



PROJECT MUSE®

Empire through the Eyes of a Yapoo : Male Abjection in the
Cult Classic *Beast Yapoo*

Christine Marran

Mechademia, Volume 4, 2009, pp. 259-273 (Article)

Published by University of Minnesota Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mec.0.0096>



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/368630>

Empire through the Eyes of a Yapoo: Male Abjection in the Cult Classic *Beast Yapoo*

MALE ABJECTION IN EARLY POSTWAR JAPAN

The celebrated cult classic *Beast Yapoo* (1956–58, *Kachikujin yapū*) by Numa Shōzō and the four-volume manga version created by writer Ishinomori Shōtarō and artist Sugar Satō (1983–84, 1993) prominently feature the abjection of the Japanese male.¹ Based heavily on the novel, the manga series describes the galactic travel of Japanese student Rin'ichirō to a white matriarchal empire in space. In this technologically advanced matriarchy, “yellow men” are considered nonhuman “simian sapiens” and surgically altered to serve specific purposes such as animate toilets, living scooters, and tiny replicas of Japanese cultural heroes who wipe their faces with white women’s saliva to win in battle. *Beast Yapoo* portrays a Japanese man who suffers a cultural trauma not so different from Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver, whose similarly humiliating ordeals of enslavement on a global imperialist stage result from his subjection to other species and races.

The antiheroic Japanese male has been a central figure for writers and artists in depicting Japan’s position in postwar global politics. Kobayashi Yoshinori is one manga artist who has provocatively used the image of the

abject Japanese man to critique in nationalist terms a postwar politics in which Japan is the “whipping boy” of America. For example, in his manga *A Theory of War* (1998, *Sensōron*), Kobayashi included a depiction of Japanese government leaders “naked on hands and knees, faces pressed against a mirror into which they panted apologies to a foreign power who was violating them from behind.”² This image in Kobayashi’s work resides alongside caricatures of idealized imperial heroes—kamikaze pilots flying over round suns and snowcapped Fujis. In this satirical juxtaposition, Kobayashi leaves no question that there can be an *unabjected* Japanese sensibility that is not sub-

servient to U.S. power.³ Another conservative, now Tokyo governor (mayor), Ishihara Shintarō, in a youthful self-portrait drew himself as an abject figure “who had come apart, a head with one skeletal arm attached by hinges and the other limbs akimbo and out of reach. It was as if Ishihara were expressing the disequilibrium he had experienced as a thirteen-year-old when the war ended in 1945 and the world turned on its ear.”⁴

ANTIHERO RIN'ICHIRO DOES NOT EMBRACE DEFEAT. RATHER, HE EXPERIENCES A COLLAPSE OF BOUNDARIES IN THIS TRAVEL NARRATIVE IN WHICH A LOST PILGRIM WHO CANNOT RETURN HOME CONFUSEDLY ASSESSES HIS NEW LIMITS.

Ōe Kenzaburō, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, pointed to the symbolic castration of the postwar Japanese male that produced ironically “a nation of sexual men, indulging in peace and comfort by being dominated and subordinated to a mighty America.” Arguing implicitly for a masochistic vision of the Japanese male, he wrote, “I see difficulties and anxieties burdening the progressive political activists in this nation; an overpowering wall stands against them. In a country of sexual men, political men can be nothing but outsiders, not only powerless but also funny and tragic.”⁵ In this case Ōe points to a symbolic castration of the Japanese male in wartime who readily submits to that castration in the postwar. Takayuki Tatsumi has argued that sado-masochistic (SM) metaphors are always lurking within international politics generally and especially within the Japan–U.S. relationship, and that a discourse of “creative masochism” abounds in postwar Japan in which the humiliating experience of defeat is “turned into a techno-utopian principle of construction.”⁶ He refers to other writers who have similarly described the postwar mentality of defeat as masochistic in terms like “creative defeat” (Tsuru Shigo) and the “strategy of being radically fragile” (Matsuoka Seigo). In writing about *Beast Yappoo*, Takayuki suggests that “Numa’s biological degradation of the Japanese foresaw the self-referential, metastructural logic of

consumerist masochism, in which the subject consuming new technology enjoys being disciplined, whipped, and finally consumed by technocracy itself.”⁷ Here Takayuki seems especially to gesture toward a practice of *reading* masochistically.

