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# Women's Self-Representation and Transformation of the Body: Kōno Taeko and Ogawa Yōko

Mizuta Noriko

## 《要旨》

### 女性表現と身体の変容

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トルストイにせよ、フローベールにせよ、あるいは有島武郎にせよ、女性の精神をけっしてないがしろにしなかった作家といえども、女性が生殖を離れた愛と快楽を追求すれば、男としてそれを手きびしく懲罰せずにはおかなかった。こうして、女性がみずからの身体の欲望と快楽とその表現を自己表現として獲得することが、現代の女性文学にとっての最大のテーマとなったのであった。

だが、女性を生殖から解放し、性と愛の快楽＝エロスにおいて女が男から主導権を取り返すために、二十世紀前半のフェミニズムの思想は、身体とセクシュアリティの未踏の領域を探求してきた。ピルの発明と解禁と普及という、避妊のテクノロジーは、あっけなく快楽と生殖を分離させたかに見える。フェミニズムは、自分たちを追い越して女たちの子宮に達したテクノロジーに追いつこうとして苦戦しなければならなかった。

性と生殖をテーマとする、女性作家たちの表現へのさまざまな試みをあとづけながら、主として最近の河野多恵子、小川洋子、山田詠美などの作品分析を通して、みずからの身体において快楽の主体となった女性たちの、今、女であることの新しい定義を求める、暗闇の未踏の領域での思考に光を当てる。

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In the debate over pornography that has engaged feminists in recent years, one point upon which both pro and con forces agree is the distinction between pornography and erotica. This distinction was settled around the time of the 1960s censorship wars, when eros was defined as an affirming life energy, and erotic expression was hailed as something celebratory rather than pleasure-oriented.

It goes without saying that the current controversy over pornography is related to the earlier controversy over censorship. Yet, incredible as it seems today, the sixties censorship debate was virtually devoid of any perspective of the woman's body. The entire debate was confined to the argument, on the one hand, that pornographic sexual expression was socially harmful and should be legally restricted through censorship, and an opposing position based on preserving freedom of expression and the arts.

The feminists who are opposed to pornography and critical of society for tolerating it build their position around a critique of the objectification of women's bodies and the exploitation and commodification of female sexuality by men and male culture. This issue, they feel, should come before any discussion of freedom of sexual expression versus legal restriction. Pornography, they say, objectifies women's bodies, controlling them by violence. It degrades women for the sake of pleasure and the fulfillment of desire, or to provide an outlet for male hatred and resentment. In the name of pleasure, society tolerates a relationship in which the weak are abused and dominated by the strong—the relationship of perpetrator versus victim, dominator versus dominated. Women's bodies are used as outlets by injured male egos. Pornography robs women's bodies of all their human qualities, makes them objects for consumption, possesses and violently consumes genitals which are severed from the rest of the body—a clear case of murder and dismemberment. In fact, the argument runs, pornography is premised on the rendering as pleasurable of the fragmenting and dismembering of women's bodies.

While criticizing pornography in this way, many feminists make a distinction between pornography and erotica. Erotica is seen as “good pornography”<sup>1</sup> because of the positive value attached to eros and its expression. Physical contact such as caressing and sexual intercourse is viewed as an erotic and celebratory expression taking place between self and other. Pleasure is redeemed by love and the act of celebrating life.

However, the female act of creating life—giving birth—is absent from pornography, of course, and from erotica as well. Erotica does not touch upon pregnancy and childbirth, or even such rudimentary reproductive mechanisms as insemination or implantation of the embryo. Physical pleasure and enjoyment are separated from reproduction.<sup>2</sup> In erotica, the body does not fulfill any reproductive function. It is affirmed solely for its metaphoric and symbolic value, and physical pleasure is consumed. Ironically, eros as *celebration of life* only became possible for both men and women after the connection between women's bodies and the *production of life* had been severed. And indeed, the separation of female body from the function of reproduction was what the feminists of the 1960s had sought.

Behind the censorship controversy of the 1960s was a male discourse that constructed pleasure by detaching the reproductive function from the womb. Since both the desiring subject and the recipient of pleasure were male, male discourse had little difficulty in separating reproduction from sexual pleasure with regard to either men's bodies or women's. The separation was more problematic for female discourse, and especially for feminism.

Women hitherto had no body of thought which would allow them to detach themselves from their own wombs and legitimize their own pleasure independent of procreation. Feminism, on the other hand, sought independence for women through sexual liberation, and attempted to repudiate the mainstream conception of reproduction and childrearing along with the ideals of motherhood and femininity based there. On the other hand, feminism perceived the childraising, nurturing woman's body as the site of the difference between women and men, and acclaimed the ideal of womanhood grounded in that body.

