

**From the holdings of the Department of Special Collections , Princeton University Library,
Princeton, NJ**

These documents are either in the public domain, or can only be used for educational and research purposes (Fair use) as per U.S. Copyright law (text below). By accessing this file, all users agree that their use falls in the public domain or within fair use as defined by the copyright law. We do not charge any permission or usage fees for the publication of images of material in our collections, including those provided by Princeton University Library, via our website, catalog, or directly from staff. For more information regarding copyright, credit, and citation please review the information on the Copyright, Credit and Citation Guidelines page of our website.

<https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/policies/copyright-credit-and-citation-guidelines>. If you have any questions, including how to order higher-quality images from the collection, contact Special Collections Public Services via our Ask Us! Form. <https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/ask-us>

Doctoral Dissertations, 2011-2026

East Asian Studies

2012

Playing in the Shadows: Fictions of Race and Blackness in Postwar Japanese Literature

Bridges IV, William H.

Princeton, NJ : Princeton University

<http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/dsp01qf85nb33g>

U.S. Copyright law: The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, §108, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of fair use that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve a violation of copyright law. <https://www.copyright.gov/title17/title17.pdf>

PLAYING IN THE SHADOWS: FICTIONS OF RACE AND BLACKNESS IN POSTWAR

JAPANESE LITERATURE

William H. Bridges IV

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY

OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE

BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EAST ASIAN STUDIES

[Adviser: Atsuko Ueda]

September 2012

© Copyright by William Henry Bridges IV, 2012. All rights reserved.

Abstract

This dissertation is the first book-length study to consider the literature, primarily prose narratives, engendered by postwar Japanese authors' encounters with African Americans and African American literature. The dissertation argues that the "blackness" of postwar Japanese fiction is written in two modalities. The first mode fixates on the representation, and thus the imaginary mastery, of black (typically male) bodies. Given the influx of African American soldiers and black culture in Japan evoked by the Allied Occupation, the early postwar period saw an uptick in works written in the first mode, *i.e.* the postwar novellas of authors such as Ishikawa Jun and Kojima Nobuo. The very influx of black people and culture that catalyzed production in the first mode, however, also served as an impetus for the creation of organizations such as the *Kokujin kenkyū no kai* (The Japanese Association for Negro Studies) and literary endeavors such as the *Kokujin bungaku zenshū* (The Complete Anthology of Black Literature). This milieu sparked Japanese authors'—Nakagami Kenji and Ōe Kenzaburō are two such examples—interest in reading, interpreting, critiquing and, ultimately, incorporating the tropes and techniques of African American literature and jazz performance into their own literary works. Such incorporation leads to a second mode of writing blackness in Japanese literature. The blackness of literary works written in the second mode arises not by virtue of the representation of black characters, but by virtue of the works' investment in the possibility of writing Japanese literature that has black literature and history in its intertextual and contextual networks.

Whereas previous scholarship itself has fixated on the first mode, this dissertation amalgamates textual analysis and literary historical investigation in order to fully delineate the rich history of black-Japanese literary exchange and bimodal writing of blackness in Japanese

literature Through five case studies that progress chronologically from Ishikawa Jun's "Ōgon densetsu" (The Legend of Gold, 1946) to Yamada Eimi's *Payday!!!* (2003), this dissertation both reconsiders postwar Japanese literary representations of blackness and argues that black-Japanese literary exchange created a vein of modern Japanese literature shaped by Japanese authors' interpretations of blackness and black fiction.

Acknowledgments

I know that this dissertation could have played in the shadows for much longer than it did—it takes, I’ve realized, a village to raise a Ph.D. I would like to offer a few words of thanks to the community that has done so much to shape my intellectual growth over the last seven years.

It is almost impossible for me to express my gratitude to Professor Atsuko Ueda without slipping into something that might sound like hyperbole. The first words that come to mind are those of Caliban (without—of course—the tidbit about learning to curse); Atsuko Ueda taught and continues to teach me what it means to read and think *carefully*, a word that should resonate on several registers. If the work I produce is of any merit, it is because of the standard she set, a mark eclipsed only by her dedication to helping me reach that standard. I am truly fortunate to call her my mentor.

One of my favorite aspects of this dissertation is that it comes with a built in incentive to find intellectual inspiration outside of my home department. Valerie Smith guided me during the baby steps of my first foray into African American literature. Black literature seems to come to life when Valerie reads it; I can only hope that she transferred some of her magic to me during our time together. There is a way in which Reginald Jackson frames my time at Princeton: Reggie’s unique brand of brilliance-meets-compassion greatly influenced my decision to come to Princeton, and it was that same brand that facilitated the completion of my dissertation. My thanks to him for doing Asian Studies how it should be done. I’d admired the work of Nina Baym from afar—her scholarship shaped and reshaped many of my thoughts on our shared scholarly interests—long before she agreed to join my committee. It was a pleasure to finally put a voice with the words on the page.

I had the great fortune of studying at Waseda University under the auspices of the Fulbright Foundation during the 2009-2010 academic-year. Takahashi Toshio was a guiding light during my time in Tokyo. His graduate seminar—a weekly display of intellectual fireworks—had a lasting impact on my approach to the study of modern Japanese literature. Thinking of Professor Takahashi, I am also reminded of my gratitude to Dean Karen Jackson-Weaver and the Office of Academic Affairs and Diversity, who also aided in making my trip to Japan possible. The brilliance of Karen’s advice is matched only by the warmth of her personality.

I don’t think I could have come this far without the inspiration, motivation and support I received from my peers, both *kōhai* and *senpai*. If I listed each of you by name, these acknowledgments would become a sixth chapter, so I’ll provide an open and standing invitation to give each of you your acknowledgment in person, over *chai*.

My family supported me during times of doubt (I’ll never forget how my brother put and pulled it all into perspective for me: “But they pay you to read books, right?”), so I thank Lillie, Kwame and Nakeisha. Keiko made a herculean amount of sacrifices over the years—often with a smile. For every word written here, there is a corresponding moment when Keiko was taking care of something for me, so I dedicate the words written here to her. And here, as I acknowledge the support I’ve received from my family over the years, it seems fitting to express my thanks to Professor Richard Okada. As one labors to meet the requirements of professionalization, it is easy to forget why we were originally drawn to our fields of study. Richard had a way of reminding us all why we fell in love with the poetry and prose of Japan in the first place. After hearing what even I was willing to admit was one of my, shall we say, less than stellar ideas, Richard once said that he was “willing to play with any idea at least once.”

For Richard, the life of the mind was a playful one; I hope to approach my students with his characteristic openness. My time with him was too short, but I received too much from him during that time. I know this comes a little too late, but, given his musings on belatedness, I'll say it anyway: thank you.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	v
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Speakable Things Unspoken: Moments of Silence, Moments of Blackness, and the Dialogic Narration of Self in Occupation-Period Fiction	24
Chapter 2: In the Beginning: Geneses, Genealogies, Blackness and Ōe Kenzaburō	73
Chapter 3: Even Signifyin(g) Monkeys Fall from Trees: Misidentifying Pronominal Politics and Nakagami Kenji on the Fiction of <i>Burakuness</i>	113
Chapter 4: Narration and the Color Line: Black Authority, Transracial Narration and Yamada Eimi	182
Chapter 5: “Copies That Make Originals:” Cultural Hermeneutics and the <i>Little Black Sambo</i> Controversies	242
Conclusion	320
Bibliography	336

Introduction

After the Egyptian and the Indian, the Greek and the Roman, the Teuton and the Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of the other, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

—W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks*

This twoness (*nijūsei*) is not one of two unreconciled (*aiirenai*) principles respectively claiming their independent territory. It is the two faces of the same singular literary self. One side mimics the other in the language of the other; the other side reproduces what mimicry has taught it in its own tongue. Behind these two faces, however, one can see—to be sure—one intersecting principle, one intersecting philosophy. The two that have been bound together by this intersecting principle and philosophy will never stand in antagonistic opposition; the form and content are forced to mutually permeate one another and by and by fuse into one, by and by they create a new singular face that doesn't resemble either of the two original faces. “Japanese literature” (*kokufū bungaku*) is the endpoint of a long process of permeation and fusion such as the one described here.

