (The Syndrome of Imperfect Communication) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobô, 1991), p. 85. In the 1970s, *Kadokawa shoten*, one of the biggest Japanese publishing companies, published Kurimoto Kaoru's sensational book, entitled *Mayonaka no tenshi* (Midnight Angel), in which male celebrities are dramatized as male homosexuals. Kurimoto/Nakajima had serialized *Shôsetsu dôjô* (The Arena of Novel Writing) in *Magazine June*, where she featured a large number of professional *yaoi* writers.



initiated and eroticized through male homosexual fantasies, she defined herself as insane and perverted, but she gradually recognized that she desperately needed her male homosexual fantasies, in order to maintain some sort of stable balance in relation to her ambivalent mental condition. Nakajima's self-reflexive descriptions evoke such questions as: What are female fantasies of male homosexuality? Why do a significant number of Japanese women crave (consciously or subconsciously) male homosexual narratives? How can the idea of female fantasies of male homosexuality be analyzed in terms of a broader discourse concerning female sexuality and its relationship to the reification of unbalanced gender relations? How can we define the concept of female fantasies of male homosexuality, specifically if we take into consideration a woman's psychological development, which essentially limits the expressive discursive space assigned to her?

In Japan, male homosexuality has a long tradition that has been extensively analyzed in recent years.<sup>9</sup> In pre-modern Japan (prior to 1868) in particular, sexual relationships between men were not only acknowledged but were often elevated to the level of a *dō* ('way'). Some of the earliest acknowledged relationships between men arose from Buddhist ascetic practice: since heterosexual desire was forbidden as an obstacle to spiritual enlightenment and Buddhist priests and monks therefore often lived in all-male enclaves, monks' corporeal desires were directed toward *chigo*, young Buddhist acolytes. In the court-centered Heian period (794-1185), the word *chigo* referred to (beautiful) boys who danced at festivals or participated in rituals. But by the medieval period (roughly 1200-1600),

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<sup>9</sup> See Gary P. Leupp's *Male Colors: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) and Gregory Pflugfelder's *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), for more detailed analysis of male homosexual practices in pre-modern Japan. The title of Leupp's *Male Colors* is a literal translation of the Japanese *kanji* phrase, *nanshoku* (male homosexuality).

dominated by warriors and *bushidô* (the way of the *samurai*), the word *chigo* had clearly come to indicate the younger homosexual partner in a Buddhist setting.<sup>10</sup> As *samurai* values and aesthetics continued to dominate Japanese society through the end of the Edo period (1600-1868), *shûdô* (pederasty) was institutionalized among members of the Japanese *samurai* class as a more spiritual, supreme and aesthetic form of relationship, compared to the physicality of most heterosexual relations.<sup>11</sup>

Turning to modern Japanese literature, we can list several male authors whose narratives focus on male homosexuality: Mishima Yukio, Inagaki Taruho, and Mizukami Tsuyoshi, to name but a few. It may be plausible to say that the long history of male homosexuality in Japanese society/culture is closely associated with a misogynistic ideology that has tempted men to give a privileged position to psychological enlightenment among men, believing that this is a concept that women cannot understand. In a broad sense, male homosexual narratives constructed by male authors are bound up with (sexual) issues that only men can access (or explore); male-oriented issues of misogyny and homosociality, for example, generally appear to represent a determining force that characterizes Japanese male authors' homosexual works. However, a study of male homosexuality that arises out of a more female-oriented research project, focusing on the male homosexual fictions written and read by women, calls into question the idea of a fixed correlation between male

<sup>10</sup> See Paul Schalow's 'Kûkai and the Tradition of Male Love in Japanese Buddhism,' in *Buddhism, Sexuality and Gender*, ed. Jose Cabezon (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992) and Margaret Childs' "*Chigo Monogatari*: Love Stories or Buddhist Sermons?" *Monumenta Nipponica* 35:2 (1980), for a more detailed analysis of *chigo* sexuality.

<sup>11</sup> However, critics sometimes discuss ideological difficulties in defining male-male relationships in pre-modern Japan as 'homosexual' within the context of modern ideas of sexuality. See Joshua Mostow's "The Gender of *Wakashu* and the Grammar of Desire" (Honolulu: University Hawai'i Press, 2003) for further analysis of sexual formations in pre-modern Japan. Mostow also discusses such significant issues as visualizing 'pansexual' desires, as well as treating *shunga* (pornographic pictures), not as representations of historical realism, but rather as belonging to fictionalized and fantasized contexts.

homosexuality and exclusively male-oriented issues.

As Nakajima/Kurimoto shows, it is precisely because (Japanese) women are so much concerned with male homosexuality, through reading and writing imaginative narratives that portray it, that the sociological aspects of male homosexuality are not exclusively limited to issues surrounding male (sexual) desire. However, basing my thematic analysis on psychoanalytic approaches, I would like to begin by arguing that male homosexual narratives written by women are complex phenomena, precisely because these narratives constitute an enterprise that differs markedly both from male homosexual narratives written by male authors and from practical (e.g. political) issues surrounding male homosexuality. Nakajima reinforces my analysis:

[Women] choose and create a world in which male homosexuality is not unnatural *not* because they have some extraordinary interest in male homosexuality. It would be more precise to say that, in the process of searching for the kind of situations to which they are unconsciously attracted, they (coincidentally) arrive at a romance between boys.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, I would like to explore the discursive process by which male homosexual narratives are stylized as fantasy images, rather than as the inscriptive reflections of any realistic, practical form of sexuality.<sup>13</sup>

In contemporary Japanese society, the significance of a particular genre of *manga* comic books, called *yaoi*, can be characterized as idealized female fantasies of male

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<sup>12</sup> Nakajima, p. 190.

<sup>13</sup> This point will arise repeatedly in the discussion that follows, but let me emphasize here that the object of my analysis in this project is *not* the 'real-life' world of male homoeroticism, but rather the discursive universe constructed within female narrative fantasies of male-male sex.

homosexual relationships. I will fully discuss *yaoi manga* in Chapter 6. Let it suffice for the moment to point out that nowadays the *yaoi* genre, which includes a large number of comic books, novels, and weekly or monthly magazines dealing with male same-sex relationships, occupies a large sector of the Japanese book market, with many *manga* artists consistently attaining the bestseller list.<sup>14</sup> Here, my focus is on tracing the process by which the formations of female fantasies become involved in male homosexual narratives. For instance, Hashimoto Osamu (a man) criticizes Hagio Moto's *Tôma no shinzô* (The Heart of Thomas), one of the early *manga* masterpieces representing female fantasies of male homosexuality, defining it as a failed *shônen* (for or about boys) *Bildungsroman*. In contradiction to Hashimoto's analysis, Miyasako Chizuru (a woman) argues that *The Heart of Thomas* is not the story of a *shônen* (boy), but rather that of a *shôjo* (girl) who plays the role of a *shônen*.<sup>15</sup> Miyasako suggests that female fantasies of male homosexuality are not really stories of *shônen* and male homosexuality, but instead represent what Miyasako calls *hi-shôjo* (anti-*shôjo*), who attempt to dismantle the ideological straitjacket of being a *shôjo* within the context of patriarchal, hierarchical structures. As Miyasako implies, in the process of analyzing female fantasies of male homosexuality, we should place emphasis on these as fantasies, rather than on the male homosexual narratives themselves. In other words, the male homosexual characters and the concept of male homosexuality itself within *yaoi* narratives are constructed and represented as fantasies within the female imagination, and do not refer to the 'realities' of male homosexuality.

Female-oriented narratives of male homosexuality in popular culture are not

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<sup>14</sup> See Akiko Mizoguchi's "Male-Male Romance by and for Women in Japan: History and the Subgenres of *Yaoi* Fiction," in which Mizoguchi provides some important data about *yaoi* consumption.

<sup>15</sup> Miyasako Chizuru, *Chôshôjo* (Supergirls) (Tokyo: Hokueisha, 1984), p. 184.

exclusively limited to Japanese women; such narratives can also be seen in the North American '/' ('slash') movement, which started by recasting *Star Trek* characters in homosexual pairings.<sup>16</sup> Analysts of *yaoi* and 'slash' explore the fact that these popular genres (of male homosexual fantasies) are basically female oriented:

[*Yaoi* are] male homosexual novels and *manga* written by women writers for women readers in Japan.<sup>17</sup>

...the ['slash'] fandom is also 100 % female.<sup>18</sup>

...there is pornography written 100% by women for a 100% female readership.<sup>19</sup>

Constance Penley, a (sympathetic) analyst of the 'slash' movement, raises a question similar to Nakajima's concerning the apparently powerful female drive to fantasize male homosexual narratives: "Why are women fans so alienated from their own bodies that they choose to write erotic fantasies only in relation to a nonfemale body?"<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Yaoi* and 'slash' have in common the fact that both genres foreground female fantasies of male homosexuality. However, they do not completely coincide with each other. For instance, 'slash' contains not only male homosexuality but also other sexual orientations (e.g. lesbian). Also, 'slash' does not emphasize the conditions of heterosexual orientation very strictly; in contrast, *yaoi* narratives consistently dramatize homosexual acts with a climax in anal sex, a pattern that represents clearly defined (heterosexualized) roles of top (the penetrator) and bottom (the penetrated). See Henry Jenkin's *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991); Constance Penley's "Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Study of Popular Culture," in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), and Joanna Russ's "Pornography By Women For Women, With Love," in *Magic Mommas, Trembling Sisters, Puritans and Perverts* (New York: The Crossing Press, 1985) for more detailed analysis of 'slash.'

<sup>17</sup> Mizoguchi Akiko, "Sore wa, dare no, donna, 'riaru?': *yaoi* no gensetsu kûkan o seiri suru kokoromi" (Whose, And What "Real" Is It?: The Attempt to Systematize the Discursive Space of *Yaoi*), *Image & Gender* 4 (2004), p. 27.

<sup>18</sup> Constance Penley, "Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Study of Popular Culture," p. 483.

<sup>19</sup> Joanna Russ, "Pornography By Women For Women, With Love," p. 79.

<sup>20</sup> Constance Penley, "Brownian Motion: Women, Tactics and Technology," in *Technoculture*,

The topic of male homosexuality has not been limited to female-produced popular culture materials (e.g. *manga*); it also constitutes a major theme in relation to the formation of female sexuality in Japanese women's literature. As admitted by *yaoi* artists themselves, their works were originally influenced by Mori Mari, a female writer and daughter of literary lion Mori Ôgai (1862-1922), and especially by her trilogy concerning male homosexuality, "Kareha no nedoko" (The Bed of Withered Leaves), "Nichiyôbi ni boku wa ikanai" (I'm Not Coming on Sunday), and "Koibitotachi no mori" (The Lovers' Forest), all of which were published in the late 1960s. At that time, the Japanese *bundan* (literary establishment) did not acknowledge the value and validity of Mori Mari's male homosexual trilogy, generally dismissing these novels as 'perverse' narratives, written by a 'perverse' woman. The critical silence with regard to this trilogy points to an overall denial of the importance of the examination of women's sexuality; *bundan* critics were unable to recognize the significance of the issues of displaced and divergent formations of female sexuality that loom in the background narratives of female fantasies of male homosexuality. What the critics failed to see is that the analysis of the female (conscious and subconscious) drive to fantasize male homosexual narratives may provide various theoretical viewpoints from which the social/cultural myths of female sexuality can be seen to be encoded and decoded.

Considering the fact that not only Mori Mari, but also a number of other (Japanese) women writers (Kôno Taeko, Okamoto Kanoko, and Matsuura Rieko, to name but a few<sup>21</sup>) pursue the particular theme of male homosexuality as grounded in a fantasmic diegesis, it becomes apparent that, in the process of exploring the incredibly complex area of (female)

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eds. Constance Penley and Andrew Ross (Minnesota and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 154.

<sup>21</sup> Male homosexual configurations figure in works by a number of Japanese female writers, such as Tomioka Taeko, Nagano Mayumi, Sugimoto Sonoko, Ôba Minako, and so forth.

gender formations and relations, male homosexual fantasies can (and should) be positioned as one of the initiating discursive points from which (some) female desires may originate (although they are then subconsciously repressed). Kôno Taeko's sadomasochistic narrative preferences are thematically combined with the male homosexual eroticism of the father and the son in "Yôjigari" (Toddler-Hunting). Critical analysis of Okamoto Kanoko's works usually focuses on her particular artistic perspective, the animating force behind her distinctive writing. The complicity of representations of female sexuality that foreground male homosexuality seems to be far beyond the scope of Okamoto's literary endeavor, since she usually dedicates herself to presenting positive, straightforward images of strong, mysterious, even shamanic female characters. However, Okamoto's short story entitled "Kakose" (The Bygone World, discussed in Chapter 4) is set apart from her other works through its treatment of male homoerotic, sadomasochistic and incestuous eroticism. In an attempt to disempower phallogocentric paradigms, Matsuura Rieko has also offered particular descriptions of the politicized and textualized relationships reflected in various kinds of sexuality (especially lesbianism). In such works as *Oyayubi P no shugyô jidai* (Big Toe P's Years of Apprenticeship) and *Nachuraru ūman* (Natural Woman), Matsuura conveys sub-narratives of male homosexuality behind primary narratives that explore various forms of lesbian or female auto-erotic discourse. In her latest work, entitled *Ura vâjon* (The Reverse Version, discussed in Chapter 5), Matsuura also addresses the psychological development of women who are attracted by male homosexual fantasies.

Mark J. McLelland, an analyst of gay culture in Japan, summarizes the dialectic of female fantasies of male homosexuality and female realities of heterosexuality in the following way: "*Shonen'ai* [female fantasies of male homosexuality] stories represent an

ideal world of romance which is as much a utopia as is the world of heterosexual sex a dystopia.”<sup>22</sup> Why is male homosexuality consistently figured as a utopia, in contrast to a heterosexual dystopia? In order to throw light on the popularity of this female idealization of male homosexuality, we need to observe the relationship between these fantasmic narratives and the actual nature of female sexual desires and repressions. Faced with issues concerning such problematic, ‘perverse’ sexual fantasies of male homosexuality, it is all the more important to reconsider the discursive nature of women’s male homosexual fantasies in terms of both the gender formations that they reflect and the kinds of psychological subjectivity behind them. The diverse status of women’s male homosexual fantasies can be clarified by seeing it in terms of the problems associated with positioning women in the ambivalent space of the Symbolic Order. I would like to suggest that these fantasies serve both to problematize established ‘certainties’ about the nature of female sexuality and to recontextualize the sublimation (balance) of women’s psychological position as gendered beings within the patriarchal structure. Through examining Japanese female writers’ male homosexual narratives and the contemporary cultural enterprise of *yaoi manga*, I shall explore some of the ideological, sociological, and sexual possibilities (and impossibilities) of the female imagination. This exploration will provide a theoretical perspective from which to analyze Japanese women’s imaginative space more generally and to search for new approaches by which to comprehend a complex and divergent female (sexual) subjectivity.

In Chapter 1, taking broader issues of gender into consideration, I shall map out a theoretical framework for the fantasy/sexuality correlation. First of all, by laying bare the analytical complexity involved in the contextualization of ‘fantasy,’ I will examine

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<sup>22</sup> Mark J. McLelland, *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan: Cultural Myths and Social Realities* (Richmond:Curzon, 2000), p. 87.



psychoanalytic approaches to issues surrounding fantasy formations; here, some overlappings, as well as some incompatible distances, between Freudian approaches and Kleinian criticism will be discussed. Female fantasies of male homosexuality may be analyzed within the framework of Sigmund Freud's famous article, "A Child is Being Beaten," which clearly addresses the meaning of female psychological development with regard to ambivalent sexualities. Freud describes his female subjects gazing at a scene in their fantasies, in which a boy and his father (erotically) interact. Following Freud's analysis of female fantasies of male homosexuality, we can say that, when male homosexual discourse is activated specifically through fantasy, it can no longer be conceived of as a fundamentally male activity. By highlighting the female desire to access the multiple, divergent contexts of sexuality represented in male homosexual narratives, we can also begin the systematization of theoretical formations of bisexuality (androgyny, genderlessness). Finally, the structurally and narratologically dominant tropes of metafiction in female fantasies of male homosexuality will be discussed within the context of such psychological orientations as projective identification and scopophilic dissociation.<sup>23</sup>

Chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5 concentrate on specific texts. In Chapter 2, in a clarification

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<sup>23</sup> Here, I would like to note that the psychological term 'scopophilia' is defined in various manners (with other related terms, such as scopophilia, scoplagnia, troilism, pictophilia, and so forth). Scopophilia is sometimes considered as a synonym for scopophilia. The term scopophilia may be used more frequently, especially in the field of visual studies; for example, such pioneers of psychoanalytic visual analysis as Laura Mulvey and Christian Metz use the term scopophilic in their studies. However, critics sometimes make a distinction between these words. For example, the Japanese psychoanalyst, Anno Jô, relates scopophilia to the act of secret observation of others engaged in 'sexual intercourse,' while he defines the original concept of scopophilia as watching others putting on and taking off clothes. See *Bessatsu nihon rinshô ryôikibetsu shôkôgun* (The Supplement of Japanese Clinical Studies of Syndromes) No. 39, p.291-293. Since my primary focus with regard to the female gaze is closely related to the act of viewing 'sexually-oriented scenes' (mostly sexual intercourse), I will therefore use the term, scopophilia throughout this dissertation. See also Melanie Klein's *Contributions of Psychoanalysis 1921-1945* in which she discusses psychoanalytic subjects of 'seeing' using the word 'scopophilia.'

and elaboration of certain key notions regarding women's male homosexual fantasies, I will examine Mori Mari's male homosexual trilogy. The primary focus of this chapter foregrounds the ways in which the female imagination of male homosexuality is elaborated in terms of women's sense of the '*homme fatal*,' misogyny, and the idealization of homosocial diegesis. Chapter 3 begins with an analysis of thematic and formative overlappings between Kôno Taeko's "Toddler-Hunting" and Freud's theory of female fantasies in "A Child is Being Beaten." I will explore how female misogyny and the idealization of the *shônen* (boy/young man) identity are used as means to escape from the negative connotations of female sexualities (and femininity per se). I will also argue that, in reality, sadomasochistic pleasure and desire are interconnected with the fantasmic eroticism of the father-son relationship through a mediating process of psychological and/or metafictional internalization. Chapter 4 investigates the ways in which male homosexual, sadomasochistic, and incestuous eroticism in Okamoto Kanoko's "The Bygone World" interact with her repetition and fetishization of certain motifs of decadent aestheticism. In Chapter 5, questions concerning the female psychological drives underlying fantasies of male homosexuality will be considered through an examination of Matsuura Rieko's *The Reverse Version*, in which Matsuura's constructive desire to create a parodic (and subversive) postmodern narrative by employing male homosexual subjects to analyze female sexuality emerges in a striking manner.

In Chapter 6, in order to investigate the different dimensions of female fantasies and desires, I shall explore the ideological, cultural, and sexual possibilities (and impossibilities) raised by viewing *yaoi manga* as pornography directed at women. I will argue that discursive issues relating to female fantasies of male homosexuality offer a subversive space within

which prevailing theories of sexuality and psychoanalysis may be explored and challenged; this is particularly relevant in relation to the specific Japanese sociocultural situation vis-à-vis sexual-textual liberation.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Mapping Out Theories of Sexuality and Sexual Fantasies

*The creative writer does the same as the child at play. He creates a world of fantasy which he takes very seriously—that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion—while separating it sharply from reality.*

—Sigmund Freud, “Creative Writers and Day-dreaming”

Critical attempts to systematize female sexual fantasies<sup>1</sup> provide various kinds of theoretical perspectives from which we can gain access to more sophisticated readings of the dynamics of female sexuality. Broadly speaking, any analytical approach (e.g. sociology, anthropology, history, science, and so forth) is able to provide significant methods with which to locate the dynamic dimensions of fantasies in terms of the divergent, textualized contexts of (female) sexuality. However, in order to argue that the discourse of sexual mechanisms should be incorporated within the constructive parameters of fantasy formations, I wish to explore psychoanalytical approaches to these issues, with specific reference to the subconsciously inscribed process by which such fantasmic sexual domains are formed. I fully

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<sup>1</sup> Psychoanalytic concepts of fantasy are often reexamined from the point of view of a critical impulse to separate ‘fantasy’ (subconsciously oriented narratives, e.g. dreams) from ‘phantasy’ (consciously oriented narratives, e.g. daydreams). Kleinian approaches are often associated with this fantasy/phantasy dichotomy. In contrast, Freudian analysis opposes the fantasy/phantasy separation, asserting that the narrative contexts and symbolic scenarios of dreams are often similar to those of daydreaming, so that the kind of clear distinction assumed by the fantasy/phantasy separation cannot easily be achieved. In this thesis, I shall consistently use the word ‘fantasy’ in terms of both the conscious and subconscious orientations that underlie the production of fantasmic narratives.

understand that these psychoanalytic frameworks cannot be considered as a perfect theoretical apparatus that can be used to solve all of the questions (and problems) surrounding issues of sexuality. However, as pointed out by feminist critics of psychoanalytic theories, psychoanalytic models uncover the psychological processes associated with power-oriented structures, in which myths concerning female sexuality are cunningly designed to maintain a seemingly balanced gender hierarchy. There have been a large number of prominent feminist scholars who use psychoanalytic criticism; such as Julia Kristeva, Ann Kaplan, Laura Mulvey, to name but a few. Psychoanalytic discourse provides a theoretical space in which gender constructions that have been hierarchically essentialized can be detextualized and challenged; it is thereby capable of contributing to feminist and gender studies.

### **Formations of Fantasy**

The very concept of fantasy as a dominating force that characterizes women's male homosexual narratives is complicated. In order to explore the circumstances of female subconscious desires and repressions, I shall first discuss the framework of female sexual fantasies in terms of the psychoanalytic domain. Psychoanalysis obviously offers models of fantasies. However, psychoanalytic structures and practices regarding fantasy formations are so complicated and divergent that some psychoanalysts' critical approaches are too distant to be compatible. As pointed out by Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis, even Freud's theories of fantasies (seduction fantasy, primary fantasy, autoeroticism and fantasy) suggest his inconsistent stance with regard to systematic fantasy formations.

In contrast, Melanie Klein's approach to fantasy defines its meanings and effects in

terms of a psychological mirror-narrative that represents realistic details. Klein argues that the subconscious impulses that underlie fantasy cannot be considered as separate from realistic, practical principles, precisely because, in the process of forming fantasies, we accept and modify the images offered (stimulated) by practical circumstances. Her critical analysis goes further, claiming that fantasy, this psychological mirror-narrative of reality, is biologically inscribed in human beings from their birth.

On the other hand, Freud denies any ideal state of reality and fantasy integration, basing his critical stance on the cognitive disorientation experienced between realistic principles and 'psychical reality.' For Freud, much of fantasy's importance and vital force derives from the fact that it functions as a substitute for repressed sexual desires and frustrations. In his analysis of fantasy, Freud discusses the importance of uncovering the psychological process of fantasy formation by means of metaphorically closing the door to the realistic domain. Laplanche and Pontalis analyze the basic context of Freud's theory of fantasy formation as follows:

Whether we are to attribute *reality* to unconscious wishes, I cannot say. It must be denied, of course, to any transitional or intermediate thoughts. If we look at unconscious wishes reduced to their most fundamental and truest shape, we shall have to conclude, no doubt, that *psychical* reality is a particular form of existence which is not to be confused with *material* reality.<sup>2</sup>

Exploring the narrativity (and fictionality) of Freud's theory illuminates the construction of fantasy as the representation of a symbolic 'lack' of a satisfying object.

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<sup>2</sup> Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis, "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality," in *Formations of Fantasy*, eds. V. Burgi, J. Donald and C. Kaplan (London and New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 8. Their emphasis.

Freud's primary focus does not foreground the reality/fantasy integration, but rather narrativity (fictionality) itself, which discloses the function of fantasy as a substitution for an 'absent' object. Insofar as fantasy formation is deeply associated with the proxy of the 'absence' of an object, the fantasmic domain cannot completely be integrated into practical principles. Laplanche and Pontalis summarize Freud's vital recognition of the role of narrativity in fantasy formation, citing Freud's statement: "So it is not 'It is *you* who say so,' but 'It is *you* who *say* so.'"<sup>3</sup> They explore Freud's thesis that "a dream is not a fantasmagoria, but a text to be deciphered."<sup>4</sup>

In her analysis of 'slash' fandom, Constance Penley questions a dominant analytical stance toward other female-oriented narratives (e.g. Harlequin romances and soap operas). She refers to the work of Janice Radway (*Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*) and Tania Modleski (*Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women*), questioning their theoretical stances, which privilege Nancy Chodorow's model of object relations and thus underrate the Freudian and Lacanian approaches. More precisely, Penley's criticism of Radway and Modleski involves deconstructing the prevailing atmosphere in which female-oriented narratives of popular culture are signified as pre-Oedipal, intentionally distanced from issues surrounding the Oedipal (and Symbolic) structure. As opposed to this theoretical disregard for Freudian psychoanalysis—legitimate criticism should be differentiated from disdain—Penley views 'slash' fantasies as representations of the absence of the desired object in popular narrative.<sup>5</sup>

My own argument with regard to female sexual fantasies of male homosexuality has

<sup>3</sup> Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis, p.29.

<sup>4</sup> Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis, p.8.

<sup>5</sup> However, Penley's analysis does not sufficiently explore the ways in which an 'absent' object is replaced and mediated in 'slash' narratives. See Penley's "Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Study of Popular Culture."

also been inspired by Freud's analysis of fantasy as a 'proxy' for the 'absence' of an object, as well as by his primary focus on the role of narrativity in fantasy formation. I agree that male homosexuality in female sexual fantasies is not represented as an object of practical (female) desire and that the narrativity (fictionality) of such fantasies textualizes male homosexual characters as representations of the 'absence' of a satisfying object. Insofar as the origin of fantasy involves 'imaginary' (fantasmic) satisfaction, as indicated by Freud, this contextualization of male homosexual fantasies suggests that (practical, realistic) male homosexuality itself cannot be signified as an object of female desire. In the following chapters, I will further explore the idea that male homosexuality in female (sexual) fantasies cannot simply be defined in terms of a desiring subject and a desired object.

However, I would like to challenge Freud's thesis, specifically as it views the process of fantasy formation based on the 'absence' of an object exclusively in terms of sexual desire. Freud is forced to deny the integration of reality and fantasy, precisely because he believes that the 'absence' of an object (specifically, the 'absence' of an object of sexual desire) must constitute the basis for fantasy formation. In this context, Klein's mirror-narrative of fantasy and reality should be reconsidered. I cannot completely agree with her predominant idea regarding reality/fantasy integration (especially the theory of infant fantasy<sup>6</sup>). However, one of her analytical insights into the ways in which realistic, practical principles (other than objects of sexual desire) are reflected in fantasy can be seen very strikingly in narratives of female fantasies of male homosexuality. It may be seen that realistic, practical female sexuality is reflected in male homosexual characters who appear in

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<sup>6</sup> To argue the inherent stability of reality/fantasy integration, Kleinian analysis asserts that even infants are endowed with an instinctive impulse to originate fantasy, through an inevitable process of projecting realistic circumstances.



female fantasies. Here, the important debate over the role of female sexuality with regard to male homosexual fantasies can be discussed in terms of a psychological process called 'projection.' Melanie Klein sees projective identification as a self-defense mechanism of the unconscious, which 'projects' the psychological confusion and anxiety caused by a split and repressed ego onto the Other, in order to restore its mental balance. Herbert Rosenfeld summarizes Klein's analysis of 'projective identification' in the following way:

'Projective identification' relates first of all to a splitting process of the early ego, where either good or bad parts of the self are split off from the ego and are as a further step projected in love or hatred into external objects which leads to fusion and identification of the projected parts of the self with the external objects.<sup>7</sup>

In this context, we can argue that the act of projecting the repressed impulses which the subject cannot control onto the Other represents the very basis from which the female discourse of male homosexual fantasies emerges. If that is the case, it is clear that realistic principles are definitively reflected in the process of fantasy formation.

Thus, this study will attempt a practical integration of Freud's and Klein's conceptions of fantasy formation, precisely because both Freud's and Klein's theoretical insights have some validity, and should therefore be applied, in order to explore female sexual fantasies of male homosexuality.

### **A Child is Being Beaten**

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<sup>7</sup> Herbert Rosenfeld, "Contribution to the Psychopathology of Psychotic States: the Importance of Projective Identification in the Ego Structure and the Object Relations of the Psychotic Patient," in *The New Library of Psychoanalysis*, Vol 7 *Melanie Klein Today: Developments in Theory and Practice*, Vol 1: *Mainly Theory*, ed. Elizabeth Bott Spillius (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge, 1988), p. 117.

One of the most famous psychoanalytic scenarios concerning female sexual fantasies is found in Freud's article entitled "A Child is Being Beaten." Freud's analysis of female sexual fantasies in this article often looms in the background of feminist discourse on gender, since this article is "Freud's only paper in which the female is the model for understanding and development."<sup>8</sup> Freud's systematized theoretical framework defines three levels of narrative structure, in which a combination of the presence and absence of the female subject can be strikingly seen. Freud explores the dynamics of sexualities, through categorizing psychological orientations of the beating fantasy in terms of gender difference: there are female beating fantasies and male beating fantasies. Showing how Freud's theory of female sexual fantasies is mirrored in the male homosexual narratives created by Japanese female authors, I shall suggest that an investigation of the complicity between these female fantasies and male homosexuality reveals a number of areas of disturbance and subversion of female gender identities. Thus, here I would specifically like to focus on the discursive space of female beating fantasies, in order to clarify and elaborate certain key notions with regard to female fantasies of male homosexuality.

Freud defines the formation of female sexual fantasy as the original stage of sexual perversion produced by a static closure of the Oedipal process, and he concludes that this sexual perversion should be repressed or sublimated by completing the formal Oedipal development, which is required for women to 'become' normal as one category of human beings. First of all, we can discern Freud's emphasis on the basic premise that female beating fantasies represent a psychological medium that is directly related to sexual arousal

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<sup>8</sup> Jack Novick and Kelly Novick, "Not for Barbarians: An Appreciation of Freud's 'A Child is Being Beaten,'" in *On Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten,"* ed. Ethel Spector Person (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 32.

(autoeroticism):

The phantasy has feelings of pleasure attached to it, and on their account the patient has reproduced it on innumerable occasions in the past or may even still be doing so. At the climax of the imaginary situation there is almost invariably a masturbatory satisfaction—carried out, that is to say, on the genitals.<sup>9</sup>

In this sense, Freud's analysis of the beating fantasy provides a significant starting point from which we can analyze the mutually compatible contexts of female sexual pleasure and the creation of fantasies.

In "A Child is Being Beaten," the significant perspective-shift between identification and dissociation in the formation of female fantasy can be summed up in terms of the following process:

1. 'A child is being beaten by the father'—the impulse of sexual desire is represented as sadistic, but the borderline between identification and dissociation is blurred;
2. 'I am being beaten by the father'—the impulse of sexual desire is represented as masochistic, and the situation is subjectified;
3. 'I am watching the child being beaten by the father'—the impulse of sexual desire is represented as scopophilic, and the situation is objectified.

In the first stage, the subjects' vague statement that "the father beats an unidentified child" implies a background narrative involving girls' unconscious desires to tighten their relationships with their fathers. We can sum up this first psychological action, as follows: The

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<sup>9</sup> Sigmund Freud, "A Child is Being Beaten: A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversions," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* Vol 17, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1995), p. 179.

father beats other children [mostly the subject's brothers and sisters], but he doesn't beat me, precisely because he loves me the most. Illustrating his framework of a three-stage structure of female fantasy, but placing his primary focus on the second, masochistic stage, Freud attempts to consider both the first and the third stages of this type of female sexual fantasy as deviant reflections of the 'normal nature' of female desire, which is only represented in the second, 'masochistic,' stage. As Freud says: "The second phase is the most important and the most momentous of all."<sup>10</sup> In other words, Freud believes that the first and the third stages of this female fantasy are essentially inscribed as perverse complements to 'normal' masochistic female sexuality, which originates from unconscious incestuous desires directed at the father, together with a concomitant sense of guilt. According to Freud, "this being beaten is now a convergence of the sense of guilt and sexual love"<sup>11</sup>; in this second stage, guilt-oriented repression (regarding incestuous desires) drives the subject's masochistic orientation. Freud does not direct his attention to the fact that almost all of his female subjects fantasize the beaten child whom they are 'watching' in the third stage as a boy; in contrast, Freud points out that the beaten child in the first stage could be either a boy or a girl. The critical analyzability of the third stage cannot be discussed without emphasizing the fact that "in the third phase it is almost invariably only boys who are being beaten."<sup>12</sup>

In the above summary of Freud's three-stage model of the beating fantasy, I purposely define the female psychological (sexual) orientation of the third stage in terms of the semantics of scopophilia. Freud clarifies the subject's position as the observer in this stage: "Here, the child who produces the phantasy appears almost as a spectator."<sup>13</sup> However,

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<sup>10</sup> Freud, "A Child is Being Beaten," p.185.

<sup>11</sup> Freud, "A Child is Being Beaten," p.189.

<sup>12</sup> Freud, "A Child is Being Beaten," p.196.

<sup>13</sup> Freud, "A Child is Being Beaten," p.190.

Freud never discusses this female act of 'seeing' or the possibilities of scopophilic 'desires' any further. His (intentional) neglect of any exploration of female scopophilic desires clearly supports the fixed gender identities, in relation to the observing man and the observed woman, which constitute the very basis upon which the patriarchal power structure emerges. Thus, even in Freud's analysis of the third stage, the pleasures involved in the act of 'seeing' are alienated from women. Instead, his textual interpretation of the third stage is characterized as a transformed version of the second stage, which originates from the presumed 'normal' female masochistic drive. In other words, the conditions and limits of the third stage involve a thematic complicity between female masochistic desires and their inevitable resolution in terms of the 'masculinity complex.' As Freud says:

When they turn away from their incestuous love for their father, with its genital significance, they easily abandon their feminine role. They spur their 'masculinity complex' (Van Ophuijsen, 1917) into activity, and from that time forward only want to be boys. For that reason the whipping-boys who represent them are boys too.<sup>14</sup>

It thus seems that women naturalize the inevitable patterns of the masculine complex through their representation of the whipping-boys in the third stage. However, we should ask: What kinds of sexuality are left (or emerge) when a woman discards her femininity with regard to genital representation and desires to be a boy? Freud's answer to this question is that nothing new emerges, apart from a transformed masochism flavored by the masculine complex. As Patrick Joseph Mahony points out, Freud also asserts that the beaten boy in the third stage represents a woman's "entrance into a masculine complex whereby she only wants to be a boy."<sup>15</sup> It may indeed be true that the beaten boy signifies a deformed female masochism

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<sup>14</sup> Freud, "A Child is Being Beaten," p.191.

<sup>15</sup> Patrick Joseph Mahony, "'A Child is Being Beaten': A Clinical, Historical, and Textual Study," in *On*

and its relation to the masculine complex. However, through analyzing female fantasies of male homosexual narratives, I would like to call Freud's assumptions into question. I wish to argue that, if we narrow down the thematic of female fantasies of the 'boy' who is being beaten by the father in terms of a deformation of female masochism (and the concomitant masculine complex), then issues of female sexuality can never transcend a presupposition of female passivity as negatively inscribed in the Symbolic Order. Arnold H. Modell calls the third stage the 'disguised fantasy.' He says: "The disguised nature of this third phase of the fantasy allows it then to be used for masturbation so that by means of this disguised fantasy, which hides the father, an incestuous wish can be gratified."<sup>16</sup> I cannot completely agree with Modell's monolithic analysis that the deep-structured narrative of the third stage 'disguises' an incestuous love for the father. However, as Modell points out, this third stage does serve to 'disguise' the complicated structure of the female psyche. Thus, I would like to analyze the narrative of the 'whipping-boy' from divergent theoretical perspectives, in order to indicate the (limitless) possibilities of female sexual dynamics.

Within the discursive framework of female sexual fantasies and desires, I would like to suggest that the scopophilic desires in the third stage—"I am watching a child being beaten by the father"—represent a productive phase of female psychological development, rather than merely playing the role of supplement to the second stage of female masochistic desire. If the study of female fantasies of male homosexuality arises out of a more female-oriented research project in terms of the poetics and politics of female sexuality, then the fixed idea of mystifying female sexuality (and sexual fantasy) as masochistic in "A Child

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Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten," p. 52.

<sup>16</sup> Arnold H. Modell, "Humiliating Fantasies and the Pursuit of Unpleasure," in *On Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten,"* p. 71.

is Being Beaten" has to be called into question.

A critical collection, titled *On Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten,"* features essays in which psychoanalysts analyze Freud's article from different points of view. Given the diversity of critical approaches it is striking that *none* of the book's contributors mentions the scopophilic nature of female desire in the third stage; they focus instead on the sadomasochistic representation of this stage of the fantasy.<sup>17</sup> It seems clear that the structure of female fantasies of male homosexuality can and should be analyzed within the framework of the third stage, which clearly manifests sexual desires arising from the female gaze directed at the interaction of two males (the boy and the father). When we observe that the mechanism of the third stage is organized and conducted so that the epistemological position of 'observer' is significantly located in terms of female sexual fantasy (and desire), it can be seen that the presumptive core of female fantasies lies in the interaction between 'the gaze' and female sexual desire; female fantasies of male homosexuality may thus be defined as the representation of female desire with a scopophilic orientation.<sup>18</sup>

However, considering female fantasies of male homosexuality in terms of a scopophilic mode of textual representation does not fully foreground female inclinations to view homosexual, rather than heterosexual, relationships. Several *yaoi* critics (Ueno, Fujimoto) suggest that the intrinsic qualities of *yaoi* may be seen within the context of a more radical interpretation of the female 'gaze,' which witnesses the sexual interaction of male lovers in relation to women's ideological challenge to the gendered power structure of men as gazing subjects and women as visual objects. An implicit danger must nevertheless be

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<sup>17</sup> In this book, the contributors' main focus is specifically on contextualizing sadomasochistic elaboration in "A Child is Being Beaten."

<sup>18</sup> It should be pointed out that Freud's analysis of the formation of female fantasy emphasizes the notion of a female masochistic orientation in the structure of the Oedipus Complex, so that the perceiving subject in Freud's theory is teleologically distanced from female scopophilic desires.

recognized in the idea that women can actively become involved in a binary visual hierarchy as a means to reverse or deconstruct that hierarchy. Female scopophilic desires in female fantasies of male homosexuality therefore need to be analyzed in relation to other psychoanalytic components, such as identification, projection, and dissociation, in order to clarify the female identity-creating process highlighted by the conditions and limits of 'gynesistic' sexuality as revealed in female fantasies of male homosexuality.<sup>19</sup> Later, I will explore more details of these female psychological contexts of identification, projection, scopophilia and dissociation in terms of the specific forms of metafictional structure.

### **Masculinity 'vs' Femininity: Penis/Phallus Envy**

In order to understand the discursive contexts of female sexual fantasies of male homosexuality, major dimensions of the masculinity/femininity dichotomy need to be reevaluated and reconceptualized. Through this analysis of female sexual fantasies of male homosexuality, I hope to provide a theoretical framework which could account for the synchrony between women's subconscious desire to nullify their femininity (female misogyny) and their psychological temptation to identify with masculine identities.<sup>20</sup> Freud's

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<sup>19</sup> Alice Jardine (*Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985) writes about the problematic nature of discourses that are coded as 'feminine'—abstract discourses defined in terms that have little to do with actual women but that are necessary for the construction and maintenance of modernity. She coined the term 'gynesis' ('genesis' with a female ['gyn'] twist) in an attempt to name an epistemological space that transcends (or is apart from) the constructed contexts of modernity, an alternative narrative space. I have created an adjective, 'gynesistic,' to describe a sexuality that invokes this space.

<sup>20</sup> In this study I do not wish to repeat Freud's mistaken tendency to assume that all women share an identical sexuality, organized through an identical process of fantasy formation. The prevalence and popularity of *yaoi*-type narratives in Japan and elsewhere suggests that many women identify in fantasy with apparently male characters, and that a close analysis of the third stage of the "A Boy is Being Beaten" fantasy may help in illuminating the motives behind that tendency. But I do not contend that this analysis is relevant to the sexuality of *all* women.



analysis of the third stage of the beating fantasy, within the context of the masculine complex, should be taken seriously. Female fantasies of male homosexuality seem to suggest that women are automatically trapped within a complex masculine scheme in which femininity is negatively signified, precisely because, for women, there is nothing for language to inscribe but their own absence. Thus, these male-dominated ideological structures force women to believe in a seemingly essentialized dichotomy between man as the initiating subject and woman as the subordinate other, and to lament over their femininity and hate it on a subconscious level. Thus, male homosexual fantasies that are repeatedly narrated by (Japanese) women indicate women's psychological alienation from their own female gender and their (futile?) attempts to assimilate masculine subjectivity.

The primary themes initiated by women's male homosexual narratives and the relationship between these narratives and the power-related hierarchy created by the masculinity/femininity dichotomy should therefore be reviewed in relation to discursive formations regarding gender construction, such as Freud's analysis of women's psychological orientation in terms of 'penis envy.' Freud asserts that women are less emotionally stable than men, that they are envious and quick to anger, only because they feel frustrated by the 'obvious' fact that they have been 'castrated.' Freud's project in regard to the representation of female 'penis envy' goes further, exploring the Oedipus Complex scenario whereby a woman's sense of 'lack' (of a penis) is transposed into a subconscious desire to engender a baby boy with her own father. In this sense, female fantasies of male homosexuality may be defined as corresponding exactly with the 'penis-envy' model. However, Freud shows that the primary drive behind the construction of fantasies is initiated by an act of substitution for repressed desires; fantasies are thus not mere reflections of reality. The 'penis' itself is

therefore not exactly an object of desire in female fantasies; what female readers of male homosexual fantasies desire is not to supplement the 'absence' of the 'penis' itself, but rather to engage in a 'fantasy' of the (replaced) 'penis.'

Thus, if the concept of 'penis' (or 'penis envy') is considered deeply, it becomes apparent that the discourse regarding the 'phallus' which was explored by Jacques Lacan is extremely relevant for the further analysis of female fantasies of male homosexuality. The very concept of the 'phallus' is paradoxical and complicated, precisely because it is simultaneously associated with and distanced from the biological penis. Lacan discloses the ways in which the concept of the penis is epistemologically institutionalized. According to the Lacanian scenario, power dynamics are not bounded by the productive force of the biological penis, but rather by the hegemonic epistemology that the penis symbolizes; what Lacan calls the 'phallus'—i.e. the epistemology of penis-supremacy—governs the relational mode of power in which women are inscribed as unable to access various forms of representation, precisely because the manipulated 'phallus' scenario dominates the female psyche. Jane Gallop views the dominating epistemology of the phallus as follows: "It is its privilege among signifiers that determines its predominance as a symbol."<sup>21</sup> As pointed out by Gallop and other feminist critics, the idea that penis/phallus envy compels women to merge into the specific ideological domain of patriarchy appears increasingly naïve. However, at the very least, an understanding of the general concept of penis/phallus envy enables us to consider theoretical viewpoints from which we can approach female fantasies of male homosexuality. In this sense, the theoretical force of the 'phallus' may perhaps be revealed through female fantasies of male homosexuality, in which such 'phallus envy' incorporates

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<sup>21</sup> Jane Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 19.

the cumulative narrativity of fantasy into female psychological development.