It is not uncommon to suggest that the male masochistic figure within a text can introduce a disrupting and critical perspective—of patriarchal society, of imperialist history, of dominant gender codes.⁸ In postwar Japan, the male who performs submission has often been used to symbolize (for example, in the postwar stories and films about the lover of famous sadistic mistress Abe Sada by Ōshima Nagisa) a romanticized rejection of patriarchal privilege. On the other hand, in the satirical plays of Satō Makoto, the male masochist’s humiliating submission is deemed not countercultural but required by fascistic totalitarianism.⁹ So what about the protagonist of *Beast Yapoo* (a novel often described as an SM/SF), who is chained, naked, and subservient to his white mistress throughout the story? The novel and manga do reflect the metaphors of creative masochism that Takayuki suggests, in the sense that they are about the total destruction of Japan and the dispersion and consequent erasure of Japanese culture (into a new, white empire). Further, the great popularity of a novel and manga that depict relentless scenes of mutated Japanese bodies certainly suggests a metastructural logic of *consumerist* masochism.

The *Yapoo* texts, however, do not feature a masochistic psychology but a psychology of abjection. Antihero Rin’ichirō does not embrace defeat. Rather, he experiences a collapse of boundaries in this travel narrative in which a lost pilgrim who cannot return home confusedly assesses his new limits. In other words, the novel and manga suggest a doomed psychic space from which the Japanese male is expected to operate in the postwar. At the same time, the manga and novel prove to be an odd critique of the past Japanese imperial system in that the imperial history of the galactic empire that abjects Rin’ichirō is strikingly similar to his own.

READING BEAST YAPOO

The manga *Beast Yapoo* is unusually faithful to the original novel. The novel was first serialized from 1956 in the SM magazine *Strange Club* (*Kitan Kurabu*), which accounts for the common description of it as an SM novel. This essay focuses on the manga version but both the novel and manga begin with a time traveler named Pauline Jansen making a forced landing on Earth from

her future into postwar Germany, where she encounters a white woman named Clara and her Japanese fiancé, Rin'ichirō. As the novel progresses, Germany and Japan are shown to have divergent postwar trajectories. Pauline is from the Empire of a Hundred Suns (EHS)—a galactic empire that considers “yellow men” as beasts. She is disgusted to see Clara treat Rin'ichirō as a human. Pauline decides to take Clara and Rin'ichirō to EHS in order to transform Rin'ichirō into a *yapoo*—a personal domestic slave who would serve white woman Clara's every need. Stunned by a bite from Pauline's mandog, Rin'ichirō is unable to resist his abduction to EHS. He is taken centuries into the future, around the year 4000, where he has no bearings. Unable to speak the language of EHS, he is reliant upon his Germanic betrothed who strangely can communicate with other EHS women over space and time. Rin'ichirō is in exile in this nostalgic complaint in which the loss of an imperial masculine sensibility is articulated through endless scenes of abjection showing the Japanese man as unable to find his place in the new galactic-political history.¹⁰

How the Japanese man comes to be enslaved beast in the EHS is explained in detail in the second volume of the manga. Subtitled “Japan's Nightmare History” (*Akumu no Nihonshi*), the volume's early chapters describe the global warfare that turned the thriving nation into a breeding ground for primitives at the turn of the twentieth-century. This historical tale of Japan's destruction begins with the simple detail that Japan had “put its fate” in the hands of the American military. When the United States chose to attack communist-bloc countries in the postwar, along with the Central and South Americas and the Middle East, Japan too suffered tremendous radiation sickness along with most other “yellow peoples” (*ōshoku jinshu*).¹¹ America suffered Soviet germ warfare that disabled and killed 99 percent of its white population, while those who were “pure-blood blacks” (*junketsu kokujin*) survived and even thrived. In Japan, the birth rate somehow increased, but 60 percent were “born dim-witted and with birth defects.”¹² Asia dried up from the radiation, and so healthy Japanese in their twenties and thirties sought to emigrate. (At this point in the story, Japanese become stand-ins for all Asians throughout the text, which uncritically eliminates other Asian national identities).¹³ The Japanese workers were allowed into Brazil but only with blue collar work permits. Those remaining in Japan were unable to run their government, and an ineffective police force led to the strong prevailing over the weak. Children didn't take care of their parents and many people died of hunger, were killed for food, committed suicide, went insane, or died of plagues. The chapter concludes, “‘Japan’ perished.”¹⁴