—Takeuchi Nobuo, “Nihon bungaku ni okeru tasha no keifu” (“The Genealogy of the Other in Japanese Literature”)

Introduction: Blackness and the Double Consciousness of Postwar Japanese Literature

In 1853, Commodore Perry's black ships brought a combination of epistolary and gunboat diplomacy to the shores of Japan. These two modes of diplomacy embodied differing methods of cross-cultural communication: the rhetorical efficacy of the letter hinges on the power of the written word; the steamship's suasion is based on the ocular, on the power of the visual to speak to us without or perhaps beyond words. Almost as if to ensure that the message of the warships wasn't overly adulterated by the cordiality of the letter, Perry—who was known to choreograph and rehearse his audiences with foreign officials—presented the Japanese with a cipher for interpreting the parallel modes of diplomacy: black bodies. As John Dower writes, “from the moment he first stepped on Japanese soil in 1853 to present the letter from President

Fillmore, Perry also sought to impress the Japanese with authentic black men.”¹ As Perry delivered the letter, he was flanked by two “negro[es], armed to the teeth...blacks, selected for the occasion... [and] two of the best-looking fellows of their color that the squadron could furnish.”² The “authentic negroes furnished” by Perry served as a kind of hermeneutic aid to the Japanese as they navigated the two modes of diplomacy. On the one hand, the stalwart black soldiers were an ostentatious advertisement of American might coupled with an invitation for Japan to open its doors to the allures of modernization. On the other hand, the black soldiers, insofar as they are subject to the rule of the Commodore, are less of an advertisement and more of a prognostication of what will come of Japan if it refuses the invitation. If the eve of the Second Opium War didn’t make the prognostication clear, the castrated black servants in his crew and “Plantation ‘Niggas’ of the South” in the minstrel show Perry produced for the Japanese upon his return in 1854 did.

Given the numerous artistic renditions of African Americans by Japanese artists during the opening of Japan, it seems that Japanese received Perry’s messages. Doubled performances of blackness stipulated that the Japanese view themselves with double vision—as walking with (but always a step behind) the Commodore into the new world order *and also* as castrated servants/dancing minstrels awaiting the Commodore’s call to jump Jim Crow—as they entered the purview of the “modern,” Western world. If the Meiji period gave birth to something like a Japanese understanding of the modern self—as the argument goes— that “something” was informed both by the Western notion of the “other” and the West as “other.”

¹ John Dower, *Black Ships and Samurai: Commodore Perry and the Opening of Japan*(1853 – 1854).

² Matthew Perry, *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan Performed in the Years 1852, 1853 and 1854 under the Command of Commodore M.C. Perry, United States Navy*, p.295.



Figure 1: Japanese artists' renditions of African Americans in Perry's party. From left to right: "one of the best-looking fellows of their color that the squadron could furnish," a black servant who accompanied Perry to the port city of Shimoda, either white soldiers in blackface or "real Ethiopians" performing in a minstrel show aboard the Powhatan.

To select two examples from the litany of such claims: Sharalyn Orbaugh begins her treatise on “The Problem of the Modern Subject” by positing that “one of the great problems facing the Meiji reformers was the recognition that the concept of modern selfhood or subjectivity—later termed *kindai jiga* (modern self) or *shutaisei* (subjectivity)—that appeared to be current in the advanced nations of the West was radically different from that in Japan;” as the Iwanami *Nihon bungakushi* (A History of Japanese Literature) articulates the issue, “the modern Japanese (*nihon no kindaijin*) had to fortify their ‘self’ perception in the midst of angst (*fuan*) caused from the encounter with the West as an ‘other’ which possessed overwhelmingly superior civilization (*bunmei*).”³ What we see here is the making of a modern Japanese Self that is both racialized and divided—W.E.B. Du Bois might tell us that it is the birth of a self with double consciousness.

Literally alongside this birth of modern Japanese double consciousness we see the genesis of Japanese writings on blackness. Japanese artists’ depictions of the black servants and servicemen who accompanied Perry include marginalia such as “darkie” (*kuronbō*) and “a hired darkie crewman” that guide the viewer in this first encounter. It didn’t take long for such marginalia to make its way onto the main page of Japanese literature: we find references to “countries of sun-kissed darkies (*kuronbō*)” and “darkies from the African states hired on the cheap” as early as Kanagaki Robun’s (1829 – 1894) *Aguranabe* (The Beefeater, 1871) and *Seiyō dōchū hizakurige* (Shank’s Mare Round the West, 1870-1876).⁴ The fifth installment of *Shank’s Mare Round the West* is revelatory in that it juxtaposes Robun’s prosaic description of the “darkies” of India with an illustration of half-naked natives. This juxtaposition reveals, in my mind, one of the generative tensions of Japanese literary writings of blackness: Robun gropes,

³ *Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literature*, p.24; *Nihon bungakushi* (A History of Japanese Literature), p.274.

⁴ Kanagaki Robun, *The Beefeater*, p.273; *Shank’s Mare through the West*, p.254.

desperately and in the dark, for a way to translate the experience of encountering the visible difference of “darkies” into the language of Japanese literature. The tension in Robun between visual representation (or re-presenting) of blackness and writing that has the potential to go beyond representation is one felt both between the illustrations of Perry’s black crewmen and their marginalia and, arguably, between Perry’s letter to the Tokugawa shogunate, which warned of “the large ships-of-war destined to visit Japan [that] have not yet arrived in these seas,” and the black crewmen in Perry’s party, whose existence in America served as visible proof of what would happen if those ships were to arrive.⁵

Although the earliest work considered in this dissertation was penned in 1946, some 93 years after Perry’s ominous warning of warships and divination through black bodies, I begin with this sketch of Japan’s double vision of the black body circa the putative opening of Japan for two reasons. First, this rehearsal prefigures several of the concerns one sees in postwar Japanese literary writings of blackness and thus throughout this project—*i.e.* a fixation on spectacular viewings of “authentic” black bodies, the ethics and politics of representing blackness in Japan and in Japanese, questions concerning if, how and when to triangulate white, black and Japanese relations in a discussion of Japan’s discursive construction of blackness, the role the literary might play in such a discourse, *et cetera*. Second, and perhaps more germane to this project, the racially-charged events surrounding the opening of Japan hold within them the germ of a tension that comes to maturity in the postwar period, that is the tension between representing the black body and a writing of blackness with the potential to go beyond issues of representation, even if and when the black body is represented. Although the juxtaposition of illustrated and scripted blackness underscores such tension in the works of an author such as

⁵ Matthew Perry, *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan Performed in the Years 1852, 1853 and 1854 under the Command of Commodore M.C. Perry, United States Navy*, p.300.