If the formation of female sexual fantasies of male homosexuality can be examined in relation to 'phallus envy,' then the subconscious female idealization of what Eve Sedgwick calls 'homosociality,' which constrains women's access to positions of power, should also be discussed. As Lacan argues, principles related to the phallus/power correlation have constituted the basic premises for patriarchal domination, which have assiduously created woman as a subordinate 'other.' The hegemonic knowledge which is produced and textualized by the power dynamic of the phallus can only circulate among men, as a means of maintaining the prevailing power structure. According to Sedgwick, the homosocial orientation organizes and synchronizes the reproductive process of power/knowledge. Both the narrative and thematic issues raised by female fantasies of male homosexuality cannot escape complicity with a recontextualization of homosocial mechanisms: female characters are clearly excluded from such idealized (and authoritative) male-oriented relationships. The ideological appeal to women of these homosocial representations (originated in terms of a homosexual orientation) can clearly be seen in certain forms of female psychological orientation.

### **Masculinity 'and' Femininity: Bisexuality and Androgyny**

I have discussed women's psychological alienation from their own femininity and the productive potential of foregrounding a (projected) masculine identity. However, the entire formal and thematic force of female fantasies of male homosexuality cannot be limited to female attempts to efface female identity. It is true that, in their male homosexual

narratives, women are attempting to tackle issues regarding the textualization of femininity; however, these issues are so complicated that they clearly cannot be discussed as if they involved an absolute rejection of femininity. The textuality of the female body (and of femininity per se) in female fantasies of male homosexuality can be broadly reviewed through two different critical approaches: a theoretical stance based on the notion of psychological 'projection,' and one that attempts to explain bisexual and androgynous representations.

One of the things that Melanie Klein's psychoanalytic approach demonstrates is that the ego's uncontrollable impulses are subconsciously projected onto the other, in order to achieve a balance in terms of psychological stability. Within the context of female fantasies of male homosexuality, it is precisely femininity itself that is postulated as the ego's uncontrollable point of reference. In this sense, identifying issues of femininity as disturbances to the organized psychological stability of the ego's balance, a woman attempts to alienate herself from her own femininity and to project it onto the male homosexual characters in her fantasy world. Thus, in this process femininity is not effaced, but rather is projected outward, in order to explore the possibility of attaining female psychological balance through such male homosexual fantasies.

Male homosexual characters who specifically express female identities are strikingly visible in the *yaoi manga* genre discussed in Chapter 6; women's act of projecting their own femininity onto male homosexual characters reveals the fact that the background narrative of women's male homosexual fantasies is thematically constructed on the basis of heterosexual paradigms. However, this projective process (and its relation to the female act of identifying with male homosexual characters) is so complicated that the sexual discourse in *yaoi* (or

indeed female fantasies of male homosexuality per se) should be analyzed in ways that go beyond the duality of heterosexuality/homosexuality (lesbianism). The female projective (and identifying) act has never been clearly defined—for one thing, it differs, depending on the exact structure of various (female) readers' receptive acts. The possible structures of that reception can be broadly summarized as follows: 1) *yaoi* readers project their femininity onto *both* characters in a male-male pair;<sup>22</sup> 2) *yaoi* readers project their femininity onto *one* of the characters of the pair (the 'bottom'), a process which clearly would reiterate heterosexual paradigms; 3) even though *yaoi* readers project their femininity onto only one member of the pair, they also somehow identify with the phallic pleasures of the 'masculine' member of the pair (the 'top'). In this study, I will address all three kinds of projection, but will place emphasis on female readers' act of projecting their femininity onto *both* partners in the male couple; female readers subconsciously desire such bisexual representations, as I will discuss below. I will return to this argument later, in Chapter 6.

Precisely because the concept of sexuality in female fantasies of male homosexuality is multiple, shifting and divergent, it can be discussed in relation to issues surrounding bisexual/androgynous identities. Within the context of Freud's analysis, the idea of bisexuality is certainly not unfamiliar. As Jean-Michel Quinodoz points out, an acknowledgement of bisexual orientation is assumed in the generalized theory of beating fantasies presented in "A Child is Being Beaten": "Analyzing different aspects of beating fantasies, Freud shows the importance of psychic bisexuality—that is to say, of the masculine

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<sup>22</sup> In this case, it would seem that *yaoi* characters reflect, not a heterosexual, but rather a lesbian paradigm, precisely because both partners in the male-male couple possess a projected femininity. However, this study attempts to discuss *yaoi* sexuality as bisexual, rather than lesbian. I would like to develop the idea that, while femininity is projected onto these male characters, it never entirely dominates their masculinity. Thus, in *yaoi* femininity does not contradict masculinity, but these sexual elements are blended with each other.

and feminine elements that go to make up any individual.”<sup>23</sup> Freud observes that the imaginative female transformation to a boy in the third stage, along with the masochistic, passive, and ‘feminine’ male fantasies of being beaten by the father (i.e. the subconscious male desire for homosexuality), together represent the psychic bisexuality of both sexes.<sup>24</sup> However, Freud’s theoretical stance with regard to bisexual identity is primarily indebted to the patriarchal concept that femininity, as a subordinate form of sexuality, must merge into masculinity, the central sexuality. Hélène Cixous is therefore skeptical about the effectiveness of this patriarchal concept of bisexuality, which may acknowledge the sexual divergence implicit in bisexuality but nevertheless serves to nullify femininity. In contrast, Cixous explores her own particular idea of bisexuality, which, in its own way, privileges the formation of bisexuality.<sup>25</sup> She argues that bisexual identity should be discussed as a specific form of theoretical discourse, one which presents the ideological possibility of escaping from patriarchal structures. As Cixous states:

Bisexuality: that is, each one’s location in self of the presence—variously manifest

<sup>23</sup> Jean-Michel Quinodoz, “‘A Child is Being Beaten’: A Seminar with Candidates from the Perspective of Contemporary Psychoanalysis,” in *On Freud’s “A Child is Being Beaten,”* p. 117.

<sup>24</sup> In this dissertation, I will not discuss the structure of males’ beating fantasies in detail. However, I would briefly like to point out the manner in which Freud analyzes the differences between male beating fantasies and female beating fantasies. Male beating fantasies can also be discussed in terms of the three-stage Freudian structure, as follows:

1. ‘I am loved by my father’: this phase clearly indicates the boy’s feminine attitude toward his father. This first phase does not include any sadistic impulse, as the first phase of female beating fantasies does.
2. ‘I am beaten by my father’: this phase is equivalent to the second phase of female beating fantasies. While the girl represents her incestuous desires toward her father at this stage, the second stage of the male version of beating fantasies indicates the boy’s repressed (homosexual and incestuous) desires toward his father.
3. ‘I am being beaten by my mother’: even though here the subject of the beating has changed from father to mother, the beater still manifests masculine qualities. Thus, this third stage can also be discussed in terms of the boy’s (homosexual) desires toward his father, precisely because here the ‘mother’ is a disguised ‘father.’

<sup>25</sup> Cixous is not talking about bisexuality as we often think of it—that is, as describing a person who is attracted to both men and women—but as an aspect of the nature of sexuality within each person.

and insistent according to each person, male or female—of both sexes, non-exclusion either of the difference or of one sex, and, from this “self-permission,” multiplication of the effects of the inscription of desire, over all parts of my body and the other body.<sup>26</sup>

Cixous's critical stance concerning (bi)sexuality often reaches a point at which her textual/sexual interpretation places too much emphasis on the female orientation, so criticisms directed at her analysis for essentializing femininity may be seen as valid.<sup>27</sup> However, she should nevertheless be credited for her attempts to deconstruct the patriarchal notion of bisexuality, in which femininity is considered merely as a negation of masculinity. In effect, Cixous opens up horizons of bisexual identity that had seemed to be closed forever, through signifying female sexuality as the primary force in bisexuality, just as male sexuality had previously been similarly signified. The issue of sexuality in female fantasies of male homosexuality is thus also significant, in that it represents a way of testing Cixous's model of bisexuality. For instance, it should be pointed out that women's act of ‘adding’ vaginal pleasures to the formation of male characters signified by the phallic in *yaoi manga* supports Cixous's theory, in which masculinity and femininity coexist equally in the bisexual arena. (This issue will be discussed further in Chapter 6.)

These analytical points regarding the role that attitudes toward femininity play in the formation of women's male homosexual fantasies can thus be discussed in terms of Cixous's theory of bisexuality. However, in the context of women's male homosexual fantasies, the

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<sup>26</sup> Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, ed. David H. Richter, trans. Keith Kohen and Paula Cohen (New York: A Bedford Book, St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 1096.

<sup>27</sup> We can thus see that Cixous's theory of bisexuality attempts to relocate woman's position as speaking subject within the patriarchal context. See Toril Moi's *Textual/Sexual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1988) for more detailed criticism of Cixous.

very concept of bisexuality remains paradoxical, because it is also mediated through androgynous (sexless) principles which include imaginary features of the *shônen* (boy/young man) identity. As may be clearly seen in Kôno Taeko's "Toddler-Hunting," the systematized formation of the *shônen* identity is generally signified as androgynous, rather than bisexual. Precisely because the *shônen* no longer represents an ontologically stable entity in relation to the fundamental authority of the Symbolic Order, in which men and women are both conclusively inscribed as gendered beings, women are tempted to idealize the *shônen* identity as a comprehensive representative of androgyny.<sup>28</sup> I will explore the radical position of the *shônen* within the context of gender formation in Chapter 3. Let it suffice for the moment to point out that androgyny and bisexuality both provide effective theoretical approaches to the analysis of female sexual fantasies of male homosexuality; both may be employed to contextualize and recontextualize the formation of women's sexual fantasies.

In this regard, Francette Pacteau's idea of androgyny takes a theoretical position that resembles Cixous's concept of bisexuality.<sup>29</sup> First of all, Pacteau attempts to avoid discussing androgyny in terms of existential reality; instead, her critical stance implies that androgyny should be signified as a rhetorical concept which represents an image derived from psychological fantasy. Pacteau argues that androgyny negates any essentialized sexualities; it thus avoids falling into the trap of the patriarchal hierarchy:

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<sup>28</sup> Scholars such as Jennifer Robertson and John Treat have described the androgynous aspects of *shôjo* identity within the Japanese socio-cultural context. I would like to note that, while a great deal of work has been done concerning the ambiguities of *shôjo* sexuality, almost no studies have been carried out concerning the ambiguities of the *shônen* image.

<sup>29</sup> Pacteau explains that she needs to draw a clear borderline between androgyny and hermaphroditism, because she believes that this distinction can lead us to question the concept of sexualities. Her distinction between androgyny and hermaphroditism relies heavily on a presumed dichotomy between the invisible and the visible. Her example of androgyny is Katharine Hepburn's boyish appearance in *Sylvia Scarlett*; Pacteau argues that Katharine Hepburn's androgyny can never be inscribed (or made visible) within the gender hierarchy; in contrast, she defines the visible exhibition of both breast and penis as a mark of the hermaphrodite.



The androgynous 'position' represents a denial, or a transgression, of the rigid gender divide, and as such implies a threat to our given identity and to the system of social roles which define us.<sup>30</sup>

Pacteau is careful to define 'desire' as a basic psychological premise, and she implies that desire cannot be represented without being mediated by issues of fear and threat. She therefore concludes that the implications of androgynous desire relate specifically to the nature of castration anxiety. The ambivalent condition of androgyny can also be revealed through a discussion of issues surrounding female fantasies of male homosexuality. The male homosexual characters in female fantasies possess characteristics similar to those outlined in Pacteau's theory of androgyny, suggesting a harmony between masculinity and femininity, at least in terms of such subversive impulses. Nevertheless, the androgynous figures in female fantasies cannot escape complicity with a basic female psychological ambivalence regarding anxiety over the absence of penis/phallus power. Pacteau continues her analysis of androgyny as follows:

The androgynous figure has to do with *seduction*, that which comes before undressing, seeing and touching. It can only exist in the shadow area of the image; once unveiled, once we throw a light on it, it becomes a woman or man, and I (myself) resume my position on the side of the female. The perfect symmetry of the figure of the androgyne positions the viewer at the convergence of the feminine and the masculine where 's/he' oscillates. The androgyne is excessive in its transgression of the boundaries of gender identity; however, this threat of superabundance, of overflowing, is safely contained within the frame of the feminine and the masculine.

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<sup>30</sup> Francette Pacteau, "The Impossible Subject: Representations of the Androgyne," in *Formations of Fantasy*, p. 63.

The figure of the androgyne represents the gathering into one image of those various instances when the certainty in our identity wavers under the 'constant pressure of something hidden but not forgotten.'<sup>31</sup>

According to Pacteau's exploration of androgyny in terms of seduction and the image, it can never be precisely located (and signified). The male homosexual figures in female fantasies also remain at a distance from representation within the monolithic Symbolic Order; they manifest mysteriously divergent images of seduction that are continually mediated and replaced.

However, the multiplicity of both the media and the genres of male-male homoerotic fantasy in Japan complicates the picture somewhat, so that Pacteau's clear distinction between 'androgyny' and 'hermaphroditism' becomes harder to draw. Precisely speaking, *yaoi* characters do not fit Pacteau's model of androgyny, because we can *see* their naked bodies and their genitals, while, according to Pacteau, androgynous representation cannot be clearly inscribed (i.e. it cannot be made visible). However, in this study, I would like to analyze *yaoi* characters in terms of Pacteau's concept of androgyny, for the following reasons: 1) the bodies and behaviors of *yaoi* characters provide an interesting mix of both masculine and feminine characteristics, so that their (sexual) identities can never be clearly defined; 2) the genitals of these characters are mostly abstracted: the penis is usually not shown clearly—only in outline, or whited out, or obscured by something—and this fact supports the androgynous model, rather than the fully-revealed hermaphroditic one. I will return to this argument in later chapters.

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<sup>31</sup> Pacteau, p. 78-79.

## Female Psychological Orientations and Metafiction

An analysis of the basic premises of women's male homosexual fantasy narratives also entails a consideration of issues regarding the structural organization of those narratives. In fact, one of the ways in which female sexual fantasies are carried out involves the mobilization of metafictional narrativity. As discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 in more detail, Kôno Taeko's "Toddler-Hunting," Okamoto Kanoko's "The Bygone World," and Matsuura Rieko's *The Reverse Version* are all strategically textualized through metafictional narrative procedures. As well, Freud's project for systematizing female psychological development regarding fantasy formations in "A Child is Being Beaten" is similarly narrated in terms of a metafictional logic. Thus, if we pay close attention to the role of metafiction in narratives concerning women's male homosexual fantasies, it becomes apparent that the metafictional context provides a way to understand the female subject of these far-reaching fantasy formations.

In order to understand why metafictional narrativity should have become such a significant form for the purpose of (re-)locating the subjects of female sexual fantasies, we should start by examining the position of the subjective ego in relation to two distinct dimensions of the reality/fantasy dichotomy. In other words, as its very name suggests, metafiction features a two-leveled diegesis, in which the subject is ideologically doubled in terms of its diegetic transformation. Even when the subject of the present narrative domain is not reflected exactly by the active agents of the metafictional narrative, the extradiegetic self participates decisively in the intradiegetic narrative as the one who creates the metafictional domain and is the origin of its narrative procedures. In this sense, it is precisely this process of metafictional construction that renders the subject double in relation to the diegesis of

women's male homosexual fantasies. In other words, the primarily metafictional structure of women's male homosexual fantasies foregrounds women's cognitive ambivalence regarding such psychological processes as identification and dissociation. In order to be actively involved in the imaginative projection of male homosexual fantasies, women are tempted to identify with the male homosexual characters in these fantasies; in this identification process, these male homosexual characters' bisexuality and androgyny perform the function of stimulating women's sexual desire. As a result of their successful involvement in this identification process, women's sexuality can be concealed behind male homosexual characters, who are not biologically defined as women but are projected in terms of ambivalent female identities. As indicated in Kôno Taeko's "Toddler-Hunting," Matsuura Rieko's *The Reverse Version*, and the narratives of *yaoi manga*, issues of sexual pleasure and eroticism constitute the basic premises upon which metafictional narratives of male homosexual fantasies are built. The principles of identification of such narratives involve a readjustment and transformation of female sexual pleasure and eroticism. In general, female sexuality remains constrained within a social context that promotes sexual taboos and guilt concerning women's recognition (and enjoyment) of their own sexual pleasure. Male homosexual fantasies potentially resolve the psychological reaction formations provoked by the sexual taboo against women's active involvement in sexual pleasure; they thus provide a medium through which women may strive to become fully sexual beings.

This process of psychological identification is complicated and ambivalent, precisely because it must paradoxically be characterized by means of dissociating principles. As a consequence, any concept of a constructed male sexuality defined in relation to such terms as guilt and shame is sublimated within the context of women's male homosexual

fantasies. In a move that complicates the discussion even further, the locus of interactivity in women's male homosexual fantasies does not only function through women's acquisition of the phallic authority to deal with their eroticism; it also offers the possibility for a scopophilic dissociation (and consequent distance) from the male characters (and from the practical reality of sexuality itself). In this way, women can control, to some extent, the subjective balance of sexual repression. Thus, the entire formal and thematic energy of scopophilic dissociation can be summed up in the following manner: 'I identify with the penis of male homosexual characters who perform sexual acts, and I participate in their sexual pleasure and excitement. But, after all, as a woman I feel distanced from their shameless sexual ecstasy, since they possess an unfamiliar form of sexuality symbolized by the penis.' In this context, psychoanalytic concepts of female sexuality, such as projection, identification, scopophilia and dissociation, interact reciprocally and thereby enable female readers to access sexual representations in terms of the gynesistic sexuality embodied in women's male homosexual fantasies. Thus, the structure of female psychological development in relation to *yaoi* and other similar narratives can be outlined as follows:

1. Repressed female sexuality is projected onto male homosexual characters.
2. Female characters (authors and readers) identify with male homosexual characters, who are now signified as the erotic; this impulse toward identification does not appear to be elaborated upon, since the subject is blurred into the Other as the result of projective acts. The reason that the subject is blurred is specifically because the process of projection activates a similar process of psychological gender transformation (female readers project their feminine abjection onto male characters).

3. Paradoxically, however, this process of identification parallels the dissociation involved in scopophilia; on this basis, female readers must dissociate themselves from male homosexual characters, in order to be distanced from their eroticism. They are thus paradoxically able to solidify their psychological balance disengaged from the sexual acts represented. The erotic desire of identification is transformed into the sexual pleasure associated with scopophilia.

It is therefore no coincidence that metafictional structures prevail in female fantasies of male homosexuality. Such metafictional narratives are organized to express a female psychological orientation that needs to strike a balance between the various aspects of a doubled (or multiple) subjective ego. As Patricia Waugh says:

The examination of fictionality, through the thematic exploration of characters 'playing roles' within fiction, is the most minimal form of metafiction....Such novels tend to present characters who are involved in a duplicitous situation requiring the perpetration of some form of pretence or disguise.<sup>32</sup>

As Waugh indicates, the act of role playing is one of the narrative formations that are contained in the multiple diegesis of metafiction. It is through this very concept of multiple levels of diegesis, together with all of the possibilities of role playing, that female fantasies of male homosexuality are organized. Ruth Riesenbergh Malcolm refers to the fantasies of one of her patients, who suffered from a psychotic breakdown. This female patient told her that, in her (erotic) fantasies, a 'mirror' always appeared; in the fantasy sphere, she dedicated herself to 'looking' at the mirror, in which various kinds of erotic acts (including those involving male homosexuality) were displayed. What I would like to emphasize here is that this

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<sup>32</sup> Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1984), p. 116.

'mirror' exactly corresponds to the metafictional context of setting and distance, which functions to counterbalance the female patient's psychotic disorientation. As Malcolm says:

It is the eyes that create the visual image in *The Mirror*, into which she projects herself at the same time and becomes identified with (she 'is' or 'is in') each one of the participants. In *The Fantasy* the eyes play a similarly central role by 'putting' into *The Mirror* the participants and their activities.<sup>33</sup>

Through the mediation of metafictional narrative structures—which provide a comfortable psychological space and an appropriate distance between reality and fantasy—female characters (and readers and authors) can freely enter and leave these reality/fantasy spheres; in the process of playing the roles of male homosexual characters (by means of projection, identification and dissociation) they can thus balance the divergent aspects of their egos.

The above analysis represents my counter-argument to Freud's theory of the third stage of female sexual fantasies, in which he limits his analysis to the psychological process of the girl's identification with the boy, who is endowed with a transformed masochism and the masculine complex. In terms of the basic premise that underlies female fantasies of male homosexuality, I do agree with Freud's paradigm with regard to women's desire to become boys (through identification with them). However, the female psychological orientation regarding male homosexual fantasies cannot (or should not) be limited to this impulse of identification. Rather, when the female sexual identity of the third stage is explored in relation to *scopophilic* desires, the dynamics of female sexuality diverge and multiply, precisely because the epistemological distance that is created through a (metafictional)

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<sup>33</sup> Ruth Riesenbergh Malcolm, "The Mirror: A Perverse Sexual Phantasy in a Woman Seen as a Defence against a Psychotic Breakdown," in *The New Library of Psychoanalysis*, Vol 8 *Melanie Klein Today: Developments in Theory and Practice*, Vol 2: *Mainly Practice*, ed. Elizabeth Bott Spillius (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge, 1988), p. 121.

scotophilic orientation provides a possible space in which divergent psychological orientations, such as projection, identification, and dissociation (as well as divergent sexual identities, sadism, masochism, hetero/homo/bisexuality, etc.) can be activated simultaneously. In the same way, the metafictional space subsumes an ongoing (psychological) orientation of identification with, and dissociation from, the male homosexual agents in fantasy narratives.



## CHAPTER TWO

### **“L’ homme fatal” in Mori Mari’s Male Homosexual Trilogy**

*Mori Mari lives in the heaven of literature.*

— Mishima Yukio, “Anata no rakuen anata no gin no saji”  
(Your Heaven and Your Silver Spoon)

*Mori Mari was like a fairy born from literature.*

— Okuno Takeo, “Bi no kyokugen no bungakusha” (The  
Author of Extreme Beauty)

Mori Mari (1903-1987) was the eldest daughter of a leading writer in modern Japanese literature, Mori Rintarô, known by his pen-name Ôgai. In Mori’s famous essay collection, entitled *Chichi no bôshi* (My Father’s Hat, 1957), she describes how Ôgai loved and pampered her as his favorite daughter; evidently, this emphasis on the close relationship between father and daughter greatly motivated her as a writer of fiction.<sup>1</sup> Mori married twice: first, when she was sixteen, the son of a wealthy merchant; then, in her late twenties, a

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<sup>1</sup> In the article entitled “A Room Sweet as Honey: Father-Daughter Love in Mori Mari” (in *The Father-Daughter Plot: Japanese Literary Women and the Law of the Father*, eds. Rebecca L. Copeland and Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i, 2001), Tomoko Aoyama discloses how Mori Mari’s attachment to Ôgai is fictionalized in *Amai mitsu no heya* (The Room of Sweet Honey).

professor of medicine. Mori's (male homosexual) fiction provides us with a vision of these two unsuccessful marriages, in which she had been defined as an 'outsider' because of her deviation from the norms and standards assigned by modern Japanese society. Mori first became famous as an essayist, before establishing her status as a writer of fiction. In 1957, she won the *Nihon esseisuto kurabu shô* (Japanese Essay Writers' Club Prize) for *My Father's Hat*. She dedicated herself to a career as a writer of fiction in her late fifties, publishing a small number of full-length novels and novellas, as well as several collections of essays before her death in 1987. One of her most famous and critically acclaimed prose works is *Amai mitsu no heya* (The Room of Sweet Honey, 1975), which depicts an incestuous relationship between an uncle and niece; in 1975, Mori won the *Izumi Kyôka bungaku shô* (Izumi Kyôka Literary Prize) for this work.

In other works Mori establishes a different aesthetic realm from the father-daughter eroticism portrayed in *The Room of Sweet Honey*. Well-known novelist Mishima Yukio, one of the admirers of Mori's writing, speaks very highly of her concept of aestheticism:

In literature, heaven means the heaven of language. That is the heaven in which language preserves a royal authority and dispenses its blessings, where nothing possesses power except language, and nothing can be replaced by anything but language. I heard that somebody planned to make a movie based on your work. How dare they! In the world of your literature, every word is very carefully chosen, and placed in an appropriate manner. As soon as we open the page, a sweet-smelling scent diffuses. So, once we fall into the pot, we end up melting, not only in "honey," but also in sulfuric acid. This happens because this honey, acid and language are all completely innocent. You never use language in the sense of lost paradise. You

always use language as your private words, with sufficient delight and respect. Your language is never crushed by external reality. This is the reason why I value you as a resident of heaven.<sup>2</sup>

As Mishima points out, we cannot discuss the aesthetics of Mori's fiction without recognizing her penchant for beautiful words, mainly based on European notions of culture and aesthetic value. Mori expresses her artistic faith by describing beautiful people, things, and events with beautifully refined language. In this sense, her male homosexual trilogy, "Kareha no nedoko" (The Bed of Withered Leaves), "Nichiyobi ni boku wa ikanai" (I'm Not Coming on Sunday), and "Koibitotachi no mori" (The Lovers' Forest), has special value; this trilogy creates a densely romantic atmosphere that provides a perfect aesthetic accordance with the elaborate narratives concerning enchanted 'homme fatal' characters which these novels present.<sup>3</sup> As Miura Eiko says: "'The Lovers' Forest' and 'The Bed of Withered Leaves' are aesthetic fairytales for women, woven by a woman."<sup>4</sup> Famous *yaoi* critic and author Nakajima Azusa describes the unavoidable influence of Mori's work on her own writings:

As soon as I read the first line, I was already captured by Mori Mari. But it was a kind of shock that cannot be easily expressed ...Even now, I think that everything started from that moment...My life was completely changed after reading "The Bed

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<sup>2</sup> Mishima Yukio, "Anata no rakuen anata no gin no saji" (Your Heaven and Your Silver Spoon), in *Kawada yume mukku Mori Mari* (Tokyo: Kawada shobô), 2003, p. 170-171.

<sup>3</sup> I borrow the phrase 'homme fatal' from the book entitled *Homme Fatale* [sic] (Tokyo: Furontia wâkusu Ltd., 2004) written by one of the most famous *yaoi* (female fantasies of male homosexuality) writers, Yamaai Shikiko. The enchanted beautiful young man's inevitable fate of attracting other men is romantically represented in this popular culture novel. I have chosen the term 'homme fatal,' even though the characters this phrase describes are all young men. But really their 'youth' is primarily a matter of their being significantly younger than their older seducers. In fact, the 'fatal' characters in Mori's fiction are about 18 years old, which would make them 'men' by North American standards.

<sup>4</sup> Miura Eiko, "Mori Mari chinkon: erekutora konpurekusu to sodomii" (The Repose of Mori Mari: Electra Complex and Sodomy), *Bungei Tôkai* 10 (1987), p. 45.

of Withered Leaves.” “I want to write such stories.” “This is everything I’ve always desired.” “I want to bathe in, identify with, and merge into this world.” These were such painful aspirations and desires...Mori Mari would dislike being labeled as the founder of *June shōsetsu* (male-male homoerotic novels) and would insist that her precisely established aesthetic world has nothing to do with such works. I believe that Mori Mari was extremely individualistic. However, even so, it is still true that Mori Mari brought us forth. If I hadn’t had the opportunity to encounter her works, at the very least I would not have written stories in the genre that now occupies such a large part of my writing. Also, my sensibility as a writer was undoubtedly formed in large part by Mori Mari.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Mori’s works constitute one of the earliest, most important female attempts to highlight a discourse of male homosexual romance; Mori demonstrates the power of the female imagination to be one of the primary means by which female sexuality and its socially defined roles may be examined. However, even though her fiction, which is generally categorized as *tanbi ha* (aesthetic school) writing,<sup>6</sup> has been highly valued by such prominent authors as Mishima Yukio<sup>7</sup> and Murō Saisei, and she has been singled out among female authors and readers of male homosexual fantasies as a charismatic author of *shōnen ai* [boy love] narratives,<sup>8</sup> academic research on Mori Mari and her writing remains limited both

<sup>5</sup> Nakajima Azusa, “Mori Mari to no deai,” in *Kawade yume mukku Mori Mari*, p. 139-141.

<sup>6</sup> In the article entitled “Mori Mari ‘Kobitototachi no mori’ no Nashie” (Nashie in Mori Mari’s ‘The Lovers’ Forest’), *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 41:11 (1976), Etsugu Tomoko calls Mori Mari the “73 year-old heavenly maiden of the *tanbi ha*” (p. 151).

<sup>7</sup> See Mishima’s comment, quoted earlier. Mishima Yukio (1925-1970) was one of the most famous and controversial authors of modern Japan, known for his aesthetically beautiful literary style, his interest in male homoerotic themes, and his extreme right-wing political views. Yoshikawa Toyoko briefly mentions that Mori’s writing style in her male homosexual trilogy has something in common with Mishima’s. See Yoshikawa’s “Homosekushuaru bungaku kanken” (Information Concerning Homosexual Literature), *Nihon bungaku* 41:11 (1992).

<sup>8</sup> *Yaoi manga* artists and writers (including Nakajima/Kurimoto) usually acknowledge that their narratives

in Japan and abroad. Moreover, most articles on her writing reflect the fixed idea that the only novel by Mori that is worthy of critical consideration is *The Room of Sweet Honey* and completely neglect her male homosexual trilogy; the *bundan* [literary establishment] thus ignores all aspects of Mori's male homosexual fiction, rather than devaluing it. As Mori herself says:

Critics say that they can't understand my immoral stories, "The Lovers' Forest," "The Bed of Withered Leaves," and "I'm Not Coming on Sunday," and criticize them as bad stories...[W]hen "The Lovers' Forest" was published (after *My Father's Hat*), I foolishly thought that magazines would feature this work more than they did the earlier one, since this work was much more interesting. However, there was no response.<sup>9</sup>

The lack of enthusiasm for the study of sexuality (especially 'perverse' forms of female sexuality) among the Japanese literary community has contributed to the critical neglect of Mori's trilogy, since its thematic energy is only perceptible after an adequate analysis of (female) sexuality in relation to the power of the female imagination. In this chapter, I propose to analyze Mori's male homosexual trilogy by exploring the following points: What political and ideological possibilities (and impossibilities) do Mori's 'homme fatal' characters signify? In terms of Mori's gender discourse, what relations of male domination and female exclusion are basically sustained? These two questions constitute the essential means of understanding Mori's male homosexual trilogy.

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have been inspired by Mori Mari's male homosexual trilogy. Such *yaoi manga* and novels (especially) are sometimes labeled *tanbi mono* (aesthetic writing), precisely because these artists have been so much influenced by Mori's *tanbi* writing style.

<sup>9</sup> Mori, *Mori Mari zenshû* Vol 6 : *Dokkiri channeru* (The Complete Works of Mori Mari Vol 6: Surprising Channel) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobô, 1993), p.105.

### **Elaborations on the Theme of "A Woman Watching a Boy Being Beaten by His Father"**

In "A Child is Being Beaten," Freud points out that female sexual fantasies (of male homosexuality) should be considered in terms of the basic premises of the gender-creating process; thus, such fantasies are also closely related to central theoretical issues regarding female gender inquiry. A number of Japanese female authors, such as Kôno Taeko, Okamoto Kanoko, and Matsuura Rieko (each of whom will be discussed in the following chapters), employ narrative patterns of metafiction in relation to their representations of male homosexual fantasies. The overriding formula for such patterns is that of a female writer (in reality) who composes (and thereby watches) a narrative in which a woman (character) composes (and watches) a (meta) narrative in which a boy is being beaten by his father. In contrast, the narratives in Mori's male homosexual trilogy portray a more intimate relationship between a female author and her male homosexual fantasies; this occurs precisely because these fantasies are not mediated by any female characters or any fictional creator in the sphere of meta-reality. In other words, the form of Mori's fiction takes as its goal the fullest possible description of female imaginative 'fantasies,' which are nonetheless distanced from the artificial implications of any meta-narrative space. Thus, it is not her female characters, but Mori Mari herself, who clarifies the 'backstage' creation of male homosexual fantasies; this can be seen in the following passage:

Based on romantic stories like Paulo and Francesca or Romeo and Juliet, which from my youth I had always wanted to write, and triggered by a private photo of Jean Claude Brialy and Alain Delon which I saw in a Japanese movie magazine, I finished writing these stories in no time. At the head of the bed where Brialy is lying

down, perhaps because he has a cold, sits Alain Delon. He is facing the viewer and holding a wine glass in both hands, as if he were covering it carefully—this is a common French gesture to prevent the alcohol from evaporating from the wine. He gazes into space as if he is dreaming. On the other side of the bed, Romy Schneider holds a white wild chrysanthemum and offers it to Brial. Just glancing at this picture, I knew by intuition that Jean Claude Brial and Alain Delon were lovers. At the same time, I realized that, even though Romy Schneider was Alain Delon's fiancée, neither of the men cared for her at all. I thought Brial was wonderful, and Delon was also wonderful. Then, when I wondered how such wonderful men stood up, when they arose from chairs, and how these beautiful boys flirted, both Brial and Delon started moving, made love to each other, and played out a naked 'bed scene' in quite a spiritual way. I was just enraptured, and transcribed (on manuscript paper) two men who laugh and embrace each together, entangled like one of Michelangelo's sculptures come to life; they moved, fell down on top of one another, and rolled about like a strong, mature tree and a thin, young one, both hit by a strong wind which had started meandering at midnight.<sup>10</sup>

This passage clearly shows that Mori was inspired by the (seemingly) erotic interaction between Jean-Claude Brial and Alain Delon to fantasize them as homosexual lovers, who 'played a show' for her and thereby produced the embellished narrative of male homosexuality that occurred in her fantasy. Mori continues: "'The Lovers' Forest' can be translated into 'Le bois des amants' in French, so it's really such a beautiful world....[I]f people can see this beautiful world, they will clearly see the moving sculptures that I

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<sup>10</sup> Mori, *Dokkiri channeru*, p. 495.

imagined in my mind.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, it can be said that her male homosexual trilogy definitively explores female fantasies of male homosexuality, and that in these narratives Mori succeeds in creating a beautifully structured and beautifully phrased analogue to one (simple) sentence: ‘a woman watches a boy being beaten by his father.’ In the following chapters, I will return to arguments concerning Freud’s analysis of female fantasies (of male homosexuality), exploring how other Japanese female authors have cultivated the discursive possibilities of male homosexual fantasies in their work.

### **“L’homme fatal”: Challenging “The Law of the Father”**

In her male homosexual stories, Mori emphasizes a formulaic relationship between male lovers, typically portraying such characters as a couple made up of a sophisticated (aristocratic) middle-aged man and a capricious but beautiful teenage boy. What makes Mori’s stories authentic ‘homme fatal’ narratives is that the beautiful teenage boys gradually begin to exploit the middle-aged men, who end up being destroyed by the end of the narrative. As critic Kotani Mari says:

There is no doubt that [in Mori Mari’s fiction] beautiful boys are male versions of the ‘femme fatale’ type which was widely favored in the nineteenth century. It seems that they appear in the present world in order to overthrow the firmly established power relations of heterosexual society.<sup>12</sup>

“The Lovers’ Forest” and “The Bed of Withered Leaves” are both narratives concerning ‘homme fatal’ boys, whose enchanting beauty and sexual power lead their partners to tragic

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<sup>11</sup> Mori, *Dokkiri channeru* p.496.

<sup>12</sup> Kotani Mari, “Surôgarasu no himegimi” (A Princess of Surô-Glass), in *Kawada yume mukku Mori Mari*, p. 202.



ends; these tales produce a dense, sweet atmosphere of decadence, romanticism and aestheticism. Their 'uncanny' power, enhanced by their beauty, gives these 'homme fatal' boys their extraordinary ability to unsettle seemingly well organized patriarchal structures which are basically constituted by 'the law of the father'; however, these 'homme fatal' boys' subversive impulses are never consciously employed.

Here, I would like to emphasize that the diverse aspects of male homosexuality portrayed in Mori's literature should be considered in terms of the issue of the 'fatal/fatale' narrative, in which the character who is signified as possessing a (beautiful) 'body' causes the unavoidable ruin of the character who manifests intelligence (and spirituality). In "The Bed of Withered Leaves," Guylan de Rochefoucauld is the child of an aristocratic French father and a Japanese woman; he is in his thirties, an associate professor at the university. With his social status as an intelligent university professor and an immense inheritance from his father, Guylan is depicted as a perfect (noble) man, who has succeeded in obtaining anything he might desire: money, status, love, intelligence. Deeply attracted by Leo, a teenage delinquent, Guylan starts protecting him, playing the roles of both a romantic lover and a guardian; he is gradually trapped by Leo's charm and beauty, which Guylan clearly views as the symbol of his inevitable ruin:

Right after Guylan saw Leo for the first time, he already realized that Leo's powers of seduction were so terrifying that they would lead him to the brink of ruin...Leo first tasted the secret fruit with Guylan one summer in a mountain hut when he was sixteen, after climbing the Hodaka. Since then, Leo had been transformed into an evil angel, who seduced Guylan, scattering white poisonous powder, even though inside he was still naïve and childlike. Guylan, who had fallen seriously in love with

Leo, knew that he encouraged Leo's precocity and thus gradually invited the approach of his own ruin.<sup>13</sup>

The description of Leo's character as an 'homme fatal' is similar to that of the 'femme fatale' prototype, which is basically signified in terms of the 'body,' rather than any spiritual characteristics. Janey Place analyses how 'femmes fatales' in the film noir are constructed to manifest their femininity as 'body':

The *femme fatale* is characterized by her long lovely legs: our first view of the elusive Velma in *Murder My Sweet (Farewell My Lovely)* and of Cora in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* is a significant, appreciative shot of their bare legs, a *directed* glance (so directed in the latter film that the shot begins on her calves, cuts to a shot of her whole body, cuts back to the man looking, then finally back to Lana Turner's turban-wrapped, angelic face) from the viewpoint of the male character who is to be seduced.<sup>14</sup>

In a manner similar to treatment of the 'femme fatale' prototype, Leo is represented as ineffective in real life, so that his charms are limited to his natural endowments of beauty, eroticism and decadence:

Days of pleasure that seemed to last forever had corrupted Leo. Guylan became his guarantor and made Leo enter Seijô high school, making up for changing majors by forcing him to take daily lessons. However, recently, since he was pampered endlessly, Leo had become nothing but Guylan's sexual partner, and Leo played with him, making Guylan spend money. His school grades were only slightly higher than

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<sup>13</sup> Mori, "Kareha no nedoko" (The Bed of Withered Leaves), in *Koibitotachi no mori* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1975), p. 169-171.

<sup>14</sup> Janey Place, "Women in Film Noir," in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E Ann Kaplan (London: British Film Institute), 1978, p. 45.

'F.' He was not slow-witted, but he was constantly distracted and lacked any power to sustain anything. He just didn't possess enough strength to endure it all.<sup>15</sup>

Both Leo's enchanting external beauty and his lack of a sincere attitude toward life are paralleled in Mori's other 'homme fatal' boy, Paulo, in "The Lovers' Forest." Like Leo, Paulo is chosen by Guydeau de Guiche, another university professor who is the child of a French aristocrat and the daughter of a Japanese diplomat, and he lives a life of pleasure under Guydeau's protection. Paulo's delinquent but enchanting nature is described as follows:

Paulo had attended the university for around a year, when his parents were alive. But he was a natural-born idler, who didn't feel like doing anything.<sup>16</sup>

Paulo's beauty, which made him look like the child of an English man and French woman, led Guydeau to cherish a strong attachment to him; he felt like always keeping Paulo affectionately in his pocket. However, at the same time, such qualities as an innocent viciousness, a certain cunning, pierced Guydeau like the thorn of a rose, with a soft, pliant pain. Guydeau thought that Paulo possessed something like the first light red thorn that appeared on the stem of a rose. He was vicious. He had poison without recognizing it. He was a small poisonous flower. 'That's why I'm so obsessed with him.' He was marijuana.<sup>17</sup>

In attempting to clarify the value and validity of Mori's 'homme fatal' boys, I would like to begin by exploring Mary Ann Doane's examination of the 'fatal/fatale' discourse, from which the discursive originality and the aesthetics of 'homme fatal' boys can be further

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<sup>15</sup> Mori, "Kareha no nedoko" p. 170-171.

<sup>16</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori" (The Lovers' Forest), in *Koibitotachi no mori*, p.92.

<sup>17</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p. 125.

developed. Sharalyn Orbaugh summarizes and analyzes Doane's 'fatale' discourse, suggesting that the *shôjo* (girl) characters in stories written by Kanai Mieko, another renowned Japanese female writer, are, in relation to the 'fatale' ideal, shaped so that they receive some degree of empowered status within the Symbolic Order. Describing Kanai's *shôjo* characters as '*shôjo* fatale,' Orbaugh comments:

Doane says that the femme fatale's power is unconscious; it comes from her body (its beauty) rather than from her mind or intention. She is linked to male fears about 'uncontrollable desires'—a man's fear that despite his strong ego, he may be in danger of losing control because of the irresistible allure of the femme fatale. In these [Kanai's] stories, it is clear that the *shôjo* do not consciously intend to bring harm to their fathers. On the contrary, they wish for nothing other than to be their fathers' perfect object of desire. But, like the classic femme fatale, their attempts to be the perfect feminine female (in this case the perfect feminine daughter—virginal and obedient) cause complicated emotions that result in tragedy. It is also clear that in both stories the father represents 'control'—he defines and controls the world the *shôjo* lives in. But even though the fathers do not consciously desire their daughters (as far as we know), the *shôjo* here, just like the classic femme fatale, represent the wild loss of control, the overturning of the 'law of the father' that is supposed to keep everything organized and rational.<sup>18</sup>

Orbaugh's analysis of Kanai's '*shôjo* fatale' can be summarized in terms of three stages: 1) the '*shôjo* fatale's' desire (and necessity) to follow 'the law of the father'; 2) the '*shôjo*

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<sup>18</sup> Sharalyn Orbaugh, "Kanai Mieko no tanpen shôsetsu ni okeru 'shôjo fatârû'" (The 'Fille Fatale' in the Short Works of Kanai Mieko), *Journal of the Ochanomizu University Graduate School of the Humanities and Sciences* (February 2003) (Quoted from the unpublished English original).

fatale's 'uncanny' subversion which unconsciously disturbs the harmony of patriarchy; 3) the father's fear of the 'shôjo fatale's seductive qualities and his struggle (and ultimate failure) to maintain the 'the law of the father.'