A few decades later in this detailed minihistory of the decline of the Japanese empire, the remaining people in Japan are discovered by a galactic “General Mac,” who returns to the Earth in 2067 after building the space colony “Terra Nova.” In order to save the remaining white people on the polluted globe, he builds a space ship that can carry the remaining whites to the colony. Blacks are abducted to be slaves, with the the remaining blacks on Earth killed with lasers. Upon discovering people living in caves on the Japanese archipelago, “Colonel Rosenberg” determines that they are not human but animals, in order to make it easier for the colony to use them in experiments and labor without the need to take responsibility for their lives or deaths. If they were “apes,” he argued, there would be no reason to recognize their rights as humans. “General Mac” accepts this “policy,” as it made it easier for whites to assert their power. It is decided that Japan will become a breeding ground for these “apes”—a “monkey island.” They are referred to as *simian sapiens*—a likely reference to the sorts of names Americans used in propaganda wars against the Japanese during World War II. Historian John Dower has documented at length the common use of “monkey” and “simian” in wartime efforts to frame Japanese as nonhuman or subhuman, to humiliate but also to make killing Japanese justifiable:

Among the Allied war leaders, Admiral Halsey was the most notorious for making outrageous and virulently racist remarks about the Japanese enemy in public . . . Simian metaphors described the Japanese as “stupid animals” and referred to them as “monkeymen.” During the war he spoke of the “yellow monkeys,” and in one outburst declared that he was “rarin’ to go” on a new naval operation “to get some more Monkey meat.”¹⁵

The metaphor of the simian was common in wartime in Britain and American media: “*Collier’s* featured several full-color covers by the British artist Lawson Wood portraying Japanese airmen as apes, and *Time* ran a cover portrait pertaining to the Dutch East Indies in which a Japanese apeman dangled from a tree in the background.”¹⁶ These are only a few examples of the simian epithets cast at the Japanese. In Numa’s story, white militaries have gone a step further. A third of the people in the camps created by “Mac” are to be allowed to return to Japan to be raised as a supply of animals upon which the Empire can perpetually draw. They will be given the impression that they are under control of their own destiny, but in reality the country would be a *protectorate* called “Jaban” (combining “yaban” meaning “primitive” and Japan).

This history of the destruction of Japan invokes the American-induced

radiation sickness, Cold War struggles, and advanced military technologies that negatively impacted Asian nations during and after World War II. The idea that Japanese have no right to their own destiny and must become a protectorate of Western powers led by General Mac recalls occupied Japan. Japanese bodies are considered contaminated, mutant, defective; and while Britain and the United States are named as those that used nuclear weapons, it is noted that Japan went along with these two global powers, thereby showing Japan to have participated in its own demise. The EHS is hierarchical and that hierarchy is based on nineteenth-century evolutionary notions of race and power. In the empire, black slaves do the intellectual labor, while scientifically altered “yellow people” provide sexual pleasure and entertainment, as well as do household chores. The empire requires this kind of hierarchical treatment of individuals to maintain control, extend its base, and generally conduct the work of the empire. So far are the *yapoo* at the bottom rung of the social (and evolutionary) ladder that their white mistresses do not even recognize them as part of the human race as initially articulated by the policy set by “Rosenberg.” EHS scientists have, in nineteenth-century fashion, *proven* scientifically that these so-called *simian sapiens* are inferior to the human race. Since they are considered animals, the white women have no qualms about physically altering the *yapoo* to use for human purposes.¹⁷ In this sense, Numa creates a dystopic universe in which Japan is completely destroyed and the Japanese reduced to “apes” in the eyes of the West. It is a depraved world that is the source of profound confusion and pain for the new arrival, Rin’ichirō.

THEORIZING ABJECTION

The protagonist of *Beast Yapoo*, Rin’ichirō, is captured, surrounded, and eventually defined by another culture. He is manipulated and then carried off to become chattel for an Aryan matriarchy. Once abducted to EHS, he is made into a perversion of himself and a projection of the Other. The projection by the other of him as beastly is successful enough that he grows to have an ambiguous, decreasingly solidified sense of self. He becomes an *abjected* figure in Julia Kristeva’s sense that the abject confronts us “with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of animal,”¹⁸ unable to remain within the boundaries created as pure and clean and undefiled. In *Beast Yapoo*, the Japanese man becomes an irrational subject who fails systematically to produce a pure “I” that does *not* reside in the “Other” by virtue of a slow loss of a sense of being a unique self from a discrete culture.