For the male discourse of the sixties, the separation of sexual pleasure and procreation was enabled by the concepts of sexual liberation and eros. Yet for feminism, the split was brought about more by technology than by ideas. Birth-control technology (the development, legalization, and popularization of the pill) effected the detachment of the function of reproduction from the womb with stunning rapidity. Ever since, one might say, feminism has been struggling against technology in a losing race to the womb.

Technology has beaten women's liberation to the womb, and is dismantling the myth of the female body. Yet technology is a double-edged sword—a hermaphrodite. It elucidated the mystery of conception and granted women control over the reproductive functions of the uterus. What that meant in reality, however, was that women lost dominion over their own wombs. Thus the ideology of sex, which liberated pleasure by divesting the womb of its reproductive function, was problematic for women.

It was technology which paved the way for women's bodies to signify both procreation and pleasure independent from each other before women themselves opened intellectually a way to pleasure for its own sake, independent of procreation. Even though it was technology that separated pleasure from procreation, however, the separation meant liberation for women in a culture which legitimated sexual pleasure for women solely through procreation, and which punished any attempt by women to pursue pleasure-as-physical-consumption on their own.

Literature is filled with depictions of women who have been punished for pursuing love and pleasure. They are forced into unhappy marriages or made pregnant, become ill or insane and are driven to death or suicide. Even authors who were by no means demeaning in their portrayal of women would ultimately pass stern judgement on women who pursued love and pleasure independent of procreation. Because she dares to love a man without concern for marriage or reproduction, Yōko in Arishima Takeo's *Aru Onna* (A Woman)

ends up suffering a uterine disorder. Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina are made to commit suicide in the end; Tess and Hester Prynne are expelled as outcasts. Women were not permitted a doctrine which could separate the two values of procreation and pleasure assigned to their bodies.

The issue of reclaiming not only physical desire and pleasure but also its representation was central to the contemporary female investigative activities of self-representation and self-actualization, and as such has been a major theme of contemporary women's literature. Yet despite their call for women to possess their own bodies and desires, modern Japanese women writers found it difficult to devise a conceptual approach which could affirm physical pleasure independent of procreation. Most women writers were forced either to discard the pleasurable and procreative body, assigning creativity to the realm of language and the psyche, or search for the basis of self-representation in the myth of woman as the "reproductive sex," where body and mind remained undifferentiated.

Kōno Taeko was the first writer to clearly express a conceptual approach which separated procreation from pleasure in women's bodies. Writing on the eve of technology's conquest of the uterus, Kōno rescued pleasure from procreation via a type of back alley of Gothic imagination: she made the women in her stories sterile—victims of uterine disorder. Yet this does not make Kōno a landmark criminal—the perpetrator of the first dismemberment of women by another woman—for we must remember that this back door was situated in a completely male discourse. For Kōno, pleasure was a paradox, a reversal of love and the celebration of life, and her back alley to expressing it was the metaphor of illness, sterility, a disease of female reproductive organs, is a strategy Kōno uses for separating pleasure from procreation.

The separation of physical pleasure from procreation is clear from Kōno's early works. She continually depicted women choosing pleasure rather than procreation, consumption rather than production. These women appeared to be in complete possession and control of their own desires and bodies.

*Ari takaru* (Ant Swarm) (1964), *Dai ni noru* (On the Table) (1965), and *Akuru hi* (The Next Day) (1965), all feature protagonists who have been avoiding pregnancy in their sex with their husbands, when they are told by doctors that they have some uterine disorder which renders them sterile or temporarily infertile. The realization that they do not or cannot get pregnant frees their wombs to become sex organs of pleasure. The women are granted a legitimate reason for the pursuit of pleasure; their physical disorders allow them to pursue pleasure openly.

Yet while procreation and pleasure may be antinomic propositions for women, they still cleave together closely as twins. Thus repudiation of procreation—the choice not to bear children even when physically capable of it—can only bring the heroines

a masochistic pleasure—that obtained from surrendering their bodies to the use of the other. In addition, when the women realize that they not only *do not* but *cannot* conceive children, their masochism takes on an added dimension: to the pleasure they gain from being physically abused by their husbands is appended the pleasure of harassing imaginary children. The harassment of children is masochistic rather than sadistic because the children are seen as one with the women themselves—a part of their own bodies created by their capacity for procreation. The pleasure obtained by inflicting pain on children is a reversal of the pleasure obtained through childbirth and maternal love, and thus the ultimate in masochistic pleasure. Even here, women's pleasure must be legitimated and enabled by motherhood (albeit a perverted motherhood).