These thematic aspects of the 'shôjo fatale' are closely related to Mori's way of describing her 'homme fatal' boys. First of all, these boys apparently try hard to be perfect objects of their patrons' (surrogate fathers') desire, which constitutes the basic premise of the patriarchal balance in these relationships. Both Leo and Paulo are sensitive to their patron's controlling and dominating 'gaze': "Guydeau's glance, which seemed to awaken from some depth of thought, stroked Paulo...Paulo feared nothing as much as Guydeau's eyes, when he noticed there was something wrong with himself."<sup>19</sup> However, their desperate struggle to obey 'the law of the father' is disturbed by the appearance of a third party, who is called *kuroi otoko* (the dark man). This 'dark man,' who appears both in "The Lovers' Forest" and "The Bed of Withered Leaves," represents the double of the patron/father; like the latter, 'the dark man' is also a university professor, the child of an Italian father and Japanese mother, and as a mature man is endowed with incomparable attractiveness. However, during the course of the narrative development, 'the dark man' functions as a medium through which the 'homme fatal' boys are gradually able to discover their real nature, which they previously did not recognize, and transform themselves into 'uncanny' entities who subvert patriarchal harmony, leading to the consequent destruction of their fathers/patrons/lovers. In "The Lovers' Forest," after stealing a glance at 'the dark man' who coincidentally (or intentionally) appears in the hotel restaurant where Paulo and Guydeau have lunch together, Paulo tries to conceal his unconscious desire to be seduced by 'the dark man' by maintaining his complicity with

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<sup>19</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p. 108.

Guydeau, saying that "he [the dark man] is not good looking."<sup>20</sup>

The implications of another 'homme fatal's' desperate struggle to control his prohibited desire can also be seen in "The Bed of Withered Leaves":

Leo's consciousness of being watched created a sudden and pleasant sensation in him, and he couldn't resist it. Since coming to know Guylan, Leo found endless, aching pleasure in attracting superior men with his enchanting power. His feeling of security in this situation depended on the fact that Guylan was still in Kyûshû. 'If I meet him somewhere else, it would be better to pretend not to know him. Just looking at his face is OK, but I'm afraid of kissing him.' The dark man, with unblinking gaze, stared at Leo, whose transparent eyes in a white, embarrassed face concealed cunning but childish ideas under the shadow of long, light brown eyelashes. The dark man's eyes were completely still, looking at Leo's face, which had the perfect contours of a gemstone. When his eyes rested on the clear luster of Leo's pale red lips with their finely etched shallow lines, his gaze clearly expressed irresistible evil desires. Eyes that possessed no warmth of feeling and soft lips like those of a young virgin endlessly seduced him. The beautiful boy's evident disturbance at the temptation to be unfaithful clearly indicated the existence of a powerful patron and cruelly unsettled the heart of the libertine Olivio Tôta. Leo, who gazed back at the man unconsciously, sensed danger and stood up. 'I don't like that man. Also, I'm afraid of Guylan. I couldn't live anymore, if Guylan hated me. I should be in Guylan's arms.'<sup>21</sup>

Taking into consideration 'homme fatal' boys' ambivalence regarding their opposing

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<sup>20</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p. 116.

<sup>21</sup> Mori, "Kareha no nedoko," p.172.

desires to remain 'father's boys' and to be 'seduced' by prohibited impulses, we should consider Mori's 'homme fatal' stories as subversive signs by which patriarchal authority within the Symbolic Order might conceivably be overthrown. While 'homme fatal' boys' attempts to obey 'the law of the father' may seem to underwrite a patriarchal construction, the main focus of Mori's 'homme fatal' narratives suggests that the 'fathers'" dominance is limited by the 'homme fatal' boys' 'uncanny' impact on them, and that this unconsciously calls into question and ultimately undermines the presupposed authority of 'the law of the father.'

Freud's analysis of the 'uncanny' provides the formal and thematic complexity required to locate what may be considered 'unsignified' in this context. The concept of the 'uncanny' describes the unexpected emergence of unconscious phenomena that should have been repressed and that are therefore represented as a disturbing force:

In the first place, if psycho-analytic theory is correct in maintaining that every affect belonging to an emotional impulse, whatever its kind, is transformed, if it is repressed, into anxiety, then among instances of frightening things there must be one class in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which *recurs*. This class of frightening things would then constitute the uncanny; and it must be a matter of indifference whether what is uncanny was itself originally frightening or whether it carried some *other* affect. In the second place, if this is indeed the secret nature of the uncanny, we can understand why linguistic usage has extended *das Heimlich* ['homely'] into its opposite, *das Unheimlich*; for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the

process of repression.<sup>22</sup>

Poststructural feminists have analyzed the 'uncanny' in terms of a subversive force capable of denaturalizing the hierarchically fixed patterns of our epistemological perceptions. For instance, Julia Kristeva's concept of 'abjection' investigates one way of unmasking the process through which such stereotypical paradigms are constructed. The 'abject' should not (or cannot) be consciously represented, but it definitively constitutes part of the subject. Insofar as the subject vainly attempts to repress, eliminate or control such 'abjection,' this state is signified (and unsigned) both internally and externally; thus, the dislocated phenomena associated with the 'abject' give rise to a fearful, eerie and 'uncanny' subversion of power. Rosemary Jackson also develops Freud's notion of the 'uncanny,' defining it as the fantasmic representation of a psychological invasion by taboos and prohibitions; it thereby functions as 'the literature of subversion.' In this sense, the 'homme fatal' boys in Mori's male homosexual trilogy can be discussed as an innovation in gender discourse.

Enforcing the powerful 'fathers' law,' the patrons/fathers/lovers in these novels observe, warn and control their beloved boys, so that they shall never escape complicity with the power of patriarchal discourse. However, the patrons/fathers/lovers' desperate desire to confine their boys ultimately turns out to be unfruitful. In "The Bed of Withered Leaves," Leo finally gives in to 'the dark man's' temptation, becoming a 'prey' to his sadistic desires:

Which one's pose fell first? After a while, Leo's small, sharp screams were heard, and the dull, groaning sound of a whip followed after an interval...the noise of the whip continued, and during intervals Leo's faint, small and imploring voice was heard. Soon, the sound of the whip stopped, and Leo's groaning voice, as if he were

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<sup>22</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Uncanny," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol XVII, p.241.



dying, blended with the sound of kisses, like the sharp sound of a beak picking up fruits among scattering withered leaves; this continued for a long time, and then silence came.<sup>23</sup>

Leo tells Guylan that his deviation from 'the law of the father' has been an irresistible accident, pleading the excuse that he was forcibly carried away and became involved in this sadomasochistic play against his will. However, in actuality Leo's affair with 'the dark man' was not an irresistible accident, but rather reflected his subconscious and illicit desire to break all prohibitions. Leo feels this 'temptation of the prohibited' in this way:

Leo sometimes gazed at the man's dark arms, tinged with a purple color. 'If his arms twined around my neck, and tightened, the bones in my neck would be broken. If his arms held me tight while I was thinking such thoughts, I would lose my mind.' He also feared the possibility of being seduced, as if something had already started running around inside his body.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, Guylan's attempts to regain control from Leo, who is now signified in terms of an uncontrollable fear, correlate precisely with his desire to maintain the Oedipal paradigm of paternal dominance. Leo's 'abject' initiation, which conveys his indomitable, mysterious power over Guylan, is activated and elevated by the revelation of his masochistic nature. Guylan fears Leo's enchanting masochism, which has flowered under the influence of his 'prohibited' sadomasochistic play with 'the dark man':

Guylan thought: masochism was awakening in Leo. The time would come when Leo's desire for ecstasy couldn't be satisfied by Guylan's own sadism. Just like a woman, sensation was what mattered to Leo. Soon, he would be attracted by

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<sup>23</sup> Mori, "Kareha no nedoko," p.182-183.

<sup>24</sup> Mori, "Kareha no nedoko," p.175.

somebody else. He had already started being attracted, without realizing it. Guylan clearly saw the destination of Leo's ecstasy.<sup>25</sup>

Gyulan's growing "hatred, which couldn't let Leo live anymore"<sup>26</sup> is proportional to his love for Leo; this hatred arises from his fear and disappointment that his beloved has broken 'the law of the father' and has thus been transformed into an 'uncanny' subject, who can never be controlled by the father's symbolic power. Guylan tries hard to subordinate Leo's 'uncanny' masochism by enforcing his own sadistic power; Guylan's sadistic orientation gradually strengthens to such an extent that his sexual acts become flavored with sadism; ultimately, he deprives Leo of his freedom by confining him in the house. However, the more Guylan tries to control Leo through activating his own sadistic impulses, the more Leo's 'uncanny' masochism is paradoxically enlarged, and Leo deviates from the 'law of the father' even more:

A day passed, two days passed, a week passed. Guylan's caresses, which became increasingly sadistic as time went by, awakened something inside Leo. Obstacles of shock and fear were removed, and memories of Olivio's whipping and the ecstasy of being whipped, which were sleeping in fear and were now burning from each scar, awakened deep within his unconscious. Memories of being dragged into the depths of a curtain by his left leg, which was grabbed by Olivio like an axle, and of being whipped on his legs, waist and abdomen, rose to the surface, and the memories were not merely fearful. Strange desires to be whipped were once again developing. Guylan's lips burned each one of his scars when they touched them, and Leo recalled Olivio's whipping with ecstasy. There was fantasmic light in Leo's eyes,

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<sup>25</sup> Mori, "Kareha no nedoko," p.195.

<sup>26</sup> Mori, "Kareha no nedoko," p.199.

who, for the first time, was groaning like a beast, wriggling unendurably, and gazing at Guylan imploringly under his caresses.<sup>27</sup>

Here, the seemingly harmonized relationship between the dominant (Guylan) and the dominated (Leo) is blurred, precisely because Leo unconsciously overwhelms Guylan and eventually breaks the 'father's' spell. This disruption of 'the law of the father' gives Guylan a fatal blow; at the conclusion of the narrative, he finally kills Leo and takes his own life.

The above analysis shows that Mori's work takes on an authentic unity through its use of the 'femme/*shôjo* fatale' motif—here masculinized as 'l'homme fatal'—as a means to subvert male-oriented paradigms. However, if Leo's death is viewed as the inevitable punishment for his disturbance of the mechanisms of patriarchal society, it might be argued that the subversive implications of the 'homme fatal' are not sufficiently explored in "The Bed of Withered Leaves." In contrast, in "The Lovers' Forest," after his 'father,' Guydeau, dies, Paulo's enchanting 'homme fatal' nature is enhanced even more. Guydeau's death becomes a primal motivation through which Paulo becomes aware of his true nature and is thereby transformed into a perfect subject of 'abjection' which confuses the paradigms constructed by patriarchy. As briefly discussed above, Paulo can be considered Leo's double, and he is thus also accompanied by issues of 'homme fatal' subjectivity regarding 'the law of the father.' At the end of the narrative, Mrs. Ueda, Guydeau's secret lover, is harshly rejected by him. Having been deceived by Guydeau, who is blindly attracted by Paulo's enchanting charms, she finally kills Guydeau out of jealousy. However, the background narrative of Guydeau's death suggests that it is Paulo, not Mrs. Ueda, who brings about the inevitable ruin of Guydeau, precisely because Paulo's mythical beauty and power have motivated Mrs.

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<sup>27</sup> Mori, "Kareha no nedoko," p.198-199.

Ueda's murderous act. Paulo's pervasive 'homme fatal' aura is thus enhanced by Guydeau's tragic death. The following scene indicates the way in which this death increases Paulo's sense of mysterious vitality:

Paulo still feared Guydeau. Even though Guydeau was a corpse, Paulo thought that the corpse looked like it might get up. However, on the other hand, he felt something other than fear. Just a moment ago, his heart had seemed paralyzed, incapable of sorrow or any other emotion, while a great sorrow existed somewhere off in the distance. That sorrow then became connected with a small element of reality, and it finally burst out. At that moment, something different, something sweet and caressing, could gradually be sensed. Then, Paulo returned to being Paulo. Paulo's mind, which had been dominated by a hysterical sensitivity concerning Guydeau's affection, returned to its own innate nature...In his suddenly lifted face, Paulo's lips recovered their beautiful, light-red color, and his entire face became animated with vitality, like a flower whose stem is immersed in water. It would not take long until, like a beloved *geisha*, his beauties, which had haunted Guydeau, would emerge with a sort of pride.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, it can possibly be said that the affliction and shock that Paulo has to confront with Guydeau's death are required for Paulo to progress one step further in the establishment of his 'homme fatal' identity. Moreover, the narrative's conclusion suggests that Paulo's enhanced 'homme fatal' nature will now target 'the dark man' as his next 'prey.' However, even though a possible relationship between 'the dark man' as Paulo's next master/father/patron and Paulo as his obedient 'victim'/son seems to be suggested by the

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<sup>28</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p.148-149.

superficial aspects of the narrative, we cannot avoid considering this relationship in terms of a specific form of 'femme/*shôjo* fatale' discourse which clarifies the fatal/fatale's unconscious drive to ruin his/her patron/father/lover. One cannot ignore the fact that 'the dark man,' as Guydeau's double, also reflects 'the law of the father'; he also would require Paulo to follow this 'law' and would thus unknowingly assume an inescapable destiny where he would also be ruined by Paulo's 'homme fatal' dominance. In such a context, we need to reemphasize that Mori chooses the *shônen* (boy/young man) and broadens the scope of the 'fatal/fatale,' defining it as a subversive force by which the overall goal of overthrowing the universalized 'law of the father' may be achieved.

### **The Oedipal Scheme in a Male Homosexual Context**

When Freud observes that the Oedipal Complex is organized and conducted in such a way that the Son's desire for the Mother (the Father's 'woman') is symbolized metaphorically as a power game between two men, the Father and the Son, he thereby displaces the Mother, a woman, from the power-structure arena by conceptualizing her as a silent object. Thus, while men are conceived of as actively engaged in an oppressive paternal (and masculine) power orientation on both the material and the metaphorical levels, Freud views women as essentially 'invisible' entities. This raises questions: Why, for example, does the Mother not have a right to choose the Son over the Father? What would happen if the Mother attempted to take on a productive role in relation to the Oedipal Complex and its complicity with masculine domination? More precisely, what would happen if the Mother decided to fight the Son for the Father's love, as is suggested in the

world of Mori Mari's fiction? Here, it is useful to analyze how the mechanisms of the Freudian theory of the Oedipal Complex operate in Mori's male homosexual fiction, and how the deconstruction of those mechanisms is enabled, when the woman's position as a silent object is subverted in a practical manner.

Speaking precisely, it is not correct to assume that the discursive nature of Mori's male homosexual fiction can be analyzed within the framework of the theory of the Oedipal Complex, which clearly arises as a representation of heterosexuality. However, it should be noted that an Oedipal "father-son genealogy" with "phallic discursive authority" (Orbaugh)<sup>29</sup> is also perceptible in Mori's male homosexual fiction, and that this fact seems to suggest that, in such a context, the isolation of the female from such a male-oriented Oedipal scheme is an inevitable necessity.

In Mori's fiction, artistic faith is generally expressed by her male characters, who combine the beauty of grace and power and thereby (simultaneously) embody an animating transcendent force. The concept of an idealized male body is thus of such significance that it constitutes an imaginative, mesmerizing sphere, in which the representation of the male body is necessarily linked to a form of unrealistic idealization. In the following passage, Mori skillfully describes the figure of Paulo by means of a persistent exploration of a sense of perfect beauty:

He might be around seventeen or eighteen, certainly not yet nineteen years old. The young man's eyes, which swiftly looked around the car, were very beautiful, as if he

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<sup>29</sup> Orbaugh defines the homosocial contexts described in Natsume Sôseki's *Kokoro* as a "father-son genealogy." Within this homosocial genealogy, "phallic discursive authority" is handed down directly from one generation of males to another, with no intervening female body. See Orbaugh's "General Nogi's Wife: Representations of Women in Narratives of Japanese Modernization," in *Pursuit of Contemporary East Asian Culture*, eds. Xiaobing Tang and Stephen Snyder (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996) for further details.

were dreaming, but there was a cold light in them. These eyes were shadowed by the bridge of a compact, slightly crooked nose; in the boy's nearly perfect beauty, these eyes were like sharply faceted gemstones, inlaid with subtle art.<sup>30</sup>

Okuno Takeo praises the above passage highly, saying that "there are no other writings which express the beauties of a masochistic, narcissistic boy to this degree."<sup>31</sup> I also would like to quote another, similar passage in full, where Mori's depiction of Guydeau's alluring masculine body rejects any realistic method of representation:

He was a handsome man with a strong neck, around thirty-seven or thirty-eight, with all the outstanding characteristics of a Frenchman...His forehead immediately made one believe that it concealed intelligence, but it was not too wide, and his hair was black. His big, round eyes, like those which Frenchmen usually possess, seemed to project the atmosphere of a poisonous snake somewhere in the Southern islands, with somewhat comical taste. Looking at this young man, one imagined a series of overlapping illustrations like those alphabets entwined with something like the branch of an apple tree which often appear in French books. Such things as goose-quill pens, parchment scrolls, white silk collar frills that wound around the neck several times and were then tied into the shape of a flower, or a prison bed in the Bastille, a ceramic bathtub with one side of Marat's body leaning out, Sans-culottes wearing European-style *hakama* and berets with emblems, holding placards saying "Egalité Liberté Fraternité."<sup>32</sup>

In such a context, we realize how deeply Mori's aesthetic attitude is implicated in the male

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<sup>30</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p.79.

<sup>31</sup> Okuno Takeo. "Bi no kyokugen no bungakusha" (The Author of Extreme Beauty), *Chikuma* 266 (1993), p.15.

<sup>32</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p.86-87.

bodies of Paulo and Guydeau, which are respectively symbolized as a gemstone and artistic drawings. As Itô Reiko says, Mori's male homosexual characters, "with their sexless beauty, possess androgynous aspects. So they are mostly distanced from everyday realities."<sup>33</sup>

While the male characters in Mori's fiction, with their perfectly idealized male bodies, seem to be placed at a distance from any transparent, obvious reality (of heterosexuality) and to be immersed in an imaginative realm in which they do not need to be constrained by socially constructed paradigms, it is her female characters who attempt to recover those materialistic principles that seem to have been subsumed by the romanticized homosexual psyches of the male characters. Mrs. Ueda, Guydeau's secret lover, had started her affair with him before he met Paulo. The more Guydeau is attracted by this seventeen-year-old boy's body, which can be characterized by such words as liveliness, freshness and purity, the less interest he has in the 'ugly, decaying body' of Mrs. Ueda. Mrs. Ueda's 'gendered' body is described in Guydeau's internal monologue in the following manner:

Guydeau felt that the obsession of Mrs. Ueda's stout, ugly body pressed heavily against his head. Heated breasts that were pressed flat on the bed when she lay on her face, nipples and areola that were like reddish-purple raspberries, the pliable hill from the pit of the stomach to the abdomen were all still quite firm, because she had never borne a child...recently, these areas had rapidly been getting fatter, and she had lost her figure. Once Guydeau knew Paulo, these parts ceased to represent any allurements to him at all. The limbs that rolled under Guydeau's eyes concealed

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<sup>33</sup> Itô Reiko, "Mori Mari no egaku shônen bigaku" (The Aesthetics of *Shônen* Described by Mori Mari), *Shôwagakuin kokugo kokubun* 15 (1982), p. 57. Itô's article offers a limited analysis of Mori Mari's male homosexual trilogy, and is not particularly useful for the present discussion.



weariness. Four months had already passed since he had become tired of the relationship with Mrs. Ueda, and, in contrast with the fresh body of Paulo, who would be eighteen in two months, like a young, green tree, her body was gradually beginning to give off the odor of rotten fruit. Nevertheless, the underside of the skin of such rotten fruit could create a frenzy of doubt and jealousy which was always about to burst into flame.<sup>34</sup>

Mrs. Ueda's 'body' symbolizes a patriarchal construction that compels women to identify with their bodies, so that any female inquiry concerning self-identity can never transcend such a body-female correlation. When Mrs. Ueda does begin to reflect on her body, it is merely to lament its 'decay' in gradually deviating from the category of women's bodies defined as desirable by Guydeau and other men:

Mrs. Ueda's irritation—she felt as if she were constantly being chased—had built up in the body of a forty-eight-year-old woman who was reaching the twilight years of a woman's life; the oppressive atmosphere accumulated day by day, and she was gradually losing sight of the borderline between her grudge against Guydeau, who showed some signs of losing interest in her prematurely, and her hatred against her swollen woman's body.<sup>35</sup>

Fearing that her loss of Guydeau would also represent the loss of her feminine 'gendered' body and consequently the loss of her self-identity, she fights against Paulo for Guydeau's love, so that she can once again become essentialized in relation to Guydeau (and other men). Mrs. Ueda's challenge opens a new phase in Freud's Oedipal Complex: here, it is the love of the Father which becomes the cause of dissension between the Mother and the Son; these

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<sup>34</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p.107.

<sup>35</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p.123.

entangled relationships among the Father, the Mother and the Son are inevitably permeated by both heterosexual and homosexual forces, precisely because both the Mother and the Son are lovers of the Father.

The project of recovering a woman's status as a speaking subject in spite of the Oedipal scheme is activated on the ground that women can 'see' as well as men. As suggested by feminist critics such as Laura Mulvey and Jacqueline Rose, critical analysis is basically dichotomized, with the man as the gazing subject and the woman as the object gazed at. However, it must be pointed out here that the patriarchal strategy of reinforcing the gender-hierarchy is not necessarily initiated by the heterosexual man's gaze. In "The Lovers' Forest," the core of the presumptive Oedipal patriarchy actually lies in the gazes of homosexual/bisexual men. In the first half of the narrative, Guydeau and Paulo represent patriarchal society, placing Mrs. Ueda as the object of male focalization. The problem with the masculine gaze in the male-only community of the Oedipal scheme is that such a unilateral perspective imprisons women within their limited discursive space, and women are consequently constructed as an expedient of discourse, precisely because of the hierarchy between the 'observer' and the 'observed.' Mrs. Ueda's ontological fluctuation has its roots in the narratological and epistemological position she occupies as the 'observed,' as well as in her inability to acknowledge that she is primarily a focus of the masculine gaze. One day, Guydeau conspires to provide Paulo with a chance to observe Mrs. Ueda secretly, when she is with Guydeau:

"But, she is an amazing lady, isn't she?"

"Do you want to see her?"

"Yes," Paulo said, looking back at Guydeau. Paulo, who never overlooked a

vertical line between Guydeau's eyebrows, was already in a better mood.<sup>36</sup>

"Phillip Morris? Did you buy them at Tokyo Station?"

Guydeau fumbled in the pocket of his European-style *hakama* and tossed the sealed pack of Phillip Morris cigarettes into Paulo's lap. "They were in Ueda's house. You saw them."

"Yeah, so many cartons of cigarettes. But, I feel sorry for her a little bit....You were marvelous. Mrs. Ueda looked like a hunchback."

"You are such a good actor, Paulo."

"She didn't notice, did she? I examined her, looking her over closely, after you stepped aside to look at the case behind her. That's why she looked in my direction, so I could see her well. You did it on purpose, didn't you?...She loves you so much."

Saying this, Paulo's eyes took on a somewhat malicious light. Guydeau was laughing with enjoyment.<sup>37</sup>

While Mrs. Ueda has no way to realize that she was secretly observed, Guydeau and Paulo are united by their scheme and enjoy its success, describing, criticizing, and finally inscribing Mrs. Ueda as the limited object of their patriarchal discourse.

By analyzing Mori's description of Mrs. Ueda's viewing her own reflection in a mirror, we can also achieve a fuller sense of the problematic nature of her dependency on the masculine gaze, and a better understanding of the characteristics of the gaze-power correlation. In this passage, the power of the Mirror and its impact on Mrs. Ueda are skillfully described:

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<sup>36</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p. 104.

<sup>37</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p.110.

All over Mrs. Ueda's body, which had formerly been as slender as a whip, could now be seen superfluous rolls of fat, giving the impression of a piece of ugly, decayed meat. Now she seldom stood in front of the mirror after taking a bath.<sup>38</sup>

In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar indicate that there is never any shift in the subject-object relationship between men (as subjects) and women (as objects); they metaphorically employ the 'Queen's Mirror' in *Snow White* as an example of this patriarchal conspiracy. Gilbert and Gubar argue that, for the Queen, the Mirror represents the metaphorical voice of men (precisely speaking, the voice of the King); this voice manipulates her to act according to male-oriented standards and rules. It is evident to the reader that the Queen's ontological space cannot be positioned outside the masculine world of the Mirror. She can only achieve her own self-consciousness through fulfilling her function, not as an individual, but as a reflection of the Mirror. After all, there is no doubt that the Queen's inevitable ruin does not occur as the result of her personal cruelty, but as the consequence of her obvious inability to isolate herself from the spell of the Mirror (the spell of patriarchy). Like the Queen in *Snow White*, when Mrs. Ueda reflects on her figure in the mirror, she laments over her 'gendered' body, inscribed by the power of the Mirror (as representative of the male voice). However, unlike the Queen, who attempts to ruin her competitor (Snow White) for the love of the man (the King), Mrs. Ueda decides not to destroy her competitor (Paulo), but instead to demolish the Mirror (Guydeau) itself. Guydeau's 'gaze' itself is her mirror:

It was just a year ago when Guydeau's eyes had burned looking at her breasts....In Guydeau's eyes now there existed a dense weariness that she tried not to notice, but

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<sup>38</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p.112.

couldn't help noticing. His back, neck or the ardent chest that recently had aroused her furious sexual desire now aroused her hatred, and that hatred became words, each of them embedded with thorns, and such words emerged from her lips. But Guydeau's strong-willed profile and his strong neck were never affected by them, at all. Rather than not being affected, he seemed to be shooting them back at her. Guydeau's gaze, which skillfully concealed his lost interest, hid the existence of somebody else these days. Mrs. Ueda had been reading it.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, she wishes to avoid seeing this 'gaze' by literally making him invisible forever. When the matter of perspective is considered, it becomes apparent that the concept of femaleness is here largely a masculine linguistic invention and is dealt with exclusively from a patriarchal point of view; the masculine 'gaze' is the medium by which Guydeau and Paulo invent Mrs. Ueda as a woman. The 'gaze' signifies the correlation between discourse and power, which gives both the Father and the Son a chance to observe the Mother for the sake of enhancing their power, but never provides the Mother with the psychological potential to reverse such a masculine perspective. Mrs. Ueda's epistemological and ontological failure derives from the fact that she cannot initiate the process of 'seeing' others' 'seeing' her as a woman (as the other).

Ann Kaplan goes one step further, exploring the 'gaze' as a not exclusively male-oriented code; she thereby provides a number of divergent possibilities (and perspectives) to interpret ideology, culture, politics and gender/sexuality:

First, is the gaze necessarily male (i.e. for reasons inherent in the structure of language, the unconscious, symbolic systems, and thus all social structures)? Could

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<sup>39</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p.124.

we structure things so that women own the gaze? If this were possible, would women want to own the gaze? Finally, in either case, what does it mean to be a female spectator? Only through asking such questions within the psychoanalytic framework can we begin to find the gaps and fissures through which we can insert woman in a historical discourse that has hitherto been male-dominated and has excluded women.<sup>40</sup>

As Kaplan suggests, we must question what forms of ideological, theoretical, and political enterprise emerge when woman's identity is no longer constrained within the ideological straitjacket of a masculine-patriarchal perspective. The question also arises: To what extent does an effort to locate a woman as 'observer' produce a radical inquiry into the discursive construction of feminine identity itself? At this point in Mori's narrative, Mrs. Ueda, who begins to doubt both Guydeau's fidelity and his sincerity, becomes involved in a process of deciphering Guydeau's masculine perspective and thus begins to explore her own individual, personal orientation. When Mrs. Ueda shadows Guydeau secretly and finally 'sees' Guydeau and Paulo strolling on the street together, the balance of power within the Oedipal scheme begins to be shaken; of course, neither Guydeau or Paulo is capable of recognizing himself as the objectified referent of a female 'gaze':

Mrs. Ueda went a little crazy. She closed the blind of the car and started driving around Komaba, where Guydeau usually strolled, to Kitazawa, the area around Guydeau's house, to the Ginza and so forth...As Mrs. Ueda's car passed by Aoizaka in Shibuya, in order to reach the Ginza from somewhere around Komaba, her piercing eyes caught the two men who were just entering the wide, curving street. At

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<sup>40</sup> Kaplan, p.24-25.

that moment, Mrs. Ueda realized that the man who was walking with Guydeau was the young man from the food center, and she knew that she had been caught in some kind of trap.<sup>41</sup>

Mrs. Ueda is now eager to transcend the dilemma of playing the role of 'invisible' observer and to transform men into nothing more than objects of observation. Considering the perceptive significance of the act of interpretation, I wish to point out one particular sentence in "The Lovers' Forest": "Mrs. Ueda's eyes clearly saw Paulo for the first time."<sup>42</sup> This one sentence contains all of the general principles required to analyze critically the relationship between Guydeau, Paulo and Mrs. Ueda. Far more than a mere detail, this sentence provides a paradigm shift by which we are enabled to discern the progressive or creative possibilities involved when the Mother is finally placed in the role of the gazing subject.

Mrs. Ueda's power as the gazing subject is enlarged and elevated to such an extent that she succeeds in destroying the harmony of the masculine homosocial world, in which the Father loves the Son instead of the Mother, through slaughtering Guydeau at the end of the narrative. The murder committed by Mrs. Ueda obviously exemplifies the Mother's murder of the Father; she thus nullifies the seemingly balanced (at least from a masculine perspective) Oedipal scheme. In a way, Mrs. Ueda's act may be viewed as epitomizing women's victory over male domination. However, we should not rush to such a conclusion too easily. Instead, we should now ask a number of questions concerning women's identity-creating process. Such questions include: Does Mrs. Ueda transcend the male-dominant system successfully by dismantling the authority of the Father? Can the Mother's act of killing the Father entirely dispense with woman's ideological position in

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<sup>41</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p.131-132.

<sup>42</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p.132.

relation to patriarchal power? Is it possible for women to be completely self-reliant or autonomous, when women's very achievement of self-consciousness has discursive limits as a reflection of men's subjective gaze? It is obvious that, even at the climax of the narrative, Mrs. Ueda is not liberated from living according to the paradigms set by the Oedipal Complex:

Mrs. Ueda leaned against the door leading to the living room and remained standing there. In the moonlight, her black shadow looked as if it were suspended, rather than standing. Soon, as if the string had been cut, she bent her knees and crouched down, trying to creep along the floor, but she didn't seem to have enough vitality to do anything. It was two o'clock in the morning when pitiful Mrs. Ueda stumblingly left the house, leaving behind the cigarette butts which she had smoked while waiting for Guydeau and a European glass from which she had drunk alcohol after having vainly attempted to shoot herself in the throat beside Guydeau.<sup>43</sup>

Here, the fact that Mrs. Ueda attempts to kill herself after slaughtering Guydeau indicates that she remains basically constructed by the power of male discourse, without referring to any possible self-reliant reality of her own. Guydeau's death thus literally leads to Mrs. Ueda's psychological collapse. It gradually becomes clear that Mrs. Ueda's very vision of reality has been shaped by a blurred subject-object relationship, a mingled relationship between herself and the Other (man).

The concept of a unitary 'self,' which has associations with hierarchy, privilege, and the presumed authenticity of the Symbolic Order, forces women to distance themselves from the ideological enterprise of subjectivity (and self-orientedness). For instance, theorists of

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<sup>43</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p.142-143.



female self-reflective writings, such as Domna Stanton and Rita Felski, suggest that women's identity, as acquired through social conditioning in the particular context of patriarchy, represents its nature primarily through dependency. In other words, a woman remains rather reluctant to be an 'I,' in the sense of representing herself as a realm that is self-oriented, self-centered or self-controlled, and is organized and conducted in such a way as to subordinate other people to this 'self.' Nancy Chodorow argues that women may be more involved with a sense of collectiveness, precisely because of the unbreakable bonds between mothers and children. In Mrs. Ueda, the concept of autonomous subjectivity (or self-orientedness) is hardly visible, and would clearly be unstable without the existence of powerful 'others'; in this case, Guydeau plays the role of powerful 'other' in terms of Mrs. Ueda's identity-creating process. It is true that Mrs. Ueda broadens the scope of the female gaze, defining it as a subversive device by which to problematize Guydeau's domination over her ontological existence as a woman, and consequently to dismantle the construction of the gender hierarchy in the context of the Oedipal Complex. Nonetheless, her act of destroying the sphere of the Oedipal Complex while failing to problematize the 'other'-oriented process of her self-consciousness indicates the limited conditions of discourse concerning the possibility of female emancipation that she has been forced to accept. Thus, a more ideological answer to the questions posed by Mrs. Ueda's act of murder may lie in the fact that it paradoxically seems to reinforce certainties about the nature of 'femaleness' and its socially constrained role, rather than calling into question the existing system of patriarchal hierarchy in any genuine way.

### **A Deceiving Man and a Deceived Woman: Homosexuality Merged into Homosociality**

It is not only in the representation of homosexuality, in which female characters are forced to distance themselves from the force of self-knowledge that we see the archetypal features of the image of the marginalized woman, but also in the self-enclosed homosociality that Mori depicts in her male homosexual trilogy. As pointed out by several theorists of gender/queer studies, such as Eve Sedgwick, a distinction between homosexuality and homosociality is required in order to account for the complexities of sexual orientation and identification; the mechanisms of homosociality indicate that the very concept of philosophical experience has been organized as the representation of a discourse that takes place according to the interests of male-dominated society, a discourse that defines women as incapable of experiencing the kind of psychological development that could conceivably bridge the ideological gaps between men and women. Thus, it is possible to say that Mori's male characters exhibit homosocial implications, as well as homosexual attributes. They attempt to attain power by virtue of their abundant knowledge, and consequently to define themselves as powerful in terms of 'self,' with the purpose of excluding (or confining) powerless women by means of their supposedly identificatory sexual differences. Thus, in terms of the power structure (or hierarchical system), the force of knowledge, which successfully fixes the borderline between the powerful 'self' and the powerless 'other,' endows men with the legitimate right to deceive women.

In Mori's fiction of male homosexuality, Mrs. Ueda is representative of the female characters, who can never take the initiative in their relationships with the male characters who deceive them. For instance, in "The Lovers' Forest," Nashie, Paulo's female lover, is another female character who vainly tries to interrupt the homosexual/homosocial bond

between Guydeau and Paulo. Early in the narrative, Nashie develops strong doubts about Paulo's sincerity with regard to their relationship, sensing an indescribable quality of sexual tension between Paulo and Guydeau. In this respect, Nashie also reinforces the idea of the exclusion of the female from any experience of the kind of psychological or spiritual intimacy that could bridge the ideological gaps between men and women. Moreover, in terms of her role in the development of the narrative, this character suddenly disappears, and we are not provided with any clue by which to guess what may have happened to her. She literally vanishes from the narrative forever.

The other story in Mori's male homosexual trilogy, "I'm Not Coming on Sunday," also emphasizes the excluded status of women. The narrative portrays a homosexual relationship between Sugimura Tatsukichi, a middle-aged writer, and Itô Hans, his disciple. In this story, the obvious psychological ambivalence of women can be seen in Yoshiko, Hans's ex-fiancée. Her struggle for spiritual self-definition arises out of a dualistic distinction between female heterosexual reality and male homosexual/homosocial fantasy. Suffering from an unstable situation, in which her youthful sense of ideal rules and standards is confronted by the homosocial schema of these two men, she is deceived by Sugimura and Hans and tragically dies at the end of the story, once again illustrating how the female is annihilated by the fundamental structure of male homosexuality. As Tomoko Aoyama says: "the broken engagement, followed by the accidental death of Yoshiko, indicates the victory of the paternal world over the maternal."<sup>44</sup> Even though I have some problems with equating Yoshiko to the maternal (she can more credibly be seen as a *shôjo*, rather than a mother),

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<sup>44</sup> Aoyama Tomoko. "Male Homosexuality as Treated by Japanese Women Writers," p.192. The ideological confusion of femininity and motherhood is also seen in Yagi Keiko's analysis of Mori Mari's male homosexual trilogy. See Yagi's "Mori Mari: bōsei no hitei" (Mori Mari: The Negation of Motherhood), *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 44:4 (1979) for further details.

Aoyama's analysis suggests a similar kind of homosocial paradigm to those under discussion here.

These stories portray women as instinctive, rather than logical, and credulity is shown as inherent to female nature. Mrs. Ueda, Nashie, and Yoshiko have in common a sense that their relationships with their male lovers are infused with an imbalance of power between male and female (or heterosexuality versus homosexuality/homosociality). They can instinctively sense and feel it, but they are deprived of the 'language' with which to describe their imbalanced circumstances. When Paulo and Guydeau secretly spend the summer together at a resort hotel, they unexpectedly come across Nashie, Paulo's female lover. It is important to note that Nashie perceives a certain atmosphere of intimacy surrounding Guydeau and Paulo, but she is not capable of logically identifying the dynamics of male homosociality:

The electric fan hummed listlessly, and the ice in Paulo's European glass was melting, its smooth surface was floating. Suddenly, Nashie was attacked by something which she couldn't see. Where did it come from? Something weary and dreary was entering into even a pleasant dinner with Paulo. Something like a cold wind had entered from somewhere, and it seemed to envelop her together with this dinner table. Then Guydeau stood up and said to Paulo: "I will reserve a room. The curfew is at nine o'clock." After saying that, Guydeau left the dining room. Paulo looked at Nashie. "He said that he would reserve a room for me separately. Do you want to come? It's all right with you, isn't it?" They were Paulo's usual tender eyes. Nashie wondered if she were dreaming. Enveloped by something she couldn't recognize, Nashie gazed intently into Paulo's clear, attractive eyes, and

agreed....Nashie sensed that this vagueness was somehow related to the existence of Guydeau, who was sitting in front of Paulo until just a few moments ago. She felt somewhat uneasy about the hint of a secret in the eyes of the refined man who gazed at her, and from whom she immediately received something that she wanted to worship.<sup>45</sup>

Here, while Nashie clearly senses some indescribable atmosphere which seems to mesmerize and evade her, she is not able to locate the 'words' for it.

Yoshiko, in "I'm Not Coming on Sunday," also must struggle to maintain her heterosexual relationship with Hans, precisely because her sense of their incompatibility actually derives from the gap between heterosexual reality and homosexual fantasy that haunts her throughout the narrative. The differences between the ways in which Hans and Yoshiko attempt to seize the essence of their relationship relate significantly to the patriarchal norm that limits the existential value of women. Overwhelmed by Sugimura's intensity of feeling toward him, Hans has decided to betray Yoshiko by breaking his engagement with her. The day before he sends a letter to Yoshiko and her parents, in which he discloses his intention of breaking off the engagement, Hans visits Yoshiko's house, and spends the night pretending that nothing will change between them. Hans thus attempts to conceal his scheme to betray her, which has been skillfully planned by Sugimura. As Hans's fiancée, and as a woman, Yoshiko feels that some strange, indescribable atmosphere overshadows their relationship, but she nevertheless fails to find the 'words' to express her ambivalent feelings to Hans:

On the day of this last visit, Tatsukichi borrowed a car from his friend and parked it

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<sup>45</sup> Mori, "Koibitotachi no mori," p.118.

beside the wall of the Yatsuka house. He did this partly because Hans had asked him to do so and also partly because, for Tatsukichi's desire to deprive Hans of the Yatsuka family forever, even a second faster was better. At 9:15, the time they had agreed to meet, Hans and Yoshiko emerged. They looked as if they were entangled with each other. Tatsukichi pulled down the peak of his hunting hat. Hans said to Yoshiko: "I don't know why you are saying such a thing today. You know I will be coming again."

"I'm sorry. But a while ago your eyes looked like this was our last meeting. I am sure of it."

"Well, I've always said to you that I always feel like each meeting will be our last. You know I am coming on Sunday. In fact, I can't wait for our next meeting."

"But it still feels as if I were separating from you."<sup>46</sup>

As the above quotation indicates, the male plot, which functions within a world of homosexual (and homosocial) structures, overwhelms Yoshiko, who cannot participate in the action of pursuing the fundamental truth (and deception) behind the impetus of the heterosexual relationship.

According to Lacan, the Symbolic Order arises with the advent of the structure of language. As Derrida, Barthes, Kristeva and other post-structuralists claim, it is precisely because language is easily allied with systems of social power, solidifying certainties about existing hierarchies, that the power-language correlation occupies its dominant position within the continuum of the Symbolic Order. Precisely because men have easy access to the Symbolic Order, in which meaning can be 'exactly' represented by language, patriarchal

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<sup>46</sup> Mori, "Nichiyôbi ni boku wa ikanai," *Koibitotachi no mori*, p.268.

ideology reflects the presumed fact that a man is 'naturally' endowed with a talent for cultivating his identity-creating process, by means of logically analyzing and placing appropriate value on the realities of his life. On the other hand, within the Symbolic Order, women are not associated with the control of logical systematization, and are defined as clearly distanced from any 'conclusive' truth or significant knowledge. In such a context, the primary gender differentiation that occurs in Mori's fiction results from the fact that men are inclined to deceive women; the effects of this masculine manipulation are also emphasized (or validated) by the knowledge-power correlation. As Foucault indicated, this correlation between knowledge and power has constructed hegemonic binary systems that produce an unbreakable borderline between the 'self' and 'other.' Foucault sees that "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations."<sup>47</sup> By employing Lacan's and Foucault's theories, one may thus attempt to explain the knowledge-power relations that are frequently manifested in the fixed hierarchical systems of language as a basic strategy to maintain epistemic hegemony. In this regard, we can clarify the fact that, within the discourse of knowledge, Mori's male characters always choose a dominant stance in relation to any hegemonic system; in this way, privileged men, such as Guydeau, Paulo, Hans and Tatsukichi, use and abuse the structures and values of language-knowledge, underscoring the concept that the essential qualities of language-knowledge are directly related to the origins of the power structure.

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<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972), p.27.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### **Perverse Aesthetics in Kôno Taeko's "Toddler-Hunting": The Beating Father, the Beaten Boy, and a Female Masochist**

*Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder.*

—Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*

Kôno Taeko was born in 1926, and achieved the status of *bundan sakka* (member of the literary establishment) with the publication of the Akutagawa Literary Prize winning work, "Kani" (Crabs) in 1963. Kôno has published a large number of literary works, and is still actively producing narratives that provide discursive space for an inquiry into issues surrounding gender configurations. Gretchen Jones, a scholar of Japanese literature, speaks of Kôno's writings in terms of the value and validity of gender discourse, saying that "her [Kôno's] narratives 'play,' in a perverse sort of way, with gender dynamics."<sup>1</sup> Critic Yonaha

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<sup>1</sup> Gretchen Jones, *Deviant Strategies: The Masochistic Aesthetic of Tanizaki Jun'ichirô and Kôno Taeko* (Diss. The University of California-Berkeley, 1999), p. 157. In her analysis of the masochistic female characters in Kôno Taeko's literary works (including Akiko in "Toddler-Hunting"), Jones uses Gilles Deleuze's theory of pseudo-masochism which is directly linked to sadistic impulses. Jones asserts that the masochistic desires of the female subjects



Keiko highly values Kôno's subversive strategies in regard to institutionalized concepts of the female body. She states that "Kôno Taeko's works suggest that women can achieve sexual freedom as the result of their emancipation from the constructed patriarchal system."<sup>2</sup> Kôno's stories illustrate the complicated texture of female sexualities; their thematic impact is based on the depiction of sadomasochism (usually female masochism and male sadism)<sup>3</sup>. Also, Kôno's female characters often possess an 'abnormal' attraction to *otoko no ko* (little boys) and aversion toward *onna no ko* (little girls).<sup>4</sup> Among Kôno's early works, "Yuki" (Snow, 1962), "Crabs" (1963), and "Ari takaru" (Ants Swarm, 1964) present complicated frameworks of female sexual ambivalence using both sadomasochism and such 'perverse' attitudes toward boys and girls.