The abjected Rin'ichirō cannot understand the religion, morality, or law of the new empire—he wonders why he must follow it—and yet he consistently notes its similarity to his own homeland. The “Law” in EHS is similar to that discussed by Kristeva in reference to Dostoyevsky who, she argues, displays the Law as sexual and moral abjection. In *Beast Yapoo*, the Law is displayed as a world of fathers

IN *BEAST YAPOO*, THE JAPANESE MAN BECOMES AN IRRATIONAL SUBJECT WHO FAILS SYSTEMATICALLY TO PRODUCE A PURE “I” THAT DOES NOT RESIDE IN THE “OTHER” BY VIRTUE OF A SLOW LOSS OF A SENSE OF BEING A UNIQUE SELF FROM A DISCRETE CULTURE.

who are repudiated, bogus, or dead, and of debauched matriarchs who hold sway. The perpetrators of the Law, the imperial matriarchy of EHS, have ferocious fetishes that are marked as *normal* and that are *internal* to the Law. This is the horrific context in which abjected Rin'ichirō finds himself.¹⁹ So, the story is not about Rin'ichirō's embrace of a masochistic position but rather about *transformation*—his confused resistance and reluctant capitulation to a new Law whose history seems uncannily based on his own. Rin'ichirō, with his guts examined by black lab assistants, is throughout the novel and manga in the process of becoming an other within EHS at the expense of his own death, but he is always within that state of *becoming* . . . a monster, a tumor, cancer, a beast.²⁰ He is no longer the benign, internationally traveling Japanese subject. He, amid his own anguish and cries of regret, first realizes his state of exile when he attempts to grab the shoulders of Clara to convince her to return home with him. His reaching out to her is greeted with alarm. Other EHS women gather round to see if she is alright, to see whether she has been defiled by the bestial *yapoo* who would touch her without permission.

Kristeva also describes the abject self as one who jettisons phenomena that both threaten and create the self's borders: “I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which ‘I’ claim to establish myself.”²¹ Rin'ichirō is disgusted by the other *yapoo* he sees. They disgust him for their self-abasement. They become symbolic of his own future psychic and spiritual death, or the “corpse” in Kristeva that is the abject reminder that we will cease to be and whose presence violates one's own border. Just as the corpse is an “infection” into one's being, the other *yapoo* infect Rin'ichirō's psychic life. Their abjection is a mirror of his impending fate. They remain on the periphery of his conscious as his imminent future. The figure of the defiled Asian at the hands of the imperial Japanese has encroached upon the Japanese man in the postwar, post-imperial landscape of the occupation. Wartime experiments, science, and imperial law collapse into

a visual reminder of vivisection now perpetrated on a *yapoo* in EHS. This image of abjection must be repudiated but it haunts.

The psychological experience of Rin'ichirō revolves around his sense of being part of a country familiar yet distant.²² This *yapoo* is reformed physically and mentally to suit the interests of the EHS. According to its history, one of the three great inventions of the EHS was the invention of telepathy such that the *yapoo* would always know his mistress's desires. This created an extreme permeability of the body and mind. The *yapoo* is given a shot of the body fluid of its master and then through a "telehormone" can understand the mistress's thoughts. And in keeping with another aspect of abjection, lives are not sustained by desire but by exclusion. In the case of the telepathic *yapoo*, he is excluded except as a telepathic medium of white female desires. In Rin'ichirō's confused wish to return home and to pleasure Clara, whose desires have started to become his own, the boundary of the external and internal has become unclear. In this science fiction manga, Rin'ichirō is a creature that does not know what it wants, or vaguely knows what it wants but cannot repudiate others' desires.