Robun, the absence of illustrations in post-1945 works of literature highlights such tension as authors both represent and attempt to move beyond representation by means of language.

Playing in the Shadows: Fictions of Race and Blackness in Postwar Japanese Literature considers the literature engendered by postwar Japanese authors' encounters with African Americans and African American literature from Ishikawa Jun's 1946 "Ōgon densetsu" (The Legend of Gold) to Yamada Eimi's 2003 *Payday!!!*. I argue that this body of literature, particularly in its post-Ōe incarnation, has what W.E.B. Du Bois would call double consciousness. DuBoisian double consciousness allows us to think of fragmented identities as not binary oppositions of "either/or," but as "warring ideals" housed in one body that, in tandem, give rise to sightlines inaccessible from the vantage point of either of the ideals individually. The "blackness" of the body of Japanese literature evoked by postwar encounters with black people and literature is written in two modalities; the double consciousness of this body emerges at the intersection of these two modalities.

The first mode, harkening back to the days of Perry, fixates on the representation, and thus the imaginary mastery, of black (typically silent, male) bodies. Given the influx of African American soldiers and black culture in Japan evoked by the Allied Occupation, in concert with SCAP's segregationist housing policies, we see an uptick of writing in the first mode beginning in the early postwar period, *i.e.* works by authors such as Ishikawa Jun and Kojima Nobuo. Just as, say, the American horror film has its generic impetuses and mandates for the representation of blackness (we all know what's coming when a black character enters a scene to an ominous score), Japanese representations of blackness in this first mode has its telltale *modus operandi* and *raison d'être*. This first mode is characterized by its assumption that there is some preexisting blackness "in the world" and that this blackness can be visually verified and literarily

represented. Spurred by the postwar turn to documentary realism seen in Japanese literature and other artistic genres, this mode features “realistic” depictions of black characters that are the focal point of the (typically male, Japanese) narrator’s gaze and are based in turn on the author’s “real” encounter with black people. As such, this mode’s *modus operandi* is a kind of permutation of what Kobena Mercer has called the reflectionist argument, in which mediated blackness is created and subsequently authenticated based on whether or not it “accurately” mirrors *a priori* “real” black people. Moreover, representations of blackness seen in Mercer’s mirror provide Japanese characters—and, by proxy, authors—with an opportunity to reflect on their own place in a color-coded world order; Robun’s *Shank’s Mare Round the West*, a kind of quasi-travelogue with an international scope, is a progenitor of this mode. Michael Molasky’s maxim, expounding in turn on John Russell’s notion of the “reflexivity” of the black Other in contemporary Japanese culture, succinctly characterizes the primary function of this mode: “blackness serves to mediate Japanese identity in relation to whiteness.”⁶

Throughout this dissertation, I will refer to the first mode as “Japanese black literature.” This moniker is informed by Charles Chesnutt’s reminder of the darker days of the generic branding of black literature, in which ““Negro Literature”” was viewed “in the broad sense...[as] including books by colored writers and *books about the Negro*.”⁷

The very influx of black people and culture that catalyzed the production of Japanese black literature, however, also served as an impetus for the creation of organizations such as the *Kokujin kenkyū no kai* (The Japanese Association for Negro Studies) and literary endeavors such as the *Kokujin bungaku zenshū* (The Complete Anthology of Black Literature). This milieu also

⁶ Michael Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory*, p.74.

⁷ Chesnutt, “The Negro in Present Day Fiction,” p.517, my emphasis.

sparked Japanese authors’—Nakagami Kenji and Ōe Kenzaburō are two such examples—interest in reading, interpreting, critiquing and, ultimately, incorporating the tropes and techniques of African American literature and jazz performance into their own literary works. Such incorporation leads to a second mode of writing blackness in Japanese literature. The “blackness” of this second mode of writing arises not by virtue of the representation of black characters, but by virtue of the works’ investment in the possibility of writing Japanese literature that engages with black texts. This engagement occurs both intertextually, as postwar Japanese authors reference works of black literature and experiment with black literary tropes and techniques in their own works, and contextually, as postwar Japanese authors write works whose interpretation hinges on readers’ knowledge of the “texts” of black history.

Signifyin(g) on Gates’ claim that “the blackness of black literature is not...some transcending essence that exists outside of its manifestations in texts. Rather...‘blackness’ [denotes] specific *uses of literary language that are shared, repeated, critiqued, and revised*,” I refer to works written in the second mode as “black Japanese literature.”⁸ In the second mode, “black” authors are born not in the hospital, but in the library; the traveling black texts that circulated in Japan during the postwar period —texts such as Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952) —give rise to “black Japanese” authors.

There seems to me to be a fundamental difference in the two modes’ respective approach to self-Other interaction. Insofar as it is predicated on the visibility and representability of silent black bodies, Japanese black literature effectively precludes the possibility and necessity of black voices. Scholars such as John Russell (“Contemporary Japanese discourse reduces the Black Other to a mute object of the lingering gaze, desire and dread. These narratives privilege

⁸ Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*, p.121, my emphasis.

discourse about blacks while effectively precluding any dialogue”) Michael Molasky (“Blacks themselves have been given practically no voice in shaping this racial discourse, other than by providing soundbites or stereotypical, disembodied images. This discourse on blackness is a monologue, not a dialogue, and it is concerned above all with interrogating Japanese identity”) and Theodore Gessel (“the ‘actual,’ in other words the authors who actually live there [read: black authors] aren’t given an opportunity to speak for themselves; the recipient is narrated in the words of the self...it’s...a kind of literary imperialism [*bungakuteki teikokushugi*]”) have written on the monologic nature of Japanese literary discourse on blackness.⁹ The scholarly consensus of monologism is an accurate assessment of the first mode.

The consensus is also, however, a testament to the dearth of research on the second mode. The “in” of previous scholarship’s framing of “blackness in postwar Japanese literature” has been concerned primarily with the first mode, that is, with the representation of blackness in postwar Japanese literature. If the first mode represents a monologic engagement with silent blackness, the second mode, whose rise to prominence is concomitant with the rise of black studies and black literature in Japan, is dialogic in both the colloquial—*i.e.* Ōe Kenzaburō’s meeting with Ralph Ellison or Nakagami Kenji’s time at the University of Iowa’s International Writing Program—and the Bakhtinian sense of the term. Although the work of scholars such as Sharalyn Orbaugh, Anne McKnight and Ichijō Takao showcase the productivity of research of what I call black Japanese literature, the focus of their research is not Japan’s literary blackness, but on specific time periods (Orbaugh’s *Japanese Fiction of the Allied Occupation*) or authors (McKnight’s *Nakagami, Japan* and Ichijō’s work on Ōe Kenzaburō) in which the black Japanese

⁹ Michael Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan and America*, p.72; Theodore Goossen, “Tasha no sekai ni hairu toki (Entering the World of the Other),” p.429; John Russell, “Consuming Passions: Spectacle, Self-Transformation, and the Commodification of Blackness in Japan,” p. 130.

literary mode is prominently featured. This is the first book-length study with a thematic focus on Japan's literary blackness that both addresses and goes beyond the issue of representation with a diachronic scope. This dissertation both reconsiders postwar Japanese literary representations of blackness and argues that black-Japanese literary exchange created a vein of modern Japanese literature shaped by Japanese authors' translation, interpretation and (formal, intertextual and contextual) incorporation of blackness into their works.