In these works, liberated sexual pleasure is both a bitter blessing, chosen consciously and bestowed by the other, and a pain the women inflict on themselves through the harassment of imaginary children. For these women, possession of pleasure is dependent upon the abnegation of physical freedom—the same structure that obtains in the relationship between pleasure and procreation. It was this difficulty in detaching pleasure from procreation and the symbolism surrounding it that made women turn to the back alley of the gothic, utilizing the metaphors of sterility, illness, abnormality, or perversion to effect the first instance of separation.

In Kōno Taeko's early works, when the heroines voluntarily repudiate procreation—the symbolic function of the body/womb—the cost of that repudiation is the physical masochism of desiring pleasure-as-consumption. However, when the heroines realize that their lack of children is not voluntary but forced—that they are actually unable to bear children—their physical masochism is joined by a spiritual pleasure/masochism that takes the form of child harassment. For women, the very fact of being denied the symbolic function of the womb leads to spiritual masochism, and their bodies/wombs are forced to act as the inverse of the psyche. Even when the womb is freed from the physical mandates of procreation, it cannot be freed from the psychological. For women, physical pleasure is the twin of reproduction.

Kōno's current work continues to explore the possibilities of a sexual pleasure independent of procreation and the possibilities of women being the desiring subject. In *Miira-tori ryokitan* (The Mummy Snatchers) (1991), physical pleasure—this time the sadomasochistic pleasure deriving from an abusive relationship—is affirmed in the name of love (maternal love). The protagonist (the abuser) and her husband (the abused) play out a mother-child relationship, with motherhood as the catalyst that allows them to experience the pleasure of abusing and being abused. In this work, love passes through pleasure to end, finally, in the ultimate pleasure of death, a plot which recalls Georges Bataille's definition of eros as the consumption of life leading to death. Yet even this progression mimics the biological sequence in which death occurs at

the end of the reproductive act. Even here, pleasure that rejects and is independent of procreation—pleasure as non-productive overconsumption—is described through the metaphor of motherhood.

The relationship of Masataka and Hinako Odaka, the story's main characters, is portrayed as a purely private affair. Married in the early summer of 1941, near the start of the Pacific War, the couple live apart from the community, neither professing nor believing themselves to be living for anyone else. Nor are they a trouble to others. They love and live, in their own way, and only for each other. Because their existence is private and love-centered, they feel that it needs neither explanation nor excuse.

But private also means out of the ordinary. Soon after their wedding, Hinako begins to feel that their married life is unusual. And in fact, they are not a normal couple. The sexual peak which they reach through the acting out of a love-hate drama between abusing mother and abused child—the sadomasochistic love between mother and child—is the height of non-procreative sex. It is not so much a deviation from “natural,” procreative, heterosexual sex as its antithesis. In order to escape the discourse of a system which posits “normal” as “natural,” the two of them assert that they are acting out of love, and therefore in a completely private manner.

Yet love alone is not enough to legitimize the couple's deviation from the discourse of the system. Kōno tries to make her characterizations more convincing by laying the reason for the pair's unusual behavior in their childhoods and the environment. Masataka's abnormal sexual proclivities are made to seem less abrupt in light of his family history: his grandmother is German, giving his family a somewhat un-Japanese quality, and his father is a physician, a profession in which one cannot hold mystical illusions about the body (Hinako's father is also a doctor). Hinako's past is similarly checkered. Her mother died when she was young, leaving her to be raised by a womanizing and selfish father. Although her father had adopted a prospective husband into the family, the relationship between father and adopted brother was strained. The marriage itself, which Hinako had accepted as natural, failed to materialize when this brother died inexplicably in front of her, and subsequently another child was adopted whom Hinako had never seen before. Hinako's family is not an orthodox blood-related family. In fact, the insinuation is that in the end, the family line is fated to die out. It is also hinted that Hinako is an outcast, even from this family.

Unlike the heroines in Kōno's early works, Hinako is not infertile, nor does she have a uterine disease. Still, she is clearly marked with negative indicators—not only with regard to marriage but also her ability to run an ordinary household. This negative denotation is what renders her non-procreative sex and sadomasochism possible and legitimate. In an attempt to legitimize the plot as inevitable, Hinako's deviation from the system of natural, procreative sex is presented as the result of damage sustained by not being brought up in an ordinary, natural family environment. The story unfolds in a framework of dichotomies: natural vs. unnatural, normal vs. abnormal, mainstream vs. deviant.