Beast Yapoo, like so many postwar works, addresses loss. But how to interpret the endless scenes of sadism in which imperial loss is embraced in all its unbearableness? How should we understand this psychology of (male) abjection? Murakami Takashi has argued that the infantilized male in the postwar, in body and image—the "little boys"—are a product of U.S. paternalism; an unsurprising product of the infantilization of Japan after the war with its forced removal of a military army and so on. But Murakami's "little boys" are still intriguing, motorbike-riding, counterculture heroes. Rin'ichirō is no longer able to articulate a distinct coherent self, invoking an aspect of mourning and loss that such a figure in postimperial Japan inevitably produces. From this perspective, the man undergoing a sense of loss and abjection is not yet the countercultural masochist who "acts out in an insistent and exaggerated way the basic conditions of cultural subjectivity, conditions that are normally disavowed . . . [or] loudly proclaims that his meaning comes to him from the Other, prostrates himself before the gaze even as he solicits it, exhibits his castration for all to see, and revels in the sacrificial basis of the social contract . . . [and] radiates a negativity inimical to the social order."²³ Rin'ichirō barely tolerates his abjected state; Numa shows it inescapable. This is a lament of the loss of the imperial blood relation and not a performative, masochistic embrace of a weakened position. The Japanese male is submissive, but his original parent has been replaced by an imposter. He tolerates abjection, but under a sovereign mistress.

THE ROLE OF MYTHOLOGY AND LANGUAGE IN *BEAST YAPOO*'S DESCRIPTION OF EMPIRE

In this story of Japan's nationalist, imperialist past and a galactic Aryan future, an abject male becomes a critical presence for playing out the logical consequences to masculine subjectivity of the new geopolitical position in which he finds himself. The novel and manga are about place and displacement.²⁴ The context in which the novel was first serialized was one in which Japan had experienced a collapse of imperial paternal laws and even a welcoming of democratic ones, but an ambivalence still existed regarding the casting out of imperial nationalism. Some scholars feared a return to imperial totalitarianism: Ishimoda Shō, in the postwar, argued for "national emancipation and the struggle against imperialism" to break the spell of the system under which his citizens were held. He specifically wrote about the primary mythical texts that had been celebrated as those founding the Japanese empire, the *Kojiki* (680, Record of ancient matters) and *Nihonshoki* (720, Chronicles of Japan).²⁵ Such discussions were part of what was called the "Heroic Age Debate" of the 1950s, which sought to reinterpret the imperial system through analysis of these "founding" texts. Both the novel and manga *Beast Yapoo* are saturated with references to the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, suggesting the important role they have played in articulating arguments for and against imperialism in Japan. In other words, Numa critiques Western imperialism and its racism in *Beast Yapoo*, but his empire is strikingly similar to the Japanese empire, which suggests a critique of Japanese imperialism as a similarly unfair, abusive hierarchy. The very name of the galactic empire, Empire of a Hundred Suns, throws a twist into what might otherwise be a straightforward critique of white colonialist empire building. Since the foundational myths of this sadistic matriarchy that abjects, scapegoats, and dominates Rin'ichirō are so strikingly similar to imperial Japan's own, the heroism of Japan's imperial history is undermined in this highly ideological story.

Myths of progeny and etymological tracings of language in the style of Motoori Norinaga are important to asserting the EHS imperial power structure. Naming represents the will to grasp and own the world. In empire building, the essence and hierarchal position of the object is determined by the name bestowed on the object, and this point is a core feature of the novel, replicated in the manga. Numa created for EHS an entire vocabulary consisting of *kanji* or *katakana* glossed with English or German as a way of emphasizing the importance of naming in EHS—the inevitable link between naming, origins, or words and imperial lineage—i.e. the placement of bodies

physically and hierarchically. The language of *Beast Yapoo* is regularly doubled with a Japanese word glossed with a foreign reading. The imperial community is etymologically grounded in Japanese and a western language. Further, through detailed references to the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* and the academic essays of *kokugaku* scholar and founder of national language studies Motoori Norinaga, Numa rewrites Japan's origin myths in a new galactic space to expose the close relationship between empire building and language use. Lengthy etymological descriptions of the EHS vocabulary for objects and the founding myths of the empire parody the style of Motoori's *Kojikiden* (1764–98, Treatise on the *Kojiki*). For example, in the novel, a philological explication of the term *oshink*—the name for the creature who absorbs through his mouth the urine of the mistresses of EHS—extends for pages and quotes various seemingly real sources in delineating the history of the word, its current meaning, and its current usage. As with Motoori's *Kojikiden*, historical fact is created from archaic word.