These issues regarding *otoko no ko* and the sadomasochistic narrative may be seen in Kôno's 1961 novella, "Toddler-Hunting"<sup>5</sup>; issues concerning female gender discourse

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in Kôno's works may possibly be displaced by a subconscious sadistic passion.

<sup>2</sup> Yonaha Keiko, *Gendai joryû sakka ron* (The Analysis of Contemporary Women Authors) (Tokyo:Shinbisha, 1986), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> In her 1990 novel, *Miira-tori no ryôkitan* (A Bizarre Story of Mummy Hunting), Kôno reverses her usual dynamic and features a male masochist who trains his female partner to play sadist for him. See Uema Chizuko's *Resisting Sadomasochism in Kôno Taeko* (Diss. University of Oregon, 1998) and Gretchen Jones's *Deviant Strategies: The Masochistic Aesthetic of Tanizaki Jun'ichirô and Kôno Taeko* for details concerning the sadomasochistic mechanisms in Kôno's literature. Uema views Kôno's sadomasochistic narratives in terms of socially constructed paradigms that fetter women, while Jones emphasizes the performativity of sadomasochism in Kôno's literature as one of the key points required in discussing divergent female sexuality.

<sup>4</sup> Kôno is not alone in her interest in the structures of *shônen* (boy) identity. Among contemporary Japanese women writers who explore *shônen* identity, Nagano Mayumi is outstanding. From her first publication, *Shônen Arisu* (*Shônen Alice*), a *shônen* version of *Alice in Wonderland*, she focuses on the *shônen Bildungsroman*, within a homosocial/homosexual context. Especially in her serial works, *Hakuchû dôdô* (Openly in Broad Daylight), *Aozora* (Blue Sky), *Karera* (Them), and *Wakaba no koro* (Around the Time of Green Leaves), boys search for their self-identity by inquiring into issues of innocent (but physical) love for others of the same sex.

<sup>5</sup> "Toddler-Hunting" won the *Shinchôsha dôjin zasshi shô* (the Shinchôsha Literary Coterie Magazine Award). Kôno's other works that have received literary awards are: *Saigo no toki* (The Last Time) *Joryû bungaku shô* (Women's Literature Award, 1966); *Fui no koe* (A Sudden

control the narrative development of the story. "Toddler-Hunting" also illustrates the structure of female fantasies concerning male homosexuality within the framework of the third stage of female sexual fantasies outlined in Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten," which clearly manifests sexual desire arising from the female gaze directed at the (sexual) interaction of two men (the boy and the father). Thus, we can (and should) view Freud's article as a vehicle by which to analyze the narrative of female fantasies of male homosexuality in "Toddler-Hunting"; this analysis has a special value thematically in terms of deconstructing the traditional limits of female sexuality.

Strictly speaking, "Toddler-Hunting" cannot be categorized as a work that articulates female fantasies concerning male homosexuality. In this narrative, the masochistic preferences of the heroine, Akiko, are at the center of her 'perverse' sexual orientation; on the practical level, the articulation of her sexual acts is unified according to a specifically heterosexual orientation. Here, I would like to explore the fact that this very issue of perverse (and normal) sexual representations in "Toddler-Hunting" is involved in the dramatic synchronization of the heroine's almost instinctive disgust for girls and her subconscious desire to dream about the erotic interaction between a boy and his father in an imaginary (fantasized) space. Discursive issues concerning formulations such as 'women hate women' and the mechanisms of female fantasies regarding male-male eroticism constitute a thematic

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Voice) *Yomiuri bungaku shô* (Yomiuri Literature Award, 1969); her critical work *Tanizaki bungaku to kôtei no yokubô* (The Literature of Tanizaki and the Desire for Affirmation) won the *Yomiuri Literature Award* in 1976; *Ichinen no bokka* (A Year-Long Pastoral) *Tanizaki Jun'ichirô bungaku shô* (The Tanizaki Jun'ichirô Literary Award, 1980); and *Mira-tori ryôkitan* (A Bizarre Story of Mummy Hunting) *Noma bungei shô* (The Noma Literary Award, 1991). In the article entitled "Yôjigari ron; Kôno Taeko no henshutsuteki shuppatsu" (The Analysis of "Toddler-Hunting": Kôno Taeko's Paranoiac Departure, *Aosugahara* 44), Nakatani Katsumi mentions the process by which "Toddler-Hunting" was awarded the *Shinchôsha Literary Coterie Magazine Award*, and how Kôno was motivated to apply for the award.

space in which such controversial subjects as the dichotomy of sexual normality/abnormality and concepts constructed as typical of female sexual fantasies can be reworked.

### **The Dichotomy of *Shôjo* and *Shônen***

Akiko, the heroine of the story, used to belong to an operetta troupe as a chorus singer who dreamed of being the prima donna. However, learning the limits of her talent for music, Akiko left the troupe, and now makes her living as a translator from Italian. The narrative starts with a minutely detailed description of Akiko's instinctive disgust for little girls: "Hayashi Akiko couldn't abide little girls between three and ten years old—she detested them more than any other kind of human being."<sup>6</sup> Akiko's impulses in this regard are entirely irrational:

Akiko's dislike of little girls was of an entirely different order than her disdain for happy, attractive, conceited women her own age, or for young men throwing their weight around, or for smug, complacent old people. It was more like a phobia, the repulsion some people feel when confronted with small creatures like snakes or cats or frogs.<sup>7</sup>

Akiko's extreme disgust toward little girls synchronizes with her contrasting attachment to little boys. In an internal monologue, Akiko confesses to her strong attraction to them:

But little boys, now—Akiko found little boys extremely appealing at that age. She didn't know exactly when her attraction for them first surfaced, but with every passing year she found their company more intoxicating. Lately, her encounters with

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<sup>6</sup> Kôno Taeko, "Yôjigari" (Toddler-Hunting), trans. Lucy North, in *Toddler-Hunting and Other Stories* (New York: New Directions, 1996), p.45.

<sup>7</sup> Kôno, "Yôjigari," p.45.

little boys had been intensely pleasurable.<sup>8</sup>

Akiko carries her fascination with little boys to such an extreme that she buys boys' clothes, without knowing anyone to whom she might give them. After one such purchase she hears that the young son of a former colleague is about to make his debut, so she goes to the trouble of visiting him, just to present him with the clothes she has bought, even though Akiko and the boy's mother were never close friends. However, Akiko feels that her act is rewarded just by getting a chance to watch the little boy's awkward movements when putting the clothes on and taking them off.

The interaction between her protagonists' strong disgust for girls and their idealization of boys is a significant motif in Kôno's literary texts (especially in her early works, such as "Crabs," "Ants Swarm," and "Fui no koe")<sup>9</sup>. This convergence of misogyny with an attraction toward little boys is also articulated in "Toddler-Hunting," and it provides an ideological perspective from which we can approach female sexual mechanisms and challenge a number of myths regarding female sexuality. What is significant here is the relation of the *shôjo* (girl) vs. *shônen* (boy) dichotomy to socially constructed gender formations and the paradigmatic objectification that subconsciously makes Akiko idealize *shônen* rather than *shôjo*. We thus need to ask such questions as: What are *shôjo* and *shônen*?

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<sup>8</sup> Kôno, "Yôjigari," p.47.

<sup>9</sup> In Chapter Five, I will discuss *yaoi manga*, which are fantasies of male homosexuality specifically directed toward a female readership. In this field of Japanese popular culture, we can also see strong female appreciation of *otoko no ko* (or *shônen*). One of the *yaoi manga* genres, called *shota mono*, specifically deals with the sexuality of boys. The term *shota* originally comes from a boy character's name, *Shôtarô*, in the famous Japanese animation *Tetsujin 28 gô* (Metalman No. 28). Among women, *Shôtarô*, who has a cute face and wears short pants, is considered the representative *otoko no ko* figure. Women who are attracted by *otoko no ko* are generally called *shotakon no onna*, women who have a *shôtarô* complex. The *shôtarô* complex is usually compared with *rorikon* (Lolita complex). An analysis of Kôno's boy-obsessed characters in terms of the concept of *shotakon* would no doubt prove enlightening, but I will not pursue it in this study.

Or: What socially constructive processes are initially involved in the ontology (and epistemology) of *shôjo* and *shônen*?

As indicated by several critics, such as John Treat and Ann Sherif, *shôjo* identity has a significant place in the discourse of Japanese popular culture, and it appears to be very close to the notion of an asexual being. Treat sums up the gender ambiguity of *shôjo*:

It is probably incorrect and certainly misleading to translate the term *shôjo* with any single English phrase. "Young girl" is not only redundant but can refer to infants, and "young woman" implies a kind of sexual maturity clearly forbidden to *shôjo*....[O]ne might well argue that *shôjo* constitute their own gender, neither male nor female but rather something importantly detached from the productive economy of heterosexual reproduction.<sup>10</sup>

Treat emphasizes that a distinction between *shôjo* and women can be drawn, precisely because the primary and unique signifier of *shôjo* identity depends on its representation in terms of a lack of sexual productivity.

*Shôjo* identity has been largely discussed as a specific form of cultural discourse of Japanese postmodernity.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, issues concerning the establishment of *shônen* identity

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<sup>10</sup> John Treat, "Yoshimoto Banana Writes Home: Shôjo Culture and the Nostalgic Subject," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 19:2 (1993), p. 364.

<sup>11</sup> Treat suggests that it is possible for us to posit a correlation between the nationwide Japanese phenomenon of *shôjo* culture and the cultural dominance of consumer capitalistic society. The role of *shôjo* in the development of Japanese postmodernity has to be considered because of the unavoidable status of *shôjo* as a dominant manifestation of consumption in postmodern capitalist society, in which the power of consumption is emphasized as the primary medium for establishing cultural codes. *Shôjo* consumers put the postmodern theory of the consumer society into practice, being fanatically obsessed with marketable *kawaii* (cute) products; ultimately, they show how Japanese postmodern concepts actually work in terms of what Treat calls 'the aesthetic of cuteness.' It may not be too strong to say that *shôjo* can be used to promote any sort of subject—whether dramas, novels, paintings, movies, philosophies, politics, advertisements, clothes, theme parks, stuffed animals or pop idols—on the same level, by means of the concept *kawaii*. The word *kawaii* does not emerge as part of a gender-specific terminology, but transcends the limits of gender-binary discursive analysis.

within the framework of (female) gender formations have not been as extensively explored. The *shōnen* foments unrest in relation to the existing balance of the socially established gender hierarchy just as the *shōjo* does. In other words, both *shōnen* and *shōjo* escape complicity with any reaffirmation of the master social narrative of gender determination—i.e. phallic men and vaginal women.

However, the potentially subversive nature of *shōjo* identity which is explored by Treat, Sherif and other critics is questioned and challenged by Akiko in “Toddler-Hunting” (as well as by the female authors, characters, and readers of male homosexual fantasies). If gender construction is governed by a process of transition from the Imaginary Order to the Symbolic, as claimed by Lacan and other psychoanalysts such as Kristeva, the *shōjo* identity manifests fundamentally negative attributions within the context of the Symbolic Order. The dialectic of the unprivileged female identity in the Symbolic Order is the medium by which the *shōjo* is inescapably transformed into a ‘woman,’ metaphorically a deformed man. Thus, for Akiko *shōjo* identity is not signified as an idealized formation of gender-ambiguity. The following passage illustrates that for Akiko a *shōjo* is not yet a woman, but is destined to become a woman; her ascribed ambiguous and uncanny characteristics must therefore be signified within the context of patriarchal society. As discussed before, Freud uses the term ‘uncanny’ to describe an unaccountable state in which familiar things unexpectedly become defamiliarized and arouse fear and puzzlement. Akiko describes the ‘uncanny’ circumstances in which she spent her childhood as a *shōjo*:

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In other words, the postmodern *shōjo* regime is deeply rooted in the concept of marketable, consumable cuteness, in which gender identity is completely blurred. Ōtsuka Eiji, a Japanese critic of popular culture, contributes to the analysis of *shōjo* culture phenomena in his book entitled *Shōjo minzokugaku: seikimatsu no shinwa o tsumugu miko no matsuei* (The Ethnography of Shōjo: Textualizing Myths of the End of the Century, Descendants of Miko) (Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 1985).

But beneath the sunny disposition, in the pit of her stomach, she'd been conscious of an inexplicable constriction. Something loathsome and repellent oppressed all her senses—it was as if she were trapped in a long, narrow tunnel; as if a sticky liquid seeped unseen out of her every pore—as if she were under a curse. Once, in science class, they'd had a lesson about silkworms, and with a scalpel the teacher had sliced open a cocoon. Akiko took one look at the faintly squirming pupa—a filthy dark thing, slowly binding itself up in thread issuing from its own body—and knew she was seeing the embodiment of the feelings that afflicted her.<sup>12</sup>

For Akiko, the *shôjo* is literally 'uncanny,' as it is cursed. Comparing *shôjo* identity with the image of a silkworm bound in its own threads metaphorically indicates the inevitable necessity that the girl will be trapped in the structure of the male-dominated system. This description of the *shôjo*'s uncanny attributes foregrounds the concept that even the *shôjo*, who currently bathes in the pre-symbolic space of the Imaginary, can never escape complicity with the hierarchical ascriptions of the gender system within the Symbolic Order.

In contrast, psychoanalytic approaches tell us that the progress of psychological development from the Imaginary to the Symbolic enlarges the field of power (ego) by which the *shônen* could be represented as a 'man' within the Symbolic Order. If the *shônen* is naturally signified in terms of a process (or medium) of subjectification as becoming a superior, established, and authoritative subject, the sexual ontology of his ego must inevitably become distanced from the uncanny signification that *shôjo* identity unconsciously provides. However, this 'progressive' aspect of the *shônen*'s identity cannot be completely representable as that of a mature man, since he is merely 'progressing' toward integration

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<sup>12</sup> Kôno, "Yôjigari," p.46.

into the mechanisms of the Symbolic Order as a 'man.' So the *shônen*'s epistemology remains paradoxically endowed with a somewhat 'uncanny' referentiality, but in a positive sense that finds its symbolic and affective significations in his suggestive androgynous nature (in Cixous's sense, bisexual), being neither a woman (or *shôjo*) nor a man, but integrating constructive, positive elements of these differing gender identities.

Suffice it to point out that, as a man-to-be, the *shônen* is endowed with some degree of authoritative power; however, the distance between the *shônen* and the man emerges when we consider that the boy is never completely involved in the strictly established mechanisms of the Symbolic Order which sometimes function as a double-edged structure for the man and fetter him. In contrast, the *shônen* is simultaneously both in and out of the Symbolic Order, so his relation to it differs from that of the man. At the same time, the *shônen*'s complicated identity, both associated with and distanced from the Symbolic Order, provides him with a space in which he can be temporarily identified with the *shôjo*, and is thus signified by such terms as pure, lovely, cute, sweet, soft, and tender—all of which are generally used to represent the characteristics of a girl. However, as mentioned above, the unavoidable incompatibility between the *shônen* and the *shôjo* is structured by powerful socio/cultural paradigms in which gender difference is strictly established. There is thus no doubt that the *shônen*'s androgynous attributes cannot (or should not) be equated with the *shôjo*'s negative 'uncanny' connotations, since the boy's 'uncanny' ambivalence is directly related to an authoritative ascription in the context of the Symbolic Order, while in that realm the girl's 'uncanny' qualities are ascribed (and symbolized) in terms of a different, inferior reference. In such a context, it becomes apparent that Akiko represents the impact of unconscious gender constraints by lamenting the *shôjo*'s unavoidable fate of becoming a



'woman' and thereby idealizing the androgynous (and bisexual) ontology of the *shônen* identity.

Miyasako Chizuru carries out a particular analysis of *shôjo* identity. Examining male homosexual narratives composed by *shôjo manga* artists, Miyasako discusses the epistemology of the *shôjo* as follows:

The *shôjo* is enclosed in a mirrored room, a small cocoon, and is forced to cultivate pure narcissism. And her access to the external world is only possible through coquetry. By means of these kinds of initiation, the *shôjo* is created.<sup>13</sup>

She continues: "At any rate, in order to behave like a *shôjo*, 'meaning' and 'acts of cognition' are prohibited. However, the *shôjo* cannot identify herself as *shôjo* without participating in such prohibited 'meaning' and 'acts of cognition.'"<sup>14</sup> Miyasako calls the *shôjo* who deviates from her socially constructed conditions a *hi-shôjo* (anti-*shôjo*), and she implies that the *hi-shôjo*, who can be identified as a *shônen* without a penis, longs for *shônen* ontology, and that the *hi-shôjo*'s desires are represented through female fantasies of male homosexuality:

Hagio Moto used representations of *shônen* (for her artistic creation). Those *shônen* represent the *hi-shôjo*'s alter ego, and simply because they are *shônen*, they are involved voluntarily in 'meaning' and 'acts of cognition'—not in the underworld, but in the highways of the world.<sup>15</sup>

In this sense, Kôno's protagonist, Akiko, can be discussed as the sort of *hi-shôjo* that Miyasako explores. Akiko's attention to the positive position of the *shônen* in male homosexual fantasies may possibly reveal traces of her own *hi-shôjo* identity.

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<sup>13</sup> Miyasako, p. 188.

<sup>14</sup> Miyasako, p. 188.

<sup>15</sup> Miyasako, P. 207.

### A Woman Watches a Boy Being Beaten by His Father: "Hit Me on My Back, Daddy!"

In "Toddler-Hunting," the *shônen* is understood to possess idealized and fantasized qualities that attract women (Akiko and probably the story's female readers). Moreover, the path of access to the inscription of female (sexual) desires is found in Akiko's frequent daydream (fantasy), in which she is sexually stimulated by the erotic, sadomasochistic interactions between the boy and his father. Here, the textuality of female sexual fantasies (e.g. incest, homosexuality, and SM), as well as the idealization (fantasization) of the hybrid *shônen* identity, are definitively linked to the repression (and ambivalence) associated with female sexual dialectics. The extent to which this complicated discursive positioning of female sexuality works through fantasies of male homosexuality can hardly be overestimated. Akiko's fantasies of erotic (sexual) interactions between the boy and his father provide a theoretical perspective from which we can explore the dynamics of female sexuality, since the formation of Akiko's homoerotic fantasies corresponds to the deep structures of the female psychological mechanisms analyzed by Sigmund Freud in his article titled "A Child is Being Beaten."<sup>16</sup> Gretchen Jones points out that, when Kôno wrote this novella, she was not aware of the existence of Freud's article.<sup>17</sup> However, the thematic and structural similarities between "Toddler-Hunting" and "A Child is Being Beaten" are not coincidental; both works suggest the prevalence of unified structures of female psychological ambivalence regarding male homosexual fantasies. The following passage clearly indicates the way in which the

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<sup>16</sup> Let me repeat that I do not assume that all women share an identical sexuality, organized through an identical process of fantasy formation. The prevalence of beating fantasies, as reported and schematized by Freud, may provide insights into many elements of feminine sexuality, but I do not contend that the analysis that follows is applicable to all women.

<sup>17</sup> See Gretchen Jones, *Deviant Strategies: The Masochistic Aesthetic of Tanizaki Jun'ichirô and Kôno Taeko*, p. 113-114.

heroine, Akiko, contextualizes Freud's theory about women's fantasies concerning male homosexual eroticism:

As the dream world spread out about her, Akiko would plunge herself into it, her pulse beating faster and faster and her skin all moist, and she would reach ecstasy, losing all self-control.

Two figures always appeared in this strange world: a little boy of seven or eight, and a man in his thirties. The details of their personalities and activities varied slightly each time, but the age gap remained constant, as did their relationship of father and child. Their faces were out of focus, but it was important for Akiko to be able to believe that the child, at least, was very, very sweet.

The man would be thrashing the boy, and scolding him in so gentle a tone that it was harrowing. The beating would start out as the kind any father might give his son, but gradually it would reach a level of horrifying atrocity. At the very climax of the scene, however, the thought of the impossibility of such things actually happening in the real world would surface in her mind, and Akiko would return abruptly to herself. Her face would be flushed, but she'd know that she was back in reality.

(What follows in italics is the content of the fantasy that brings Akiko to 'ecstasy.')

*-You've been a very bad boy, the father starts. I'm going to have to teach you a lesson.*

*A crash as the father whacks the boy across the face, almost knocking his head off. The child staggers under the blow, and then gets back on his feet straightaway, trying to bear the pain. But he is unable to resist touching his cheek furtively.*

*-Hasn't Daddy warned you time and again not to do that? I suppose it takes more*

*than one lesson to make you understand.*

*The father issues an order to someone, and an alligator belt is placed in front of him.*

*-Take off your clothes. The child does as he is told, and the father begins whipping his buttocks with the belt.*

*-How about using our other instrument? The voice is a woman's. The belt is dropped and he picks up a cane.*

*More punishment. With every lash of the cane, there are shrieks and agonized cries. The boy is sent sprawling forward, sometimes flat on his face, but he struggles to get up each time, ready to receive the next stroke, a course of action he carries out without being told.*

*-Look. Look at the blood. The woman's voice again. There it is, the red fluid trickling down over the child's buttocks, over his thighs. The blood is smeared over the surface of his flesh by yet more thrashes of the cane.*

*Another lash, and more blood spurts out from another spot: the two streams trickle down the boy's thigh, as if racing each other. The flow stops halfway down his leg—the blood has already dried. The scene is, after all, taking place in the full heat of the summer sun.*

*-Hit me on my back, Daddy, the boy begs.*

*-I was leaving that till last. There is no hurry.*

*The father sets down the cane, and taking the boy over to a tin shack, grabs him by the shoulders and forces him against the scorching metal. The child tries to escape, wriggling around and desperately pushing himself away, but to no avail. He*

*is pinned by the heavy body of his father, pressed flat against the searing hot tin. There follows the hiss of roasting flesh.*

*Pulled away from the wall, the child totters, dazed by pain, but the father hauls him up. Then the father turns the boy around so that the woman can get a good look at the raw flayed flesh on the boy's back, dark red stripes branded into his skin by ridges of hot metal.*

*There is more to come, but now the boy crumples to the ground when told to stand. More scolding. The father ties the child's hands together and hangs him from the branch of a tree.*

*-What else should I see to? The man asks.*

*-You haven't touched his stomach. The woman's voice again, insinuating. The child gets a few lashes on his belly, and suddenly his stomach splits open. Intestines, an exquisitely colored rope of violet, slither out.*

*The woman gives the order: the man cuts the cord around the child's hands. The boy drops down from the branch to the ground. Now the man pulls the purple rope until it is tight, and jerks the child's body about as if trying to get a kite to rise into the air. The little body at the end of the purple rope is smashed against the corrugated tin shack repeatedly. Every twitch on the rope brings forth pitiful, horrifying screams.<sup>18</sup>*

Here, critical features of female sexual fantasies are constructed in terms of a totalizing picture of systematic psychological domination. There is no doubt that Akiko's daydream of the father-son relationship manifests the female psychological characteristics that Freud

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<sup>18</sup> Kôno, "Yôjigari," p. 59-61.

explored as the third stage of the psychological (and sexual) structure of female fantasies—a female referent is watching a boy who is being beaten by his father.

However, I would like to point out the discernible incompatibility between “A Child is Being Beaten” and “Toddler-Hunting” in terms of the (un)stated origins of eroticism and sexual desire. In “A Child is Being Beaten,” Freud analyzes three stages of female sexual fantasies and their relation to female sexual arousal; he clarifies the fact that the fundamental components of female beating fantasies are mediated through female sexual arousal. However, while he is sensitive to the mechanisms of sexual pleasure of female subjects, the (sexual) desire and eroticism of the active agents involved in the (three-stage) narrative of the beating fantasy are left untouched. We, the readers of Freud’s article, are left to wonder whether or not the beating father obtains (sadistic) sexual excitement, and the beaten boy obtains (masochistic) sexual excitement. In contrast, Kôno’s intent in “Toddler-Hunting” seems to be the creation of a different version of the beating fantasy, which makes the necessary modifications to the text of sexual pleasure, in order to demonstrate the complexity of female sexual identities. In the meta-fantasy narrative of “Toddler-Hunting,” Kôno thus enriches the depiction of the beating father and the beaten boy with incestuous, homosexual, and sadomasochistic eroticism. Here, what is important is that the eroticism of the active agents of the meta-fantasy (the father and the boy) is clearly stated. When the beaten boy demands more beating from his father, saying “*Hit me on my back, Daddy,*” the degree of eroticism in the scene is drastically elevated. The father then replies that “*I was leaving that till last. There is no hurry.*” The father’s reply to the boy’s erotic demand suggests that his (sadistic) sexual pleasure is also driven by this beating interaction. The depiction of eroticism in the beating fantasy in “Toddler-Hunting” is therefore clearly permeated with both the

father's sadistic excitement and the boy's masochistic pleasure. Thus, the fact that the characters' sexual excitement is clearly stated (especially the beaten boy's) needs to be analyzed further, in order to explore the practical reality of Akiko's (female) subjectivity. I will return to this argument later, when Akiko's way of relating herself to the beaten boy (and the meta-fantasy world itself) will be more fully discussed.

As the following quotation indicates, it is clear that, in terms of the semantics of Akiko's fantasy of the father and son, its meta-erotic impact synchronizes with her sexual appetite in reality: "The frustration she'd felt began to change into a different sort of excitement. Often, after surges of emotion, a strange fantasy world would descend and take her in its sway."<sup>19</sup> Akiko is disappointed at missing a planned sadomasochistic rendez-vous with her lover, Sasaki, because of his unexpected business trip. She is eager to compensate for her (sexual) frustration with her fantasy (daydream) concerning the erotic, sadomasochistic interaction between the boy and his father, which acts as a sexual 'surrogate' in which the relationship she had desired is successfully accomplished. In this sense, considering the divergence between Akiko's sadomasochistic desire to observe male homosexual eroticism in meta-fantasy and her heterosexual (sadomasochistic) orientation in reality, any reality-fantasy correlation posited with regard to female subjectivity obviously needs to be analyzed further. The indispensable complexity of subconscious female sexual desires (and fantasies) corresponds to the signifying and signified impact of the mutuality of reality-fantasy, as related to female sexual dynamics; this is to say that meta-fantasy and reality are not too distanced to be compatible, but rather that they seek to enhance the doubled nature of the scenario of female sexual development as two sides of the same coin.

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<sup>19</sup> Kôno, "Yôjigari," p. 59.

We thus need to further analyze issues concerning the reality-fantasy correlation in regard to Akiko's sexual constitution, through questioning the interactions between scopophilic desires and psychological orientations of identification and dissociation. Freud's view concerning subconscious female sexual desires, especially the scopophilic drive (I am watching the boy being beaten by the father), seems to function as a useful starting premise from which we can discuss the way Akiko associates her sexual desire with the effects of the scopophilic situation in her fantasy world. It would seem beyond doubt that the theoretical significance of the scopophilic orientation involves endowing women (as creators of this meta-fantasy) with an omniscient perspective that functions to control the (erotic) male-male relationship. This act of 'watching' interactions between men can be viewed as a form of subversive initiation, which disturbs the male-dominated framework of gender roles (what Eve Sedgwick calls 'homosocial' contexts). The psychosexual development of Akiko's authoritative power and sexual pleasure is exercised through the narrative process of male homosexual meta-fantasy. Laplanche and Pontalis summarize Freud's analysis of fantasy narratives as "*stage-setting*."<sup>20</sup> In the same way, Akiko 'stage-sets' her own psychological phenomena, directs what happens on the 'stage' in her own way, and watches the resulting erotic, male homosexual show as a member of the audience.

However, issues relating to (female) sexualities in "Toddler-Hunting" are complicated to such an extent that they are not limited to contexts of scopophilic desires and pleasures. The textual fantasy concerning Akiko's sexual desires and eroticism definitively engages her as both subject and object of her sadomasochistic orientation. Akiko's actual masochistic tastes are rewritten and reconstructed in the different text of her fantasy world. In

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<sup>20</sup> Laplanche and Pontalis, p.14.



any analysis of "Toddler-Hunting," it is important to note that there is a consistently reproduced continuity between the protagonist's sadomasochistic orientation (especially her masochistic inclination) and the various fantasy scenarios presented with regard to the father-son relationship. In order to explore the female psychological mechanisms of Akiko's fantasy world, we need to ask such questions as: Why does Akiko grant the boy the power and authority to seduce his father, as well as the erotic capacity to enjoy this sadomasochistic act? Why is the subject of masochistic desire in the meta-narrative of Akiko's fantasy not a woman like herself? Since these questions may represent characteristic features of psychoanalysis, their answers may also be discovered by means of psychoanalytic concepts such as identification and dissociation, thus providing Akiko with the possibility (and impossibility) of being both the desiring subject and the desired object.

There is a gender-coded reason why the masochistic agent in Akiko's erotic daydream should be a boy. The story's sexual subtext, which the existence of the boy in the meta-narrative seems to provide, implies that Akiko's eroticism originates from her act of simultaneously identifying herself with and dissociating herself from the boy. In other words, Akiko is the boy (the boy is her double), but paradoxically Akiko is also not the boy (the boy is her surrogate). Considering that the primary sexual drive of both Akiko and the boy centres on masochistic representations, we can say that the boy is undoubtedly organized as Akiko's alter ego. However, when a distinction between Akiko and the boy is drawn in terms of their gender difference, the structure of their respective sexual realities (and fantasies) becomes more complicated. The conceptualization of gender difference cannot be completely ignored in analyzing the dialectical conflict involved in Akiko's separation from and synchronization with the boy in terms of their differing sexual manifestations. In other words, Akiko's

masochistic drive is further enhanced through the process of identifying with the boy and his sexual pleasure in the fantasy world that she has created. However, the limitations of identification are eventually reached at the point when she consciously (and unconsciously) reinforces the fact that biologically she is a woman, while the boy is a man. At this stage, the process of identification is nullified; instead, a process of dissociation begins to function.

In that case, a question regarding female psychological orientation arises: Why is this play between two tensions, identification and dissociation, required in order to represent the formation of a particular female sexuality (and fantasy)? The discourse of the supposed impersonal subject (the *shônen*, who is dissociated from Akiko's subjective orientation) is closely associated with the female struggle involved in having a (sexual) self that is entirely vulnerable.

Nakatani Katsumi views Akiko's fantasy as representing a female sexual ambivalence regarding her subconscious desire for motherhood and its ultimate failure:

Through depicting the father as a sadist, and simultaneously fantasizing the pain of the boy who groans with violent torture, Akiko tries to identify with the boy in the fantasy. In sum, it can be considered that Akiko accepts the pain of the boy as self-punishment for her sterility, and at the same time she tries to pursue her motherhood through her unification with the boy. If so, "intestines, an exquisitely colored rope of violet," which "slither out" from the boy's stomach, may be an umbilical cord that connects Akiko to the boy in the fantasy.<sup>21</sup>

However, if we limit our analysis of Akiko's attachment to the boy (both in reality and in meta-fantasy) to a consideration of her refusal of (and desire for) motherhood and

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<sup>21</sup> Nakatani Katsumi, "Yôjigari ron: Kôno Taeko no henshitsuteki shuppatsu" (The Analysis of "Toddler-Hunting": Kôno Taeko's Paranoiac Departure), p. 31.

reproduction, this risks implicitly essentializing female sexualities within a framework of 'compulsory' motherhood and the reproductive function. Nakatani is correct to point out that all references to female sexualities in "Toddler-Hunting" should be explored in the context of Akiko's masochistic preference, but I would argue that any discussion of Akiko's masochism (and her male homosexual fantasy) needs to transcend the scope of an essentialized concept of female motherhood.<sup>22</sup> Freud's theory of female sexuality may possibly be read as reflecting the negative attitudes of a man who promotes what he believes to be a curative methodology with regard to the supposedly 'perverse' sexualities (and desires) of women. Freud asserts that women's masochistic preferences are essentially antithetical to the classic female sexual complex vis-à-vis masculinity; the original and initiatory function of female masochistic desires converges in a totalization of the ambivalence and instability inherent to female sexuality. In such a context, Akiko's masochistic preference may be favorably accepted and smoothly objectified, since no implications of prohibition or taboo are ascribed to what Freud sees as the fundamentally masochistic experience of female sexual identity.

Yamauchi Yukito views Akiko's masochism as an effect of the (inevitable) transition from the female 'productive body' to the 'pleasure-oriented body'; according to his analysis, Akiko's female body is signified as an unproductive body, which moreover has experienced

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<sup>22</sup> Many critics have explored Japan's obsessive focus on compulsive motherhood for women in the modern period. The fact that Kôno features protagonists who *cannot* be mothers allows her to explore aspects of female gender and sexuality unconnected to reproduction. Surely this deserves critical attention. For more on the government's policies encouraging compulsory motherhood, see for example, Yoshiko Miyake, "Doubling Expectations: Motherhood and Women's Factory Work under State Management in Japan in the 1930s and 1940s," in Gail Lee Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); or Masami Ohinata, "The Mystique of Motherhood: A Key to Understanding Social Change and Family Problems in Japan," trans. Timothy John Phelan, in Kumiko Fujimura-Fanselow and Atsuko Kameda, eds., *Japanese Women: New Feminist Perspectives on the Past, Present and Future* (New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, 1995).

the after-effects of tuberculosis. As Yamauchi says, "when 'productive sexuality' becomes 'unproductive,' it becomes apparent that sexuality itself exists purely for freedom and pleasure."<sup>23</sup> Mizuta Noriko also suggests a correlation between sublimation of sexual pleasure and deviation from reproductive function in Kôno's works:

The attempt to overthrow the inferior status of the disqualified woman who cannot reproduce by giving priority to a sexual pleasure that is distanced from reproduction, aims at acknowledging the independence of women's sexuality and the sense of sexuality.<sup>24</sup>

Chieko Ariga's analysis of Akiko's masochistic drive takes a similar stance to Mizuta's: "Her [Akiko's] active seeking of masochistic pleasures can be characterized as assertive or aggressive, signifying a strong claim for her own subjectivity and a desire for the autonomous identity she has won to be equal to that of men."<sup>25</sup> As Yamauchi, Mizuta and Ariga point out, in Kôno's texts sterilization (and the autonomous female refusal to reproduce<sup>26</sup>) relates specifically to female involvement with a masochistic sexual orientation. However, as psychoanalysts such as Freud and Lacan point out, the establishment of female

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<sup>23</sup> Yamauchi Yukito, "Kôno Taeko no hyôgen sekai: sengo hyôgen sekai shintai ron to shite" (The World of Expression of Kôno Taeko: An Analysis of the Body in the Postwar World of Expression), *Gunzô* 56:1 (2002), p. 297.

<sup>24</sup> Mizuta Noriko, *Feminizumu no kanata: josei hyôgen no shinsô* (Beyond Feminism: Depths of Women's Expression) (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1993), p. 241.

<sup>25</sup> Chieko Ariga, "Text Versus Commentary: Struggles over the Cultural Meanings of 'Woman,'" in *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing*, eds. Paul Gordon Schalow and Janet, A. Walker (California: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 358.

<sup>26</sup> The issues of reproduction and sterilization in Kôno's writings (exemplified by Akiko in "Toddler-Hunting," Yûko in "Crabs," Ukiko in "Fui no koe," and Fumiko in "Ants Swarm") can be explored in terms of the value and validity of female 'body' discourse. As Uema says, "Fumiko's bitterness about her possible pregnancy comes from her feeling of failure in taking control over her own body" (p.106); the female body discourse in Kôno's work clarifies the notion that pregnancy, which is always signified in terms of the male reproductive impulse, may subvert a woman's autonomous control over her own body.

sexual identity (or female identity itself) never attains a well-balanced order, insofar as it is always signified through the medium of a 'lack' (natural castration). Thus, it remains problematic to conclude that Akiko's masochism results from an 'unproductive sexuality' which is purely sublimated and integrated into a perverse but subversive process of sexual pleasure. Rather, as Mizuta suggests, Akiko's masochism should be considered as unraveling the various threads of sexual constructedness; however, this process is not completely positive, since this conceptualization of an emergent female sexuality (Akiko's masochistic pleasure) may yet produce new kinds of repressive texts, which are still trapped in the framework of established gender standards. Thus, we should ask: Which repressive texts regarding female psychological imbalance are concealed within the narrative of Akiko's masochistic desires?

Feminist psychoanalysts cannot but agree that women's psychological response to the negatively established paradigms of female sexuality is symbolized by such terms as prohibition, taboo, guilt, and shame. Transgression of the patriarchal property law is never allowed to women, who are not endowed with the penis/phallus, the symbol of patriarchal dominating power; since the realm of sexuality is originally signified and conceptualized in terms of a penis/phallus-oriented construction, female sexuality is never represented as a signifier within the patriarchal power structure. Yet, the following passage suggests that Akiko seems to take the initiative in her sadomasochistic play with Sasaki and to be distanced from any guilt feelings regarding her enjoyment of her 'perverse' sexual orientation:

The night before, Akiko had wanted to add a little variety to their usual routine, and she'd looked round frantically for something to help. Finally, she hit upon a pearl

necklace. "They're not real," she'd said, handing them to him. "Hmm. Hey, not bad." Sasaki dangled the necklace from his fingertips to tantalize her. Then, gripping it tightly, he circled around her. Akiko was already so aroused she felt as if every nerve in her body was concentrated in the flesh of her back.<sup>27</sup>

Akiko's masochistic involvement is apparently explored in relation to her subjective sexual desire; therefore, it reflects the dynamics of (female) gender configurations, which show the possibilities of reinterpreting and reshaping the dominance of gender myths. However, when a woman takes the initiative in sexual acts and actively enjoys a form of masochistic 'pleasure' that is unrelated to the female reproductive function, such 'characteristic' aspects of the female masochistic inclination assumed by Freud become problematic. In other words, in attempting to cage up female masochistic sexuality in the subconscious, women's subjective orientation and ideological position as (sexually) active agents are displaced. Broadly speaking, women's perspectives relating to their own sexual identities (and desires) cannot be fully articulated within the context of the patriarchal system; the psychological development of female masochism can never escape complicity with the imbalanced scenario created by established gender-oriented mechanisms. In contrast, when female masochism is closely associated with the notion of female subjectivity—i.e. women's own intention of enhancing their sexual pleasure through active involvement in sadomasochistic acts—elements of prohibition and taboo are immediately activated. The following citation from another of Kôno's short stories, "Crabs," suggests this negative reference toward female initiation into (perverse) masochistic pleasures: "Whenever she [Yûko, the heroine] did suffer a relapse after their lovemaking, he [Kajii, Yûko's husband] seemed to feel renewed

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<sup>27</sup> Kôno, "Yôjigari," p. 62.

disgust for her lack of shame.”<sup>28</sup> The husband is apparently disgusted by the ‘shamelessness’ of Yûko, who “had never been able to be satisfied by ordinary love making, and even now she had fallen ill, she would demand that Kajii use violent methods of arousal.”<sup>29</sup>

Women’s acts of asserting their own sexuality (in terms of a masochistic orientation, in Akiko’s case) may thus paradoxically be interpreted as a submission (conscious or subconscious) to the inevitable tension of prohibition and taboo consistently attached to any discourse involving the autonomous aspects of female sexuality. The following passage discloses Akiko’s psychological ambivalence, after becoming involved in the reality of sadomasochistic play:

As she soaked, Akiko would keep an eye on the changing-room, which she could keep in sight because the separating doors had been drawn back. Were there any cute little boys with their mothers? Wasn’t even one going to come over and join her?...Today, as a result of last night’s wild abandon—closer in fact to an act of self-annihilation—Akiko longed more than ever for a little boy to appear.<sup>30</sup>

Here, we should ask: why Akiko desperately craves for an interaction with little boys after her experience of sadomasochistic play? Akiko’s seemingly vague answer to this question indicates that little boys represent a purifying process:

Little boys inhabited such an infinitely wholesome world—Akiko always had the impression that it restored and purified her. Its simplicity was so all-encompassing that anything out of the ordinary about her could pass without notice there. Little boys went along with her in her games—sometimes they almost seemed to egg her

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<sup>28</sup> Kôno, “Kani” (Crabs), trans. Lucy North, in *Toddler-Hunting and other Stories*, p. 140.

<sup>29</sup> Kôno, “Kani,” p. 139.

<sup>30</sup> Kôno, “Yôjigari,” p. 65.

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Akiko develops this emphasis on the purification process associated with boys precisely because she is still subconsciously subject to the taboo against initiating enjoyment of the 'perverse' desires and pleasures of 'pervasive' sadomasochistic play. Thus, while Akiko seems to indulge in her sadomasochistic orientation with Sasaki on the conscious level, she still subconsciously attempts to balance the ambivalent features of female sexuality (sexual pleasures) through the mediation of these boys' identity as a purifying force.

Mary Anne Doane analyzes the female fantasy of male homosexuality in "A Child is Being Beaten" as an expression of unconscious desire "to escape from the demands of the erotic side of her life altogether."<sup>32</sup> At this stage, exploring Freud's analysis of female fantasies, we can interpret Akiko's desires and fantasies of male homosexuality as a vehicle to 'escape from the erotic side of femininity' in the following way. The beaten boy implies a subtext in which Akiko's psychological ambivalence toward her own sexuality must be projected onto his erotically charged body. Melanie Klein views such projective identification as a self-defense process of the unconscious, which 'projects' the psychological confusion and anxiety caused by its split and repressed ego onto the other, in order to restore its own mental balance. In this context, the act of projecting repressed impulses that the subject cannot control onto the other represents the very basis upon which the (homosexual, masochistic) boy's significance emerges in Akiko's male homosexual fantasy. Akiko projects the repressed components of female sexuality (especially her initial masochistic pleasure) onto the boy, and thus attempts to escape from the dilemma of dealing with her own sexual repression through identifying with and dissociating from the boy, who is now erotically

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<sup>31</sup> Kôno, "Yôjigari," p. 67-68.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in E. Ann Kaplan's *Women and Film*, p.28.



endowed with female (masochistic) sexuality. Kaja Silverman analyzes the epistemological impact of the boy in the male homosexual formation of female fantasies as a sexual 'surrogate' in the following way:

By turning herself in fantasy into the "whipping-boys," the female subject is in turn given imaginary access to this "borrowed" femininity through the image of the male body. Femininity is thus both radically denatured, and posited as the privileged reference point by means of the curious relay that is set up between these two versions of the beating fantasy...Through her identification with the "whipping-boys" in phase 3, the girl establishes an imaginary connection not only with a feminized masculinity, but with that difference.<sup>33</sup>

As Silverman points out, insofar as the boy is signified in terms of a 'borrowed femininity,' 'its' gender difference is blurred (the boy is/is not a man/woman); this figure thus incorporates divergent sexual components. For women, the boy is an idealized and subversive sexual 'surrogate' which acts to balance female sexual ambivalence. In the context of the meta-narrative of Akiko's fantasy, the boy therefore constitutes a surrogate by which Akiko can balance her conflicting impulses regarding masochistic sexual pleasure and its relation to automatic psychological functions of prohibition and feelings of guilt. The fantasy of a male homosexual, sadomasochistic interaction both re-inscribes and nullifies Akiko's access to the means of masochistic initiation in terms of the following process:

1. Akiko's ambivalent, uncontrollable female sexuality is projected onto the boy in the meta-narrative.
2. The boy who is involved in an erotic sadomasochistic relationship with his father

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<sup>33</sup> Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 203-204.

represents a 'sexual' body that is desired by Akiko, as well as a figure with whom she can identify and thus synchronize her own masochistic sexual pleasure with his; the boy's masochistic pleasure in the meta-fantasy thereby needs to be clearly articulated and is definitively synchronized with Akiko's masochistic pleasure in 'reality.'