Kōno Taeko portrays the couple's deviance as completely private behavior motivated by love. Yet their consciously-chosen sexuality is still structurally married to mainstream sex culture. The more sincere and true Masataka and Hinako are to their desires, the more we can feel the power of “normal love” from which they are deviating. The very extent to which their sexuality/love is private and consciously chosen is a measure of the clarity with which the different “other within” or “foreigner within” can be seen. The concept of private is merely another strategic and subversive back alley.

*En'en no ki* (Flaming Story) (1992) is a clear example of how Kōno Taeko positions non-procreative sex as “sex of the other within,” in a discourse of anti-establishment sadomasochism. Although the story does not depict physical pleasure, it portrays how the flame of desire burns deep inside the self, smoldering continually in the background. The heroine resembles the woman in *Yojutsu-ki* (Witchcraft) (1978) who calls forth disasters. What the heroine of *En'en no ki* calls forth, however, are the flames of spiritual masochism in the form of physical sadism directed at the other. Pleasure, though separate from procreation, still traces out the procreative progression that ends in death and consumption of the body. The story suggests that the source of that pleasure is buried in the darkness of a world beneath the conscious, and is strongly colored by the relationship—the fateful and indissoluble bond—between the body and the unconscious.

The heroine of *En'en no ki* is Mizuko, a woman born in the year of Hinoeuma—the ill-omened year of the “Fiery Horse.” Indeed, she has an intimate relationship with fire. The story begins with Mizuko talking passionately about her curious and various connections with fires, tracing back through family history then rambling on into literary and historical writings, although never probing deeply into her inner world. As the story progresses, however, we realize that the “flaming story” is the flaming world inside of the heroine herself. Mizuko, whose very birth in the Hinoeuma year evokes numerous unlucky and undesirable denotations, calls forth fire after fire in her neighborhood. Yet those fires, with their smell of arson, progress to Mizuko's own house, and then ultimately converge in the crematory fire that will consume her own body.

The excitement and abnormal interest in destruction and death that is aroused in Mizuko by fire is reminiscent of the instinctive, sexual, psycho-physical cycle of creation and destruction, birth and death. The fires themselves are metaphors for the “primeval sexualizing character”<sup>3</sup> of fire, blazing out as the flame of Mizuko's deeply buried libido. As the inverse of procreation, the sadism of arson and destruction as well as Mizuko's almost vice-like feeling of pleasure, suggest sexual pleasure. The embers of the flame that Mizuko calls forth lie inside of her—a symbolic, sexual flame—linking body and mind, pleasure and vice, sex and death.

Even after non-reproductive sexual desire is extinguished, the desire for pleasure smolders on as the fire of the libido, spiritual sadomasochism, and the flames of a



subconscious obsessed with procreation, the symbolic value assigned to the womb. Mizuko is told by a worker at the crematorium that when the sadistic flames of arson and destruction ultimately converge in the masochistic flame of the crematory fire that will consume her own body, the flames will take the shape of either an ascent to heaven or a descent into hell. Mizuko cannot say which she feels her fate will be. Yet it is impossible to banish the image of fire as the flames of punishment, redemption, and purification from the vice that wraps her.

If male discourse was one of pleasure, premised on and achieved through virtue by way of vice, women's gothic literature was strongly colored by the opposite: achievement of sadomasochistic pleasure via the immovable premise of procreation. Kōno Taeko brackets the premise of procreation through the handicaps of illness or sterility, a technique widely used in gothic literature whereby women could achieve expression. Yet by the 1970s, technology eliminated the need for those brackets by destroying the premise of procreation.

During the modern period, Japanese men writers searched for a conceptual method by which they could break the dichotomous relationship in which Western Christian thought had imprisoned the body and mind. They sought to free the body from the rule of the mind, strip off the negative denotations attached to physicality, and link mind and body together in an equal partnership. Sexual liberation was an extension of that attempt, and psychoanalysis provided a conceptual and methodological bridge joining mind and body. The realm of unconscious desires, drives, and deep-seated hatred and resentment was shown to be intimately connected to both the mind or intellect and the body. In that realm, sex was seen to rule—in both its functional and symbolic manifestations. These developments enabled the moral divorce of sex from procreation and legitimated the connection between pleasure and eros.

Modern Japanese women, however, were searching in the opposite conceptual direction from men. They were trying to free their psyches, minds, intellects, and language from the overdetermined body. To begin with, women removed the womb—nexus of symbolic meaning—from the body, then tried to separate their brains, organs, hands and feet, their eyes, ears and noses, mouths and tongues.