The complicated lexicon and processes of naming in the novel and manga reflect naming practices as portrayed in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* themselves. According to Isomae Jun'ichi, these texts relate how, during the solidification of an imperial lineage, the conquered were given a special name by the emperor, which became an index of identity that revealed one's position and duties within the sovereign order. Everything within Japan's national territory—both nature and people—was named by the emperor and placed within his order, and through this process subjects saw themselves differently:

Conquest takes place in the contact between two epistemological systems and involves political conflict as well as discord at the level of worldviews. The position that one gives to things is negated by a different epistemological system, such that a reversal takes place in which one's own status as seer is changed by the other into that of the seen. As a result, the conqueror expands his own epistemological system by appropriating the other, whereas the conquered undergoes a repositioning from seer to seen. In this sense, myth or historical narrative must be described as a conceptual act of violence.²⁶

Numa shows eloquently the way in which language and naming consolidates the sense of national bond and fraternity and how the idea of racial homogeneity is used to perpetuate a sense of national belonging. Rin'ichiro's nostalgic desire to be part of such a bonded culture is revealed most when he recalls how the myths of EHS were once part of his own. The novel illustrates how the language of imperial myth weaves an illusion of natural belonging,

which enables imperialist interventions. At the same time, the use of both Japanese and German or English words creates an odd double-layered history of imperial authority. The history of the protectorate “Jaban” works its way into the language of the colonizers, but the Japanese language is not associated with power. The unproblematized relationship of language to national history in *kokugaku* studies, which attempts to “recover and regenerate” origins to produce a national consciousness, is mimicked when the narrative of the history of EHS contains a footnote that cites Motoori’s interpretation of the term *muchi* in the *Kojiki* as a “misinterpretation.” In the satirical, darkly comic novel and manga, Numa’s complex etymologies suggest that the spell of empire is deeply grounded in the myth of an original and unique language.

So, in a parody of Motoori, who constructed with painstaking detail an ethnic and nationalist history for early modern Japan, Numa creates a complicated ancient history for EHS out of the fabric of Japan’s imperial myths. And in this new order created through language and mythmaking the Japanese man has no name. Rin’ichirō is lost because he finds that his country’s history has been rewritten in such compelling fashion that he must consider the notion that the historiographic narrative of imperial lineage in his beloved “*Kiki*” (for *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*) may have been wrong. For example, the most beautiful woman in EHS history is explorer Anna Terasu who, in traveling to old Japan to look for her abducted little sister, was worshipped by the Japanese as “Amaterasu Oomikami.” In catching a glimpse of her, Rin’ichirō is amazed to find how much she looks like the people from that era as they are described in the *Kojiki*, and he cannot but help think that it is their version that is true:²⁷

He would have been happy to believe these things to be an illusion, a dream . . . At the root of the pride of his people was the love for the gods of the beautiful lore about how they had given birth to a single imperial line of emperors. He had not forgotten to take the *Kojiki*, *Nihonshoki*, and *Manyōshū* with him on his trip to study in a foreign country. But in learning the truth [*shinsō*] of the Japan myth, he knew that the last thing he had pride in and that supported his very personality was in danger of crumbling.²⁸

Rin’ichirō, who comes to believe that the ancient Japanese had seen women’s dress from EHS and copied it, is without self and nation.²⁹ Primal narcissistic identification with the imperial paternal Japan cannot take place. To rephrase Kristeva, an unshakable adherence to Law is necessary if that perverse

interspace of abjection is to be hemmed in and thrust aside, and Rin'ichirō can no longer do this.

The manga (and novel) in this way writes an interference or denial of narcissistic fullness or identification with the religious nation of Japan. Rin'ichirō is abjected by the same kind of imperial nationalist structure he nostalgically wants to return to. He becomes ambivalent. The abject male figure of the *yapoo* embodies a cultural trauma similar to Gulliver's as described by John Kucich, who argues that Gulliver's "ordeals of enslavement and humiliation culminate in his subjection to an unquestionably superior race. This subjection compels Gulliver to disavow the sense of legitimacy he had once vested in his nation and in himself, making melancholic abjection, in his case, a vehicle for social transformation."³⁰ The title of Numa's book is reminiscent of the term "yahoo" from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Yahoos are savage, filthy creatures who possess unpleasant habits but resemble human beings. Just as Swift's yahoos appear barbaric and unclean to Lemuel Gulliver, Numa's *yapoo* appear barbaric and unclean to EHS women, until the former are transformed into useful instruments for work, pleasure, and entertainment. *Gulliver's Travels* fully explores the limits of English economic power and morality; and one of Swift's primary contributions was to turn on its head the facile dichotomy in which Europe embodied enlightenment, progress, technological advancement, and ethics, whereas Asia the barbaric and the crude with regard to technology and ethics. Robert Markley argues, "In their combination of fantasy and realism, Gulliver's encounters with the Japanese register profound anxieties about the limitations of English economic power, national identity, and morality in a world that until 1800 was dominated economically by the empires of South Asia and the Far East."³¹ Swift's decision to send Gulliver to Japan itself represents an inversion of Eurocentric discourses of colonialism, imperialism, and barbarism. Japan is used to critique the English empire of the eighteenth century and its orientalist ways. Numa's imagined hierarchy similarly satirizes imperialist values through an abjected figure. In developing accelerated technology, Japanese men are surgically altered; in the pursuit of heroism, tiny replicas of Japanese cultural heroes commit seppuku in dioramic boxes while white women look on; high art is listening to an orchestra of tiny yellow men wildly drawing to and fro their violin bows while Aryan women roll around in onanistic pleasure on live couches in this Empire of a Hundred Suns.