3. However, at the same time, Akiko is paradoxically eager to distance herself from the erotically sexed body of the boy, since any clear recognition of subjective female sexual pleasure needs to be deactivated, consciously or unconsciously. And such a dissociating process from the erotically desiring (and desired) body is successfully accomplished, simply (but in a sufficiently complicated fashion on the subconscious level) because the clearly established gender difference between them (Akiko as a biological female and the boy as a biological male) brings the distance between them into sharp relief.

The female fantasy of male homosexual, sadomasochistic conduct explicitly contains elements of objectification and subjectification of female sexual identity that clearly reflect the disavowal and repression of the female sexual ego in reality. In the process of smoothly organizing her sexual mechanisms, Akiko imaginatively represents her masochistic pleasures and displaces their relation to any potential feelings of guilt and repression. Akiko is consequently required to bring her sexual ego into conformity with the prevailing standards of the patriarchal social structure by both identifying with and dissociating from the sexually constructed body of the boy.

### **The Interrelation between Sadism and Masochism**

The repression of female sexual drives, as well as the female fear of establishing sexual subjectivity, are all clearly linked to the imaginative impulse underlying female sexual fantasies. The parallels between the structure of the female scopophilic orientation with regard to the erotic, sadomasochistic father-son relationship as described in Freud's analysis and Akiko's precarious fantasy regarding her sexual urge in "Toddler-Hunting" are striking. However, a divergence between these two accounts is perceptible, in that an unnamed female voice appears in the meta-narrative in "Toddler-Hunting," and, as a subjective agent, controls the erotic narrative concerning the boy and the father. In the third stage of Freud's three-layered structure relating to female sexual mechanisms, the female referent watches the father corporally punish the boy, and her involvement in this fantasy of male homosexuality and sadomasochism is directly associated with her voyeuristic sexual drive (and excitement). However, her function is limited to that of a voyeuristic observer, who plays no active role in the narrative's meta-fantasy; this female figure apparently projects her sexual (erotic) impulses onto the father and the boy, but never becomes actively engaged at this stage of sexual fantasy. In contrast, in Kôno's "Toddler-Hunting," the psychic reality of the female agent, who certainly embodies Akiko's sexuality and female body, transgresses the boundaries of reality and fiction, and dominates the meta-narrative of sexual fantasy by encouraging the father's erotic, sadomasochistic punishment of the boy. What I would like to emphasize here is that this embodiment of Akiko's sexual meta-fantasy represents the very ground on which the possibilities of multiplying divergent, and shifting female sexual subjectivity may be effectively explored in a way that cannot (or should not) be monolithically unified within the sexual paradigms of male-dominant structures.

As indicated above, Akiko's masochistic drives and desires are clearly projected

onto the figure of the punished boy through the complicated psychological processes involved in the meta-fantasy. However, the female meta-figure, who apparently elaborates the sadistic orientation of Akiko's fantasy through enhancing the father's act of beating the boy, suggests that Akiko's desire as signified in this fantasy cannot be limited to that of the masochistic subject. Thus, further analysis of the narrative significance of the unknown woman is required. As the controlling subject of the meta-narrative of the male homosexual, erotic fantasy, the unknown woman dominates the erotic interaction of the father and the boy in the following way. The (meta) female directs the father who is beating the naked boy with a belt, asking "*How about using our other instrument?*" and suggests that he punish the boy with a stick. The dominating sadistic impulse of the female figure is not definitive at this point, but it appears to be stimulated by the father's staging of a 'show' designed only for her. The father then deliberately "*turns the boy around so that the woman can get a good look at the raw flayed flesh on the boy's back, dark red stripes branded into his skin by ridges of hot metal.*" Also, when the father whispers "*What else should I see to?*", the woman answers "*You haven't touched his stomach.*" Finally, the woman's sadistic force is firmly elaborated, and her direction takes on a decidedly authoritative tone: "*The woman gives the order: the man cuts the cord around the child's hands.*"

The meta-fantasy of female sexual sublimation displaces the firmly established dichotomy between sadism and masochism with a significant interaction between these seemingly separate sexual drives. The complicated mechanisms of female sexual desire (and fantasy) represented in "Toddler-Hunting" can be summed up in terms of the following processes:

1. Akiko's masochistic desires achieve satisfaction through her identification with

the beaten boy; the boy's part in the erotic process of male homosexual, sadomasochistic orientation is shown by his active involvement in the sexual relationship, as he says: "*Hit me on my back, Daddy!*"

2. Akiko's sadistic impulses are initiated at the meta-fantasy level through the mediation of the unknown women, who urges the father to intensify his beating of the boy.
3. The meta-ness of the erotic father-son referent in Akiko's fantasy enhances the subjective force of female voyeuristic pleasure.

Male psychoanalysts, such as Freud and Krafft-Ebing, support the fixed dichotomous idea of a male sadist and a female masochist. However, in attempting to formulate the significance of the dominating woman in this narrative, we should consider feminists' subversive conceptualization of female sexual identity, rather than male psychoanalysts' monolithic view, which limits female sexuality to masochism. As Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous demonstrate, through attention to fundamental female (sexual) consciousness, foregrounding the discursive possibilities involved in the shifting, multiple (sexual) identity-creating process, the diverse formation of female sexuality that is carefully explored in "Toddler-Hunting" problematizes the matrix of social regulatory practices that generate consistent identities by means of patriarchal gender standards.

The purpose of the above analysis is to attempt to displace the monolithically signified particularity of female sexuality by exploring the possibilities of divergent female sexual orientations. A consideration of the interactive force of sadistic, masochistic and voyeuristic drives may possibly broaden the scope of sexual characteristics recognized or constructed as 'female.' The importance of such divergent dynamics of female sexuality lies

in their revelation of the complexity of female (erotic) fantasy in terms of its unconscious processes, as well as its consciousness. When we theoretically consider the diegetic relationship between the father and Akiko, in contrast to that between the boy and Akiko, another problem of gender configuration founded on the notion of identification and dissociation comes to the surface. It should be noted that, while Akiko's masochistic desires are recontextualized in her meta-fantasy through her identification with the desires and pleasures of the boy, her subconscious sadistic desires are definitively objectified through her avoidance of any identification with the sadistic father; instead, she creates an imaginary (female) double, who stimulates and controls the father's sadistic drives, and thus satisfies her sadistic cravings without becoming directly involved in the sadistic acts of the father. Here, we need to ask: What kinds of sexual and ideological referentiality prohibit Akiko from dissociating herself from the boy and identifying with the father figure? Or why must Akiko mediate her sadistic impulses through the controlling female meta-figure, instead of identifying herself with (and dissociating herself from) the father, as a means of balancing her sexual complexity? To deal with these questions, we must first specify the ways in which the discourse of the female (sexual) self represents a manifestation of the lacking Other within the male-oriented structures of society.

Part of the problem regarding the difference between Akiko's relationship to the father and the boy in her imagined scenario derives from her absolute loss of access to the textually inscribed masculine body. Women find themselves castrated when the privileged signifier of the penis/phallus is endowed with metaphorical and metonymical power and authority. The ambivalent and (positively and negatively) uncanny characteristics of both the *shōnen* [boy] and the *shōjo* [girl] allow an adult female (Akiko) psychologically to identify

with them. In contrast, the ontology of the father, an adult man and therefore an authoritative signifier, is completely alienated from that of the female, so it can never merge with Akiko's female sexual contextualization to induce her identification with him. In "Toddler-Hunting," Akiko's unbalanced subjectivity reflects sexual components of both the *shônen* and the *shôjo*, even though her reactions vary from a strong attachment to the *shônen* to an extraordinary disgust for the *shôjo*.

Akiko is never able to ignore either the boy's potentiality as an androgynous (bisexual) being or the *shôjo*'s unproductive, uncanny characteristics, since these features (androgyny, bisexuality, unproductivity, uncanniness) are all linked to Akiko (in terms of her female gender components), who is eager to sublimate and reach some form of compromise with her own sexual orientation. In contrast, Akiko is not concerned with the pronounced masculine component represented by the father in the meta-narrative of her sexual fantasy. Akiko apparently is not a man-hater (on the conscious level, at least), since she experiences sexual pleasure in her heterosexual, sadomasochistic involvement with her lover, Sasaki. However, while Akiko's poignant aversion to the *shôjo* can be comprehended as an unconscious acknowledgement of the unavoidable similarities between herself and the *shôjo*, her seeming indifference (whether conscious or subconscious) toward the ontology of a man (the father) seems to contextualize the father definitively as an extraneous subject, who remains firmly attached to the phallic authority of patriarchy. The ontology of the father is certainly alienated from the manifestations of female identity, and it therefore never provides a space in which gender difference might be compromised, so that the female could identify with the ideological features of the man. Thus, Akiko's libidinal sadistic impulses cannot merge with the sadistic components of the father, precisely because the father's

gender-oriented estrangement denies/rebuffs Akiko's sexually identifying process. Reinforcing this axiomatic gender difference between herself and the father, Akiko creates the female meta-figure, who clearly reflects the actuality of her sexual drives and serves to balance her complex process of dualistic engagement with her own sadistic libido.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Decadent Aesthetics of Male Homoeroticism in Okamoto Kanoko's "The Bygone World"

*...Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of Art.*

—Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying"

The product of an aristocratic and wealthy family, writer Okamoto Kanoko (1889-1939) was gifted with extraordinary aesthetic sensitivity. She cultivated her peculiar talent under the influence of several prominent Japanese male writers at that time (Tanizaki Jun'ichirô was a close friend of her brother, Ônuki Yukinosuke; Kawabata Yûrûnari was her literary mentor). Her first publications were romantic *tanka*— the classical Japanese verse-form of thirty-one syllables. These poems were inspired by the feminine sensuality of Yosano Akiko's poetry collection *Midaregami* (Tangled Hair, 1901), and later the young Okamoto became involved in the *Seitô* (Blue Stocking) movement.<sup>1</sup> In her last years,

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<sup>1</sup> In 1911 a woman named Hiratsuka Raichô began publication of an epoch-making journal, called *Seitô* (Bluestocking), in order to challenge the Meiji regime's phallogocentrism and encourage the practical emancipation of women. Raichô's call for a sexual revolution was directed against the superficiality of the social reformation in Meiji Japan, which after some early promising signs of promoting gender equality had returned in 1890 to a masculinist conservatism with the promulgation of the Prussian-inspired Constitution. Raichô's famous declaration stated that "originally, the female was the sun. She was an authentic person. Now, the female is the moon. She is the moon, which is dependent on others, shines by the other's light, and is pale like the sick" (*Seitô no jidai* p.2). Many women followed Raichô's critical

Okamoto became known as a writer of prose fiction with the publication of her first novel *Tsuru wa yamiki* (The Ailing Crane, 1936), which deals with Okamoto's personal acquaintance with well-known author Akutagawa Ryûnosuke and his sensational suicide.<sup>2</sup> Even though her career as a prose writer lasted for less than four years, she produced an enormous body of work and is universally considered of major significance in the history of Japanese women's literature, even by those readers and critics who do not appreciate her oeuvre.

The critical analysis of Okamoto Kanoko's works usually focuses on her peculiar artistic perspective, the animating force behind her distinctive writing.<sup>3</sup> Kamei Katsuichirô, a prominent Okamoto scholar, describes Okamoto's type of literature as *miko*<sup>4</sup> *no bungaku* (literature of a shrine maiden), essentially based on the *miko*'s task of dealing with supernatural forms of expression in terms of religious worship and artistic faith. Enchi Fumiko (1905-1986), another representative Japanese woman writer, views Okamoto's literature from a similar perspective and also employs the term *miko*:

Born as the last descendant of a wealthy peasant lineage that had prospered for generations, Kanoko was a *miko* who spoke for countless people who had become

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approach, which thematically defined the individual vitality of the female, with the aim of challenging male sexual fantasies. Okamoto Kanoko published her first collection of *tanka* poems, entitled *Karokinetami* (Mild Jealousy), in *Seitô* in 1912.

<sup>2</sup> According to Senuma Shigeki, *The Ailing Crane* was published in the literary coterie magazine *Bungakukai* on Kawabata Yasunari's recommendation; this work was awarded the *Bungakukai shô*. See Senuma's "Kanoko no shisô to bungaku" (Kanoko's Ideology and Literary Works), in *Okamoto Kanoko zenshû* supplement, Vol 3 (Tokyo: Nihon tosho center, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Critics have indicated that Okamoto's writing is influenced by a wide range of literature and philosophy, including the Japanese classical canon, Chinese literature, Western literature (especially English and Russian), as well as Christianity and Buddhism. See, for example, Kamei's "Miko no bungaku" (Literature of Miko), *Okamoto Kanoko zenshû* supplement, Vol 1 (Tokyo: Nihon tosho center, 2003); or Marellyen T. Mori's "The Splendor of Self-Exaltation: The Life and Fiction of Okamoto Kanoko" (*Monumenta Nipponica* 50:1, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> In pre-modern Japan, *miko* were virgins consecrated to Japanese *Shintô* gods. They played a shamanic role which mediated between human beings and deities, through interpreting their divine words.

haunted spirits after they had died, having left behind many untold grievances which could not have been expressed openly while they were alive.<sup>5</sup>

In attempting to describe in one word their sense of Okamoto's anomalous texts, other critics use diverse evocative terms, such as narcissistic, shamanic, classic, decadent, religious and baroque. Okamoto generally expresses her own artistic faith through her main female characters, who often seem to share her perceptions concerning the nature of life and art.

Okamoto presents positive, straightforward images of strong female characters with whom many women can identify, thereby enhancing their feelings of individual power. *Kingyo ryôran* (Goldfish in Profusion), *Boshijujô* (A Mother's Love), "Hana wa tsuyoshi" (A Flower Pageant), "Rôgishô" (The Old Geisha) are among Okamoto's representative works, in which the combination of power and female beauty is continually illustrated. Okamoto's female characters are like her writing itself—"a mirror that she held up to life, not to reflect but to beautify, magnify, and mythologize."<sup>6</sup>

However, when we focus on the context of the erotic, decadent and incestuous male homoerotic relationship portrayed in her short story "Kakose" (The Bygone World), a significant contrast emerges with Okamoto's other literary works. Just as Kôno Taeko's "Toddler-Hunting" portrays the ambivalent features of female sexuality and the female imaginative impulse toward male homoeroticism, Okamoto's "The Bygone World" centralizes primal issues of female sexuality in relation to the subject of male homosexual eroticism. However, there has been virtually no critical analysis of "The Bygone World,"

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Yoshida Seiichi's *Tanbiha sakka ron* (Analysis of Authors of the School of Aestheticism) (Tokyo: Ôfûsha, 1981), p. 354.

<sup>6</sup> Maryellen Mori, p. 74. For instance, in Okamoto's short story, "Flower Pageant," a male character says to the heroine: "You're like a river, wide and straight, flowing on and on, taking up everything that comes your way. It's as if all this had been arranged for you before you were born" (p.220). These words suggest that the mysterious and haunting power of charismatic people like Okamoto's heroines can sometimes transform them into forces of nature.

either in Japan or abroad, probably because the narrative details of this story are quite different from Okamoto's other works. Whereas she usually features a dynamic sense of female love and sexuality, here there is no such active female sexuality.

The narrative of this novella begins with an establishing scene, in which the narrating "I" (*watashi*), an unnamed literary woman, visits her old friend, Yukiko, and hears Yukiko's story concerning two brothers of high birth. After graduating from a girls' school, Yukiko, the daughter of a long-established store-owner, had entered service at the mansion of a retired upper-class government official, in order to learn sophisticated manners. She became a witness to the sensuous, aesthetic atmosphere of this household, in which the erotic interactions of two beautiful brothers occurred.

When we examine the narrative sequence of this story, we notice that the characteristics of male homosexual eroticism are recast in terms of a series of metafictional frames. As in Kôno's "Toddler-Hunting," the narrative structure represents sexual fantasies as determined by a *mise-en-scène* of female desire. The meta-narrative of female sexual fantasy in "The Bygone World" is initiated in the following passage: "By the way, I have a strange story relating to this house which I bought and in which I settled down. I would like you to hear the story, though it is not very cheerful. I will tell you the tale with the lights off."<sup>7</sup> Even though Yukiko's story makes claim to a certain degree of realism, since she is depicted as narrating from her personal experience, I nevertheless call it fantasy, precisely because the narrative of her story is fantasized and idealized. I will return to this argument later with a more detailed analysis of metafictional narrative formation, so for the moment it suffices to state that Yukiko's story connotes certain kinds of imaginary textualization that relate

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<sup>7</sup> Okamoto Kanoko, "Kakose," p. 273.

specifically to the scenario of a female sexual fantasy. In the following sections, I will argue that Yukiko's meta-narrative of male homosexual fantasy raises a number of discursive issues concerning female sexualities, highlighted by (and flavored with) the dominating force of Okamoto's aesthetic representations.

### **The Aesthetics of *Horobi*: Male Homoeroticism, Incest, and Sadomasochism**

In "The Bygone World" Okamoto makes use of a thematic trope familiar in modern Japanese literature: *horobi* (ruin), the sense that an elegant, traditional world is slowly and inevitably crumbling away. This is considered aesthetically beautiful in most critical evaluations. Okamoto's particular interpretation and reinscription of the *horobi* concept<sup>8</sup> expresses a decadent aestheticism replete with such supposedly immoral issues as homosexuality and incest. As the descendant of a wealthy landowner, Okamoto combines this aestheticism with "haunting evocations of the strange aura that surrounds 'old families.'"<sup>9</sup> As Kamei Katsuichirô says:

Okamoto Kanoko herself was the extremely lurid flower blooming in the terminal

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<sup>8</sup> In Japanese sociological and literary contexts, the concept of *horobi* has been identified and emphasized as a remarkable feature in Japanese *kindai* (modern) literature. In his study of male writer Dazai Osamu, famous for his literary depictions of *horobi* and for his sensational suicide (on his fifth attempt), Alan Wolfe remarks: "The text of twentieth-century Japanese history is thus highlighted by a number of suicides, each of which has been made to crystallize a particular node of signification for the Japanese modernizationist enterprise" (p.36). Many modern Japanese writers thus produced a distinctive aura, being captivated by the concept of *horobi*, often linked to suicide. The aesthetics of this aura can be seen in the suicide note of writer Akutagawa Ryûnosuke:

Now I am living in an unsound world of spirit. That world is perfectly crystal-clear like ice....For me (having decided to commit suicide), nature seems to be more beautiful than it usually is. You would laugh at my contradiction—my love for the beauty of nature and my determination to die. But the reason why nature seems to be so beautiful is because it is viewed from my *matsugo no me* (dying eyes) (p.116).

Akutagawa's philosophy of *matsugo no me* has some similarity to Dazai Osamu's *horobi no yakuwari* (the role of ruin). See Wolfe, *Suicidal Narrative in Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> Maryellen Mori, p.67.

stage of her prosperous family line. The anathema as well as beauty accumulated for centuries in the collapsing honorable family gave an extraordinary mysterious and intense power to Kanoko, who was the last life of the family.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, Okamoto herself often uses the word *horobi*. The phrase *horobi no shitaku* (preparation for ruin) occurs several times in her works, which contain a number of other examples expressing a general aura of decline and ruin. Speaking of herself, she says: "I am completely prepared for ruin. Now is the time when I have to use up all the knowledge passed on to me by generations. I never hesitate in doing so."<sup>11</sup> Okamoto's philosophy of *horobi* is clearly contextualized in "The Bygone World," which "is tainted with a strong smell of decadence."<sup>12</sup>

The narrative of "The Bygone World" starts with a scene in which the "I" and Yukiko reunite at Yukiko's mansion in the narrative present; this scene clearly suggests that the decaying, unearthly atmosphere of a 'bygone world' is encroaching on the present world in which the "I" and Yukiko live:

Because of the angle of the light of the setting sun through the rain, just the edge of the pond appeared to rise and shine like mercury. Beside the pond, the sandbank with blue reeds and a clump of cedar trees were getting dark, as if corroding from both sides.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, the decadent aesthetic of the old, established family facing its inevitable *horobi* is vividly actualized in the following passage describing Umemaro's beauty, which reflects

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<sup>10</sup> Kamei, "Kawa no yōsei" (River Fairy), *Okamoto Kanoko zenshū* supplement, Vol 2, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Okamoto, "Sekai ni tsumu hana" (Flowers Gathered in the World), in *Okamoto Kanoko zenshū*, Vol 11, p. 96.

<sup>12</sup> Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, "Okamoto Kanoko arui wa onna no narushishizumu" (Okamoto Kanoko, or Female Narcissism), *Okamoto Kanoko zenshū* supplement, Vol 3, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 271.

Yukiko's meta-fantasy world:

However, what attracted Yukiko was not these details, but the luster of fat that seemed to be totally made of refined wax. It was like a passion that had coagulated during generations of feudalism, but never ignited, even when the Meiji and Taishô eras arrived. If it ever were ignited, it would burn as a bewitching flame with the color of resentment.<sup>14</sup>

Mysterious images, tainted with various kinds of pent-up emotion, convey the aesthetic allure of the inevitable *horobi* destiny expressed within the narrative space of "The Bygone World."

The thematically prevailing decadent aestheticism of "The Bygone World" is definitively accelerated by concomitant components of densely established male homoerotic relationships. The processes of symbolic and fantasized narrative development enhance the double taboo concerning the male homoerotic and incestuous relationships that are portrayed as arising between both a father and son and between two brothers. "Y," the head of the family and a retired high ranking government officer, dotes on his younger son, Umemaro. "Y" treats Umemaro as the most extraordinary work of art among his valuable collection, and their relationship seems to articulate their homoeroticism. Umemaro is described as a young man of matchless beauty, to such an extent that "Yukiko was stunned by his beauty and gasped in surprise."<sup>15</sup> He also takes advantage of his father's blind love for him. However, the incredibly beautiful Umemaro is strongly attached to his older brother, Tomonosuke, who is not as good-looking as Umemaro, and, "with his swollen eyelids, always seemed to be on the verge of tears."<sup>16</sup> Unlike his father and younger brother,

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<sup>14</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p.286.

<sup>15</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 276.

<sup>16</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 279.

Tomonosuke frequently visits Yukiko and seems to enjoy engaging in light flirtation with her, sometimes showing her an antique, erotic picture scroll. Tomonosuke seems to be eager to place himself at a distance from the reality of his decadent, homoerotic circumstances, and views Yukiko as a potential medium for his impulse to escape. However, he ultimately realizes the impossibility of ever accomplishing his escape, since he is also deeply trapped in the mystic, aesthetic atmosphere created by his 'haunted' family blood; this is indicated when he states: "I can only live by not thinking about anything but transient pleasures."<sup>17</sup> Thus, Tomonosuke also seemingly realizes his inescapable fate.

One day, Umemaro unexpectedly appears in Yukiko's room, where Tomonosuke is lightly flirting with Yukiko, and forces his older brother to sew up a rip in his clothes. Umemaro, who represents the fascinating combination of aesthetic and sadistic impulses, intentionally ignores Yukiko, who volunteers to mend the torn seam on Tomonosuke's behalf. Through the mediation of Yukiko, the tension between Umemaro's strong will to control his older brother and Tomonosuke's flirtatious reluctance to curry favor with his younger brother intensifies as the narrative develops:

"Don't be unreasonable. I can't do it. Do you think men can sew?" Tomonosuke folded his arms, and struck a pose with his head raised. His attitude was somewhat unnatural. Straining every nerve, Tomonosuke glared fiercely into his brother's eyes. Yukiko started feeling uneasy. In haste, she took a sewing kit from a double-leafed hinged door of the chest, and seized the *yukata* that Umemaro held. "That's nothing. I can sew it up for you." Then Umemaro took the *yukata* back from Yukiko. Still facing his brother, he said "Sew it up, please, brother. You were always good at

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<sup>17</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 278.



sewing.” Tomonosuke’s face was flushed. Umemaro still pressed his brother. Umemaro’s attitude suggested that, under the circumstances, he could do nothing but force his brother to sew, unhesitatingly preparing for the malicious exposure of things that would make his brother’s face flush even more, if Yukiko were to hear of them.<sup>18</sup>

Tomonosuke’s refusal to sew the rip in his brother’s clothes originates from his desire to escape his oppressive ties with decadent homosocial (and homosexual) structures and thereby become integrated into the patriarchal society by behaving as a (heterosexual) man in relation to Yukiko. By coercing Tomonosuke to submit to his dominance, Umemaro is eager to reinforce Tomonosuke’s deviation from the structures of patriarchy. Moreover, Umemaro explicitly “disliked that Yukiko, a third party, was involved,”<sup>19</sup> precisely because Yukiko seems to disturb the erotic harmony of the male-dominated space (homosexual and homosocial). In terms of the narrative, Yukiko’s female role is definitively constructed as that of the ‘seducer’; she functions as an impediment to Umemaro’s attempt to bind Tomonosuke to the forbidden allure of male-oriented decadent beauty.

However, it becomes increasingly obvious that Tomonosuke’s flirtation with Yukiko merely represents a superficial gesture toward recovering his status as privileged signifier in the patriarchal structure. It is clear that his relationship with Umemaro, as mediated by Yukiko, is rather erotic, and so he enjoys the present scene as a ‘transient pleasure.’ Here, I would like to emphasize the way in which this particular psychological scenario concerning Tomonosuke’s masochistic impulse is depicted from Yukiko’s point of view. In the following scene, Tomonosuke seems to derive pleasure from his seemingly awkward position,

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<sup>18</sup> Okamoto, “Kakose,” p.281.

<sup>19</sup> Okamoto, “Kakose,” p.281.

caught between these two interested parties, Umemaro and Yukiko. The narrative explicitly evokes Tomonosuke's subconscious masochistic drive:

Tomonosuke seemed to be trying his best not to let Yukiko see him engaged in needlework, so he gave a faint smile, and never accepted the demand, no matter how much his brother urged him. Tomonosuke's face also alternated between going pale and sudden blushes, but he never tried to escape. Tomonosuke's eyes and mouth appeared to go numb, as he fell into some sort of masochistic trance.<sup>20</sup>

This representation of Tomonosuke in terms of sexually-oriented 'masochistic ecstasies' connects him directly with the uncanny background of his long-established family. His 'decadence' is made apparent through the ambivalent masochistic mechanisms by which his sexual desires are held suspended between Umemaro and Yukiko.

Umemaro becomes increasingly insistent, finally facing his brother aggressively and reproachfully. Umemaro's sadistic impulses are now also expressed physically: "Finally, Umemaro pinched his brother's wrist, which was thin-skinned like that of a woman. Blushing, Tomonosuke grimaced and endured it."<sup>21</sup> At last, Umemaro gives his brother an ultimatum, screaming: "I'll go out into the garden naked, if you don't sew it."<sup>22</sup> Umemaro's threat to show himself naked to his elder brother clearly upsets Tomonosuke, in that it makes explicit an erotic tonality associated with decadence and immorality. In relation to the theoretical-aesthetic framework of this story, the nudity of male bodies indicates the double taboo against male homosexuality and incest that the story portrays:

These brothers had a strange instinct of shame about exposing their bodies to each

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<sup>20</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 282.

<sup>21</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 282-283.

<sup>22</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 283.

other. No matter how much it might be necessitated by circumstances, they never stripped to the waist or tucked up the bottom of their *kimono*. They disliked doing so even more between themselves.<sup>23</sup>

Paradoxically reversing the well established background concept that Tomonosuke and Umemaro should not be ashamed to show each other their naked bodies, simply because they are related to one another, the author thereby endows their relationship with a more explicit suggestion of homosexuality and incest. In other words, Umemaro's naked body becomes "his last means of threatening his brother to make a desperate decision."<sup>24</sup> By threatening to display his naked (prohibited, but seductive) body, and thus to manifest directly their mutually repressed incestuous impulses, Umemaro attempts to make his older brother aware that Tomonosuke is not merely a passive victim of their relatively 'perverse' interactions. Umemaro consequently reinforces the institutional structures of prohibited (and perverse) desires that thematically dominate the narrative. Umemaro's desperate seduction is ultimately rewarded, when Tomonosuke submits to Umemaro's demands and starts to sew up his garment in front of Yukiko. Suspended between the pseudo-reality in which Yukiko's femininity is 'normally' configured and the decadent, homosexual and incestuous scenario that Umemaro offers, Tomonosuke is overwhelmed by Umemaro's powers of seduction and finally allows himself to be emotionally seduced.

However, Tomonosuke's powerlessness as the object of Umemaro's incestuous seduction paradoxically indicates that, in terms of their relationship, Tomonosuke is also a seductive subject; his subjective (sexual) masochistic desire is the controlling factor that underlies the pseudo-triangle relationship between Tomonosuke, Umemaro and Yukiko. This

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<sup>23</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 283.

<sup>24</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 283.

unbalanced relationship remains a pseudo-triangle, precisely because Yukiko's (female) subjectivity and (sexual) desires are not allowed to interfere with the male-oriented relationship between the two brothers. Yukiko (a female) merely provides the narrative means by which both Umemaro's sadistic impulses and Tomonosuke's masochistic desires can be activated. Since Tomonosuke ultimately accepts Umemaro's request, it seems that Umemaro's personality, which "tyrannized and used those who didn't have much survival power, even his own flesh and blood,"<sup>25</sup> has overwhelmed Tomonosuke.

However, as Gilles Deleuze has suggested, one possible and important paradigm of sadomasochism features the masochist as the one who desires and controls the sadomasochistic narrative.<sup>26</sup> When we decode the signifiers represented in the background narrative of this pseudo-triangle, it becomes apparent that, given his masochistic orientation, Tomonosuke's controlling impulse is active in "The Bygone World." Tomonosuke's reaction to the highly tense situation that has developed between the three principal characters in terms of his own capricious behavior is conveyed as follows: "After all, considering Tomonosuke's character, sewing was the kind of work which must have become part of his nature. Actually, since he was accustomed to doing it for his brother, he was fond of sewing."<sup>27</sup> Tomonosuke is obviously accustomed to sewing clothes; it seems to be his favorite household chore, so his refusal of Umemaro's request merely represents a gesture of mock resistance on his part. The above passage clearly depicts the highly tense relationship between Umemaro and Yukiko through the mediation of Tomonosuke, but this triangle actually constitutes a well-organized drama directed by Tomonosuke. What appears

<sup>25</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 280.

<sup>26</sup> See Gretchen Jones, *Deviant Strategies: The Masochistic Aesthetic of Tanizaki Jun'ichirô and Kôno Taeko* and Gilles Deleuze's *Masochism*, trans. Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1994) for a more detailed analysis of the masochist's controlling power.

<sup>27</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 285.

increasingly obvious is that it is in fact Tomonosuke who controls this dramatic manifestation of a pseudo-triangular relationship, in order to stimulate his masochistic pleasure.

According to Shibusawa Tatsuhiko's analysis:

"The Bygone World," which clearly shows the influence of Tanizaki Jun'ichirô, is like a storybook, but it is an unconventional work with a scent of decadence. There is an aura of repressed youth and carnal desires, especially in the sadomasochistic dispute between two beautiful brothers.<sup>28</sup>

As Shibusawa suggests, the (meta)narrative of this novella takes place within an uncanny continuum, in which a decadent aestheticism is clearly flavored by the sadomasochistic context of a male homoerotic, incestuous relationship between two brothers. Consequently, a metaphorical depiction of *horobi* is actualized by combining several possible modes of decadence and 'immorality' into one sensational (erotic) narrative structure. Shibusawa continues: "The structure of the story is well-formed. It can be said that Okamoto is an excellent hand at writing, especially in the last scene, where the heroine divulges the secret of the double suicide of the homosexual brothers."<sup>29</sup> Narrating her story from the diegetic space of the "I," Yukiko shockingly concludes her narration by saying: "these brothers committed a double suicide, right after their father died of illness."<sup>30</sup> This ultimate immoral action, the double suicide of the beautiful, sadomasochistic brothers, completes the aesthetic continuum of decadent eros. The narrative climax of the double suicide privileges Okamoto's ideological aestheticism, precisely because it embodies her polarized propositions: a fascinating eroticized decadence, deadly ill-fated *horobi*.

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<sup>28</sup> Shibusawa, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Shibusawa, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 286.

Here, the attraction of the notion of *horobi* lies mainly in its metaphorical applicability to the precarious but attractive moment before adolescents become adults and are completely assimilated into the 'normality' of patriarchal, heterosexual (reproductive) structures. Both Tomonosuke and Umemaro must die young (and beautiful), before the ambivalent but captivating attributes of youth are eroded by repressive heterosexual paradigms that would disturb their inextricable link to the sheltered male-only space in which they live. These two brothers (especially Umemaro) possess pure, fresh bodies; the androgynous potentiality of these young men, who are not yet considered mature, contrasts with the mysterious, voluptuous atmosphere that permeates the entire narrative of "The Bygone World." In the eroticization of decadent aestheticism, the fascination generated by androgynous youth lies precisely in its inevitable destruction. In the following passage, Umemaro's beauty interacts with the decadent tension of the long-established family; the accumulated history of the family's prosperity and decline creates an imposing emotional atmosphere:

Yukiko wondered how to describe the features of this young David; at the time, Yukiko didn't even know the picture of the sculpture of the young David created by Michelangelo. Later, during her European journeys, she became aware of it. It stood in the museum in Florence, Italy, against the background of a semicircular rotunda. Even though there was a difference between Western animality and Oriental vegetativeness, its gloomy sweetness was similar to that of Umemaro. Like a young panther, the healthy flesh tightened over the chest, back, abdomen, waist and trunk. Firm, fan-shaped muscles ascended from the smooth shoulder to the root of the neck.

From there, the neck rose with a pale and reddish tinge.<sup>31</sup>

One must acknowledge that Tomonosuke's and Umemaro's response to 'the curse of the long-established family' attains a point where transient beauty evokes eternity, at the moment when the two beautiful brothers' inescapable destiny of *horobi* is dramatically accomplished.

Just as the ideological notion of transience becomes a necessary tool for the aesthetic depiction of androgynous boys and young men in Mori Mari's male homosexual trilogy, the two brothers in "The Bygone World" must submit to the inevitable allure of the 'death instinct.' This submission represents the ultimate outcome of their aestheticism and affirms their allegiance to a cult, in which significant features of homoeroticism, sadomasochism, and incest are all linked to the ideologically privileged position of a decadent aestheticism doomed to die. As discussed in Chapter 2 on Mori Mari, the female fantasmic narrative of male homosexuality is transformed and reinterpreted as a feature of decadent aestheticism closely related to existing eschatological codes.<sup>32</sup> Considering that female fantasies of male homosexuality base their textual originality on the infiltration of an uncanny but baroque decadence, the work of Okamoto Kanoko, a *tanbi ha* (aesthetic school) author who depicts an amoral aestheticism enhanced by various 'perverse' desires (male homosexuality, incest, and sadomasochism), provides an ideal context in which to retextualize and thereby comprehend the primary signifiers of such female sexual fantasies and desires.

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<sup>31</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 286.

<sup>32</sup> Here, I would briefly like to point out that the discursive characteristics of early *yaoi* narratives also explore the representation and modes of decadent aestheticism in terms of the notion of inevitable 'ruin.' However, as *yaoi* narratives began to be distributed on a larger scale through mass-marketing, they gradually abandoned thematic issues that articulated the principles of decadent *horobi* aesthetics. Nowadays, the prevailing narrative style of *yaoi* employs the 'living happily ever after' ending.

## Meta-Diegesis and the Transformation of Female Subjectivity

Male-dominated cultures and social systems have given rise to homosocial manifestations that reduce the value of the female to such an extent that she is never represented as the primary signifier. Such a gender hierarchy, with the man at the center and the woman at the periphery, can be seen in the misogynistic, homoerotic male characters in "The Bygone World." While "Y," the father of the family, shows his face in Yukiko's room on her arrival from a sense of obligation, after that he is completely uninterested in her. "Y"'s misogynistic personality is described in the following passage:

Since separating from his wife due to her death at an early stage in his life, "Y" was completely indifferent to women. For him, women were nothing but evil spirits that seduced and disturbed the qualities that he valued most in this world, such as dignity, grace, intelligence, and so on.<sup>33</sup>

Here, women are consciously rewritten and reworked in terms of a patriarchal text in which their enthralling nature is negatively essentialized. Umemaro is also indifferent to Yukiko, thus disgracing her pride as a woman. At one point, Tomonosuke tells Yukiko that: "he (Umemaro) may have an aversion toward women, just like our father."<sup>34</sup> In contrast to both "Y" and Umemaro, who reinforce the negative essentialization of the female through their rejection of Yukiko, Tomonosuke displays a certain amount of interest in her and enjoys engaging in light flirtation with her. However, Tomonosuke's ostensible attraction toward Yukiko also objectifies her. She is represented as a medium through which Tomonosuke subconsciously attempts to stimulate his masochism; controlling the fundamental scheme of their mutual power relations, Tomonosuke uses Yukiko's feminine identity as a means of

<sup>33</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 275.

<sup>34</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 278.



enhancing Umemaro's sadistic dominance over him.

The symbolic code of 'woman' (as the Other) in "The Bygone World" needs to be discussed in more detail, precisely because the ontology of 'woman' (especially the young Yukiko) paradoxically recaptures the lost totality of a male-oriented unity in terms of both the story's plot and its diegetic development. "The Bygone World" consists of alternating but densely interwoven diegetic spaces. Before discussing them, I will briefly review the theoretical concept of diegetic formations. When the narrative takes a metafictional form, with more than one level of narration, the diegetic order is blurred. As soon as the narrator in the primary narrative (or intradiegetic space) starts telling a story, this creates the metadiegetic sphere. In "The Bygone World," the narrating Yukiko and the anonymous "I" are located in the (intra)diegetic sphere, while the young Yukiko, Tomonosuke, Umemaro and "Y" exist in the metadiegetic sphere.<sup>35</sup> In the metadiegetic narrative, the young Yukiko feels dissatisfied about the fact that Umemaro and "Y" almost completely ignore her existence as a 'woman,' and that Tomonosuke never trespasses across the line of mere flirtation; she is therefore eager to reconstruct and recapture her primary female ontology, in order to resist her epistemological erasure from the male-oriented ideological structures that surround her. Umemaro's complete disregard of Yukiko's femininity and sexual appeal especially seems to enrage her: "Yukiko couldn't help feeling irritation and dissatisfaction toward this boy (Umemaro) who was absolutely unaffected by her, a young woman who had newly joined the family."<sup>36</sup> The 'woman' is understood as lacking the psychological stability required to cultivate an autonomous subjectivity within the patriarchal structure; her access to

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<sup>35</sup> See Gerald Prince *A Dictionary of Narratology* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987) for more detailed definitions of 'diegetic level,' 'metadiegesis' and other related terms.

<sup>36</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 275.

the Symbolic Order is limited to that of a 'sexed' body that never escapes complicity with male subjectivity and desires. Thus, Umemaro's act of rejecting Yukiko's 'sexed' female body deprives her of her only legitimate way to become integrated into this homoerotic and homosocial sphere as a gendered being. Moreover, Yukiko is also infuriated by the fact that, when she volunteers to sew up Umemaro's clothes in place of Tomonosuke, Umemaro simply ignores her efforts to mediate between the two brothers:

Yukiko's anger was increased by her shame as a woman that her kind offer had been tacitly rejected. 'I will take revenge on him in any way I can.' Yukiko exited through the open corridor that reflected the shadows of green leaves, leaving the sewing kit behind; she then leaned against a pillar, and intentionally stared hard at Umemaro.<sup>37</sup>

By emphasizing her mediating orientation as *onna no mi* (herself as a woman), Yukiko reinforces the discursive nature of female subjectivity as merely a mediating object for men. Yukiko had expected to merge into the sociosymbolic structure by taking over the needlework, an activity generally gendered as a female duty. However, since she is deprived of what is considered women's work, her attempt to articulate her symbolic female role is absolutely oppressed in relation to the prevailing male-oriented diegesis.

Moreover, in order to restore the value and validity of her feminine gender, which is the only medium by which she can successfully become integrated into the mechanisms of the Symbolic Order, Yukiko even "hysterically thought of humbling 'Y's arrogant pride, since he loved Umemaro tenderly, by depriving him of Umemaro, whenever the opportunity presented itself."<sup>38</sup> Thus, Yukiko's verifiable desire for 'seduction'—her light flirtation with Tomonosuke, and her idea of seducing Umemaro as a way of taking revenge on "Y"—is

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<sup>37</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 281.

<sup>38</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 279.

motivated by her subversive impulse to regain her own 'female body' (no matter how much it may be 'sexed,' disprivileged, and placed on the periphery of the patriarchal system). However, Yukiko's attempt to 'become a woman' by playing the role of seducer is not fulfilled, so she is finally never authorized, as the female 'Other,' to become fully integrated into the homosexual/homosocial subtext.

On the other hand, when her motivation to become integrated into the homosocial world is activated through her role as an external observer, rather than through the active role of female seducer, Yukiko's point of ontological entry into the decadent, but aesthetically appealing, male homosexual (and homosocial) context is successfully accomplished. During the process of trying to mediate between the brothers through her symbolic femininity, Yukiko suddenly realizes an ideological transition (from active agent to observer) that provides her with a libidinal space in which she can view Tomonosuke and Umemaro as the object-choices of her own scopophilic desire. Observing the sensuous tension between Tomonosuke's seemingly masochistic ecstasy and Umemaro's sadistic impulses, Yukiko becomes excited by their erotic interaction:

Yukiko felt attracted by the sweet sentimental desire that could be recognized from the depth of their strong passion for each other. Yukiko's cells wove together the sadism and masochism that were often seen in people from long-established families, and that made her perceive and envy the deep mental structures that lie behind other people's similar behavior.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, observing Umemaro, who is eager to dominate his older brother by "pinching his...thin-skinned wrist," and Tomonosuke, who "blushed and grimaced and endured it,"<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 282.

<sup>40</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 282.

Yukiko is clearly excited sexually by their erotic interaction, as the following indicates: "At the zenith of excitement, Yukiko went into some sort of trance. Wishing to incite her desire further, she gradually became interested in the thrilling tragedy that was being acted out in front of her."<sup>41</sup> In a sense, the primacy of her role as an 'audience' of this sensuous show sublimates her female gender, and she is thereby enabled to explore her own 'genderless' erotic possibilities.