I aim to accomplish two objectives by stretching the “in” of “blackness in postwar Japanese literature” beyond representation. First, if Russell's conjecture is correct—that postwar Japan's “tendency to dehumanize and belittle blacks disguises another tendency, *particularly in literary works*, to employ the black Other as a reflexive symbol through which Japanese attempt to deal with their own ambiguous raciocultural status in a Eurocentric world”—then our scholarly assumption that Japanese literature's only mechanism for incorporating blackness is stereotype and representation blinds us to the moments when the postwar Japanese search for the racial self was in dialogue with blackness, a dialogue that can occur even, or perhaps especially, when blackness isn't represented.¹⁰ Second, I want to be clear and state emphatically that this project is not a literary taxonomy that attempts to pile works of Japanese black literature in one corner and black Japanese literature in the other. Rather, I argue that the two modes can and often do exist concomitantly within a particular work of literature, author's oeuvre, literary circle or sociohistorical moment. An ability to stay attuned to the tension between these two modes as they coexist is crucial to the second objective: creating a sketch of Japan's literary blackness with more fidelity to the complex and contradictory currents that run through any attempt to write race and ethnicity. If, in lieu of a metanarrative of “the Japanese representation of

¹⁰ John Russell, “Race and Reflexivity,” p. 6, my emphasis.

blackness,” we can begin to read single narratives for the multiple, at times conflicting, modalities by which they inscribe blackness and subsequently put those narratives in dialogue with one another—that is to say, if we can read and discuss the double consciousness of Japanese literary writings of blackness—I believe that we will parlay the supposed loss of a unified theory of blackness in Japanese literature into the gain of richer readings of the realities of Japanese authors’ engagements with blackness. One of the central hypotheses of this project is that this gain will attest that Japanese literary engagements with blackness have done more than simply facilitate Japanese authors’ reflections on race and the Japanese Self, but also allowed them to re-imagine the very limits of what race and a “Self” might be.

Playing in the Dark and Praising in the Shadows

Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu argues that the 1990s, on the heels of the influx of immigrant workers and globalization of Japanese labor markets in the 1980s, saw an increase in scholarship that “aimed to expose the true multiethnic nature of [Japanese] society and the monoethnic myth that conceals it.”¹¹ Works such as John Russell’s *Nihonjin no kokujinkan* (The Japanese View of Blacks, 1990), Murphy-Shigematsu continues, are paradigmatic of the “first wave” of scholarship on transcultural Japan. First wave works “greatly expanded our knowledge of minority groups in Japan,” but often run the risk of “reinforc[ing] a dichotomy of two mutually exclusive categories of [in the case of Russell] Japanese and Blacks.”¹² In the wake of the first wave, a “new wave” of scholarship on transcultural Japan has emerged that attempts to further the attrition of the myth of monoethnic Japanese culture without reinforcing new myths of its own. “While not denying or belittling the importance of discrimination,” as Murphy-

¹¹ Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, *Transcultural Japan: At the Borderlands of Race, Gender, and Identity*, p.285.

¹² Ibid., p.286.

Shigematsu sets the table for the new wave, “this literature illuminates the complexity of the borderlands of race and nation, addressing hybridity and deconstructing the notion of essential minority subject [sic] by focusing on complexity and diversity among minorities...writing in ways that overcome the rigid binary oppositional framework of colonized and colonizer, minority and majority, oppressed and oppressor.”¹³

Insofar as this study aims to make a contribution in the spirit of the new wave, we must ask two questions: why “blackness” and why “literature?” If indeed modern Japanese culture has and continues to undergo “a metamorphosis, a transformation that began in its cultural borderlands and is now spreading throughout the country” by way of “sojourners, immigrants, and long-term residents alike, some ‘looking’ Japanese, some not” who range from Japanese-Peruvians in Lima to American soldiers in Naha with cultural contributions that span from Brazilian *haikai* to root beer floats, we must discuss the decision to focus on one culture’s (African-Americana) contribution in one discursive realm (literature, primarily fictional prose narratives.)

My interest in Japanese constructions of race and ethnicity stems from my belief that, in the words of Anne McKnight, for many of us “the most fundamental and constitutive kind of differential identity that anchors us in the world is race.”¹⁴ John Dower’s *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* both reminds us that Japan’s age of “modernization” and “Westernization” coincided with the rise of pseudoscientific discourses that both validated and limited self-perception on racial terms and exhibits the insights to be gained by revisiting already-covered terrain in Japanese Studies with an eye turned toward racial discourse. One of

¹³ Murphy-Shigematsu, p.286.

¹⁴ McKnight, *Nakagami, Japan*, p.3.

the motivating impetuses behind this project is challenging the mix of legerdemain and algebra by which studies of Japan's encounter with America as a representative of the "West" becomes in turn Japan's encounter with white America. My focus on the literature engendered by the Japanese encounter with African Americans and African American literature, however, is not an attempt to replace one binary with another. Rather, I intend to paint a fuller picture of that multifaceted encounter. In hopes of gleaning a statement worth its salt out of bromide, I will suggest that the "West" is not a monolith; rather, it is best seen as a conglomerate of intersecting parts held together by the label "Western." Blackness is that part, as Perry's minstrel show and *bakumatsu*-era Japanese paintings suggest, which is both inextricably tied to and yet doesn't quite fit into the "West." As such, this project is significant insofar as, by meditating on Japanese literature's dialogic intersection with blackness, we gain new insights both into blackness' "place" in the West and the Japanese notion of self that was constructed not by a generic "encounter with the West," but by an encounter with a racialized, gendered, otherized "component" of the West whose very situation vis-à-vis the West was highly vexed—a situation not unlike that of modern Japan. The historical events of this encounter, which range from the influence of Langston Hughes' trip to Japan on Japanese proletarian literature to the traces of James Baldwin in Yamada Eimi's literary style, remain under-researched.

My emphasis on blackness embodies more than an attempt to, to borrow the words of Schomburg, "dig up" the history of Japanese black and black Japanese literature. I am also interested in juxtaposing the insights and inquiries that are attendant to studies of "blackness" with a study of postwar and contemporary Japanese literature. It might help us here to define "blackness." My definition of blackness begins with Kwame Appiah's explication of racial identity. "Racial identity," Appiah tells us, is "a label, *R*, associated with *ascriptions* by most

people (where ascription involves descriptive criteria for applying the label); and *identifications* by those that fall under it (where identification implies a shaping role for the label in the intentional acts of the possessors, so that they sometimes act *as an R*), where there is a history of associating possessors of the label with an inherited racial essence)” even if and when such an essence is nowhere to be found.¹⁵ In his meditation on blackness in Japan, Marvin Sterling figures “blackness” as a peculiar interplay between ascription and identification. On the one hand, we have “a modern Western imagination of the biological, thus presumably fixed, identity and difference of people of sub-Saharan African descent,” the “fixed identity” providing the raw materials for Appiah’s descriptive criteria.¹⁶ On the other hand, “contrasting the imagination of blackness as embodied absolute, is the reality of its inflection in ways that are pragmatically rooted in and that facilitate a range of ideological agendas,” which we might consider, in the terms of Appiah, the multiplicity of potential identifications one might make while living while black.¹⁷ For Sterling, then, blackness is the interplay between an imagined, fixed identity and really fluid identifications. This dissertation aims to think through the “blackness” of Japanese postwar and contemporary literature both as it runs alongside black literature and history and also in a manner reminiscent of Appiah and Sterling, that is as an intertextual “identity formation in transit” that is “not wholly given to [itself] at birth, but neither...[a] wholly owned psychic subsidar[y] of the hegemonic system of racial identification.”¹⁸

In response to the second question—why blackness as it is seen in literary works, particularly prose fiction—Appiah’s notion of racial identity as a kind of ascription provides us with a clue to the insights literature might bring to bear on Japan’s construction of blackness.