Yet it was the womb which integrated women's bodies. To remove the womb was to dismember the body. Women's thought in the modern period removed the womb from the body, and not only attempted to reallocate its functions, but also dilute its symbolic meaning and disassemble the integrated meaning associated with women's bodies by displacing reproduction as the central function of the womb. As a result, women's brains and psyches and hearts and internal organs and limbs and senses and language became visible, but at the same time, the overarching chaotic woman's body disappeared.

The womb, severed from its meaning as integrator of the body, became a mere reproductive organ, and a mere organ of pleasure. In the science fiction world, we are already seeing the appearance of aliens that are nothing but sex organs—sex organs swaggering around as independent physical entities.<sup>4</sup> Examples of independent cyborg-like wombs also appear in Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* (1989), a story of women who have been transformed into reproductive machines.

In *Ninshin karendaa* (Pregnancy Calendar) (1990), Ogawa Yōko portrays the physical and mental disturbance that results when the womb stops functioning as a source of meaning—not only in its former sense of procreation, the meaning assigned to the body, but also as the link between the body and the psyche or mind, and anchor of woman's identity.

The pregnant older sister of the story's protagonist is troubled by terrible bouts of starving and binging, an uncontrollable sense of displacement, and the attendant physical chain reactions. These troubles all start with the appearance of an alien—the fetus of her child, as revealed in a photograph taken by ultrasonic scanner. Technology had invaded her womb before she was ready, giving her an image of her fetus on film to take home. Ordinarily, the fetus secretes itself in the uterus for nine months before emerging as a human. During this time, it makes its presence known gradually, by moving around and kicking the uterine walls. This hiatus gives the mother time to prepare herself for the encounter with the newborn. But for the protagonist's sister, pregnancy means first being taken to the extra-ordinary world of the hospital, a place she knows only from impressions preserved inside of her since childhood. It means technology—an other which invades her body in the examination room. And it means facing the “shockingly new” process of ultrasonic examination. It leads her to the alien world inside of her body where the hostile other within awaits to destroy her.

The world of the fetus, photographed by that other, is like a photograph of “rain falling in a frozen night sky,” and the fetus is a “fragile clump of shadow” in the corner of a gaping cavity opened like a spread bean in the misty night sky. This vision makes the sister profoundly uneasy. “Here lies the origin of morning sickness,” she proclaims, and from that day she is racked by terrible morning sickness, and her mental disturbance begins. There lies the origin of her mental disturbance as well. The inside of the womb, nurturing that growing clump of shadow with its willfully dividing cells, is a foreign world that threatens the pregnant woman, and the fetus is an other living there. Pregnancy is a regression into the extra-ordinary world of dreams, and an encounter with the “new other.”

Although it appears that the pregnant woman had a history of mental disturbance, the story's protagonist also becomes progressively disturbed by the photograph of the cavity in the rainy night that she has seen. She can only imagine the fetus in terms of genes, chromosomes, larva, and Siamese twins. The fetus appears ominous and pernicious, like self-multiplying cancer cells, and she begins to harbor a secret desire

to poison it with food containing preservatives. Normally the fetus is given meaning by love and the celebration of life, and thus is able to link physical changes due to pregnancy with psychological and spiritual changes. The fetus in *Ninshin karendaa*, however, provides a glimpse of an ominous black abyss that exists between the mind and body.

Wombs and bodies that go their separate ways, and a mind that is frightened by the shadow of a fetus into fostering secret hostile and homicidal thoughts. A mind that fantasizes about the ceaselessly growing fetus being born as a poisoned baby. The alienation of such a mind from its body has already reached the level of madness.

To be pregnant is to have an independent cellular entity/other inside of one's own body, and it is not easy for the mind and other organs besides the uterus to keep pace with physical changes. Both loss of appetite caused by morning sickness and overeating are self-abusive reactions, while the rejection of the fetus is a masochistic expression. We are reminded of the well-known phenomenon that adolescent girls' denial of their physical development—their maturation into women capable of becoming pregnant—often expresses itself as anorexia. In pregnancy as well the mind often has trouble keeping up with the body, and as the case of American poet Anne Sexton shows, pregnancy and childbirth can play a large part in causing madness.<sup>5</sup>

*Ninshin karendaa* shows how the alienation between mind and body brought about by pregnancy is aggravated by technology. The story begins with the protagonist's sister coming home from the hospital after being told that she is pregnant, and ends with the sister going to the hospital for the delivery. Both points mark a crossover into the alien and technology-ruled world of the hospital, a cavity-like world that exists in the gap between mind and body. The womb, the reproductive cave which fosters the ominous other, was transformed into an alien topos.