At this stage, when Yukiko autonomously places herself at a distinct distance from the primary male-oriented narrative, the fantasy of 'perverse,' decadent aestheticism no longer possesses any realistic practicability; instead, it is reconstructed as a pseudodiegetic narrative from the perspective of the young Yukiko; Yukiko's position as metadiegetic agent now functions at another level, as a pseudodiegesis. Pseudodiegesis is created when the "metadiegetic narrative function[s] as if it were a diegetic one."<sup>42</sup> Her subjective change of roles from that of the active 'seducer' to a member of the disengaged 'audience' creates another diegesis in the metadiegetic narrative sphere; as she becomes a diegetic narrator in the present (reality) space of the narrative. Exploring divergent concepts of 'meta,' Okamoto skillfully sets the 'stage' to fulfill female scopophilic desires (and their relations in terms of identifying and dissociating processes). As discussed in the previous chapters, primary metafictional narrative issues concerning male homosexual fantasies are posited on the basis of female sexual dynamics of scopophilia, identification and dissociation. The diegetic distance between diegesis, metadiegesis, and pseudodiegesis in metafictional narratives provides the very basis upon which female characters explore the scopophilic pleasures of viewing male homosexual characters on the metadiegetic and pseudodiegetic 'stage.' By

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<sup>41</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 282-283.

<sup>42</sup> Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, p. 78.

identifying with male homosexual characters who act out an erotic 'show' on these 'stages,' female characters also synchronize with their sexual pleasures; they simultaneously identify with and dissociate themselves from the male homosexual characters, and balance their own female psychological ambivalence regarding the taboos and prohibitions with which female sexuality is generally signified.

In "The Bygone World," when Yukiko starts narrating her story of Tomonosuke and Umemaro ("By the way, I have a strange story relating to the house which I bought and in which I settled down. I would like you to hear the story, though it is not very cheerful. I will tell the tale with the lights off"<sup>43</sup>), the metadiegetic 'stage' of male homosexual fantasy is clearly set up for an exclusively female audience. Here, Yukiko and the "I" are both enabled to enhance the psychological orientation of scopophilia, identification and dissociation, by activating the diegetic distance of metafictional narrative. The following scene also metaphorically suggests that Yukiko's male homoerotic fantasy functions in terms of such a dramatized 'stage' setting:

A chandelier with the bright color of a bottle gourd suddenly lit up. Overwhelmed by the illumination inside, the scene outside the windows immediately became dark, as if covered by a curtain, and a silver thread of rain grazed this black hanging screen. My friend (Yukiko), who had closed her eyes, suddenly opened her eyes and stared directly into my face.<sup>44</sup>

The chandelier is a metaphor for stage lights, and the outside view being shut out by the light of the chandelier connotes the lowering of lights in the theater, just as the stage is illuminated at the beginning of this 'show.' Yukiko's act of closing and opening her eyes also suggests

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<sup>43</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 273.

<sup>44</sup> Okamoto, "Kakose," p. 274.

that she wishes to transfer her consciousness from reality to fantasy; therefore, the 'drama' of male homosexual fantasy starts exactly at the moment when she opens her eyes again. Moreover, at the end of the narrative, it becomes clear that the mansion in which Yukiko lives and tells her narrative to the "I" is actually the same place where Tomonosuke and Umemaro lived when the young Yukiko served them. Thus, narrating and listening to this fantastic story of male homosexuality, Yukiko and the "I" psychically take their places in the 'theater' in which male homoerotic, incestuous, and sadomasochistic brothers 'play' their aesthetic and erotic roles. It is precisely in terms of this metafictional narrative formation that Yukiko and the "I" (in the diegetic sphere) activate the psychological development of scopophilia, identification and dissociation, through watching the (metadiegetic) 'drama' of male homosexual fantasies as it unfolds.

However, what makes the diegetic formation in "The Bygone World" more complicated is the young Yukiko's psychological transformation from female 'seducer' to detached 'audience' or observer. When the young Yukiko is assigned the thematic and narrative potential of observing the erotic interactions between the two brothers, she opens up yet another diegetic space in the metadiegesis; here, the clear diegetic distance between the young Yukiko and the brothers is affirmed, precisely by the fact that her objective gaze reinforces the epistemological status of Tomonosuke and Umemaro as dramatic characters and the young Yukiko as already their audience. Thus, in the narrative of "The Bygone World," Yukiko's psychological orientation to scopophilia, identification and dissociation is doubled, because in both the diegetic and metadiegetic spheres the internal narrator, Yukiko, and the young Yukiko synchronically watch the 'stage' of male homosexual fantasies, through their identification with and dissociation from the male homosexual characters.

The significant shift of narrative structure that takes place regarding Yukiko's ideological development can be clearly described as follows:

A: The original narrative structure, involving the young Yukiko as storyteller and as 'seducer':

1. The diegetic or intradiegetic sphere/primary narrative: Yukiko tells her story to the "I," who tells it to us.
2. The metadiegetic sphere/framed narrative: Tomonosuke, Umemaro, and the young Yukiko as a would-be 'seducer' (active agent).

B: The modified narrative structure, after the young Yukiko awakens to her scopophilic desires:

1. The diegetic or intradiegetic sphere/primary narrative: Yukiko and the "I," as observers at a distance of the events recounted.
2. The metadiegetic sphere/framed narrative: Tomonosuke, Umemaro, and the young Yukiko as a would-be 'seducer' (active agent).
3. The pseudodiegetic narrative: the young Yukiko's metadiegetic status is nullified here, because she is the one who fantasizes/creates the male homoerotic 'show.' Tomonosuke and Umemaro 'perform' male homoerotic, incestuous, sadomasochistic roles with the young Yukiko as an audience: she is already a scopophilic observer.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the representation of meta-fantasies exploring the complexity and divergence of female sexual mechanisms can also be seen in Kôno Taeko's "Toddler-Hunting." The actualization of Akiko's simultaneously subjective and objective sexual dynamics can clearly be seen in her meta-narrative fantasy, in which the

unknown woman (Akiko's double, comparable to the young Yukiko's role as observer in "The Bygone World") controls the sadomasochistic, erotic interaction between the father and the boy by simultaneously dissociating from and identifying with them; she consequently functions as the subjective medium by which female sexual repression can be reinterpreted and retextualized in more subversive terms. In this sense, Yukiko's 'fantasy' of male homosexuality is undoubtedly generated in terms of the female gender as signified in the patriarchal Symbolic Order, where women are prohibited from becoming actively involved in the narrative and semantic development of the primary male-oriented structure. Since Yukiko is excluded from the male-oriented sphere, she cannot be represented as an active agent in the story told. However, she nevertheless successfully positions herself as a detached observer, who survives with some satisfaction, by fictionalizing a homoerotic fantasy concerning the two brothers and retelling the story to emphasize her own control in conveying it.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Matsuura Rieko's *The Reverse Version*: Female Fantasies of Male Homosexuality in a Postmodern Context**

*Difficult as it may seem to you, dear reader, there are probably still people out there in the East End of London quite unaware that, when worn down by the problems of the world, a quick and simple solution is often to lie on a couch and talk about one's mother to a highly qualified stranger.*

—Nigel Williams, *Star Turn*

Matsuura Rieko has consistently produced various innovative narratives that can be used to consider questions concerning the position of female sexualities in a phallogocentric world. It should be acknowledged that the reason why some Japanese literary critics compare Matsuura's imaginative writings with poststructuralist feminist critic Judith Butler's theoretical analyses is precisely because both write about gender issues in a way that challenges the concept of a singular and irreducible 'sexuality.'<sup>1</sup> Beginning with her

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<sup>1</sup> Taneda Wakako briefly mentions the ideological similarities between Matsuura and Butler in an article entitled: "Seisa to hyôgen: hyôdô no toraburu/toraburu no hyôdô" (Sexual Difference and Its Expressions: The Surface of Trouble/The Trouble of the Surface), *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyôzai no kenkyû* 40:8 (1995). A detailed and sophisticated analysis of what is often termed Matsuura's 'poststructural' writing can also be found in Ichimura Takako's "Judisu Batorâ to Matsuura Rieko: Shisen no kôsa I and II" (Judith Butler and Matsuura Rieko: The Crossing of Perspectives I and II), *Artes liberales* 62 (1998), 66

publishing debut, *Sôgi no hi* (The Day of the Funeral, 1978), most of her works, including *Nachuraru ūman* (Natural Woman, 1987) and *Sebasuchan* (Stephan, 1981), raise questions concerning lesbian identity (especially lesbian sadomasochism), and such questions consistently accompany her analysis of female sexuality. Taking the exploration of issues surrounding lesbian orientation as one of her writing strategies, Matsuura suggests ways by which contemporary lesbian critics can develop diverse critical stances by first defining their discursive position in terms of the ontological question: Who is a lesbian? When Matsuura's *Oyayubi P no shugyô jidai* (Big Toe P's Years of Apprenticeship) was first published in 1993, it caused a sensation in the Japanese literary world. It has since received much critical attention, at least partly because of its explicit descriptions of the politicized and textualized relationships between various forms of sexuality and their relevance to any attempt to challenge established phallogocentric paradigms. The story portrays the sexual experiences of its female protagonist, whose big toe is suddenly transformed into a male sexual organ. This lesbian narrative may thus be viewed as an attempt to parody the phallogocentric structure of the psyche as defined within the framework of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic approaches.

While Matsuura views lesbianism primarily as a vehicle to express a sense of 'gender trouble,' the background narrative of her gender discourse is constituted within a male homosexual context.<sup>2</sup> Even though Matsuura explores issues of lesbian identities much more deeply than those relating to male homosexuality, she consistently describes her male

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(2000).

<sup>2</sup> Matsuura's analysis of anal sexuality in relation to the patriarchal system is summarized in the following way: "I take Inagaki Taruho's belief that men's corruption starts when they discard anal sexuality and become attached to penis sexuality as a criticism of the penis's exalted status, and I very much agree with his idea" (p. 35). Matsuura's idea of anal sexuality is highly individualistic. See Matsuura's *Poketto fettishu* (Pocket Fetish) (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 2000).

homosexual subjects in contrast to lesbian identities. Her most recent work, *Uravâjon* (The Reverse Version), in particular, represents a powerful female imaginative discourse in relation to fantasies of male homosexuality.

### **How are Female Fantasies of Male Homosexuality Composed?**

*The Reverse Version* was first published in 2000, and it can be read as a postmodern work that deals with the dispersal of narrative structures and with subversive issues related to divergent sexuality. Such controversial issues as racial stereotyping, lesbianism, sadomasochism and *shônen ai* (female fantasies of male homosexuality) are all linked to the postmodern context through the mediation of a parodic and ironic referentiality. The 'camp' appropriation of parody is foregrounded through a postmodern discourse in which issues raised by female sexualities can be resignified and reconstructed through the subversion of established tropes of gender construction. Later, I will return to the deconstructive world of postmodern identity which this work represents.

First, however, I would like to explore the ways in which the manifestation of female subversive consciousness regarding gender formation in *The Reverse Version* is generated by a diegetic shift that is the direct outcome of its meta-narrative structure. As can also be seen in Kôno Taeko's "Toddler-Hunting" and Okamoto Kanoko's "The Bygone World," the use of metafictional structures and subjects constitutes an acknowledgement that female sexual identities are complex and divergent enough to deconstruct the peripheral territory delimited as female according to patriarchal paradigms. The structure of *The Reverse Version* is complicated to such an extent that it evokes diegetic disorder throughout the course of the narrative development. The book consists of 18 chapters, each of which is

an independent story that presents varying background narratives, spaces, characters and themes. In contrast to this wide range of metafictional fantasies, the narrative structure as a whole is unified by the presence of two female characters who are presented in intradiegesis throughout all eighteen chapters. As the narrative develops, we gradually realize that the creator of these metafictional worlds is a female writer. Reduced to dire poverty, she lives rent-free in the house of an old friend; as a form of recompense, she writes stories (metafictional fantasies) that are addressed only to her friend and reflect her friend's particular taste. The female writer's name may possibly be Masako, and her friend's name may be Suzuko. However, their names are never unambiguously presented. The following interactions between Masako (?) and Suzuko (?) indicate the ways in which their names (and diegetic ontology) are, to borrow Derrida's terminology, both differed and deferred through an endless play of the signifier:

You made me appear in your work again, but I didn't feel as unpleasant as I did before. Is this a twisted "I" novel? But your name isn't such an elegant name; not Tokiko, but Masako.<sup>3</sup>

Well, why aren't you concerned about whether or not the stories that I hand in every month are really written by me, Masako, rather than being concerned about the difference between the protagonist's name and my name? They might have been written by someone else, or else copied entirely from some other source. You see, Isoko?<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Matsuura Rieko, *Uravâjon* (The Reverse Version) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobô, 2000), p. 150.

<sup>4</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 151.

I don't want to be involved in your silly little game of purposely writing my name wrong. Who is Isoko? It's silly!<sup>5</sup>

The narrative mechanism of *The Reverse Version* is generated by a meta-fantasy world that clearly actualizes these two women's respective ideologies and claims, which mainly concern the ambivalence of female sexual orientations and fantasies. For example, chapters 4, 5, and 6 constitute a consecutive narrative unified by the consistent title "Tristine," as well as by consistently appearing characters and background settings. The story develops around the sadomasochistic, lesbian relationship between Tristine and Gladys. Chapter 4 ends with the following remark by its (only) reader, the author's friend: "I don't mind praising you for a sweet story this time. But I still don't like your twisted character: you never listen to my advice. Next time work over your ideas and get away from America and sadomasochism."<sup>6</sup> Chapter 5 thus begins with the author's counterattack against her friend's harsh criticism: "Now that I've gotten into the swing of it, I can't stop it."<sup>7</sup> Right after this comment in the diegetic sphere, the metadiegetic fantasy begins: "Before going out, Tristine was singing."<sup>8</sup> In terms of the narrative development of *The Reverse Version*, metafictional fantasies are represented by the mythical but subversive mechanisms of female ideological and sexual desire; the autonomous impulse to control the process of diegesis actualizes contexts of metadiegetic fantasy in which neither of the two women is clearly signified as the desired (gendered) 'body,' but rather both are depicted as desiring subjects who realize a complementary process of metadiegesis.

In Chapter 10, entitled "Chiyoko," it is clear that female fantasies of male

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<sup>5</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 162.

<sup>6</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 51-52.

<sup>7</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 53.

homosexuality are defined as the dominant metafictional referent.<sup>9</sup> Chapter 10 provides a significant theoretical space from which we can access the background narrative of the psychological development of the female conscious and subconscious desires that activate fantasies of male homosexual acts. Here, the narrative parodies the process of female psychological development, skillfully describing the diegetic shift and the schematic interpretation of the primary mechanisms of the female desire to engage in male homosexual fantasies. Right after the 'female author's' comment, addressed to her friend—"Please don't leave me alone, darling"—the narrative is directed into a metadiegetic world in which the ego/libido oriented impulses of the meta-heroine, Chiyoko, are represented. The background narrative of Chiyoko's male homosexual fantasy is set up in the following way: "Walking in such a perfectly peaceful scene, Chiyoko prayed to be immersed in her daydream of male homosexuality, there and then."<sup>10</sup> Considering the fact that here Chiyoko functions as the metadiegetic surrogate for two women (the 'female author' and her friend) in terms of the 'realistic' diegesis, in its attempt to create its own fictional setting, Chiyoko's male homosexual daydream is defined and activated as a pseudodiegetic narrative from the perspective of the 'female author,' who in this sense remains a diegetic agent:

1. The diegetic or intradiegetic sphere/the primary narrative: the 'female author' (intradiegetic narrator) and her friend.
2. The metadiegetic sphere/the framed narrative: Chiyoko is objectified by the 'female author.'
3. The pseudodiegetic narrative/the framed narrative within the frame narrative:

<sup>9</sup> Even though male homosexual contexts in relation to female imaginative power are also dealt with in Chapter 9, entitled "Juntaka," which operates together with Chapter 10, I would like to focus my analysis specifically on Chapter 10, in which the female psychological 'production' of male homosexual fantasies is so skillfully described.

<sup>10</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 115-116.

Chiyoko takes charge of narrating her male homosexual fantasies.

This exploration of fiction through metafiction in *The Reverse Version* is thematically parallel to that of Okamoto Kanoko's "The Bygone World," in which the decadent, uncanny world of two incestuous brothers is constructed as a pseudodiegetic space from the perspective of the young Yukiko, who successfully shifts her ideological position from active 'seducer' to disengaged 'audience,' as discussed above.

In this connection, we should focus not only on a diverse range of female perspectives, but also on Chiyoko's autonomous impulse to depart from the fantasmic homosexual sphere that she has created. The theatrical opening of Chiyoko's pseudodiegetic narrative is established in the following way:

Chiyoko prayed to be immersed in her habitual daydream of male homosexuality, there and then. 'For example, two boys, maybe fourteen or fifteen years old, who have unbearable love for each other, with the scene in which they finally first try to have sex. Their race doesn't matter much, but let's say that they are the sons of middle-class families in one of the advanced countries, are of the same race and attend the same school. The setting is a children's room in one of their houses, when all of the other family members are out.'<sup>11</sup>

In the above passage, the narrative setting of the (male homosexual) fantasy is minutely described and thereby clearly proves the value and validity of Freud's (and Laplanche's and Pontalis's) primary analysis of fantasy in terms of the 'stage-set.' Here, a controlling intentionality as an underlying element in connection with the fundamental premises of female fantasmic desire is clearly enforced. Chiyoko's unified desire to direct the drama of

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<sup>11</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 116.

male homosexual fantasy in relation to her own particular tastes and preferences is actualized through its very mode of enunciation and thus illuminates the divergent aspects of female imaginative power. This form of rearticulated male homosexual fantasy in the pseudodiegesis continues:

Two boys were working on their homework together as usual, but this time nobody was home except them, and a heated expectation that their golden opportunity had finally come arose in their minds. For this reason they were absent-minded; already an hour had passed, and they were still working on their homework, which would usually have been done within half an hour. Finally, the son of the house suggested: "Let's have a break." Receiving agreement from his friend, he quietly stood up. Why did he close the window curtain? The bright room suddenly became dark as evening twilight. Then, the visitor was stunned. The boy who closed the curtain started taking off his clothes, acting with determination, urging with his eyes the dumbfounded boy—who still couldn't believe his luck—to do the same thing. The visitor started unbuttoning his shirt with shaky hands, repeating in his mind: "Finally, we can do it; finally, we can do it." Now, two boys in their underwear stood face to face and stared at each other. But because they didn't know how to move smoothly to the next stage, they felt abashed and their hearts beat faster and faster; they couldn't do anything this way, just standing here like this. Before long, one of them, who couldn't bear this deadlocked situation any longer, took half a step forward, and, as soon as he sensed that the first boy had started moving, the other closed his eyes, opened his arms and threw his own body toward the beloved one. After that, there was a delightful scene, with enthusiastic sex and sweet, but awkward, words of



love.<sup>12</sup>

We, the readers, are amazed by the fact that Chiyoko's 'narrative' concerning the male homosexual fantasy in her daydream is so detailed and well-organized; beginning with the act of closing the curtain that operates as a narrative device to intensify the erotic atmosphere. In the process of producing the pseudodiegetic narrative, Chiyoko returns to being the subject/character of the metadiegetic sphere, reinscribing her particular subjective position as creator/audience of the male homosexual drama:

'If you want to laugh at its banality, just laugh at it. I don't aim at any particular originality. Any fantasy that aims at sexual pleasure inevitably follows the pattern of one's own taste.' Chiyoko's favorite fantasy involved the first spontaneous, haphazard love-making of young teenage boys. For women like Chiyoko, who loved homosexual fantasies, a more popular situation involved matching an innocent boy with an older, sexually experienced partner. Such spices as the seduction and education by an older partner, or an unconsenting (sexual) act that subsequently turned into a consenting one, were naturally included in that situation. Chiyoko had loved such scenarios when she was a teenager, and she didn't dislike them even now; however, after some chapters of her life had passed, her fantasies now settled down to reflect her present taste. Chiyoko's boys should have no discernible gaps (regarding sexual experience) between them. They must also fall in love with each other, and both of them must be endowed with sufficient intelligence not to experience any shame or fear regarding their gradually growing desires toward someone of the same sex. That way, the seriousness of their unbridled first love for

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<sup>12</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 116-117.

each other would inevitably become the strongest and most heart-aching memory of their lives, even though they didn't have any way to know that then.<sup>13</sup>

Here, the phrase "any fantasy that aims at sexual pleasure" significantly evokes the sense of pleasure derived from creative acts of the imagination, as Freud discusses in "A Child is Being Beaten." Chiyoko's method of activating her male homosexual fantasies reinforces and corresponds with what Freud calls the repetitive act of narrating fantasies; it thus represents an aspect of the 'formation of fantasy' itself. When Chiyoko defines her male homosexual spectacle as a "fantasy aimed at sexual pleasure," this re-formulation of female subjectivity in regard to the male homosexual context enhances the divergent sexual impetus of female daydreamers; it therefore synchronizes precisely with Freud's explorations in "A Child is Being Beaten."

After her fantasy concerning the two boys' first sexual experience has been disturbed by a man asking her for directions, Chiyoko immediately starts imagining another pseudodiegetic fantasy concerning male homosexual eroticism, with different settings and characters. Chiyoko's second narrative begins as follows:

'Even though I like that scenario very much, it would be less exciting if I used exactly the same scenario again, after such a short interval. So, departing from the version of innocent first love, I will choose another one. This story ought to mingle love and lust.' The boys who had appeared before disappeared; this time, it should be a man who had sexual acts with a number of partners, without any apparent serious love for any of them.<sup>14</sup>

An abrupt transformation of the narrative topic from the two boys' first sexual experience to

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<sup>13</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 117.

<sup>14</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 118.

a history of a mature homosexual man's love affairs clearly indicates that Chiyoko (as a woman) possesses sufficient imaginative force to control such male-dominated narratives from the point of view of a spectator's privileged subjectivity (which itself also represents yet another 'stage' setting). Moreover, the following passage indicates that Chiyoko's position as observer should be discussed in relation to her psychological desire to identify with male homosexual characters:

In Chiyoko's fantasy, the man naturally became homosexual as he grew up, going to places where homosexual men got together in a large city, and continually repeating these kinds of sexual act. Because he was a 'passive' type of man, it was active men who lured him. Among them, there were sadistic types. The delightful part of the story came when he started living with a sadistic type of man. Various things might happen; for example, the protagonist participated in various acts of his partner, things that the protagonist desired to do, things that he merely accepted, things that were a bit more violent than he expected, and things that were much more violent than he expected. He participated in his partner's pleasure. Even though Chiyoko had never experienced sadomasochism in reality, in her fantasy she became incarnated as a masochistic gay man, and when her fantasy reached its climax, she became intoxicated by it to such an extent that her eyes filled with tears.<sup>15</sup>

Here, Chiyoko's sexual excitement is undoubtedly stimulated through the process of identifying with the desiring and desired body of a masochistic homosexual man.

Judith Butler summarizes the female response to the charm of fantasies in the following way:

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<sup>15</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 119.

We say, 'I have a fantasy' or 'this is my fantasy' and what is presupposed is an I, a subject who has a fantasy as a kind of interior and visual projection and possession. 'And in my fantasy,' we say, 'I was sitting in the cafeteria and you came up to me.' Already the 'I' who fantasizes is displaced, for the 'I' occurs at least twice, as the one who 'has' the fantasy, and the 'I' *in* the fantasy, indeed, who is in a sense 'had' by that prior I. What is the proper place of the 'I' in its redoubling? It is not enough to say that the 'I' who reports the fantasy, who 'has' it, is somehow 'real' and the 'I' who is 'in' it is phantasmatic, for the reporting 'I' is revealing and constituting its own content in and through the fantasy that is elaborated. The narrator of the fantasy is always already 'in' the fantasy. The 'I' both contributes to and *is* the frame, the complex of perspectives, the temporal and grammatical sequencing, the particular dramatic tempo and conclusion that constitutes the very action of the fantasy.<sup>16</sup>

Following Butler, we can say that the diegetic divergence of subjectivity in such fantasies actively originates when Chiyoko, the desiring subject as spectator of the fantasy drama, also becomes the desired body of the male homosexual men about whom she fantasizes. The symbolic structure of female sexual subjectivity (and desires) regarding the metapsychology of synchronizing with the 'low' material pleasures of male homosexual characters is also articulated as follows: "In her fantasy world, those who played an active role were mainly boys. In this world, Chiyoko empathized with one of the boys; no, instead she identified with him, and, as a boy, she enjoyed sexual acts with other boys."<sup>17</sup> This process is apparently motivated by a correlation between female sexual excitement and male homosexual narrative

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<sup>16</sup> Judith Butler, "The Force of Fantasy: Feminism, Mapplethorpe, and Discursive Excess," in *Feminism and Pornography*, ed. Drucilla Cornell (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 491.

<sup>17</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 122.

that is most effectively systematized through female ideologically-determined orientations regarding the ecstasy involved in psychological assimilation into imaginary, erotic male characters. Moreover, as discussed in the previous chapters, the female sexually 'desiring' impulse is not thematically limited to a setting depicting female eroticism. The specific text of female sexual subjectivity, along with its relations to male homosexual fantasy scenarios, is only successfully reconstructed once the fantasmic male homosexual narrative activates female sexual desires that synchronize in a significant way with the unmediated pleasure of such sexually active male homosexual characters. The voyeuristic sensations of an apparently detached female 'audience' take a discernible distance from the eroticized (male homosexual) characters who are thus portrayed.

### **Representations of Male Homosexual Fantasies in Terms of Postmodern Parody**

*The Reverse Version* is a work that manifests the complicated structure of the female psyche within the framework of male homosexual fantasies. A detailed consideration of this work reinforces the discursive points with regard to female fantasies of male homosexuality made in previous chapters, such as how female sexual excitement is stimulated by male homosexual fantasies, how these fantasies are 'staged,' and so forth. Now I would like to pursue my analysis of this work further, by considering it within a postmodern context. First of all, as briefly discussed above, in *The Reverse Version* Matsuura's constructive desire to create her own work in correspondence with postmodern taste by employing diegetic disorder through a metafictional formation emerges in a striking manner. Such abrupt changes of time, space, and theme in postmodern narratives can be seen as a liberating force, directed against totalizing standards. Ursula K. Heise discusses the narrative multiplicity and

fragmentation of postmodern works in the following way:

One of the most striking developments in the transition from the modernist to the postmodernist novel is the disintegration of narrator and character as recognizable and more or less stable entities, and their scattering or fragmentation across different temporal universes that can no longer be reconciled with each other, or justified by recurring to different psychological worlds.<sup>18</sup>

In *The Reverse Version*, the apex of diegetic disorder occurs in Chapter 17, when the two women, the female author and her friend—who are supposed to be limited to the diegetic sphere of the narrative as the ‘audience’ for its metadiegetic fantasies—appear in the metadiegetic sphere as active agents. The scene in which the two women face each other and have a heated discussion is fictionalized in the metadiegetic sphere; at this point, even the seemingly unified narrative order of reality and meta/reality is completely nullified, together with any concept of a coherent space-time continuum.

Moreover, in a similar fashion to Gilbert Adair’s *The Postmodernist Always Rings Twice*, in which such topics as dramas, novels, paintings, movies, philosophers, pop art, advertisements, T-shirts, and theme parks are all analyzed on the same level, Matsuura’s *The Reverse Version*, with its divergent, fragmented, and seemingly incompatible themes (racial and sexual issues, psychology, women’s professional wrestling, *pokemon*, black music, and so forth), evokes a sense of ‘collage.’ Matsuura’s subversive impulses can also be considered an instance of the postmodern practice of pastiche. Postmodernists view pastiche primarily as a vehicle by which to express a sense of ‘self-reflexive’ irony and parody, blending the original and the simulacrum together, eventually acting as a liberating force against totalizing

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<sup>18</sup> Ursula K. Heise, *Chronoschisms: Time, Narrative, and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 7.

standards. For instance, the first chapter of *The Reverse Version* is a short horror and suspense story, which is supposedly written by the meta-author named "Stefany Queen," a name that is obviously intended as a parody of the famous American author, Steven King. Concerning this chapter, in an interview published in a literary magazine, Matsuura says: "I started writing this story, thinking that if Steven King wrote a story about a cat fight, it would be like this."<sup>19</sup> Thus, this first chapter, entitled "Okojo" (Ermine), represents a 'pastiche'<sup>20</sup> of Steven King's writings. In this regard, Matsuura's constructive desire to create her own work by employing postmodern tonalities emerges in a striking manner.<sup>21</sup>

However, what primarily makes this novel an essentially postmodern work is the way in which Matsuura deals with issues of female sexualities (such as female fantasies of male homosexuality) in a parodic and ironic manner. Irony and parody are seen as subversive concepts in postmodern discourse. As suggested by postmodern critics, such as Linda Hutcheon and Margaret Rose, the role of parody should not be underestimated within a dualistic framework divided between the serious (the high) and the comic (the low); a (postmodern) parodic strategy may be employed as a medium by which to problematize such dualistic value systems, as they were institutionalized by/in modernism.<sup>22</sup> Linda Hutcheon

<sup>19</sup> Matsuura, "Seiai kara yūtai e: *Uravājon* o megutte" (From Sexuality to Friendship: About *The Reverse Version*), *Bungakukai* 54:12 (2000), p.251.

<sup>20</sup> The French word *pastiche*, which traces its origin to the Italian *pasticcio*, is a form of artistic 'plagiarism,' blending parts of different works into one artistic construction. See Ingeborg Hoesterey's "Postmodern Pastiche: A Critical Aesthetic" (*The Centennial Review* 39:3 [1995], p.493-510) for a more detailed analysis.

<sup>21</sup> In an article entitled "Fiction and Metafiction," Nakamura Miharū observes that Matsuura is influenced by Dazai Osamu, whose writings cannot be discussed without reference to his metafictional strategies. Matsuura says that "in the process of writing [*The Reverse Version*], the first thing that came into my head was Dazai Osamu" (p. 252). Nakamura discusses the metafictional impact of *The Reverse Version*, pointing out that the title of one chapter, "Joseito" (A Female Student), may intentionally derive from Dazai's novella entitled "Joseito."

<sup>22</sup> The construction and reconstruction of the term 'postmodernism,' and other related terms, like 'historiographic metafiction' (Hutcheon), 'simulacrum' (Baudrillard), 'paraliterature,' 'cultural logic of late capitalism' (Jameson) and 'literature of replenishment' (Barth) have resulted in confrontation,

states: "I would want to argue that postmodernist parody is a value-problematizing, de-naturalizing form of acknowledging the history (and through irony, the politics) of representations."<sup>23</sup> Iida Yûko's assertion that the novel's title, *The Reverse Version*, itself indicates that it is a parody of the 'right version' is certainly apposite. She views *The Reverse Version* as a parody of modern Japanese classics, such as Natsume Sôseki's *Kokoro* (1914, *The Heart*) and Hayashi Fumiko's *Hôrôki* (serialized sporadically from 1928-1949, *Vagabond's Song*).<sup>24</sup> Even though Iida's concept of 'parody' is slightly different from my own analysis, and she never uses the word 'postmodernism,' her theoretical perspective parallels what Hutcheon explores as postmodern strategies. From Hutcheon's theoretical viewpoint, 'the past' (a unitary view of the historically authentic) is intentionally used and integrated into a narrative at first, precisely in order to challenge 'the past' as that narrative develops. Similarly, Iida shows that in *The Reverse Version* Matsuura uses 'the past' (*Kokoro* and *Hôrôki*) in order to parody and subvert 'the past' as she develops her narrative. Thus, here I would like to discuss how Matsuura attempts to parody various historically institutionalized concepts, especially those related to gender formation, in *The Reverse Version*.

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confusion, and disagreement among literary critics. Postmodern discourse is not always well accepted. For example, Fredric Jameson asserts that "postmodernism is not merely a style, but rather a cultural dominant, especially the cultural dominant of late capitalism" (p.64). Jameson believes that postmodernism can be specifically related to issues of superficial novelty; the capitalist consumer system clearly shows "the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods" (p.65). Another criticism of postmodernism is that a society that engages in image fetishism—David Lyon calls it the 'investment of image'—generally tends to transform significant issues into mere images, and thus escapes from seriously dealing with its social (and economic) problems; critics such as Terry Eagleton thus believe that postmodern artists eventually narrow down the semantics of 'image' to that permitted within the prevailing discourse of representation. For the purposes of this project, however, I rely on critical works where the potentialities of postmodernism are discussed from a more positive point of view.

<sup>23</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 90.

<sup>24</sup> Iida Yûko. "Kotoba kankei o tsuzukeru: Matsuura Rieko *Uravâjon*, *Kokoro to Hôrôki to*" (The Continuity of Language Relationships: Matsuura Rieko's *The Reverse Version*, *Kokoro* and *Vagabond Years*." *Gendai shisô* 28:14 (2000).



It becomes apparent that, in various scenes of this work, Matsuura's strategy of postmodern parody has the effect of challenging established social/cultural paradigms. For instance, the following excerpt from Chapter 2 of *The Reverse Version* can be viewed as a postmodernist parody:

I said to Eddie, "I like sadomasochistic play with white women best. So I can't marry any man, no matter who." Eddie was shocked and cried. He wasn't shocked by my rejection, but by my twisted character. He said: "Are you really serious about all that?" So I explained to him clearly: "I am a masochist, but I don't support any kind of slavery. After being treated harshly by the women I've seduced in the city, I choose the proper moment, after the heat of our play has cooled down, and I suddenly become serious, saying: 'I can't believe that you have done such harsh things to a black woman.' Then, they usually become pale. I find it interesting. I have never allowed others to despise my race or myself."<sup>25</sup>

Here, the constructed concepts of perversion and hierarchy (the master and slave) related to sadomasochism and problematic racial issues are skillfully 'parodied' and thereby challenged. This leads us to consider what political, cultural and ideological contexts might be realized through exploring female fantasies of male homosexuality in *The Reverse Version* by means of the notion of postmodern parody.

It is obvious that the Chapter 10 narrative concerning Chiyoko's fantasies of male homosexuality reflects a comic parodic atmosphere. However, Chiyoko's narrative, as a postmodern parody, subverts constructed patriarchal norms regarding the idea that female subjectivity can never be signified. Here, I would like to explore Matsuura's postmodern

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<sup>25</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 252.

strategy, which attempts to 'parody' the problematic nature of the dichotomy between *shônen* and *shôjo*. Chiyoko's male homosexual fantasies not only describe a basic scenario involving the socio-psychological manifestations of female sexual desire, but also the paradigmatic construction of the *shônen* identity, which retextualizes ambivalent female sexual identities within the context of the reality-fantasy correlation:

The features of boys were very sweet. Even before developing any secondary sexual characteristics, boys were different from girls. They had clear-featured faces, lovely voices, tough and healthy bodies that seemed invulnerable, even when they tumbled about. Their bodies were simple and firmly shaped. Girls were graceful, but they were indistinct, feeble, less active, and could never be as conspicuous as boys, unless they were decorated with such things as lace and frills. You might say that girls were just somehow insufficient. Somewhat unnatural and artistic images also accompanied girls, who were decorated with lace and frills...In contrast, boys, who didn't require any unnecessary decoration, appeared to possess the fundamental features of human beings. Embryologically speaking, it has been said that girls possess their fundamental features from the beginning, while boys are transformed during development, so it must be wrong to consider boys' characteristics as fundamental. Nevertheless, Chiyoko sensed that boys were life itself.<sup>26</sup>

What strikes us in this passage is how Matsuura accounts for the ontological dichotomy between the *shôjo* as the 'artificial' or 'unnatural' and the *shônen* as 'life.' The fact that the *shôjo* is gaudily dressed in decorative lace, which is clearly designed to stress her feminine gender, seems uncanny (artificial) to Chiyoko, precisely because the *shôjo* is going through a

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<sup>26</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 124.

process of ideological synthesis and is being inscribed as a woman, a lack of being, within the Symbolic Order. Freud's concept of female 'penis-envy' may also be reflected in Chiyoko's disappointment at having been born as a girl: "It's not fun at all to be a girl. I have always wanted to be a boy...."<sup>27</sup>

The female subconscious desire to access the authoritative matrix of patriarchy by interacting with the *shōnen* identity is described in the following passage:

Boys were not idols only for Chiyoko. Weren't boys idols for everyone? In kindergarten, the female teachers smilingly chased the boys when they did naughty things. They played merrily with the boys, catching up with them, hitting them, and holding and swinging them. There was no opportunity for Chiyoko and the other girls to get such personal contact. Why was it that being naughty was something that only boys were allowed to do? Even after entering elementary school, the situation never changed. The ones the teachers liked the best were always the naughty boys. Sometimes they were struck hard by the teachers' fists. But it was undoubtedly the boys who were cared for most and who were played with most often by both the male and female teachers. Compared with them, girls were treated as ornaments. If they had any opportunity to be cared for by adults, they would just be praised with lip-service, such as "sweet girl" and "good girl," or else they experienced the attentions of perverted men, who wanted to put their hands in their underwear.<sup>28</sup>

Right after Chiyoko's boyfriend criticizes her, saying that she does not consider him as her better half, but rather as "a substitute or image of the men she madly loved,"<sup>29</sup> she seems to

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<sup>27</sup> Matsuura, *Uravājon*, p. 124.

<sup>28</sup> Matsuura, *Uravājon*, p. 123-124.

<sup>29</sup> Matsuura, *Uravājon*, p. 123-124.

be driven to reflect on her ontological position in regard to the patriarchal issues endemic to her female gender construction:

Chiyoko was extremely mortified by that criticism. 'I certainly love images of boys more than anything else. But that is a world completely distant from the reality in which I keep company with you [her boyfriend]. So, you can never substitute for it.'<sup>30</sup>

However, now Chiyoko is immediately eager to immerse herself in her male homosexual fantasies, in order to mitigate the psychological confusion incited by her boyfriend, and not to become engulfed in the abyss of patriarchal realities. The loss of realistic consciousness within the structure of the privileged signifier of female imaginative power can clearly be seen in the following:

Right after leaving his room, Chiyoko was seized with melancholia. Heading for the station, she felt her legs becoming heavy. 'I want to go back to the world of homosexual dreams, any kind of scenario would be all right.'<sup>31</sup>

The following passage shows that Chiyoko's subconscious attempts to escape from the reality of being a woman reach the point where she totally negates her female identity:

The gentle hippopotamus man [Chiyoko's boyfriend] didn't reach the point of saying: "You'd better change your sex, and become a man." But Chiyoko admitted that somebody else could have thrown those words at her. Even though nobody had ever said such a thing to her, Chiyoko herself had already pondered the idea. However, what Chiyoko enthusiastically desired was to become a young teenage boy. 'So, even if I changed my sex after reaching twenty and then had various

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<sup>30</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 122.

<sup>31</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 124.

opportunities to experience wonderful sex with men, that would still mean that I'd end my life without making my best wish come true. I already gave up on getting the best kind of pleasure in life a long time ago, when I was still quite small. Instead, throughout my life, I will need my homosexual dreams.'<sup>32</sup>

Thus, Chiyoko's male homosexual fantasies seem to compensate for her own destiny, in which she cannot be anything but a woman.

In this regard, Matsuura seems to use male homosexual fantasies in order to reinforce and recontextualize the ontology of women within the patriarchal framework; male homosexual fantasies represent women's lament over 'being a woman.' However, I would like to emphasize that Matsuura views the hierarchical *shōnen/shōjo* dichotomy (according to patriarchal paradigms) and male homosexual fantasies primarily as vehicles by which to express a sense of postmodern irony and parody. The female fantasies of male homosexuality in *The Reverse Version* basically consist of two alternating narrative (and ideological) realms, each of them representing interwoven but separate levels of subject and consciousness. The first level of narrative can be called the patriarchal story line; in this first narrative domain, the patriarchal norms (in terms of privileged male gender and subordinated female gender) are expressed and revealed. However, the main focus of Matsuura's discourse is on the significance of the second narrative domain, because this second narrative domain reveals, rather than conceals, her postmodern desire to 'parody' the first (primal and patriarchal) narrative domain.<sup>33</sup> The tone of postmodern parody in the second narrative is activated

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<sup>32</sup> Matsuura, *Uravājon*, p. 125.

<sup>33</sup> Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar analyze Anglophone women's literature in the nineteenth century (Jane Austen, George Eliot, Emily Dickinson, and so forth) in terms of the double narrative line. In the first narrative domain, we can see women writers' necessity to pattern their works after patriarchal writing norms, in order to be accepted by the patriarchal regime. On the other hand, women's subconscious desires for 'salvation' are suggested in the (concealed) second narrative line. Gilbert and Gubar therefore define

dramatically when we realize its ironic reversal of the customary relationship between the *shônen* and *shôjo*. In the primary narrative, Chiyoko's idealization of the *shônen* and her negation of the *shôjo* may seem to reinforce patriarchal realities, failing to address many crucial issues of gender configuration. However, when a *shôjo* freely operates the *shônen* as a puppet in the sphere of her male homosexual fantasies, the hierarchical dichotomy between *shônen* and *shôjo* is drastically reversed. For instance, in one scene the sociologically hierarchical relationship between man as subject and woman as object is reinforced by Chiyoko, who is rejected by her boyfriend and laments over the fact that she can't marry him. However, right after that, she has an opportunity to watch an erotic interaction between two boys:

It happened when the train stopped for a moment at the point where it made a sharp curve. From the wide-open view through the train window, without any high buildings, the second floor of a house came into sight, about 100 meters away. Even the bookshelves in the room could be perceived clearly, since the window was open. It looked like a children's room. There were two boys, around grade five or six, in the room. One of them was wearing a yellow T-shirt; the other was wearing a white one. Chiyoko suddenly thought that they would not be able to engage in any sexual acts, with such an open view from the train. There were no specific, well-grounded reasons that made Chiyoko feel this. Was it because she was so familiar with homosexual daydreams? Then, the one wearing the yellow T-shirt came up to the

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this second, concealed narrative domain as the 'real' (and autonomous) world, where women writers actually tell their own stories. However, this double narrative structure in women's literature can never be compatible with that of postmodern literary works. While the second, concealed, narrative domain that is analyzed by Gilbert and Gubar may paradoxically indicate that women writers and their literary works are, at all times, directly connected with the concept of anxiety (or desperation), the parodic subversion of the second narrative in postmodern works clearly overwhelms the first (patriarchal) narrative.

window and closed it, while still facing the other boy. Chiyoko wondered what was going on and strained her eyes to see. Even looking through the frosted glass, she could clearly distinguish the bright colors of the T-shirts. The boy in the yellow T-shirt, who had closed the window, went around behind the boy in the white T-shirt, who was sitting on the floor; he pushed his hands under the armpits of the other boy and held him tight. As she was about to utter a cry, the train started moving again, and the house with the young boys passed out of Chiyoko's view. 'What was that? It could have been nothing else but a homosexual act. Why do my own fantasies match reality so closely, as if it were a gift from Heaven?' She couldn't believe that she was experiencing hallucinations because of her emotional disorder. She had never experienced such a thing in her entire life. She could only think that an unbelievable coincidence had occurred, something with a vanishingly small probability of perhaps one in a hundred or even one in a thousand. Chiyoko was exalted and felt heartened.<sup>34</sup>

Chiyoko is relieved and energized by the homoerotic display that she has watched. Here, Chiyoko's male homosexual fantasies (and reality) function as the primary medium that endows her with power; the ironic and parodic reversal of the established gender hierarchy can be seen in the fact that the female gains a privileged position through the act of 'playing' with her male 'puppets.' Borrowing Iida's term, the primary narrative of patriarchal standards can be viewed as the 'right version,' while the significant features of the second narrative express the subversive possibilities of the 'reverse version.'