Rin'ichirō's psychological transformation into a *yapoo* is a gradual process that shifts to a masochistic sensibility only in the last pages of the story. This newly emergent psychology is framed in geopolitical and racial terms in

the manga when Rin'ichirō recalls a story his father told him about being humiliated by an American soldier and his “*pan pan*” escort. Rin'ichirō has now come to believe that the *pan pan* prostitute was right to say that all Japanese men are useless [*darashinai*].³² The same night that Rin'ichirō recalls his father lying beaten and humiliated on the ground after being pummeled by an American soldier, his mistress Clara gives him the freedom to return to Japan. Rin'ichirō refuses her offer, choosing to remain her *yapoo*, a dog-slave at her feet. He desperately wants to explain to her that he can't go home because he has fully assimilated the EHS's discriminatory view of the Japanese as ugly in body and spirit. When Clara suggests that he be brainwashed before he goes back so that he won't remember all he has seen, Rin'ichirō replies that he can't live without her, so Clara (wondering if he isn't “genetically suited to this humble position”) declares to baptize him anew: “You will be like the country that has unconditionally surrendered and will not desert the occupying military,” to which Rin'ichirō replies, “Yes, I am not an independent country but your protectorate.” Clara continues: “You want to be my pet right? And so you don't care how you are treated, right?” Rin'ichirō replies: “Yes! Absolutely!”³³ In these final pages, Rin'ichirō no longer feels an abject sense of loss, anger, or frustration. Rather, he revels in his passionate sense of devotion.³⁴ In finally accepting his “protectorate status,” Rin'ichirō fully transitions to being a *yapoo*. No longer an ambiguous self, he embraces this new humiliated position. The conclusions to both the novel and manga may reject Rin'ichirō's earlier sense of homelessness that he retained for most of the story, but it is the stark suddenness of this transformation in the final pages that makes it somehow strained. Nevertheless, Numa concludes with a masochistic man who rejects any troubled self-identity and sees himself through Western imperialist eyes as—a *yapoo*.

IN FINALLY ACCEPTING HIS
“PROTECTORATE STATUS,”
RIN'ICHIRO FULLY TRANSITIONS
TO BEING A YAPOO.

Kristeva treats the psychic life of the individual prior to his subjection to the symbolic order as the space where abjection occurs. But abjection facilitates the defining of broader imaginaries, especially imperialist imaginaries. Curiously, Kristeva's examples of the connections between the abject and society-building focus on primitive societies, such as the following: “The abject confronts us, on the one hand, with those fragile states where man strays on the territory of animal. Thus, by way of abjection, primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture in order to remove it from the threatening world of animals or animalism.”³⁵ But it is not just

the primitive that incorporates abjection; we might suggestively look to the case of French imperialism in the postwar to suggest that Kristeva has unwittingly responded with her theory of abjection to the collapse of an imperial society closer to her in time and space. The cult classic *Beast Yapoo*, and especially the manga created not long after Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*, uncannily insists that empire operates through the logic of abjection and the logic of abjection through empire.