Both *Kampeki na byoshitsu* (The Perfect Sickroom) (1989) and *Yohaku no ai* (Blank Love) (1991) use the cavity-like alien world of the sickroom to portray the inner world that can be seen in the gap between mind and body. In these works, woman's body not only becomes isolated from the mind, but as a result, the various organs begin to be isolated from the body as a whole.

*Yohaku no Ai* tells the story of a woman with a psychogenic hearing disorder. Her ears are isolated—closed off from her mind, her whole body, and the outside world. Nothing can control those ears. The woman's sense of life and death is completely concentrated in her ears. Whether she will maintain her mental equilibrium and recover, whether she will be able to survive the present moment, whether she will fall back into madness—all this depends on her ears, those incessantly ringing, swirling cavities of darkness. Her ears preside over her womb, and even more, over the life and death of mind and body. They are a mysterious source of meaning. What can be glimpsed in the deep crevasse of her ears is a desolate land excluded from the "normal" world of

healthy, fertile love. If love were to appear in this alien cavity of a world, it would be neither healthy nor unhealthy, neither fertile nor infertile, but a desexualized “blank love” somewhere in between.

The woman’s hearing loss cuts her language off from her mind and body. That lost language is revived by the fingers of a young shorthand reporter, who is recording the woman’s account of her illness’ origin and progress—in a sense, the patient’s inner monologue—for psychiatric treatment. Those fingers grasp the key to recovery. The fingers of the young shorthand reporter are giving her life coherence, writing out a unified narrative, and recording the language which retrieves her mental equilibrium; they literally grasp the key to her mental illness and the recovery of her ears. The woman talks to those fingers, loves those fingers, sleeps with them held to her. In her breast, there develops a deep finger-shaped cavity, as if those fingers had actually penetrated into her body.

When the recording is completed, the woman has recovered from both her hearing impairment and her madness. With recovery the fingers disappear, and the confessional text which the fingers recorded also vanishes. Those fingers which exist only to record language represent the alienation between mind and language, as well as the dissolution of the woman’s conscious act of self-representation. The mouth that speaks language, the ears that hear it, and the fingers which record it. Those organs which were previously integrated by the act of writing, maintaining the woman’s mental equilibrium and filling the gap between mind and body, become dismembered, in the process dismembering the act of writing.

The fingers which grasp the key to recovery are proxy pen, penis, and physician—traditional male metaphors—yet they have lost the ability to write and have intercourse. The split between sex and love, the alienation between language and mind, cannot be resolved by men, nor by the act of self-representation. The pen/penis and the inner confession which had previously held the power to impel recovery break into their component parts, and lose their omnipotent power. Women of the modern period entrusted their self-actualization to self-representation/writing via language. Yet that is no longer possible with technology accelerating the breakdown of the mechanisms which linked women’s bodies and minds.

Love for fingers and an obsession with ears are examples of fetishism. This tendency to fixate on parts arises when the body loses its integrity as an organic entity and stops being a *topos* that gives rise to meaning.<sup>6</sup> The physical sense of organic naturalness may be shattered through emotional shocks like betrayal or heartbreak, giving rise to oddly vivid sensual impressions of smell, touch, or sight as the body’s physical functions such as eating start to materialize on their own, along with their attendant organs. The brain, the heart, and even the womb become mere organs, no longer integrating the body or linking symbolically with the mind. When the protagonist attempts to find salvation through and concentrate her senses in those fragmented organs, the only thing that appears is her own deranged inner world.

The protagonist is helped to recovery by fingers/penis which have lost both the ability for sex and the ability to create through reason and language, being reduced solely to the ability to record in writing. With recovery, she ends up freed of both men and sex. The confessional text remains lost. Perhaps from the blank space where it once was will arise something quite different from healthy, fertile procreative sex: a desexualized love, like that for a son or younger brother or nephew.

All of Ogawa Yōko's heroines are united by their hatred for the dirty and disorderly bodily organs, their hatred for a life of "eating, sleeping, and taking out the garbage"—a life of sex, childbirth, illness, and finally death.

Sex and marriage are still unknowns for the fatally ill younger brother of the protagonist in *Kampeki na byoshitsu*, a story about the tactics employed by the mind in order to live with a body that has "just gone funny all by itself," and the sickroom which provides the space where life can contemplate death. The protagonist's brother gradually becomes unable to eat, his organs function less efficiently, and his young body loses its organic quality, becoming more and more transparent and inorganic-seeming, like something made of glass. The breakdown, collapse, and decay of the body as an organic entity presupposes madness. If the mind is unable to keep pace with the inexplicable changes of the body, the body is also unable to keep pace with the disturbances of the mind.