In the narrative, a *shôjo*, who is originally signified in terms of negative referents,

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<sup>34</sup> Matsuura, *Uravâjon*, p. 126-127.

ironically initiates a drama involving male characters for her own purposes; thus, no matter how much the *shōnen*'s ontological superiority is emphasized and idealized by Chiyoko, it is she herself (a female) who has the power to dominate the male (characters). In a parodic reversal of the established hierarchical relationship, a woman (the inferior) ironically dominates the 'para-society' of the male (the superior) world, and this is precisely what is required in the postmodern context. Linda Hutcheon explains the postmodern orientation in relation to its strategic reversal of totalizing norms:

Yet, it must be admitted from the start that this is a strange kind of critique, one bound up, too, with its own *complicity* with power and domination, one that acknowledges that it cannot escape implication in that which it nevertheless still wants to analyze and maybe even undermine. The ambiguities of this kind of position are translated into both the content and the form of postmodern art, which thus at once purveys and challenges ideology—but always self-consciously.<sup>35</sup>

Matsuura's narrative of male homosexual fantasies in Chapter 10 thus corresponds precisely with what Hutcheon calls postmodern *complicity* and *challenge*. In an interview published in a literary magazine, Matsuura clearly articulates her thematic intention of using male homosexual fantasies for a subversive, parodic purpose:

For example, in Chapter 10 homosexual fantasies, what are called 'yaoi,' appear.

"If it is said that men have colonized women, women can also colonize men through their images. I purposely wrote in terms of such a consciousness."<sup>36</sup>

Thus, while Matsuura pretends to have some complicity with the established dialectic of power by drawing a clear borderline between the idealized *shōnen* (man) and the

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<sup>35</sup> Hutcheon, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Matsuura, "Seiai kara yūai e," p.255.



dehumanized *shôjo* (woman), her postmodern strategy 'parodies' that hierarchy by ironically endowing the *shôjo* with more authority to freely 'play' with the *shônen*. The narrative of male homosexual fantasies in *The Reverse Version* can be viewed as a medium with which to 'parody' institutionalized and hierarchical concepts of gender-specificity, according to which women themselves come to believe that they can never be signified. In sum, Matsuura explicitly creates a 'parody' of female fantasies of male homosexuality, thereby asserting the power of female subjectivity in a very postmodern manner. Female fantasies of male homosexuality cannot be limited to the negative reference of lamenting female nature and femininity. Matsuura seems to use female fantasies of male homosexuality to reveal women's specific struggle to establish their social status on the basis of their self-identity as part of a postmodern strategy of 'parody' or reversed. However, the narrative of male homosexual fantasies can also be taken as reflecting a female subversive impulse to pursue multiple, diversified forms of sexuality, as I discuss in the next chapter on *yaoi manga*.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **Perverse Sexualities, Perverse Desires: Representations of Female Fantasies and Yaoi Manga as Pornography Directed at Women**

*There are many kinds of power, used and unused, acknowledged or otherwise. The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling.*

—Audre Lorde, “The Use of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power”

In contemporary Japanese society a particular genre of *manga*, called *yaoi*, can be characterized as female fantasies about idealized male homosexual relationships. These *yaoi* comic books are mostly produced by female authors; their readership is also overwhelmingly female. In discussions of this genre, the origin of the term *yaoi* has been a significant topic of debate. One hypothesis is that this term stems from the phrase ‘*yamanashi ochinashi iminashi*’ (no climax, no ending, no meaning); this phrase is considered as having originally represented a cynical remark, used to criticize works in which artists dedicated themselves to depicting pornographic sex scenes, while ignoring narrative functions and structures. Another hypothesis is that the term *yaoi* conjures up erotic elements, specifically the anal intercourse of male homosexuality, out of the phrase ‘*yamete oshiri ga itaikara*’ (Stop, my ass hurts!).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Nakajima Azusa’s *Tanatosu no kodomotachi: kajô tekiô no seitaigaku* (Children of Thanatos:

Whatever the true origin of the term may be, the *yaoi* comic books, as Kotani Mari indicates, is female-oriented (both producers and consumers), and thus deeply intertwined with what Alice Jardine calls the 'gynesis' of the female subconscious.

The particular revolutionary wave of *yaoi* arrived nearly a decade later, in the latter half of the 1970s, when Kurimoto Kaoru published *Mayonaka no tenshi* (Midnight Angel, 1979) and *manga* artists categorized as 1949-ers (the '24-nen gumi,' referring to the year of their birth) issued a succession of male homosexual works that are now highly acclaimed, such as Takemiya Keiko's *Kaze to ki no uta* (The Song of the Wind and the Tree, 1976), Hagio Moto's *Tôma no shinzô* (The Heart of Thomas, 1974), and Yamagishi Ryôko's *Hiizuru tokoro no tenshi* (The Prince of the Land of Sunrise, 1980). In 1979, a new magazine, *June* (pronounced 'Juné'; Sun Publisher), first emerged as a pioneer venue for female fantasies of male homosexuality.

Nowadays the *yaoi* genre, which includes a large number of comic books, novels, and weekly and monthly magazines dealing with male same-sex relationships, occupies a large sector of the Japanese book market, with many *manga* artists consistently attaining the bestseller list.<sup>2</sup> Many female *yaoi* readers are also enthusiastic about *dôjinshi* (amateur coterie magazines),<sup>3</sup> which often parody the male characters in popular *shônen* (boys')

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Ecology of Extreme Adaptation, Tokyo: Chikuma shobô, 1998) for a more detailed explanation of these hypotheses. Such terms as *tanbi mono* (aesthetic fiction), *bishônen mono* (fiction about beautiful boys), *june mono* (*June*-type fiction), *bôizu rabu mono* (boys' love fiction) are also used for this genre.

<sup>2</sup> In Mizoguchi Akiko's article entitled "Male-Male Romance by and for Women in Japan: History and the Subgenres of *Yaoi* Fiction," the history of *yaoi* (and *yaoi dôjinshi*) is well summarized. She also addresses such issues as the sales of *yaoi* publications, the definition of *yaoi* and other related terms, and control codes of sexual descriptions in *dôjinshi*.

<sup>3</sup> These are similar to "zines" in North America. See Sharon Kinsella's "Japanese Subculture in the 1990s: *Otaku* and the Amateur *Manga* Movement" (*Journal of Japanese Studies* 24:2, 1998) and Sharalyn Orbaugh "Creativity and Constraint in Amateur *Manga* production" (*U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 25, 2003) for more details about *dôjinshi* (including *yaoi dôjinshi*) marketing. Ôtsuka Eiji's analysis of *yaoi dôjinshi* should also be mentioned here. Ôtsuka's theoretical perspective on *yaoi* involves an examination of the concept of *monogatari* (narrative) in a capitalist consumer society. His focus is on the duplicated

*manga* and animations, pairing them in homosexual relationships. In this sense the formation of *yaoi dôjinshi* thematically parallels that of the American '/' ('slash') movement, which started by recasting *Star Trek* characters in homosexual pairings.<sup>4</sup>

Because of its nature, *yaoi* discourse provides various theoretical perspectives from which we can analyze the process of gender-creation and other controversial aspects of our cultural backgrounds. Before discussing theory, however, we should establish the parameters of *yaoi* narratives. Broadly speaking, *yaoi* can be divided into a number of firmly established narrative forms: *toshishita zeme* (in which the younger partner penetrates the older man); *shota mono* (works about love and sex between young adolescent males); *rîman mono* (works about business men, short for '*sararîman* [salaryman, i.e. businessman] *mono*'); *gakuen mono* (narratives situated on a campus); and so forth. Several important discursive issues can be raised about the recurring tropes within each of these categories, such as the fixed (or unfixed) relationship between the *seme* (the penetrating) and the *uke* (the penetrated); whether or not that relationship tends to be patterned on (and to reiterate) cultural stereotypes about the sexual roles in heterosexual relationships; the significance of the fact that *yaoi* characters are required to be unrealistically beautiful and so on.

Another salient topic pertaining to *yaoi* discourse involves the question of readership and gender/sex identity. Some critics have gone so far as to suggest that female readers (and

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system of *yaoi dôjinshi*, in which the basic narrative (main program) is copied from an original, 'grand narrative' (e.g. original *shônen manga* or animation), and that narrative is limitlessly rearranged, retold, and parodied. Ôtsuka argues that, in the dominant capitalist consumer society, consumers' orientation is not limited to consumption; consumers consume narratives, and are at the same time interested in producing (arranging) narratives. According to Ôtsuka, *yaoi dôjinshi* typically materialize the narrative concept of consumer capitalism. See Ôtsuka's *Teihon monogatari shôhi ron* (The Standard Text of Analysis of Monogatari, Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 2001) for more details regarding his analysis.

<sup>4</sup> See Joanna Russ's "Pornography By Women For Women, With Love" and Constance Penley's "Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Study of Popular Culture" for more details about the '/' ('slash') zine movement.

authors) of *yaoi* have problematic sexual identities, which they describe in such pathologizing terms as Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) and female to male (FTM) transsexuality.<sup>5</sup> Although all these issues require further critical and theoretical elaboration, in this chapter I will specifically explore *yaoi* as an example of narrative pornography directed at female readers.

Closely connected with the 'gynesis' issue of sexual unrest are the excessive sexual scenes that occur in *yaoi manga*, so we must question the purposes served by such pornographic narratives. Certainly, *yaoi manga* artists generally spend many pages describing sex scenes as minutely as possible, and these sexual descriptions are elaborated on to such an extent that they are frequently labeled pornographic. However, even though several *yaoi* critics, such as Kotani Mari, Fujimoto Yukari, and Nakajima Azusa, have explicitly labeled *yaoi* as pornography directed at women, their analysis is not theoretical. In this chapter I take a first step toward remedying this omission by exploring the ideological, cultural, and sexual possibilities (and impossibilities) of defining *yaoi manga* as pornography directed at women, in order to investigate the dimensions of female erotic fantasies and desires.

This analysis will be premised on the following principles: (1) the pornographic orientation of *yaoi manga* can be analyzed within the framework of Freud's article "A Child is Being Beaten," which clearly explicates the meaning and engagement of female identification, projection, scopophilia, and dissociation; and (2) on the basis of Hélène

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Nakajima Azusa's *Tanatosu no kodomotachi*. Nakajima asserts that *yaoi* can provide therapy for women suffering from the psychological imbalance of Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) acquired through sexual abuse. For Nakajima, *all* women are exposed to the trauma of sexual abuse by living within the prevailing context of patriarchy. For Kashiwabara Shihomi, *yaoi* functions as a representation of women whose egos have been disturbed by the impacts of transsexual identity. Analyzing *yaoi* within the framework of such pathologizing terms is beyond the scope of my analysis. However, I would like to point out the danger implicit in any critical approach that relies on essentializing assumptions such as the conclusion that all female *yaoi* readers have MPD or transgender/transsexual desires. See Kashiwabara's *Yaoi genron* (A Phantasmic Analysis of Yaoi) (Tokyo: Natsume shobô, 1998).

Cixous's theory of bisexuality, I will argue that female eroticism (and desires) in *yaoi* fantasy seem(s) to problematize the discourse of heterosexual structures that constitute the patriarchal myths of female sexuality. The results of this discussion will show that the pornographic eroticism of *yaoi* requires consideration in terms of its relation to specific forms of narrative structure. Moreover, I will show that *yaoi* narrative, as pornography for women, offers a subversive space within which prevailing theories of sexuality and psychoanalysis can be explored and challenged; this is particularly relevant in relation to the specific Japanese socio-cultural situation vis-à-vis sexual-textual liberation.

#### **"A" Pornography or Pornographies**

On the first page of her essay entitled "Pornography By Women For Women, With Love," Joanna Russ states, referring to 'slash' 'zines, that "there is pornography written 100% by women for a 100% female readership."<sup>6</sup> Constant Penley labels 'slash' as "romantic pornography."<sup>7</sup> Henry Jenkin's analysis of 'slash' seems purposely to underestimate the significance of female sexual desires (e.g. as depicted in/by pornography directed at women) with regard to excessive sexual descriptions.<sup>8</sup> As Russ and Penley point out, the very concept of female sexual desires and repressions in 'slash' (and *yaoi*) cannot be explored without examining the impact of excessive sexual descriptions and a discourse based on pornographic principles. Similarly, Kashiwabara Shihomi suggests that *yaoi* should be formally recognized as pornography directed at female readers, taking into consideration

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<sup>6</sup> Russ, p. 79.

<sup>7</sup> Penley, "Brownian Motion: Women, Tactics and Technology," p. 138.

<sup>8</sup> See Henry Jenkins's, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*.

the thematic reasons for *yaoi* culture's great popularity.<sup>9</sup> However, the theoretical framework of the pornographic nature of *yaoi* discourse awaits more detailed study.

Andrea Dworkin criticized pornography, suggesting that the thematic stance of pornography cannot escape reducing women's status to that of objects of satisfaction for men's sexual appetites. Following Laura Mulvey's critical analysis in her pioneering article on feminist visual theory, "Visual and Other Pleasures," Dworkin and other anti-pornography feminists deliberately essentialize the gaze as a binary construction, with men as the gaze/subject/powerful and women as the gazed-upon/object/powerless. In a broad sense, the formal and thematic validity of this visual theory stems from two major questions:

Is there 'a' gaze that is firmly gendered? And: Is that single gaze strongly power-related?

Lacan (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 1973) suggests a different way of analyzing this issue, stating that the gazing subject can, in turn, be objectified as the gazed-upon object—which calls into question the fixed nature of the power relationships produced by the gaze. Lacan's scenario of the potential mutuality of the gaze calls into question Dworkin's contentions and some of Mulvey's. Another problematic aspect of the Dworkian anti-pornography stance derives from the fact that her definition of pornography is based on her assumption of the value and validity of what Adrienne Rich called 'compulsory heterosexual' paradigms. Here, the sexual designation of pornography and desire is limited to the heterosexual, and this solidifies the distinction between the active male role of seeing and the passive female role of being seen.

This definition of pornography raises interesting questions about the position of

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<sup>9</sup> Kashiwabara, p. 102.

female readers in the field of pornography. If we propose a strategic reversal of the pornographic gaze to that of a gazing female and a gazed-upon male (as, for example, in male strip shows for women), we find that we are similarly caught up in the metaphysics of patriarchal-heterosexism. In a broader consideration of the definition of pornography, we need to avoid such exclusionary patriarchal and heterosexual conceptual paradigms. The most useful counterarguments to Dworkin's theory of pornography come from lesbian critics such as Judith Butler, Teresa de Lauretis, and Pat Califia, who raise issues about the position of female (especially lesbian) readers of pornography. Both de Lauretis and Butler believe in the value and validity of pornography as sexual 'fantasy,' basing their thematic analysis on Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis's famous article, "The Fantasy and Origin of Sexuality." Califia also argues that lesbian sadomasochism (S/M) in pornography functions as a creative fantasy, and thus possesses subversive possibilities that escape complicity with patriarchal schema. Such incompatible stances among critics and defenders of pornography are relevant to our consideration of female erotic (and pornographic) fantasies of male homosexuality. Pornographic discourses have been articulated differently, depending on the audiences at which they are directed.

Also, in attempting to explore the discourse of pornography, we have to consider the context of erotica. Due to the etymological backgrounds of these words ('pornography' refers to prostitution, and 'erotica' derives from 'eros'), such critics as Audre Lorde, Dianna Russel, and Gloria Steinem support the idea of positively signified 'eros' versus negatively signified 'pornography.' For instance, Lorde defines the erotic as subversive power, asserting that the "very word *erotic* comes from the Greek word *eros*, the personification of love in all its aspects—born of Chaos, and personifying creative power and harmony"; in contrast,



“pornography is a direct denial of the power of the erotic, for it represents the suppression of true feeling.”<sup>10</sup> However, even though Lorde attempts to textually ‘name’ pornography and eroticism, the epistemology of these terms still presents divergent, paradoxical, and ambiguous implications. As Brian McNair says, “pornography, and the elements said to comprise it, are shifting, slippery things, changing their content and meaning over time and between cultures.”<sup>11</sup> As well, it is clear that Lorde’s idea of the erotic and Califia’s exploration of pornography cannot be completely distanced from each other, precisely because both (the erotic for Lorde and pornography for Califia) seem to possess subversive aspects. In this regard, we need to consider the erotic and pornography neither as diametrically opposed nor as identical terms. In my analysis of *yaoi manga* as pornography in this chapter, I would like to promote Drucilla Cornell’s concept of pornography as ‘speech.’ She asserts that “we need to explore the temptation of pornography; exactly how and what it communicates.”<sup>12</sup> For Cornell, pornography is not synonymous with visual representations of kinky scenes; instead, it provides a discursive space in which to analyze the contextualization of sexual temptation. Thus, in this chapter, I would like to consider the concept of the erotic (the power of mutual and harmonized pleasures in Lorde’s sense) as a way to discuss pornography’s “language of lust” (Cornell), and to show how the sexually explicit scenes in *yaoi manga* ‘speak’ to female readers and ‘tempt’ them.

*Yaoi* narratives include all kinds of sexual acts, such as hand jobs, fellatio, digital penetration of the anus, and S/M. The following citations from “Readers’ Pages” in *yaoi*

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<sup>10</sup> Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” in *Feminism and Pornography*, ed. Drucilla Cornell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 570-571.

<sup>11</sup> Brian McNair, *Mediated Sex: Pornography and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Arnold, 1996), p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> Drucilla Cornell, “Pornography’s Temptation” in *Feminism and Pornography*, p. 555.

magazines reveal female readers' reactions to such explicit sex:<sup>13</sup>

The final episode of Minami Haruka's "Love à la Carte!" (Ren'ai arakaruto!) is so good and obscene. So much . . . semen!! (sorry to write something so crude). The scene in which Izumi looks surprised when a finger is inserted in his butt and he is forced to ejaculate—I found it erotic.

*(Konkai no saishûwa [Minami Haruka Sensei no "Ren'ai arakaruto!"] totemo H de yokatta desu. Nanitte eki ga . . . ôi [gehin de sumimasen]. Oshiri ni yubi irerarete ikasarete bikkuri shiteru Izumi-kun, erokatta).*<sup>14</sup>

The other day, I lent *Gold* to my friend. Later, she told me that she had a nosebleed. . . . I wonder if she is sexually frustrated.

*(Senjitsu tomodachi ni GOLD o miseta tokoro nanto sono tomodachi wa hanaji o dashita sô desu . . . tomodachi wa sôtô yokkyû fuman na no ka na to omotte imasu).*<sup>15</sup>

Insofar as these female readers consume *yaoi manga* as a medium through which they are sexually 'tempted,' we may define these texts as pornographic. Next we shall explore the ways gendered sexuality is constructed in *yaoi manga*, and the relationship of this construction to female psychology.

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<sup>13</sup> In Japanese *manga* magazines, readers frequently write letters to the magazine to comment on stories they like. The fact that many *manga* magazines include a reader response questionnaire that can be filled out and sent in demonstrates that readers' opinions are seriously considered when editors decide what to include in future issues.

<sup>14</sup> In colloquial Japanese language, 'H' (pronounced 'etchi') stands for the obscene and erotic.

<sup>15</sup> "Readers' Pages," *Be-Boy Gold* (April 2002, Biblos Publisher). In Japanese *manga*, nosebleeds often signify sexual excitement, so this real-life nosebleed is being interpreted in a similar way, as an excess of sexual excitement built up over a long period of sexual frustration.

### **A Female *Yaoi* Reader Watches a Boy Being Beaten by His Father**

In Chapter one, I discussed the framework of female sexual fantasies in Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten." Here, I would like to explore this issue further and provide some theoretical perspectives from which we can discuss formations of female sexual fantasies in relation to issues concerning pornography directed at women. As Arnold H. Modell points out, in "A Child is Being Beaten" Freud explores the third-stage narrative specifically in terms of female sexual arousal. Modell states "the most important aspect of the third stage is that the fantasy creates unambiguous sexual excitement, which is used for masturbation."<sup>16</sup> In this chapter, I shall discuss the possibility of analyzing *yaoi manga* as female pornography foregrounding female masturbatory pleasure. I hope that this analysis will provide a discursive space in which we can understand how the sexual pleasure of third-stage female subjects is initiated in "A Child is Being Beaten."

The basic premise of *yaoi* foregrounds the autonomous female act of viewing a male homoerotic display. *Yaoi* is assumed to illustrate the formula of woman as gazing subject and man as gazed-upon object. Following the pattern of Freud's female subjects, who watch the boy being beaten by his father, *yaoi* may thus be defined as the representation of female desire with a scopophilic orientation and pleasures. As indicated by Fujimoto Yukari (*Watashi no ibasho wa doko ni aru no?* 1998), Ueno Chizuko (*Hatsujô sôchi*, 1998), and Nakajima Azusa (*Komyunikêshon fuzen shôkôgun*, 1995), for female readers *yaoi* represents a 'puppet show' in which a pornographic mode of *textuality* has been developed: just as Freud's female referents gaze at the scene in which the child and the father interact erotically,

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<sup>16</sup> Modell, p. 70.

so female *yaoi* readers play the role of observers of the 'show' of two men or boys acting out sexual, erotic, and pornographic roles. At this level, to epitomize *yaoi* in the simplest way, we could say that a subversive impulse is perceivable in *yaoi* narratives because women who are 'normally' deprived of the privileged position of the gazing subject are endowed with the power to 'gaze' at these male homoerotic displays. If so, *yaoi* would be equivalent to 'lesbian' displays directed only at men, in which the male gender is empowered with the attributes of a disinterested spectator.

However, we must recognize that there is an implicit danger in the idea that women can readily reverse or deconstruct the usual visual hierarchy through taking up an active position in it. There are thus a number of theoretical difficulties in examining and formulating the various aspects of female scopophilic desires solely within the framework of *yaoi* discourse. We cannot neglect the fact that Freud views female beating fantasies in terms of psychological perversion. Thus, before rushing to the conclusion that *yaoi* constitute a transparent medium that serves to enhance the subversive female drive to challenge the male-oriented structure of the 'gaze,' we need to examine the complex structures of the female psyche in relation to such particular desires for male homosexual fantasies.

Luce Irigaray and other feminist psychoanalysts have attempted to pinpoint how the Freudian theory of penis-envy, which situates women as unable to access representation within patriarchal discourse,<sup>17</sup> purposely reinforces the representation of *sexuality* in masculine terms, so that this masculine discourse also situates women as unable to access active sexuality. In this context, the right to access any materials related to sexual fantasies

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<sup>17</sup> Irigaray asserts that the perceiving female subject in penis envy is no longer treated as a coherent, meaning generating entity because the concept of penis-envy necessarily reflects a specifically male fear of castration. She concludes that Freud's patriarchal theory solidifies the metaphysical structure that "sexuality is never defined with respect to any sex but the masculine" (*This Sex Which Is Not One*, p.69).

and desires has been reinforced by the epistemological power of masculinity, which in Lacanian terms is symbolized as the phallic. For example, it becomes apparent that X-rated videos, erotic comics, nude magazines, and other erotic materials were originally masculine inventions that men are privileged to access. What this means is that women's sexual identities have been alienated from any possibility of entering as subject into the representation of the erotic.

In contemporary Japanese society, the elaboration of eroticism is still dominated by the authority and symbolic features of the phallus. In contrast to Japanese men, who openly read pornographic *ero-manga* and nude magazines while on subways, trains, and buses, as discussed in Ann Allison's book, *Permitted and Prohibited Desires*, and Sandra Buckley's "Penguin in Bondage: A Graphic Tale of Japanese Comic Books," Japanese women and girls hesitate to open pornographic *yaoi manga* in public. This can be seen, for example, in the following remarks from "Readers' Pages":

... my everyday routine involves feeling ashamed for going to the cashier to buy *yaoi manga*.<sup>18</sup>

[On the train,] I was eating rice balls and sandwiches while reading *Magazine Be-Boy*. Then a middle-aged woman sitting next to me peeped into my magazine and said "It's amazing that nowadays not only men but also women read such obscene magazines."<sup>19</sup>

The depiction of eroticism is irrevocably gendered, and insofar as sexual eroticism is formulated in terms of the masculine and the phallic, women are constrained from accessing

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<sup>18</sup> "Readers' Pages," *Magazine Be-Boy* (February 2003).

<sup>19</sup> "Readers' Pages," *Magazine Be-Boy* (July 2002).

pornographic pleasures, such as watching adult videos or reading *ero-manga*.<sup>20</sup>

For women, the problematic aspect of eroticism is associated not only with their lack of access to pornographic materials but also with the psychological complexities connected with a sense of guilt. In "A Child Is Being Beaten," Freud defines the very concept of female sexuality (and sexual desire) in terms of women's inevitable feelings of guilt due to women's unconscious incestuous desires. Although Freud's stance on this issue should be questioned, he should also be credited with pointing out that women's primal sexual identity often includes feelings of guilt. Freud limits himself to discussing this guilt within the context of women's subconscious desire for an incestuous (heterosexual) relationship. Arnold H. Modell seems to have a similar problem in regard to Freud's critical stance: "Freud was undoubtedly right in assigning to guilt a central role in the genesis of this masochistic fantasy. But I would question whether the content of the guilt is as uniformly incestuous as Freud describes."<sup>21</sup> We can further develop the concept of female feelings of guilt from a different perspective, that is, in terms of women's reactions to heterosexual pornographic materials. Then the question becomes how the mechanism of women's guilt or shame works within the framework of pornographic representations. A gender-based analysis following from a recognition of this psychological dilemma suggests that, first of all, women feel guilt about identifying with female characters (or models) in pornography, who express sexual satisfaction by means of male penetration.

To escape complicity in this sexual dilemma involving the sense of guilt attached to the consumption of heterosexual pornographic materials, Japanese women created the world

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<sup>20</sup> Gretchen Jones analyzes how Japanese 'ladies' comics'—i.e., heterosexual pornographic *manga* directed at female readers—function to comfort women who are psychologically reluctant to purchase male-oriented pornographic pleasures. See "'Ladies' Comics': Japan's Not-So-Underground Market in Pornography for Women" (*U.S. Japan Women's Journal* 22 [2002]) for further analysis.

<sup>21</sup> Modell, p. 73.

of *yaoi*, fantasies about male homosexuals in which female readers are not required to consider the disadvantages of exposing their eroticism, since the essentialized female sexual identity that fetters women in other forms of pornography is excluded from *yaoi* narratives. Here, the important debate over female sexuality in *yaoi manga* can be discussed in terms of a psychological process called 'projective identification,' which means "splitting off and getting rid of unwanted parts of the self that cause anxiety or pain."<sup>22</sup> Here, what I explore as the psychological process of projection is theoretically similar to what Midori Matsui has argued—namely, that "girl readers . . . kill[ing] off the abject part of their own femininity."<sup>23</sup> However, though Matsui seems to undermine the subversive potential of Kristeva's abjection theory in arguing that the abject part is "killed off" in order to "be accepted by the patriarchal culture" (*ibid.*), I would like to emphasize that the act of projecting female sexuality can be diversified and transformed in *yaoi* rather than being prohibited from being represented. (I will expand on this point in the next section, on bisexual representation.)

Revealing the capacity (and necessity) for projecting the repressed components of female sexuality onto male characters in *yaoi*, female readers attempt to escape from the dilemma of dealing with their own sexual repression. In *yaoi*, insofar as all aspects of the sexual repression involved in 'enjoying' pornographic sex are projected onto male homosexual characters who are biologically not 'women,' female readers are liberated from feelings of guilt and shame connected with deriving sexual excitement from their identification with the abjected and objectified female characters who appear in pornography

<sup>22</sup> Betty Joseph, "Projective Identification: Some Clinical Aspects," in *The New Library of Psychoanalysis*, Vol 7, *Melanie Klein Today: Developments in Theory and Practice* Vol1: *Mainly Theory*, p. 138.

<sup>23</sup> Midori Matsui, "Little Girls Were Little Boys: Displaced Femininity in the Presentation of Homosexuality in Japanese Girls' Comics," in *Feminism and the Politics of Difference*, eds. Sneja Gunew and Anna Yeatman (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 1993), p. 186.

directed at men. It is precisely through this process of projecting repressed female sexuality onto male homosexual characters that female readers obtain the ambivalent and balanced status of identifying with the protagonists, and at the same time dissociating themselves from them by their scopophilic orientation, thereby achieving a safe and comfortable involvement with the pornographic.

After projecting the uncontrollable impetus of their sexual desires onto male homosexual characters, female readers are drawn into the enterprise of eroticism through their imaginative collaboration with one or both of the male characters who perform sexual acts. Here it can be briefly remarked that the significance of identification is that it provides female readers with access to the phallus, symbolized as the power of sexual domination in such 'transgressive' sexual acts as anal sex, S/M, rape, the use of sexual apparatuses, and fellatio. In *yaoi*, both the penetrated *uke* (passive) characters and the penetrating *seme* (active) characters enunciate their active erotic desire with such statements as "It's great! I can really feel it!" (*Ii! Sugoku kanjiru!*); "Your penis is too big for me" (*Omae no ôkisugiru*); "Not from the front, please insert from the back" (*Maekara ja naku ushiro kara shite*); and "Do you want to come in my mouth?" (*Kuchi ni dasu?*).<sup>24</sup> In this way, *uke* characters are portrayed as enjoying sex as freely as *seme* characters do.

As a consequence, the concept of a constructed female sexuality defined in relation to such terms as 'guilt' and 'shame' is sublimated in *yaoi*. In a move that complicates the discussion further, the locus of interactivity in *yaoi* functions not only through women's acquiring the phallic authority to deal with their eroticism, but also through offering the possibility of a scopophilic dissociation (and consequent distance) from male characters (and

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<sup>24</sup> I cite these explicitly erotic phrases from *Be-Boy Magazines*.



from the practical reality of sexuality itself) by which women can control the balance of subjective sexual repression. In this context psychoanalytic concepts of female sexuality—such as projection, identification, scopophilia, and dissociation—interact reciprocally and thereby enable female readers to access pornographic representations in terms of the gynesistic sexuality embodied in *yaoi*.

### **The Representation of Bisexuality as Subversive in *Yaoi***

We encounter difficulties in defining the conditions and limits of female sexuality when discussing *yaoi* because critics tend to describe representations of female sexuality in them in terms of the problematic interactions inherent in heterosexual paradigms. For instance, as Nakajima Azusa points out, these fantasies about male homosexuals reveal subconscious female desires to escape from the components of femininity. Nakajima's focus on female ambivalence in *yaoi* demonstrates how the qualities of female beauty are cunningly encoded by the masculine gaze: "In this world, being beautiful, coquettish, cute, and sexy is the most important value for a *shôjo*. If a *shôjo* is not beautiful, coquettish, cute, and sexy, she is harshly treated, mocked, neglected, and made into a butt of comedy."<sup>25</sup> Further, women who consistently expose themselves to such a selective masculine gaze in the context of a hierarchically ordered society attempt to nullify their female bodies (and such social paradigms as female beauty, motherhood, the reproductive function), and to take refuge in the harmonious sphere of male homosexual fantasies.

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<sup>25</sup> Nakajima, *Komyunikêshon fuzen shôkôgun*, p. 191.

Fujimoto Yukari argues that the problematic aspect of female sexuality in *yaoi* unquestionably involves an “escapist impulse from the pain of being passive in sexual acts.”<sup>26</sup> Fujimoto’s definition is reinforced by Midori Matsui’s analysis of the character of Gilbert in Takemiya Keiko’s *Kaze to ki no uta* (The Song of the Wind and the Tree), who is repeatedly raped. Matsui argues that the fact that Gilbert is the victim of rape—an act generally associated with female sexuality—enables the female reader to identify with him as well as to experience a vicarious fear that reflects the reader’s own sexuality, since she realizes that she herself may be a future rape victim. And Suzuki Kazuko points out that *yaoi* functions as a fantasy in which female readers escape complicity with the hegemonic masculine discourse that limits female sexuality to a ‘childbearing’ framework. For Suzuki, the “abandonment of the female body via the depiction of male homosexual relations emerged as the result of disappointment with a society characterized by sexual oppression.”<sup>27</sup> The theoretical focus of these *yaoi* critics is thus on the concept of female sexuality as essentially passive. This is signified by their consistent use of terms such as ‘pain,’ ‘fear,’ and ‘abandonment,’ and this negative attitude toward female sexuality completely dominates their consideration of the narrative structures of *yaoi* sexuality. However, this tendency to analyze *yaoi* sexuality in terms of female passivity ignores the subversive possibilities that *yaoi* discourse presents in relation to traditional gender configurations. Because my focus in this project involves identifying and integrating those elements in *yaoi* that can stimulate women’s sexual desires and fantasies, I will proceed with my analysis not by limiting *yaoi*’s gynesistic sexuality to a reflection of passive female sexuality, but by broadening the

<sup>26</sup> Fujimoto Yukari, *Watashi no ibasho wa doko ni aru no* (Where Do I Belong? The Shape of the Heart Reflected in Shôjo Manga) (Tokyo: Gakuyô shobô), p. 142.

<sup>27</sup> Kazuko Suzuki, “Pornography or Therapy?,” in *Millennium Girls: Today’s Girls Around the World*, ed. Sherrie I. Inness (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), p. 250.

epistemological interpretation of female desires in *yaoi* as multiply divergent.

As I argued above, it is precisely because *yaoi* has significance as a pornographic representation directed at female readers, and is generally discussed in relation to issues surrounding female sexuality and fantasy, that the psychoanalytic norms of readers' identification with the male homosexual characters become the focus of analysis. However, if this discourse of identification with respect to *yaoi* is limited to a consideration of female readers' specific form of identification with penetrated *uke* characters who play the more passive and 'feminine' role—as Fujimoto, Matsui, and Sukuzi suggest—then this drastically narrows the scope of potential female sexual desires and fantasies that can come into play in *yaoi*. The issue of the stylized depiction of the characters in *yaoi* thus has considerable significance, in that the conventions of depiction generally reinforce the binary oppositional relationship between the penetrating *seme* character and the penetrated *uke* character in ways that appear parallel to a heterosexual orientation.

It is certainly persuasive to argue, as the three critics just mentioned have done, that a gender-based interpretation of *yaoi* suggests that the practical reality of women's sexuality is presupposed as a passive, 'penetrated' orientation, so that female readers are tempted to identify with *uke* characters more than with *seme* ones. However, if we put aside these stereotypical constructions of female sexuality and analyze the potentially *divergent* impulses of identification with regard to *yaoi*, we realize that a deconstruction of the masculine-heterosexual mechanism takes place in a very practical manner. In an article entitled "Dimensions of Desire: Sex, Fantasy, and Fetish in Japanese Comics," Setsu Shigematsu points out the danger in automatically assuming that the sexual pleasures and desires of female readers of 'ladies' comics' (*redisu komikku*, or *redikomi*) stem from their act

of identifying with raped female characters. Appropriating the Kleinian theory of multiple, synchronic identification—as opposed to Freud’s notion of diachronic identification, in which each process of identification represents a separate stage of development—, Shigematsu says:

I think that identifications are more oscillating and fluid, shifting and incomplete, moving among multiple contradictory (psychic) sites that are constituted differently depending on the specific history and experiences of the subject.<sup>28</sup>

If we consider the multiple, shifting, and synchronic processes of identification experienced by female readers during the act of reading *yaoi manga*, we can push this discussion of the productive possibilities of deconstructing patriarchal-masculine dynamics even farther.

To understand how female *yaoi* readers put the theory of multiple synchronic identifications into practice in relation to *yaoi*, it is useful to examine the narrative subgenre categorized as ‘reversible.’ This subgenre represents the sexual dynamism inscribed in the complexities of *yaoi*’s gender configurations to the fullest possible extent. As the name itself indicates, a ‘reversible couple’ signifies male lovers who never draw borders between *uke* and *seme* sexualities, so that they frequently ‘reverse’ sex roles, becoming involved in both active (penetrating) and passive (penetrated) sexual pleasure. It seems that an ideological answer to questions presented by female desires for multiple identifications may lie in this sexual elaboration of the ‘reversible couple,’ who both penetrate and are penetrated and who thus present numerous possibilities in terms of the representation of multiple sexual pleasures.

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<sup>28</sup> Setsu Shigematsu, “Dimensions of Desire: Sex, Fantasy, and Fetish in Japanese Comics,” in *Themes and Issues in Asian Cartooning: Cute, Cheap, Mad, and Sexy*, ed. John A. Lent (Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999), p. 136.

For instance, in Nitta Yûka's *yaoi manga* entitled *Haru o daite ita* (Holding onto the Spring), serialized in *Be-Boy Gold*, the narrative describes its main characters, the famous actors Iwaki Kyôsuke and Katô Yôji, as a 'reversible couple.' In one of the episodes, after 'getting married' in Las Vegas, Iwaki and Katô spend their first night together as a 'married couple.' As the scene indicates, Iwaki, who was first penetrated by Katô, says: "I want to make love to you this time. What do you think about that?" (*Ore mo omae o dakitai. Iya ka?*) Katô answers: "How can I say no to you!" (*Iya na wake nai jan*). (On one page, Iwaki is performing the *seme* role and Katô is performing the *uke* role, but on the next page their sexual roles are 'reversed.')

In this context, the sexual moods and tonalities of these 'reversible' characters work in practical terms to solidify the foundation for examining the corroboration of active and passive eroticism as it relates to a divergent sexual enterprise.

In the standard *yaoi* narratives as well, in which the sex roles of *seme* and *uke* characters are usually more fixed, the *uke* character may represent a 'vagina/anus' to be penetrated, but at the same time his phallic pleasure is never neglected. For example, the *uke* character's sexual pleasures as both 'vagina/anus' and penis are synchronically represented in some *yaoi manga*. The main characters in "P-B-B" (Playboy Bruce) are Shinobu (*uke*), the former No.1 host in the club, and Junsuke (*seme*), the current No.1 host. In one of the scenes, while being penetrated by Junsuke, Shinobu says: "Oh, God . . . I really feel like I could become your woman. . . I feel like I'm going to get pregnant" (*Yabee . . . ore . . . maji omae no onna ni saresô da yo . . . haranjaisô*). Penetrating Shinobu's anus and fellating his penis at the same time, Junsuke replies: "You're fine as a man. . . besides. . . I . . . like your penis." (*Otoko no mama de iin da yo . . . ore . . . anta no kore suki da shi*).<sup>29</sup> Here, the coexistence of

<sup>29</sup> The ellipses here are as in the Japanese original.

Shinobu's erotic pleasures at being simultaneously penetrated and fellated indicates a pervasively divergent homosexual eroticism that succeeds in challenging the master narrative of distinguishing an active (penetrating) sexuality from a passive (penetrated) one.

The thematic energy of *yaoi* discourse is thus originally associated with the female act of embodying an erotic force in the process of identifying with male homosexual characters. Insofar as such an identification process cannot be limited to either the penetrated *uke* or penetrating *seme*, female sexual desires in *yaoi* encompass a limited range of sexual pleasure within the context of multiple and shifting desires. Of course, such female desires (and fantasies) about divergent sexualities in *yaoi* may not always constitute a positive psychological reaction. It can be argued that the discourse of *yaoi* sexuality is limited in terms of its relation to patriarchal-heterosexual norms because it seems to reflect heterosexual structures of penis-oriented sexuality that are confined to 'the signified' of the penetrating/penetrated dyad. It is certain both that the sense of phallic dynamism in *yaoi* is elevated to such an extent that the erotic climax of these narratives is consistently represented by anal intercourse, and that this parallels the paradigmatic heterosexual narrative in which the word 'penis' is presumed to possess magical powers over female readers in terms of their access to the representation of eroticism. If *yaoi* culture had emerged during Freud's era, he would no doubt have been enchanted by it and considered it the most suitable medium through which to verify his theory of women's penis-envy.

However, any discussion of the vital importance of sexual emancipation remains irrelevant and fruitless as long as the sexual themes of *yaoi* are analyzed in terms of exclusively heterosexual political and institutional structures. It is significant, therefore, that we can discern that the background narrative of women's psychological development in

reading *yaoi* is their subconscious desire to deviate from a principle of female sexuality defined as irreducibly under the power of male domination. The privileged position of the 'penis' in *yaoi* has to do with female desires (and fantasies) of assimilating phallic sexuality into a *vaginal* orientation. Bathing in a fantasy of male homosexuality—in which male characters (both *uke* and *seme* characters and the 'reversible couple') highlight such divergent sexual aspects as the active and the passive, the penetrating and the penetrated—female readers desire not the unified sexuality of the vagina but an encompassing eroticism that combines vaginal/anal and phallic orientations. Female *yaoi* readers therefore identify with *yaoi* characters who discard neither the ecstasy of the penis nor that of vaginal/anal pleasure in order to simulate the combined sexual pleasures resulting from an imaginatively coexisting penis and vagina/anus.

Precisely because the concept of *yaoi* sexuality is multiply shifting and divergent, it can be analyzed in relation to issues surrounding bisexual/androgynous identities. In chapter one, I discussed how such concepts as bisexuality and androgyny offer clear examples of the importance of challenging the apparent limitations of sexual identities. Our understanding of the female reader's fascination with the depiction of a body in which the penis and vagina/anus are compatible is enhanced by Cixous's hypothesis of bisexuality and Pacteau's exploration of androgyny as a signifier that challenges the solid ground of gender/sexuality construction.<sup>30</sup> However, it might be counter-argued that my discussion of homosexual characters in terms of Pacteau's theory of androgyny is incorrect, because she concludes that the androgynous image should not possess any (sexually) visible characteristics. As we can

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<sup>30</sup> Penley also devotes attention to the androgynous, bisexual characteristics of Kirk and Spock in 'K/S slash.' However, her analysis of 'slash' basically concludes with her statement that Kirk and Spock are definitely men, with male bodies.

see from the illustrations, *yaoi* characters are biologically male and possess visible genitals. In this sense, *yaoi* characters should be analyzed as hermaphrodites, not as androgynes in Pacteau's schema. However, I would like to emphasize the androgynous nature of *yaoi* characters' images in the following ways. First of all, as discussed above, these characters' sexualities can never be inscribed within the context of patriarchal-heterosexual paradigms; the potential ability of these characters to nullify the inscriptive elements of heterosexism coincides with Pacteau's model of androgyny. Moreover, just as, according to Pacteau's model, androgyny is never inscribed with visible biological characteristics, so the genitals of *yaoi* characters are almost always visually obscured—only presented in outline, or whited out, or hidden something; in the same way, the concept of the 'penis' per se is also abstracted within the sexual discourse of *yaoi* narratives. Even though *yaoi* characters are described as biologically male, their characteristics and behavior reveal that they are not really male, but idealized representations of female fantasies. Thus, the penis of such *yaoi* characters cannot be definitively identified with the biological penis, precisely because for these characters the 'penis' is an imaginary artifact; in *yaoi*, the 'penis' symbolizes an 'absence,' rather than being an exact representation of a biological penis. I would thus like to emphasize that all (male) *yaoi* characters may be considered as androgynous, owing to the fact that their genitals represent a fantasized (idealized) concept, instead of being inscribed as the (biological) 'penis.' Among these characters, reversible couples in particular may be viewed as androgynous, precisely because they obscure any singular concept of sexuality all the more by means of their divergent sexual orientations.