¹⁵ Appiah, *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race*, p.82, emphasis in original.

¹⁶ Marvin Sterling, “Searching for Self in the Global South: Japanese Literary Representations of Afro-Jamaican Blackness,” p.55.

¹⁷ Sterling, p.55.

¹⁸ Aldon Nielsen, *Writing between the Lines: Race and Intertextuality*, p.24.

Much of the scholarly work on blackness in Japan has been done by historians (*i.e.* Hiromi and Tetsushi Furukawa's *Nihonjin to afurikakei amerikajin* [*The Japanese and African Americans*], 2004) and, primarily, anthropologists (*i.e.* John Russell's *Nihonjin no kokujinkan* [*The Japanese View of Blacks*], 1991). A study of Japanese literary constructions of blackness brings with it, I argue, new methodological possibilities; if, by way of a permutation of Naoki Sakai's conjecture, we can suggest that *anthropos* shapes the disciplinary configuration of studies of blackness in Japan, how might the contours of that study change if shaped by *litteratura*? Studies such as Russell's tend to begin with a premise—and this premise tends to be a determination of whether or not Japanese representations of blackness are “racist” or “stereotypical”—and subsequently provide a laundry list of intellectual tidbits that affirm said premise; texts that *challenge* said premise are often left out to dry. This approach, although beneficial in its encyclopedic breadth, runs the risk of prematurely terminating a complex discussion on race and ethnicity. If “literariness,” as Rey Chow suggests, is “that which tends to disappear into something else at the moment of its being objectified...literature is, ultimately, a historically mobile, changing relationship (of writing) rather than a concrete essence,” literature will provide us with a medium better equipped to handle the contradictory twists and turns that accompany racial identity as an “identity formation in transit.”¹⁹

I turn to prose fiction in order to investigate the making of racial selves in Japanese postwar and contemporary literature. Neuropsychologist Paul Brok and neuroscientists such as V.S. Ramachandran and Antonio Damasio tell us that the self is a narrative spun by a novel-writing machine: the human mind. “In brains endowed with abundant memory, language, and reasoning,” that is, in a brain like the one reading these words, “narratives with...simple origin

¹⁹ Rey Chow, “The Interruption of Referentiality: Poststructuralism and the Conundrum of Critical Multiculturalism,” p.179.

and contour are enriched and allowed to display even more knowledge, thus producing a well-defined protagonist, an autobiographical self,” like the one reading these words.²⁰ The racial self is a narrative with a twist colored by the ascriptions and identifications described by Appiah. If what we call our racial self is an elaborate narrative spun by a mind capable of highly abstract reasoning and acted upon by the characters and setting of our lived experience, prose fiction provides us with a prime opportunity for self-study. The appearance of “blackness” in a work of Japanese prose fiction is a surefire sign of the creation and exploration of racialized selves: Japanese black literature constructs and juxtaposes black and Japanese characters in search of the definitive characteristics of these racial selves; the author’s of black Japanese literature engage in a form of self-expression dependent upon black history and literary forms. As such, the intersection of Japanese black literature and black Japanese literature provides us with two layers of self-exploration: racialized selves as they are created in fictional works and the creation of Japanese authorial personas as they express themselves vis-à-vis black literature and history. I am thinking of this intersection when I call this project a study of “fictions of race”—I mean both works of prose fiction that feature black characters as well as the way Japanese authors engage with the fictionality of race itself as they negotiate their racial identities against those of African Americans.

My joining of blackness with Japanese literature is an attempt to wed the insights of Toni Morrison and Tanizaki Jun’ichirō. In *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Morrison delineates the genealogy of American Africanism, or the American construction of blackness, and its symbiotic role in the construction of literary (and, by extension, psychological) whiteness. Morrison suggests that:

²⁰ Antonio Damasio, *The Self Comes to Mind*, p.204.

Explicit or implicit, the Africanist presence informs in compelling and inescapable ways the texture of American literature. It is a dark and abiding presence, there for the literary imagination as both a visible and an invisible mediating force. Even, and especially, when American texts are not “about” Africanist presences or characters or narrative or idiom, the shadow hovers in implication, in sign, in line of demarcation...As a metaphor for transacting the whole process of Americanization...this Africanist presence may be something the United States cannot do without.²¹

Playing in the Shadows, a project which is undeniably indebted to Morrison’s notion of playing in the dark, can be seen as an exploration of the Africanist presence in Japanese literature, a presence that includes but goes beyond the issue of representation; this project investigates the way in which visible and invisible “Africanist presences or characters or narrative or idiom” encounter and shape works of Japanese literature. I wed Morrison’s argument with Tanizaki in order to urge us not to forget the metaphoricality, that is, the literariness, of race. Scholars of Japanese studies will recall the anecdote about the architect who, after reading Tanizaki’s *In Praise of Shadows*, mistakenly assumes that he can intuit Tanizaki’s ideal living conditions. There is, I argue, something literary—in the sense proposed by Chow—at work when Tanizaki writes that “those with the slightest taint of Negro blood, be it but a half, a quarter, a sixteenth, or a thirty-second, had to be ferreted out and made to suffer.”²² If we can mitigate the urge to chastise and regard Tanizaki’s words with the care and tools of the literary critic, I believe that we will gain a richer understanding both of the rhetorical techniques by which Japanese authors construct blackness (how, for example, might the “taint of Negro blood” be another moment of Tanizakian irony and thus more than a simple display of Negrophobia) and the sociopolitical and historical contexts that inform these constructions (how, for example, does Tanizaki come by terms based in American popular theories of hypodescent, i.e. “quadroon” and “hexadecaroon,” and what might these traveling terms tell us about Japanese discussions of race circa the 1933 publication of *In Praise of Shadows*).

²¹ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, p.46-47.

²² Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, *In Praise of Shadows*, p.32. Harper-Seidensticker translation.

Overview

If there are 40 million black Americans, Henry Louis Gates reminds us, then there are 40 millions ways of being black—and the years since Gates’ aphorism have seen the addition of approximately 2 million more ways. Although it goes without saying, it goes better with saying that this dissertation will not and cannot address the totality of Japanese literary engagements with blackness; I focus primarily on the “blackness” of black Americans, which is in turn the primary focus of postwar and contemporary Japanese authors. What I aim to do here is tell two intertwining stories about those engagements among the myriad of such stories.