The sickroom which houses and controls the brother's body in its journey toward death is a sanitary space seemingly set apart from the world. Dirt and disorder are banished from it, and there is nothing to disturb the mind. The brother lives in this space. This "perfect sickroom" protects the minds and bodies and above all else the lives of the protagonist and her brother from the crazy world that surrounds them. To live is to be in the sickroom, and to perfect the sickroom is to banish madness and watch the progression of physical changes undisturbed. The sickroom provides a space where life as it is can be affirmed and fulfilled, actions which validate the *topos* of expression which the sickroom makes possible. Yet one wonders whether this in itself is not a type of madness.

The brother's sickroom harbors neither passion nor eros nor procreation, but it does have love—a love that exists in a space where both the organic physical functions and madness are controlled. This space where the organism takes leave of life and faces death—the "blank love" that exists in the cavity between mind and body—can neither give birth to life nor save it. But by protecting the perfect sickroom, it is the love of "impossible motherhood," a love which helps validate the realities of the sickroom: the body that is turning into inorganic matter, the life which must face death.

Kōno Taeko's *Miira-tori ryokidan* also entrusts to "blank love" the feeling of being alive and the physical validation that seizes her characters when they are sealed off in a

closed room. The love that finally enables the couple's physical flames to be completely consumed is one that blazes up in the extra-ordinary temporal space of wartime when their house is afire from a bombing, a love that awakens in a closed room when it is time to die. This love is "perverted maternal love"—the love of a mother who wants her child to be fulfilled.

Technology has liberated the womb from reproduction, and it is no longer necessary for women to follow the back door of illness, sterility and madness to freedom. At the same time, however, technology occupies the womb, controlling and dominating its procreative functions. In *Kampeki na byoshitsu* the mother who could somehow make the closed room/sickroom a conscious space of life is already absent, so the love of the heroine for her brother is that of "impossible motherhood" for which not even perversion is possible.

Because of the way in which technology has beaten women's discourse to the womb and severed procreation from women's bodies, the works of Ogawa Yōko were born of a world where women no longer had to employ Kōno Taeko's tactic of legitimizing the split between procreation and pleasure through the back alley of illness or sterility. Pleasure in Kōno's works fled the mandate of procreation through the back alley of uterine disorder, and it could express itself only through the act of sadomasochistic love in a closed room. Kōno Taeko's sadomasochism is the essence of non-procreative sex, and Ogawa Yōko's sense of repulsion for the metabolizing body organs is an expression of the fragmenting body which has lost integrity and symbolic meaning.

Women's bodies, liberated all unawares from procreation by technology, continue their cellular division and shut themselves off in the sickroom. The sickroom is enveloped by a world of cold clouds; from it, the burning flames cannot be seen.

The division of procreation and pleasure, whether contrived by women themselves or forced on them by the other, made visible the deep blackness inside of modern women. This was the blackness of chaos—the chaos that resulted from having had their bodies termed synonymous with nature, and their minds and organs all crammed into the womb, as the organ of reproduction. This chaos had been the only foundation for self-representation allowed women.

Modern women's literature began by attempting to cast some light on this internal chaotic darkness. In order to reveal the inner self that was sinking in the deep blackness between the mind and body, it was first necessary to sever the mind from the body/womb. The hatred of the procreative womb has been a central creative theme in the works of numerous women writers, from Takahashi Takako to Masuda Mizuko. Drawn down the back door by the flickering flames in the inner darkness, the body liberated from procreation was validated in the closed room of the sickroom, protected by perverted motherhood or impossible motherhood, and nursed. Without all this, it would have been impossible for women's inner selves to become the foundation for modern women's representation.



Since the 1970s, contemporary women's thought has left the back alley for the main street, seeking to reunite the fragmented parts of the female body to form a new site for femininity and female self-representation. The works of Yamada Eimi, for example, portray the world of women's eros, and the women's body as a new site of female power. There is no drama and no plot, only the validation of women's eros and its power, and the temporal space of the present which makes that eros possible.

*Haaremu waarudo* (Harlem World) (1987) portrays a sexual world centering around Sayuri, a woman of mixed heritage who is an erotic goddess. Sexy Sayuri attracts men one after the other. She has four lovers who create erotic spaces around her, spaces which are different from everyday social space. Sayuri's sexuality is such that, rather than giving pleasure to men, she robs them of it, transforming them in the process. While undoubtedly a female sexuality, Sayuri's sexuality not only arouses the desire for sex and for Sayuri herself in the men, but simultaneously provides the power for them to want, become aware of, and validate themselves.