Mizoguchi Akiko's analysis of female identification with male homosexual characters provides an interesting perspective:



What I would like to say is that when female readers say that they empathetically identify with the inserter (*seme*), their stance is preconditioned by the fact that in reality they perpetually take the inserted one's (*uke*'s) position. When female readers emotionally empathize with the *seme*'s act of making the *uke* become 'a woman' and become sexually excited, their existential stance originally internalizes the *uke*. Precisely because they are familiar with the role of 'a woman,' they are able to imagine how, in contrast with his male gender, the *uke* becomes 'a woman.' Thus, they understand the *seme*'s pleasure in making a man become 'a woman.'<sup>31</sup>

Mizoguchi's concept that women who naturally internalize their 'penetrated' femininity empathize with the *uke*'s pleasure makes sense. However, Mizoguchi's analysis of issues surrounding female identification with male homosexual characters stops at this point. Her analysis is not sufficient to comprehend the process by which various kinds of female pleasure are organized when women identify with the *seme*'s pleasure in making a man (*uke*) become 'a woman.' Does this identification with the *seme*'s pleasure reflect a subconscious female desire to dominate the former dominator (men)? Or does this mean that, while a woman identifies with the *uke*'s passive pleasure, she also wants to view herself simultaneously from a different (the *seme*'s) perspective? I interpret Mizoguchi's assertion that women's (imaginary) pleasure in penetration derives from the act of identifying with the *seme* as representing women's subconscious desire to simulate a form of male-oriented pleasure that differs from internalized female forms of passive sexuality. As I discussed above, the most important debate with regard to sexuality in *yaoi* has concerned theories of

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<sup>31</sup> Mizoguchi Akiko. "Homofobikku na homo, ai yue no reipu, soshite kuia na rezubian: saikin no yaoi tekisuto o bunseki suru," p. 203.

bisexuality and androgyny.<sup>32</sup> However, subconscious female desires to identify with the male gender present an epistemological challenge to any totalizing concepts of female sexualities.

The bisexual features of *yaoi* characters represent female desires for divergent sexualities, by challenging the binarized sexual structure of masculine/female. One of the scenes in the *manga* entitled *C!!* (serialized in *Chara*), which parodies *yaoi* culture and sexuality, shows the implied mechanism that activates female desires through a pluralized sexual orientation. The narrative begins with a scene in which a heterosexual couple is praying at a shrine. The woman asks her boyfriend, "Can you guess what I prayed for?" He answers, "Your wish? Let me see. You probably prayed to be reincarnated as a man in your next life. You are demanding, so you also prayed to be reincarnated as a homosexual man and to experience both *seme* and *uke* pleasures." She is surprised and shouts, "Wow! that is exactly what I prayed for! Did I say it out loud?"<sup>33</sup>

Here, the notion of "experiencing *seme* and *uke* pleasures" reflects a symbolic correlation between the phallic context of masculinity and the vaginal/anal context of femininity, decentering the polarity of sexuality. What we need to consider in *yaoi* is the bisexual (or multisexual) foreground in which the *yaoi* character's body is desired. We should also explore how a bisexual (or multisexual) nature is inscribed as a transformative feature of female sexuality. Moreover, in *yaoi* the sexuality represented by Cixous's concept of the female desire for a bisexual orientation is theoretically subversive enough to challenge the limitations of gender constructions that rely on essentialized concepts of female sexuality,

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<sup>32</sup> Let me remind the reader that the concept of 'bisexuality' under discussion should not be considered in terms of the behavior of any particular individual who engages in sexual activity with both males and females, but rather it should be discussed as one of the aspects of sexuality within each person.

<sup>33</sup> *Chara* (April 2003, Tokuma shoten publisher).

such as rape fantasies, masochism, sexual pleasure focused on the vagina, and so forth.<sup>34</sup>

### **Narrative of Desires**

Through clarification and elaboration of certain key notions of female sexual desires and fantasies, I have argued that *yaoi* discourse can be approached from various theoretical perspectives, to explore the conditions and limits of female desires and fantasies. In this section, I proceed with my analysis of *yaoi* discourse by cultivating the hypothesis that the integrating elements of what is constructed as pornographic sexuality in *yaoi* are not limited to the extreme sexual acts of male homosexual characters whom female readers desire and idealize in various ways. It is simplistic to conclude that the impact of *yaoi* sexuality, in relation to female sexual desires and eroticism, is automatically attributable pornographic, obscene descriptions of male homosexual sex. If we assume that female readers are sexually excited just by reading the pornographic scenes in *yaoi*, it would be logical to assume that porn videos and magazines directed at homosexual men must also be capable of stimulating sexual pleasure in female *yaoi* readers.

However, rather than consuming pornographic materials directed at homosexual men,

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<sup>34</sup> Here, I would briefly like to note that the subversive potential of female fantasies of male homosexuality is not entirely acknowledged. For instance, Constance Penley refers to the attitudes of women who are involved in 'slash' toward acknowledged feminists. Examining interview materials, Penley confesses her unease and puzzlement with regard to the fact that women authors and readers are reluctant to relate their involvement in 'slash' to any form of feminist activity. Penley laments that, even though 'slash' materials may possibly provide a theoretical viewpoint from which to facilitate feminist and gender studies, women unconsciously deny such possibilities. A similar distanced and unconcerned stance toward feminism can also be seen in *yaoi* culture. At the very least, *yaoi* readers often seem to be ashamed of their sexual arousal at reading supposedly 'perverse' narratives concerning male homosexuality and seem to be reluctant to examine issues surrounding *yaoi* and female subjectivity.

such as those categorized as *sabu*,<sup>35</sup> female readers prefer the fantasy narratives of *yaoi*, in which any reflection of the practical realities of male homosexuality is discarded. Now we should ask: in what ways do female *yaoi* readers conceive of *yaoi* sexuality as no longer a fundamental counterpart of actual homosexuality? Or, what ideological, sexual possibilities does *yaoi* present when it is distinguished from other pornographic materials? Here, we can press the argument of *yaoi* sexuality as pornographic even farther, by pointing out that a specific form of *narrative structure* must be considered as a fundamental premise for elaborating the pornographic dimension.

In *Alice Doesn't*, Teresa de Lauretis asserts that the prevailing subject in cinematic pleasures cannot be limited to the matrix of visual desires because the construction (or deconstruction) of desires is semiotically or structurally furthered within the normative framework of the narrative. De Lauretis is the first to broaden the scope of the analysis of 'desire in narrative' by expanding and challenging Laura Mulvey's declaration that 'a sadism demands a story.' Erotic desires are inscribed in the formation of narrative, as Mulvey indicates, because the sadistic impulse is reflected in the act of storytelling itself; however, de Lauretis indicates that principles of desire surrounding issues of narrative should not conclude with the specific narrative of sadistic eroticism. De Lauretis believes that the orientation of desires in narrative unquestionably involves constituent elements of sexual and erotic dynamism; in attempting to elaborate her critical stance, she explores the formation of desires that are inscribed especially in relation to Oedipal forms of plot development.

Although Mulvey's and de Lauretis's respective critical stances seem too distanced to be compatible, their arguments have in common the sense that narrative itself constitutes a

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<sup>35</sup> In the field of *yaoi*, pornographic materials directed at a male homosexual audience are called *sabu mono*, a term derived from the male homosexual magazine *Sabu*, published by Sun Publisher.

characteristic feature of the archetypal space of sexual and erotic pleasures and desires. Janice A. Radway and Tania Modleski can also be referred to here, since their critical approaches seem to acknowledge that specific narrative forms (such as romance novels and soap operas) involve the meta-narrative of female psychological inquiries into the mechanisms of sexual desires and fantasies. The formation of erotic narrative in *yaoi* signifies its activation in terms of pornographic representation; this, in turn, has the effect of stimulating female eroticism. What narrative components, then, are promoted as a medium for erotic and even aesthetic consciousness-raising in *yaoi manga*? Discussing the practical realities of male homosexuality, Leo Bersani argues that the power of the hierarchical concept of penetrator (top) / penetrated (bottom) is perceptible even within the male homosexual orientation itself. The position of bottom (penetrated) has been considered to be inferior to that of top (penetrator). As Bersani says:

A general ethical polarity in Greek thought of self-domination and a helpless indulgence of appetites has, as one of its results, a structuring of sexual behavior in terms of activity and passivity, with a correlative rejection of the so-called passive role in sex. What the Athenians find hard to accept, Foucault writes, is the authority of a leader who as an adolescent was an "object of pleasure" for other men; there is a legal and moral incompatibility between sexual passivity and civic authority.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, this kind of negativity toward the bottom is seldom seen in depictions of the *uke* (the penetrated), simply because *yaoi* are female fantasies and thus operate according to a different principle of gender formation. Mark McLelland's assertion that "gay magazines and pornographic sites on the Internet are largely lacking in

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<sup>36</sup> Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*, ed. Douglas Crimp (Michigan: MIT Press, 1988), p. 212.

representations of the 'beautiful youth' so popular in women's media"<sup>37</sup> can also be cited here. Representations of beautiful homosexual men are largely a female invention in the post-war period. The characters in female fantasies of male homosexuality should not be assumed to be gay, nor even men. They represent a contextualization of female fantasies and thus possess androgynous, bisexual components. In this sense, the use of the word *yaoi* in reference to the notion of gay liberation is complicated, because it possesses its own paradoxical identity. *Yaoi* discourse basically involves fantasy formations related to *female sexualities*; once this is understood, *yaoi* can be discussed as narratives that manifest repressed female psychological mechanisms, and that simultaneously suggest the possibility of divergent, multiple sexualities.

The thematic energy of *yaoi* narratives is originally associated with the romanticized idea that 'you are the only love in my life,' which can be considered as the paradigmatic master narrative of *yaoi* sexuality. The artistic faith in *yaoi* sexuality is generally expressed through the dramatic tension between two male characters who are 'meant for each other,' thereby embodying the romantic force of the monogamous relationship. The following are some common phrases in which the concept of a 'destined love' is inscribed:

"Whenever I hold you, I realize that you are the only love for me. I will love you forever."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> In "Gay Men as Women's Ideal Partners in Japan" (*U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 17, 1999), McLelland suggests that, in reality, there is a particular alliance between heterosexual women and homosexual men. He implies that both women and male homosexual men are located as the peripheral in this world of patriarchy, so they subconsciously empathize with and support each other. However, I would like to point out that the alliance of gay men and heterosexual women and fantasmic narratives of male homosexuality are incompatible in some ways. As I have mentioned, female readers of *yaoi* usually attempt to take some distance themselves from male homosexual materials directed at male homosexual men (e.g. *sabu mono*).

<sup>38</sup> Nitta Yûka, *Haru o daite ita* (Holding onto the Spring), Vol 6 (Biblos Publisher [2002]).

"I will pledge eternal love to you in the name of Mother Earth and Father Sun. My body belongs to this earth, but my soul is yours only. Even though my life ends, my soul will be with you forever."<sup>39</sup>

"Just keep looking at me, and ignore everything else. I have everything you want, and you have everything I want. Our eternity is only seen in ourselves."<sup>40</sup>

The idealized concept of 'you are the only love in my life' thus constitutes an imaginative, mesmerizing sphere for female readers, and consequently interacts with the various elements of pornographic description.

Another example pertaining to the structure of pornographic narrative directed at female readers and its relation to eroticism can be seen in Japanese popular culture in 'ladies' comics.' In both *yaoi* and ladies' comics, similar kinds of extreme sexual descriptions are employed in narratives directed at female readers. However, the fundamental incompatibility between *yaoi* and ladies' comics can be seen in the fact that in ladies' comics extreme sexual acts (such as rape, S/M, and play with dildos) are not necessarily sublimated into the sphere of 'pure love.' The sexuality in ladies' comics is more or less directly associated with the raw material of sexual appetite: a man rapes a woman just to satisfy his sexual appetite; a woman wants to be raped to stimulate her sexual desires; S/M functions as the medium through which a man humiliates and dominates a woman; a woman who feels unsatisfied by sex with her lover uses a dildo to reach orgasm. Fujimoto Yukari asserts that in ladies' comics the eroticism of rape scenes can be enhanced if a woman is gang-raped.<sup>41</sup> It is therefore

<sup>39</sup> Takashima Kazusa, *Wild Rock* (Bilos Publisher, 2002).

<sup>40</sup> Kamo Nabako, "Mukodono x Mukodono" (Groom X Groom), *Magazine Be-Boy* (January 2003).

<sup>41</sup> Fujimoto Yukari, "Onna no yokubô no katachi: redisu komikku ni miru onna no seigensô" (The Structure of Female Desire: Sexual Fantasies in "Ladies' Comics"), in *Nyû feminizumu rebyû*, Vol 3

plausible to say that the depiction of extreme sexual acts is not completely defined in the context of the supremacy of love in ladies' comics. In contrast, Nakajima Azusa considers *yaoi* to be the "ultimate love fantasy" and the "harlequin romance of male homosexuality,"<sup>42</sup> exploring *yaoi* as pornographic romance that highlights the dramatic tension between beautiful male homosexual characters.

In this context, it is appropriate to consider the rape scenes that are frequently seen in *yaoi manga* as typical examples of *yaoi* sexuality. Rape in *yaoi* is seldom depicted as an act of criminal violence between a clearly defined assaulter and a victim. First of all, rape in *yaoi* is not signified in terms of the *seme* character's (the assaulter's) disruptive sexual/violent desires, but rather as resulting from his uncontrollable love for the *uke* character. In the most commonly portrayed form of rape, an *uke* character is raped by a *seme* character who has reached the limits of his ability to repress his overflowing affection for the *uke*. Such an act is clearly recognized as rape as long as no (sexual) consent is apparent between the *seme* and the *uke*. The *seme* may try to tie up the *uke* and even slap him in order to carry out his desires, forcing penetration, while the *uke* may frantically scream and cry at the *seme* to stop, and may actually end up torn and bleeding. The bleeding *uke* can be compared metaphorically to a virgin.

But no matter how violent and bizarre the rape may be, it is not depicted as criminal violence, insofar as the issues of rape in *yaoi* can be analyzed in terms of a specific form of dramatic tension required to highlight the narrative of the *yaoi*-style romance. Rape is used to smoothly organize the narrative of *yaoi* in which two men (or boys) gradually realize that they are meant to be together: while the *seme* is able to express his absolute love for the *uke*

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(Tokyo: Gakuyô shobô, 1992), p. 73.

<sup>42</sup> Nakajima, *Tanatosu no kodomotachi*, p. 23.



through the act of raping him, the raped *uke*—who previously considered the *seme* as just a close friend—gradually becomes aware that the *seme*'s love and desires are elevated to such an extent that he cannot do anything but rape; consequently, the *uke* is touched by the *seme*'s effusive love and falls in love with him.

When the narrative structure of *yaoi* is considered in depth, it becomes apparent that the mechanism of *yaoi* eroticism is also activated by any situation that presents the context of an equal partnership between two lovers. Eve Sedgwick suggests that the mechanism of homosociality indicates how philosophical thought has organized the representation of discourse according to the interests of male-dominated society, excluding women and confirming them in their powerlessness in the name of identificatory sexual differences. One of the most influential post-Saussurian theorists, Jacques Derrida, has also focused on the metaphysics of comradeship, and attempts to deconstruct what he calls 'phallogocentric' friendship between men:

With this political conclusion, Zarathustra brings up the case of woman. She is at once tyrant and slave, and that is why she (still) remains incapable of friendship, she knows only love. This thesis concerns not only woman, but the hierarchy between love and friendship.<sup>43</sup>

However, in the *yaoi* world, homosociality, instead of representing this imbalance of power between male and female, is idealized and eroticized by female readers as a 'magical' world in which they can achieve their overall goal of attaining a nonhierarchical sexual relationship. Henry Jenkins similarly refers to the homosocial components of 'slash' fandom:

A focus on how slash constructs a continuum between homosocial and homosexual

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<sup>43</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London and New York: Verso, 1997), p.282.

desire may explain why the protagonists of slash stories are male lovers and yet often have had no previous history of gay relationships.<sup>44</sup>

However, his analysis does not sufficiently explore the ways in which the female creators and receivers of 'slash' literature sublimate such homosocial paradigms.

*Yaoi* narratives (especially *dôjinshi*-type parodies of male characters from *shônen manga* and animation) are closely associated with a homosocial orientation by which men are free to nurture their spiritual bonds and pursue their common interests and ideals. *Yaoi* narrative seems to suggest the inevitability of the explicit isolation of the female from this masculine-spiritual orientation, because she is shown as incapable of experiencing the kinds of psychological development that could bridge the ideological gap between men and women. It is generally the case that homosocial implications are perceptible in the *shônen manga* works and animations that female *yaoi* readers are tempted to eroticize through their 'slash' parodies. For instance, during the 1980s, the sports *manga* *Kyaputen Tsubasa* (Captain Tsubasa, serialized in *Shônen Jump* and made into an animated TV show) became very popular in the field of *yaoi dôjinshi*, and female readers eroticized its characters—boys who become faithful friends while aiming to win the Soccer World Cup in the future. *Yaoi dôjinshi* that erotically parody *shônen manga* works, and animations in which the narrative proceeds through missions and dreams fulfilled by the supremacy of male friendship, are too numerous to count.

Spiritual homosocial bonds are also articulated in original (i.e. non-parodic) *yaoi manga*. In *Haru o daite ita* (Holding onto the Spring), Iwaki and Katô first meet as rivals, competing with each other for a movie role, so their relationship is established as

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<sup>44</sup> Henry Jenkins, p. 205.

career-based, inspired by each other's pride in being actors, prior to their becoming a romantic couple. Their professional competition coexists with the spice of romance even after their romantic bonding. In one scene, Iwaki is asked by a reporter at a press interview, "Mr. Iwaki, your new TV drama will be broadcast at the same time as Mr. Katô's drama will be shown on a different channel. What do you think about that?" Iwaki answers: "Katô's new drama? First of all, both of us are professional actors. So I never intend to ruin my career because of personal matters."<sup>45</sup>

Such a context of equal partnership with implications of overcoming the power hierarchy can also be seen in the following quotations from *uke* characters: "If I need to continue pretending to be so weak and fragile in order to be loved [by the *seme*], [the love] would mean nothing!"<sup>46</sup>; "Kiyomine [the *seme*] has never treated me like a woman, since we are equal."<sup>47</sup> The socialization of women in Japan into the patriarchal ideology's prescribed the notion that females cannot (or should not) participate in the pursuit of any fundamental spiritual inquiry is still socially active, and is inscribed in the female psyche. Thus, in *yaoi* narratives, female readers attempt to simulate an experience of romance highlighting the spiritual bond of (nonhierarchical, homosocial) men. Nagakubo Yôko analyzes the female idealization of the sublimating concept of comradeship among men, as follows:

The relationship between the protector/protected is not needed for them [the male homosexual characters in *yaoi*]. The structure of the protecting man and the protected woman is still firmly established in heterosexual romance novels. Ikumi (*uke*) laughs at and strongly rejects power relations based on gender. Ikumi's strong ego and his

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<sup>45</sup> Nitta, *Haru o daite ita*, Vol 4, 2001

<sup>46</sup> Nomori Mina, "Kimi wa sabishigariya no hana" (You are a Lonely Flower), *Magazine Be-Boy* (May 2002).

<sup>47</sup> Abe Miyuki, *Komatta toki wa hoshi ni kike* (Ask the Stars When in Trouble), Vol 15 (Tôsuisha, 2002).

'pride as a man' make him think that way. Here, a scenario involving male homosexual lovers prevents the romance of Ikumi and his lover from entering into the power structures of gender.<sup>48</sup>

Monique Wittig has argued that lesbianism overthrows the political and sociological interpretation of women's identity and consequently enables us to realize a way to transcend the compulsory heterosexual regime. However, instead of engaging in the enterprise of lesbian fantasy, female *yaoi* readers are eager to transcend the dilemma of being in a disadvantageous position in the socially defined gender hierarchy through their identification with the phallic power that, in *yaoi*, controls all general principles of sexuality. The theoretical question of why male homosexual relationships, not lesbian ones, are depicted in this rebellion against the institutional functions of heterosexuality must be answered specifically in terms of the psychological mechanisms of female sexuality mentioned above. Just as the concept that 'we are meant to be together' provides the narrative impetus that accelerates the female eroticism in *yaoi*, so the idealization of equal relationships enhances the impulse of female sexual desires. The following conversation between another male homosexual couple who attend Katô and Iwaki's marriage ceremony in *Haru o daita ita* illustrates such equality:

"What do you think of their relationship? I wonder which one is which [referring to

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<sup>48</sup> Nagakubo Yôko, "'Yaoi shôsetsu' ron joron" (The Analysis of *Yaoi* Novels: Introduction), *Senshû kokubun* 65 (1999), p. 96. The discursive power and currency of this romantic paradigm can be gauged by the fact that in 1993 the fiancée of the Japanese Crown Prince explained her decision to accept his marriage proposal after long resistance by saying that he had promised to take care of her and protect her forever. Her public statement to this effect put the final touch on what was viewed as a perfect, 'fairy-tale' romance. (Now almost ten years into their marriage the Crown Princess, a former career diplomat, is suffering clinical depression from the oppressive strictures of palace life, determined and controlled by a huge bureaucratic organization called the Imperial Household Agency. Her husband, the Crown Prince, has indeed made valiant efforts recently to throw off the Agency's repressive policies and save his wife, so far without success.)

*seme* and *uke*]. Usually we consider that the one wearing the white tuxedo is the wife (*uke*), but I can't tell if that is the case with Iwaki and Katô, too."

"I don't know. But all I can say is that there no distinction between heaven (top) and earth (bottom) for Iwaki and Katô. They have been and will be standing in the same place all the time."<sup>49</sup>

This conversation conveys how a nonhierarchical love relationship can correspond to the spiritual, as well as to the sexual, bonds uniting a couple. In such a context, the mechanism of *yaoi* sexuality indicates that the very concept of homosexual orientation is organized by the representation of a masculine-spiritual bond which female *yaoi* readers erotically desire and about which they fantasize. Joanna Russ says: "If you ask 'Why two Males?' I think the answer is that of eighteenth-century grammarians to questions about the masculine-preferred pronoun: 'Because it is more noble.'"<sup>50</sup>

Erotic moods and tonalities work in practical terms to enhance the female eroticism in *yaoi*. What we need to emphasize here is that the very notion of 'pornography' in *yaoi* is not limited to those pornographic scenes in which rape, S/M, and other extreme sexual acts are depicted. The primary focus of female sexual desires in *yaoi* involves a narrative of two men (and/or boys), and the value and validity of that sublimating narrative are 'flavored' by the pornographic representations that it contains. One of the female readers requests, "Please publish a lot of work in which sexual scenes are very erotic and obscene but the narrative contents are based on the concept of pure love."<sup>51</sup> In such a context, it would be right to assume that the discursive nature of female sexual desires (fantasies) in *yaoi* can only be

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<sup>49</sup> Nitta, *Haru o daite ita*, Vol 6.

<sup>50</sup> Russ, p. 84. I use the word 'noble' here as Russ does—to indicate a socially- and culturally-determined belief about the masculine pronoun, not to endorse a judgment about the 'nobility' of masculine ontology.

<sup>51</sup> "Readers' Pages," *Be-Boy Gold* (April 2003).

analyzed within the framework of a 'narrative of desires' in which the animating force of pornographic depiction and the narrative that female readers erotically desire interact with one another. It is precisely this form of pornographic narrative, containing concepts of supreme love and partnership, that distances *yaoi* from other pornographic narratives such as ladies' comics, *sabu* materials directed at homosexual men, men's *ero-manga*, and so forth.

### **Does *Yaoi* Misrepresent Queer Identity?**

I have attempted to clarify what factors (or kinds of concepts) make it possible to construct homosexual *yaoi* discourse as an ideal imaginative fantasy of female sexuality, emphasizing the nature of *yaoi* narrative as pornography directed specifically at a female readership. The critical reaction to *yaoi* culture has not always been positive. For example, American academic Keith Vincent believes that the parodic contextualization of male homosexuality in *yaoi* narrative fails to reflect realistic homosexual inquiries, eliminating queer identity altogether and leaving the fundamental issues of homosexuality unresolved.<sup>52</sup> Mizoguchi Akiko also explores *yaoi* discourse, but she nevertheless seems discontented with what she calls the 'homophobic' principles of *yaoi*. As Mizoguchi says: "readers' consciousness that they do not want to identify with gay men even in fantasies are clearly reflected [in *yaoi* narratives.]"<sup>53</sup> Sharon Kinsella also seems skeptical about the subversive

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<sup>52</sup> Kotani Mari and Keith Vincent, "Kuia seorī wa doko made hirakeru ka" (How Far can Queer Theory Go?) (*Yurika* 11[1996]), p. 84–85.

<sup>53</sup> Mizoguchi, "Homofobikku na homo, ai yue no reipu, sosite kuia na rezubian-saikin no yaoi tekisuto wo bunseki suru," p. 197. Mizoguchi argues that such phrases as: "I'm not gay. But I love you," "I can't imagine having sex with any other man but you," constitute homophobic representations. However, my interpretation of these phrases is different from Mizoguchi's. These phrases should not be considered

impulse of *yaoi* discourse, arguing that:

*Yaoi, june mono*, parody and *rorikon* express the frustration experienced by young people, who have found themselves unable to relate to the opposite sex, as they have constituted and located themselves within the contemporary cultural and political environment.<sup>54</sup>

However, these critics seem to ignore the fact that *yaoi* discourse constitutes precisely a female-oriented space in which female readers attempt to organize hybrid forms of textuality/sexuality involving the various ideological, cultural, and sexual possibilities that are mentioned above. In particular, Vincent's refusal to accept the effectiveness of *yaoi* discourse should definitely be challenged. The very concept of 'queer' can be paradoxical, since it is usually intended to describe a subversive force, but at the same time it also is often used in a conservative sense to institutionalize some discourses and exclude others. I would like to point out that a general negation of all *yaoi* discourse is an implicit danger in Vincent's criticism of *yaoi*. As I discussed above, *yaoi* clearly contains the subversive impulses (and complicated aspects) of being queer, but not in Vincent's sense. The very limitations imposed by 'privileged' queer discourse reveal the ideological and thematic contradictions involved in queer possibilities. It may be true, as Vincent points out, that *yaoi* narratives seem to be distanced from representations of the practical realities of male homosexuality. However, this incompatibility should not be dismissed as the total failure of queer discourse, precisely

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homophobic representations, but should rather be viewed as dramatic elements that enhance romantic narratives concerning male homosexual lovers. Male homosexual characters insist that they are 'naturally' heterosexual, precisely because they wish to show that their partner's attractiveness is so alluring that they are willing to change their sexual orientation for his sake.

<sup>54</sup> Kinsella, p.306. Here, Kinsella's analysis seems problematic, in part because she discusses *yaoi* and *rorikon* on the same discursive ground. The analytical features of *yaoi* and *rorikon* should be explored separately. *Rorikon* does not involve people fantasizing about themselves as the opposite sex; rather, it is straightforward male-looking-at-female pornography.

because *yaoi* provides divergent possibilities for queerness (such as bisexuality, androgyny).

On the other hand, a theoretical stance that never questions the act of considering (practical) male homosexuality and *yaoi* on the same level is also problematic. Sandra Buckley's analysis represents one such example:

The gay readership is in some sense the group with the least complicated relationship to these image-texts. In a cultural landscape that remains otherwise generally hostile to overt representation or expression of the homoerotic, these texts offer gay readers a rare site for the possibility of a direct and positive identification without denial or modification.<sup>55</sup>

Mizoguchi harshly criticizes Buckley's analysis, which equates gay people to the fictional characters in *yaoi*, saying that she confuses 'representation' with 'reception.' As Mizoguchi implies, *yaoi* discourse is much more complicated and divergent than Buckley believes; it therefore should not simply be viewed as directly parallel to the situation of gayness in reality. Vincent and Buckley may seem to take completely different analytical viewpoints. Vincent dismisses *yaoi* works, which for him are nothing but a stumbling-block to gay male liberation, while Buckley appreciates *yaoi*, which for her signify gradual public acceptance of gayness.<sup>56</sup> However, the basic premises of their analysis remain compatible, precisely because both Vincent and Buckley consistently confuse representations with reality, dismissing the effectiveness of imaginative discourse.

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<sup>55</sup> Sandra Buckley, "Penguin in Bondage: A Graphic Tale of Japanese Comic Books," in *Technoculture*, p. 181.

<sup>56</sup> In analyzing *yaoi*, virtually no one mentions lesbianism, or the ways in which *yaoi* does or does not relate to the lives of lesbians. Mizoguchi Akiko is the first critic who attempts to take a new approach to *yaoi* discourse by discussing the lesbian paradigm inscribed in *yaoi* narratives. See Mizoguchi's "Homophobic Homosexual, Rape with Love, and Lesbian Queer: saikin no yaoi tekisuto o bunseki suru" (Homophobic Homosexual, Rape with Love, and Lesbian Queer) and "Male-Male Romance by and for Women in Japan: History and the Subgenres of *Yaoi* Fiction" for further details.



There is clearly a sense in which *yaoi* narrative can be considered as pornographic fantasies directed at female readers, but its value and validity can be elaborated only when we recognize that its background narrative provides the discursive space for women to participate actively in such issues of female sexuality and identity as bisexuality, homosociality, and other modes that contest a hierarchized, heterosexual paradigm.

## CONCLUSION

A consideration of the discursive space of female psychological orientations in women's fantasies of male homosexuality, as manifested by the Japanese women writers and readers discussed above, gives rise to a number of complex and controversial issues in regard to female identity-formation. An overview of female-oriented narratives of male homosexuality shows that disregarding these narratives merely as a manifestation of female 'perversion'—for example in the way that male critics proved themselves unable to explore the analytical possibilities of Mori Mari's male homosexual trilogy—has the function of closing the door forever on a number of specific issues concerning both female subjectivity and gender formation.<sup>1</sup> In discussing female fantasies of male homosexuality, it appears increasingly obvious, as Nakajima Azusa has remarked, that many women convince themselves that fantasies of male-male sex constitute the only medium by which they can sublimate the dilemmas of being a 'woman' within the patriarchal context. In a way, such fantasies represent a kind of salvation, precisely because this genre mixes, neutralizes, and sublimates women's sense of fear (anxiety, internal conflict) and hope (potentiality, challenge).

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<sup>1</sup> Let me remind the reader that I do not contend that female subjectivity per se relies on fantasized narratives of male homosexuality. But the frequency with which such narratives appear, and the structural similarities among them, suggests that this is one significant form of sexual subjectivity that we should discuss.

According to established sexual paradigms, women are assumed by definition to possess 'unbalanced egos.' However, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that this concept of unstable subjectivity is a social construct through which women are signified; women consequently search for some means by which to deal with this patriarchal myth of female subjectivity as lack and ultimately to deconstruct it. Just as Anna Freud's female subject continuously retells the homoerotic story of "The Knight and the Noble Youth" in order to control her 'unbalanced ego,' many contemporary Japanese women—whom Miyasako Chizuru terms *hi-shôjo* (anti-*shôjo*)—still seem to be obsessed by male homosexual fantasies, and paradoxically to perceive erotic possibilities in them. Thus, it is possible to argue that female fantasies of male homosexuality should be discussed as a means of understanding existing fractures in the prevailing political, socio-cultural, and ideological situation in Japan (and elsewhere), which endlessly 'produces' women prone to immersing themselves in a fantasmic world of male homosexuality.

Freud is careful to specify that his critical viewpoint in the exploration of theories of female beating fantasies is focused on female psychological perversion and disorientation. As he suggests, fantasies of male-male sex manifest female subconscious desires to be a 'boy'—or, more precisely, to be anything other than a 'woman.' Thus, such psychoanalytic constructs as the masculinity complex and penis/phallus envy can certainly be perceived as reflected in female narratives containing fantasies of male homosexuality. Kôno Taeko's "Toddler-Hunting" highlights this situation through its narrative process, in which a masochistic heroine, Akiko, is obsessed with the ontology of *otoko no ko* and conversely is disgusted by the *shôjo* identity. In Matsuura Rieko's *The Reverse Version*, Chiyoko also identifies herself with the male homosexual characters in her fantasies and laments over the

fact that the existing hierarchized gender system forces her to become a 'woman.' Mori Mari too describes female characters who are forbidden access to the discourses of knowledge and language involved in the homosocial/homosexual power correlation.

In this context, female characters (and authors and readers) who find a way to distance themselves from their disempowered female identities through their idealization of the 'boy' (focusing on male homosexual characters) gradually realize the ontological possibilities of being an 'observer' or spectator in fantasies of male homosexual encounters. Freud fails to call attention to the unquestionably distanced position of women who dedicate themselves to this act of watching. However, this female orientation of watching male homosexual/homoerotic 'shows' can be perceived as presenting the possibility of dissolving the boundaries of power between man as the gazing subject and woman as the object gazed upon. In "Toddler-Hunting," Akiko (as observer/spectator/creator) creates the metadiegetic show of the sadomasochistic father and the boy; this enforces her own indomitable power to 'stage' such a show. The decadent homoeroticism of Okamoto Kanoko's "The Bygone World" is dramatically highlighted when Yukiko makes the ideological shift from the role of a 'seducer' to that of an 'observer'; her subjective shift indicates that she gains power to objectify the male characters and somehow control her 'unbalanced ego' as a woman. In Matsuura Rieko's postmodern parody of female fantasies of male homosexuality, Chiyoko laments over her feminine gender, but at the same time she (the peripheral) is the one who initiates the psychological impulse of free 'play' with the male homosexual characters in her fantasies; this indicates the subversive possibilities of the female gaze.

However, we should be careful not to define the female gaze as a successful strategy to dismantle subordinate representations in the domain of patriarchal hegemony, precisely

because the female gaze is double-edged; while the female act of seeing must be acknowledged, at the same time it inevitably represents fear, anxiety, and the impossibility of women becoming directly involved in the central narrative as active agents. In other words, the female gaze (in relation to male homosexual narratives) must be considered as an unbalanced and precarious position that women have resorted to, in order to deal with issues of femininity that have been negatively essentialized by the predominant male-oriented discourse. Thus, the issue of the female gaze must be discussed in relation to such psychoanalytic concepts as projection, identification, and dissociation. Female characters (authors and readers) project their uncontrollable feminine aspects onto male homosexual characters; this psychological process is similar to what Melanie Klein calls 'projective identification,' which is viewed as a means by which the 'deranged ego' may be balanced.

Thus, women both identify with and dissociate from male homosexual characters, who represent their own projected femininity; in this way, they can enjoy sexual pleasure as a 'boy.' In "Toddler-Hunting," Akiko projects her masochistic inclinations onto the beaten boy in her fantasy world; she thereby exerts control over her masochistic libido, which is socially 'unacceptable' in reality, through her identification with and dissociation from this male homosexual character. The ways in which reality (being a woman) and (male homosexual) fantasy may be smoothly organized in terms of projection, identification, and dissociation can also be seen in Chiyoko's psychological processes in *The Reverse Version*. This kind of female psychological orientation regarding male homosexual fantasies is also a feature of *yaoi manga* narratives (pornography written by women and for women in comic book form), which provide an appropriate medium through which women can access the space of the erotic by identifying with male characters. Such pornographic depictions paradoxically allow

women both to dissociate themselves from their own prohibited libidinal impulses and to express and enjoy them.

As discussed above, female fantasies of male homosexuality reflect certain negative constituent elements of socially constructed femininity (such as masculinity complex, penis/phallus envy, psychological derangement, prohibition of the erotic, and so forth). Some critics are therefore skeptical concerning the subversive capability of these narratives in terms of the expansion of theoretical possibilities concerning gender discourse. However, what I would like to emphasize here is that we can use the female subconscious desires expressed in these narratives as a means to demystify prevailing gender formations and to explore divergent, multiple sexualities. The male characters in these narratives are constructed as fantasy representations, rather than as realistic depictions, precisely because they can thereby be used to symbolize a certain harmony between masculinity and femininity. The prevalent idealization of the 'boy' in these fantasies should thus be viewed as a specific form of gender discourse that presents an ideological possibility of escape from patriarchal-heterosexual structures. For those women who indulge in male homosexual fantasies, the very concept of the 'boy' seems to combine certain positive elements of gender formation; it should be emphasized that here the 'boy' should be considered as an imaginary representation, referring to no 'real' being. The 'boy' is not a man, a woman, or a *shôjo*; however, he possesses a man's power and strength, a woman's elegance and beauty, a *shôjo*'s innocence and *kawaii* (cute) nature, and thus evokes the longing for a realm where gender-binary paradigms are no longer universal.

The 'reversible couple' in *yaoi manga* is also detached from institutionalized heterosexual concepts of the male and female bodies, in which the roles of the penetrator and

penetrated are never 'reversed'; the 'reversible couple' thus represents women's subconscious desire to transcend their 'vaginal' body (as well as the 'phallic') body. A critical stance that views *yaoi* as a mockery of 'real,' 'authentic' gayness should be questioned, precisely because *yaoi* narratives are not created in terms of the matrix of gender-regulatory practices (such as 'authentic' male homosexuality), but rather represent subversive fantasies concerning divergent, multiple sexualities. This study, in which I have examined narratives of male homosexuality written by Japanese female authors, is a first attempt at analyzing the discursive space of women's interest in male homosexuality, and as such it has inevitable limitations. In concluding, I would like to suggest some possibilities for further research on this topic.

Besides the writers I have introduced here, there are many other modern Japanese women authors who have addressed various aspects of male-male sex and homosexuality. Works in this vein include Ôba Minako's *Hana to mushi no kioku* (Memories of Flowers and Insects), Tomioka Taeko's "Wandârando" (Wonderland), and Ekuni Kaori's *Kirakira hikaru* (Shining Brilliantly), all of which engage practical aspects of gayness (cross-dressing, the use of feminine language, heterosexual marriage to camouflage one's sexual orientation, etc.). Narratives dealing with the traditional Japanese theatrical worlds of *Noh* and *Kabuki*, in which male performers (called *onnagata*) are trained to play the roles of women, include Sugimoto Sonoko's *Hana no hibun: Zeami Motokiyo* (The Epitaph of A Flower: Zeami Motokiyo), *Katamuku taki* (The Leaning Fall), and Enchi Fumiko's *Onnagata ichidai: Nanase Segawa Kikunojô den* (The Life of *Onnagata*, The Seventh Segawa Kikunojo). In addition, Takamura Kaoru's *Redi jôkâ* (Lady Joker) is a masterpiece which harmonizes hard-boiled suspense and homosexual/homosocial eroticism. Further research on the ways

the theme of male homosexuality is engaged in a wide variety of narrative fiction by women—much of it concerned with a more ‘realistic’ depiction of gayness—would enhance our understanding of the psychoanalytic function of the works I have described here.

Next, as I briefly discussed in the introduction, Japanese culture has a long historical tradition of male homosexuality (e.g. *shûdo*, *chigo*) and the discourses surrounding it. An analysis of the kinds of female fantasies of male homosexuality discussed here might well be enriched by a consideration of the relationship that pertains between them and these historically established discourses.

One of the thematic points that I have emphasized throughout this study is the empowerment and disempowerment involved in the act of seeing (scotophilia). Examining the possibilities (and impossibilities) of the acts of ‘seeing’ and ‘being seen’ offers a clear view of the psychological paradox involved in women’s attempts to tackle and overturn patriarchy and other related issues. In this regard, the relationship between the visual aspects of comic strip media and voyeurism deserve further research.

This study would also have benefited from audience research, which might have revealed more about the backgrounds (age, class, occupation, marital status, sexual orientation, and so forth) of the women who are attracted by male homosexual fantasies. More in-depth audience research, surveying various aspects of the reading experience, would contribute to our understanding of what these fantasies actually mean to the women who write and read them so avidly.

We also should try to grasp the meaning of (fantasmic) male homosexual characters within the context of lesbianism. In this dissertation, I have emphasized the bisexual (that is, mixed male and female) aspects of the representations of male homosexual characters.



However, these representations could also be analyzed from a different perspective—one that considered the ‘male’ characters as women/lesbians in drag.

Finally, psychoanalysis attempts to reveal how the symbolic role of the ‘mother’ should be positioned within a patriarchal, heterosexual society. Generally speaking, female narratives of male homosexuality lack any clear image of the ‘mother.’ This absence of the ‘mother’ may be interpreted as reflecting the psychological reluctance of female readers to identify with female characters (especially with the ‘mother,’ a figure which, in the Japanese socio-cultural context, is consistently negatively signified, as in the still-prevalent rhetoric of *ryōsai keibo*).<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, it is possible that the repression of the image of the ‘mother’ in this genre may exemplify the controlling/phallic mother who subconsciously dominates the child’s libido in the pre-Oedipal period.

In this study, I have argued that female psychological ambivalence can be embodied in the form of fantasies of male homosexuality. The notion of ‘fantasy’ certainly adds deep, complicated structures to our psychological inquiries. I assume that Freud’s analysis, according to which a ‘fantasy’ is not merely a reflection of reality, but rather constitutes a narratological dimension in which psychological imbalances may be replaced and mediated, can make a basic contribution to an analysis of female fantasies of male homosexuality within the context of gender discourse. The ‘lack’ that women frequently sense in reality is

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<sup>2</sup> After the National Isolation Policy was withdrawn in 1857 (the beginning of the Meiji era), Japan became susceptible to influences from the West. Meiji Japan’s sexual reformation was associated with Japan’s political, imperialist ambitions to compete with the Western Powers. For modern(ist) women, the ‘sexual revolution’ which the Meiji government promoted represented a superficial change. Women were forced to become *ryōsai kenbo*, *good wives and wise mothers*. The modern(ist) idea of female social status was that, only when women were educated to fulfill the functions of mother and wife, dedicated to domestic work in the private sphere, could they be fully accepted by modern(ist) society. This idea of *ryōsai kenbo* still prevails in the Japanese psyche to some extent. Thus, the image of the ‘mother’ cannot completely escape complicity with the negative idea of female confinement within the domestic, private area.

replaced and mediated through fantasies of male-male sex. In this context, further analysis is required, in order to demonstrate how the practical implications of 'fantasy' (the replaced 'lack') manifest the fundamental problems of patriarchal-heterosexual ideology; at the same time, the possibilities that 'fantasy' offers in the rejection of the supposedly inherent nature of 'female-ness/male-ness' must be examined in greater detail..

In sum, both the conscious and subconscious impulses involved in the creation of these fantasies provide a dynamic space in which the *écriture* of sexuality may be explored. The notion of the 'pervert' is a socially and ideologically constructed concept, promoted by power-oriented discourse in order to reinforce the hierarchical foundations of certain societies. Thus, we should discuss how recognizing the social and ideological constraints that construct some identities as 'normal'/central and some as 'perverted'/peripheral may help to loosen and eventually deconstruct such constraints. Male homosexual fantasies may certainly be viewed as a female 'perversion,' but not in any negative, oversimplified sense. Rather, such fantasies may be considered 'perverse' precisely because the concept of 'fantasy' itself is accompanied by polymorphic, divergent implications for viewing the society/culture in which we live. We can (and should) therefore constantly attempt to cultivate and analyze fantasy formations, in order to discern the social and ideological constructions that underlie both the process of becoming 'perverse' and that of labeling 'perversions.'

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