The first story is actually a set of stories, a series of five case studies that provide close readings of the function of “blackness” in the oeuvres of individual authors (Ishikawa Jun and Kojima Nobuo in the first chapter, Ōe Kenzaburō in the second, Nakagami Kenji in the third chapter and Yamada Eimi in the fourth). This selective survey does not purport to be representative of “the” Japanese literary engagement with blackness but is nevertheless informative vis-à-vis the impetuses, characteristics and implications of such encounters. My methodology shares something in common with that offered by Leith Morton’s *The Alien Within: Representations of the Exotic in Twentieth-Century Japanese Literature*. In so doing, I attempt to balance a guiding hypothesis of this study—even if Japanese authors employ the same signifier, “black” (*kokujin*), to identify the object their literature approaches, the idiosyncrasy of the intersection of their, say, lived experiences, ethnic and gendered identities, sociohistorical moments, literary styles and preferred genres, education, political leanings and affiliations, *et cetera*, leads to a multitude of varying significations of “blackness” with a complexity that cannot be fully critiqued by the blanket analysis of stereotype studies—with the reality that these

idiosyncratic approaches both shape and are shaped by a shared postwar Japanese discourse of literary blackness.

The first chapter, entitled “Speakable Things Unspoken: Moments of Silence, Moments of Blackness and the Dialogic Narration of Self in Occupation Period Fiction” challenges the scholarly myth of the Japanese representation of blacks in Japanese black literature as “voiceless minorities.” Here, I consider the dialogues—both voiced and silent—that occur between black and Japanese characters in the short fiction of Ishikawa Jun (1899 – 1987) and Kojima Nobuo (1915 – 2006) written during the American occupation of Japan, a period of lively black-Japanese exchange even in the face of American censorship of Japanese media. Juxtaposing close readings of the representation of blackness in Ishikawa’s “The Legend of Gold” and Kojima’s “Amerikan Sukūru” (American School, 1954) with analysis of the stories’ respective reception histories, this chapter argues that even Japanese black literature is inevitably a dialogic (rather than monologic) endeavor. This is the only chapter that deals explicitly with the issue of representation. The chapter serves as a kind of allegory for the project at large insofar as it searches for dialogue in spaces deemed monologic.

The second chapter—“In the Beginning: Geneses, Genealogies, Blackness and Ōe Kenzaburō”—traces the genealogy of blackness in the 1960s works of one of the first authors of black Japanese literature: Ōe Kenzaburō (1935 -). The chapter figures Ōe as an author between two modes of writing blackness in Japanese. “In the Beginning” considers the path from Ōe’s works of Japanese black literature (e.g. “Shiiku,” *The Catch*, 1957) to his subsequent works of black Japanese literature (e.g. *Sakebigoe*, *Outcries*, 1963). The genealogical stops on this path include Twain, Sartre, Wright, Ellison and Baldwin. I read Ōe’s fiction and nonfiction written from 1961-1968 as a kind of essayistic paper trail of his transition to black Japanese literature,

and consider the implications of his musings on the transformative power of reading black literature for Japanese authors.

The centerpiece of the project, “Even Signifyin(g) Monkeys Fall from Trees: Misidentifying Pronominal Politics and Nakagami Kenji on the Fiction of *Burakuness*,” considers the color line of literary intertextuality by way of an exegesis of the references to black literature in the 1960s fiction of *burakumin* writer Nakagami Kenji (1946 – 1992) vis-à-vis Henry Louis Gates’ notion of signifyin(g), a theory that avers to delineate the uniquely black aspects of literary allusion. Ōe’s writing of black literature ends circa 1968; this is approximately where Nakagami’s begins, with texts such as the 1968 “Nihongo ni tsuite” (On the Japanese Language). By reading Nakagami against Gates, I argue that Nakagami is the first author to fully embrace black Japanese literature and all of its ontological and epistemological implications.

Building on the notion of black-Japanese intertextuality proposed in the previous chapter, the fourth chapter, “Narration and the Color Line: Black Authority, Transracial Narration and Yamada Eimi,” questions the notion of the black author/black authority and the possibilities and impossibilities of transracial narration vis-à-vis the writings of self-proclaimed “black” Japanese author Yamada Eimi (1959 -). I begin with a discussion of the historical origins of the notion of the “black author/black authority” and read the discourse of the black author/authority vis-à-vis both Yamada’s attempt at transracial, “black” narration in texts such as *Payday!!!* (2003) and the scholarly reading paradigms mobilized to interpret and critique said attempt.

The first four chapters foreground the first story that this dissertation tries to convey. The fifth chapter foregrounds the second: a literary history of Japanese literary discourse of blackness.

To reiterate, I do not think that the case studies presented here are representative of the sum of Japanese authors' writing of blackness nor are these authors' writing of blackness reducible to some shared stereotype. I *do*, however, think that we can use the points of confluence seen in the idiosyncratic collection of works presented here to adduce the framing presence of a shared discourse. The proliferation of Japanese black literature featuring the trope of nameless black soldiers who speak only in silence during the Occupation embodies the postwar literary assessment of wartime rhetoric of racialized world orders and "Asiatic blackness:" discombobulation and ambivalent tosses and turns from African Americans as potential partners in a transracial, transpacific solidarity to African Americans as occupiers. Ōe's shift from Japanese black literature to black Japanese literature from 1957-1968 is a testament to the historical and literary events (*i.e.* the African-Asian Writers Conference in 1961, the increase in Japanese translations of black literature such as Hayakawa Shobo's 12-volume *Complete Works of Black Literature* between the years of 1961-1963, Japanese authors' non-fictional reportage of 1960s black America). Nakagami's experimentation with black Japanese literature from 1968-1988 prefigures a discursive shift from Ōe's 1960s concern with humanist bonds to an anti-humanist investigation of identity formation. The second story as it is told here concludes with Yamada Eimi, whose works from 1985-2003 continue Nakagami's experimentation to the end of effectively converting Occupation-period ambivalence vis-à-vis blackness (in which Japanese authors gaze at voiceless black bodies) with postmodern, post-bubble ambivalence vis-à-vis blackness (in which "Japanese" authors pose as black bodies and claim to give them voice).

The fifth chapter "'Copies That Make Originals:' Cultural Hermeneutics and the *Little Black Sambo* Controversies," reviews the time span covered in the first four chapters (1954 – the early 2000s) by way of comparative analysis of the reception history and varying interpretative

approaches employed in the U.S.-Japanese debates on *Little Black Sambo* from 1953 until 2005, when the book was republished after being banned by all major Japanese publishing houses. Methodologically grounded in Steven Mailloux's definition of "cultural hermeneutics," this chapter investigates the issues surrounding the reading of blackness—i.e. interpretive communities, the ethics of reading in translation, the visual reading of blackness, reception histories, *et cetera*—in postwar Japan as it is seen through the *Little Black Sambo* debates. Employing Japanese interpretations of Sambo as a central hub, the chapter provides a diachronic view of Japanese literary blackness to complement the synchronic views offered by the first four chapters.

In concert, the two stories told in this dissertation present the transnational intersections of blackness and Japanese literature as venues at which to reconsider the way in which we write, read, and imagine race in an increasingly globalized world. I provide both a survey of "blackness" in Japanese literature from the post-World War II American occupation of Japan to the present as well as close readings of five case studies in Japanese literary blackness. Eschewing an extended discussion on the two Rs—representation and racism—this dissertation explores the remarkably protean nature of Japan's "blackness" as it is witnessed in specific contexts and texts. Such an exploration reveals that the rich history of black-Japanese intellectual and cultural exchange has led to the creation of a vein of "Japanese literature" shaped by the Japanese literati's imagination, interpretation, and, ultimately, incorporation of "blackness" into the body of postwar Japanese literature. Taking Takeuchi Nobuo up on his offer to view Japanese literature as the bicephalous "endpoint of a long process of permeation and fusion," this project attempts to account for the double consciousness of Japanese literary

blackness, for both the view of blackness from within the frameworks of postwar and contemporary Japanese literature and the blackness that enters and alters those very frameworks.