The men are brought to life through their desire for Sayuri. An aging diplomat idling away his days in a foreign country, a young man who is nearly incapacitated by the banality and shallowness of everyday, middle-class life, a young black embezzler who wastes his sexual favors on women who approach him, and an Asian foreign exchange student who, between his daytime studies and nighttime restaurant job is losing sight of his purpose in life—all regain a zest for their own sexuality when they come into contact with Sayuri's sexuality, and all become more themselves as a result. She reunites their body and minds through her female sexuality. When Sayuri loses confidence in herself as Eros, their worlds also collapse. Harlem is a sexual space created around female eros, and a space of life that transcends the real.

Sayuri is the goddess Eros, not because she dominates her lovers' desires but because she makes it possible for them to validate their own desires. In that respect, Sayuri is the female version of the forest gamekeeper in D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; and Harlem is the female and urban version of the forest where the gamekeeper lives. The difference between Sayuri and Lawrence's male god is that Sayuri's Harlem is not backed by the discourse of the "primeval forest." Harlem is a mirage floating in the empty space of the city, an illusory space that can disappear as instantly as the flick of a switch can turn off a television.

Lawrence's male Eros penetrates into the woman's womb and causes pleasure, reviving the woman's body as nature, and providing the power to restore nature itself. In contrast, Sayuri has lost connection with nature through the womb, and consequently she is a female Eros without the power to restore nature. Since women's eros was only made possible by separating women from procreation as nature, this is both natural and probably desirable. What female eros wishes to restore is not nature but woman's own physicality and its power.



In *Haaremu waarudo*, that physicality is a simulated female eros reflected in the mirrors of multiple male desires and sexualities. This amplified, simulated female eros which can only exist through the agency of the mirrors, has already lost its own agency through the complex mechanisms that operate behind the screen. When the simulated eros and the self-image projected on the screen disperses, the goddess Eros returns to the men who take care of her. Yamada's female eros needs men's desire as its mirror. Nevertheless, in her works women's eros and pleasure blankets the space of the city like a reverse-image mirage of male/female culture, and for a second, renders that culture invisible in a mirage of high-tech, post-modern urban culture. The mirage is Yamada's female narcissism—the Harlem of women's bodies.

After a century, women's bodies have come to a new starting point. Women's bodies have been placed on the cutting board or examining table and dismembered, manipulated, and dissected, to be incinerated in the crematory flames of passion, revenge, and purification. Yet amidst the warm ashes of narcissism the unquenchable embers of that body still smolder as primeval chaos. There, alive and well, is the culture and thought which seeks the origin of a female representation. Modern Japanese women writers have consistently used their dissembled body as a strategy for their female expression. Although the reunified female body has not yet emerged through their expression, that strategy itself was their challenge to the male discourse of the dichotomized, gendered culture.

## Notes

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### 1.

For a discussion on the pornography debate among American feminists, see "Yureru shisen no seijigaku" (The Politics of Fluctuating Sight), in *New Feminist Review*, no. 3, ed. Shirafuji Kayako (Gakuyo Shobo, 1992), and the special feature on pornography in *Gendai shiso* (Modern Thought) (Seidosha, Jan. 1990).

### 2.

Sylvia Sodrind, "Pornography as the

Feminist Avant Garde." Ibid. 289-95.

### 3.

See Gaston Bachelard, *Hi no seishinbunseki* (*La Psychanalyse du Feu*), trans. Maeda Kosaku (Serika Shobo, 1990).

### 4.

Kotani Mari, "Seiki no seikimatsu—Bagaina raiku eirian no shigaku" (Turn of-the-Century Genitalia—The Poetics of Vagina Like Aliens), in "Onna to hyōgen- Feminizumu hihyō no genzai" (Women and Expression—Contemporary Feminist Critique), *New Feminism Review*, no.2, ed. Mizuta Noriko (Gakuyo

Shobo, 1991).

### 5.

Marilyn Yalom, *Maternity, Mortality, and the Literature of Madness* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985).

### 6.

Ogawa Yoko's recent work "Kusuri yubi no hyohon" (The Specimen Ring Finger) (*Shincho*, July 1992) gives an even clearer example of finger fetishism. In this story too, the finger represents the lacking penis. A woman who has lost her ring finger seeks deliverance by preserving it as a specimen and shutting it away.