Notes

1. The manga volumes based on the novel by Numa Shōzō used for this paper, scripted by Ishinomori Shōtarō and illustrated by Satō Sugar, are *Kachikujin yapū: Uchū teikoku e no shōtai* (Beast yapoo: Invitation to a galactic empire) (Tokyo: Tatsumi Shuppan, 1983); *(Zoku) Kachikujin yapū: Akumu no Nihonshi hen* (Beast yapoo continued: The nightmare history of Japan) (Tokyo: Tatsumi Shuppan, 1984); and *Kachikujin yapū: Mujōken kōfuku hen* (Beast yapoo: Unconditional surrender) (Tokyo: Tatsumi Shuppan, 1993). All translations from these texts are by the author. There are no published English translations available for these texts.

2. John Nathan, *Japan Unbound* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 129.

3. Ibid., 151. Nathan also writes that in a related case, in a heated public debate about the depiction of the Nanking Massacre, “the Sankei media group” led a media campaign deploring textbook histories that were “anti-Japanese” or “masochistic” histories.

4. Ibid., 173.

5. Ōe Kenzaburō, “Warera no sei no sekai” (Our world of sex) in *Shuppatsuten* (Starting point) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1980), 145; quoted in Yumiko Iida, *Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 131.

6. Takayuki Tatsumi, *Full Metal Apache: Transactions between Cyberpunk Japan and Avant-Pop* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 168.

7. Ibid., 57.

8. See Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), and Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty and Venus in Furs* (Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books, 1991), among others.

9. See chapter 5 of Christine Marran, *Poison Woman: Figuring Female Transgression in Modern Japanese Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

10. It is possible to read *Beast Yapoo* as an inversion of Mori Ōgai's short story “Dancing Girl” (1890), in which Toyotarō, a Japanese student in Germany, abandons a German dancing girl, Elise, to become a Japanese state bureaucrat. Just as Elise cannot believe her abandonment and suffers a lifelong state of shock and distress, Rin'ichirō similarly agonizes over his abandonment by a German woman who puts affairs of state and pleasure before his welfare.

11. Numa, Ishinomori, and Satō, *(Zoku) Kachikujin yapū: Akumu no Nihonshi hen*, 23.

12. Ibid., 30.

13. Japanese women are also relatively absent in *Beast Yapoo* texts. *(Zoku) Kachikujin*

yapū: *Akumu no Nihonshi hen* shows how especially “caucasian-looking” Japanese women function as borrowed wombs. They are raised in “Jaban” and then chosen to live at the “nunnery” on EHS. It is there they first learn about EHS and that blacks have become slaves and other Japanese have been reduced to being “yapoo.” However, once they are told that they enjoy special privileges, “they feel a certain amount of pride,” according to the text.

14. Ibid., 31.

15. John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 85.

16. Ibid., 87.

17. The manga suggests here the way that our current society for the most part has no qualms about submitting animals to vivisection and other physically and mentally destructive treatment.

18. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 12.

19. Ibid., 20.

20. Ibid., 5.

21. Ibid., 3.

22. Kristeva writes that abjection is what disturbs identity, system, order, and what “dissembles,” and what does not respect borders, positions, rules. It is the “in-between,” the “ambiguous,” and the “composite.”

23. Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 52.

24. Kristeva has argued, the abject is an exile who asks “Where am I?” instead of “Who am I?” “A deviser of territories, languages, works, the dejected never stops demarcating his universe whose fluid confines . . . constantly question his solidity and impel him to start afresh . . . The abject ‘is simply a frontier’ and ‘sublime alienation’” (*Powers of Horror*, 8).

25. Isomae, Jun’ichi, “The Space of Historical Discourse: Ishimoda Shō’s Theory of the Heroic Age,” trans Richard Calichman, *positions* 10, no. 3 (Winter 2002): 631–68.

26. Ibid., 660.

27. Numa, Ishinomori, and Satō, (*Zoku*) *Kachikujin yapū: Akumu no Nihonshi hen*, 53.

28. Ibid., 61.

29. Ibid., 68.

30. John Kucich, *Imperial Masochism: British Fiction, Fantasy, and Social Class* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 4.

31. Robert Markley, “Gulliver and the Japanese: The Limit of the Postcolonial Past,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (September 2004), 458–59.

32. Numa, Ishinomori, and Satō, *Kachikujin yapū: Mujōken kōfuku hen*, 121.

33. Ibid., 226.

34. Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* writes: “The abjection of self would be the culminating form of that experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural loss that laid the foundations of its own being. There is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is in fact recognition of the want [the lack] on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded” (5).

35. Ibid., 12.