Chapter One

Speakable Things Unspoken: Moments of Silence, Moments of Blackness, and the Dialogic Narration of Self in Occupation-Period Fiction

For me, in the face of this horrible spectacle, from this day forward all words have become powerless.

—Higashi Jun, *Higashi Jun shōgen (The Testimony of Higashi Jun)*

And since the victim does not have the vocabulary to understand the violence or its context...friends...would have to fill those silences with their own reflective lives. Thus, the opening provides the stroke that announces something more than a secret shared, but a silence broken, a void filled, an unspeakable thing spoken at last.

—Toni Morrison, *Unspeakable Things Unspoken*

Introduction

“Contemporary Japanese discourse,” John Russell tells us, “reduces the Black Other to a mute object of the lingering gaze,” “privilege discourse *about* blacks while effectively precluding any dialogue” between black and Japanese characters, and thereby “silence[s] the Black Other.”¹ The ethical imperative that evokes questions of monologism in Japanese representations of blackness is duly noted; take for example Spivak’s conjecture of the “paradoxical subject privileging” that effaces the discontinuity between “representation as ‘speaking for’...and ‘re-presentation’, as in art or philosophy” such that “those who act and *struggle* are rendered “mute.”²

We should also, however, keep in mind Bakhtin’s meditation on the impossibility of monologic utterance in novelistic discourse: “Forming itself in the atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed, in fact anticipated by the answering word. Such is the situation in any living dialogue.

¹ John Russell, “Consuming Passions: Spectacle, Self-Transformation, and the Commodification of Blackness in Japan,” p. 130. My emphasis.

² Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” p.70.

All rhetorical forms, monologic in their compositional structure, are oriented toward the listener and his answer.”³ Analogously, Karla Holloway asks us: “How can the discourse of the Other possibly be perceived as a monologue? Truth, language, alterity (otherness) find their definition within the “discursive territories” of a literary heritage that values and affirms pluralism.”⁴ To translate these arguments into the terms of the intersection of blackness and Japanese literature, there is a “living dialogue” between “Japanese” literature and “blackness.” This dialogue, moreover, extends beyond an investigation of “racial hierarchy,” the term that is inevitably deployed to analyze blackness in Japanese discourse. Here, *identity itself* is deconstructed by the dialogue with blackness, thereby making it impossible to simply plug something like “Japaneseness” into a predetermined racial hierarchy. If the counterarguments of Bakhtin and Holloway are valid, we must recalibrate the ethical imperative that motivates critiques of Japanese representations of blackness such that we ask not why these representations are monologic, but *monologized* by scholarly reading paradigms—not why black characters in Japanese literature are silent, but *silenced*.

Silence is of paramount importance in this challenge of the notion of Japan’s monologic narration of literary blackness. The remaining chapters of my study eschew discussion of the representation of blackness in order to distill the myriad ways in which literary “blackness” informs postwar Japanese literature, many of which remain under-researched due to our scholarly focus on issues of representation. This chapter, the only chapter in which the representation of blackness is my central concern, serves as a kind of metaphor for the chapters to come; there is a rich dialogue between postwar Japanese authors and black culture and

³ M.M. Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” p.280.

⁴ Karla Holloway, “Revision and (Re)membrance: A Theory of Literary Structures in Literature by African-American Women Writers,” from *African American Literary Theory*, p.396.

literature that takes place directly beneath the textual surface through which Japanese authors represent blackness. The argument made here engages with a kind of iron man (rather than with a straw man): we will consider the dialogues that occur in silence—what Toni Morrison has recently referred to as the “invisible ink”—between black and Japanese characters in Occupation-period fiction, a moment of fierce intercultural dialogue even in the face of fiercer American censorship. If dialogue can and does take place in moments of complete silence, monologue as such is impossible—even when the Other is silent she speaks to us.

David Danow outlines what he calls the “poetics of silence” as follows:

In verbal art as well as in life there are only two modes of human communication: verbal and what is commonly termed “nonverbal.”...In critical analyses scholarly interest has focused almost entirely...on the presence of the Word, rather than on its frequently telling absence. This may be explained in part by the fact that the ostensibly articulated word in art (as in life) is the predominant communicative mode, while the extraverbal component—that which is communicated...in the absence of speech, that is *in silence*—appears as a constituent factor of discourse that is generally perceived as supportive or reflective of the verbal message. *But what if the extraverbal mode, if only temporarily or periodically, emerges as the primary means of communication?* What might we learn if our focus remains concentrated on the moments of dialogue of *communicative silence*?⁵

We turn to postwar Japan to listen to dialogic exchange that occurred in silence. Quite a bit of ink has been spilled discussing whether or not the Occupation stifled or magnified free expression in Japan.⁶ Although it is impossible to produce a definitive answer to such inquiries, we can be sure that the process of atomic warfare and occupation evoked moments of intense silence. The language that was once regarded as the unspeakable tongue of the enemy (*teki no gengo*) was now the *lingua franca* between the occupier and the occupied, now the language that merited postwar bestsellers such as the *Nichibei kaiwa techō* (*The Pocket Notebook of Japanese-*

⁵ David Danow, *Models of Narrative: Theory and Practice*, p.119, second emphasis mine, others in original.

⁶ See, for example, Yoshida Masatoshi’s “Sengo to bungaku no mondai: ‘Etō Jun/Honda Shūgo ronsō’ ni yosete” (Issues in the Postwar and Literature: The Eto-Honda Debate) for one account of the conflicting interpretations of the possibility of freedom of expression under the Occupation composed by Etō Jun and Honda Shūgo.

English Conversational Expression).⁷ Add to this SCAP's wholesale policing and censoring of all Japanese media in an attempt to "end Japan's 'feudal' concepts,...its racial consciousness and belief in divine mission."⁸ At the pinnacle of this silence-inducing triumvirate was the very real possibility, as poet Higashi Jun suggests—however ironically—in the testimony with which this chapter begins that the trauma of war and occupation could not be narrated. It was in this silence-riddled milieu that Japan was obligated to narrate its resurrection.

The literary intersection with blackness was a vital interlocutor in this silent narration. In "Caged Bird," poet Maya Angelou—a poet whose initial response to trauma was self-induced silence—proffered: "a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams/ his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream/ his wings are clipped and his feet are tied/ so he opens his throat to sing."⁹ Angelou's amalgamation of voiced silences ("shadow shouts," "nightmare scream," opened throats that have yet to sing) invites us to view literary silence—African-American, Japanese, or otherwise—as something that is irrevocably readable. In his *Theory of Literary Production*, Pierre Macherey diagrams the project of reading for silence: "what is important in a work is what it does not say...what the work *cannot* say is important, because there the elaboration of utterance is carried out in a sort of journey to silence."¹⁰ By charting this "journey to silence," we come face to face with the very limits of narratability in postwar Japan, thereby observing the moments of silence—moments which are, in the Occupation-period fiction of Ishikawa Jun and Kojima Nobuo, accompanied by moments of blackness—that inevitably inhabit dialogue and speak unspeakable things.

⁷ See Cho Jung-Min, "Kojima Nobuo 'Amerikan sukūru' ron" (On Kojima Nobuo's "American School"). Cho claims that the notebook sold some 4,000,000 copies in the month of September 1945 alone.

⁸ Marlene Mayo, "Literary Reorientation in Occupied Japan: Incidents of Civil Censorship," p.135.

⁹ Maya Angelou, "Caged Bird," from *Shaker, Why Don't You Sing?*

¹⁰ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p.87.

Ishikawa's "The Legend of Gold" ("Ōgon densetsu," 1946) and Kojima's "American School" ("Amerikan sukūru," 1954) both present characters attempting to narrate the war past and re-narrate themselves into the (at times not-so-) brave new world. Both narratives also include the intersection of moments of communicative silence with moments of blackness: "The Legend of Gold" ran afoul of SCAP censors due to its representation of a black Occupational soldier and "American School" thematizes the disciplinary power of self-imposed, internalized censorship by representing a series of exchanges between a voluntarily mute Japanese English teacher and the black soldier who prompts said muteness. It is only through the destabilizing encounter with blackness, represented in the fiction of Ishikawa and Kojima through the figure of the black male soldier, that the protagonists of these texts begin to find some semblance of stability, some silent sanctuary, in Occupied Japan. In both "The Legend of Gold" and "American School" the injection of blackness provides a profoundly silent space from which to dialogically narrate the ineffable, a key prerequisite of the reconstruction of the postwar Japanese self.

Moments of Silence, Moments of Blackness and Ishikawa Jun's "The Legend of Gold"

Moments of Silence and the (Im)Possibility of First-Person Singular Narration of the Self in Ishikawa's "The Legend of Gold"

Ishikawa's "The Legend of Gold" was one of the first literary works to break the silence of the postwar landscape. "The Legend of Gold" (hereafter "Legend") is narrated by a man known to the reader as "I" (*watashi*) who, after being forced to evacuate his house due to the firebombing of Tokyo, embarks on a country-wide odyssey in a quest to fulfill "three secret desires" (*hitoshirezu mitsu no negai*, literally "three wishes unknown to others"): finding a repairman for his sporadically-functioning watch, finding a hat to replace his wartime headpiece, and reuniting

with a former infatuation.¹¹ “Legend” has been described by Noguchi Takehiko, one of the first and preeminent scholars of Ishikawa Jun’s fiction, as “a narrative (*monogatari*) that conveys the new departure to the postwar world.”¹² In this narrational depiction of the transition from war to peace, Ishikawa suggests that the instability of the narrating process itself must be supplemented in order for it to aid in the process of self-reconstruction; within the context of the Occupation, the plausibility of self-formation based on the narration of a singular I, long a staple of modern Japanese literature, comes under assault. As Sharalyn Orbaugh contends, “One of the conspicuous elements of these stories [Occupation-period fiction] is the radical split between the experiencing/transforming body and the “I” necessary to speak or narrativize that experience/transformation.”¹³ From the very onset—that is, to borrow Noguchi’s term, the “departure” (*shuppatsu*) of this period—silence supplements the narrating of the postwar Japanese self. It is only in the concluding moments of “Legend,” when “I” encounters the black soldier and the two share a silent dialogue, that “I” can begin the process of stable self-narration. For the sake of clarity, let me state that I will rehearse a close reading of “The Legend of Gold” in its entirety rather than focusing solely on the section featuring the black character; rather than a “representative” soundbite, I argue that the silent dialogue between the protagonist and the black soldier is audible only within the full context of the story itself.

The onset of “Legend” bears witness to the paradox of a dethroned subject rewriting its subjectivity. The first translation presented below attempts to mimic the stylistics of the opening of “Legend.” The second is a masterful rendition composed by William Tyler. The juxtaposition of the two translations highlights how much work has to be done to insert a

¹¹ Noguchi Takehiko, Ishikawa Jun entry of the *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten*.

¹² Noguchi Takehiko, Ishikawa Jun entry of the *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten*.

¹³ Sharalyn Orbaugh, *Japanese Fiction of the Allied Occupation: Vision, Embodiment, Identity*, p.327.

linguistic and thematic subject into the text, thereby making it accessible to the, in this case, English-speaking reader.

In times when there isn't any rice no matter where you go, even if there were rice it wouldn't be given due to a guilty conscience—don't you think so? Well, the shop across the way is owned by a Chinaman, so he has no problem serving rice. Rice topped with meat and vegetables—whatever they serve comes with white rice, but at this shop, the best we can do is, well, this. Upon saying this, whether it was the pure white bread, the coffee with milk and sugar, the custard cake with ham in it...and was that egg in the donuts—there were goods that weren't commonly found on the plates at any other store of this kind. The *thought process* of this good-hearted business woman was certainly that although there was none of Japan's rice—rice that has long been offered to god at the first harvest; even after the god's avatar had been beaten out there was still a latent taboo based on psychological grounds [against eating something other than rice]—the quality of anything else served there was worth bragging about. In this place in Yokohama, the year's end approaches, and in this little barrack store built in the middle of the burned-out ruins, all the customers come and go aimlessly like silhouettes flickering on the wall of a cave; the customers are a flat mass, their faces are indiscernible, they make no sound, they move their hands and mouths darkly and silently. *I too am one of those silhouettes...*¹⁴

“Now *I ask you, sir*. How can people expect to be served white rice in times like these? There's none to be had no matter where you look. Besides, *I* wouldn't serve it even if *I* did have it on hand. It wouldn't feel right if *I* did. Yes, *I* know. The Chinaman across the street has got white rice. He's got it, and he doesn't think twice about offering it to his customers. You name it, he'll serve it. Vegetables over rice. Meat with rice. A bowl of streaming rice to go with the main dish. But not at this shop. No, *sir, I'm* sorry, but we can't do that for you. “So just what is it that *we*¹⁵ can do? *I* knew *you'd* want to ask. Well, it's not much, as you can see, this is about the best have to offer...Such is the story here in Yokohama...The customers shuffle in, pale shadows of their former selves, their figures moving along the wall like the silhouettes of people living in caves who hover over the flickering light of a small fire. We are packed together, all seated in a row, pressed so close that it is virtually impossible to tell one customer from the next. Everyone is silent, *our* hands and mouths moving noiselessly as *we* eat. *I* too number among the cast of shadow figures...¹⁶

The power of Tyler's translation comes from its reproduction of Ishikawa's *jōzetsu-tai* (garrulous style). The garrulous style, which employs the techniques of conversational narrative in written tales, “was a prose style that enjoyed currency in Japanese (and world) literature in the 1930s...characterized by long sentences, often with minimal punctuation and paragraphing...In the case of Japanese novelists, it may also be seen as a reversion to a narrative style that predates

¹⁴ Ishikawa, p.325.

¹⁵ This “we” is italicized in Tyler's translation, but it is also italicized for our purposes as well. We will question exactly who this “we” gestures toward momentarily.

¹⁶ William Tyler, *The Legend of Gold and Other Stories*, p.56-57.

the introduction of Western punctuation and has the look of...classical *monogatari*.”¹⁷ When immersed in garrulous prose, the reader becomes entangled in a conversation with the narrator.

That the reader is eavesdropping in on an ongoing dialogue is apparent from the very outset of the narrative. The first sentence ends: “*sashiagerarenai ja gozaimasen ka*,” which translates along the lines of “you can’t serve it [rice], right?” In addition to the call-and-response expectation embodied by the word “right,” the verbs in this phrase are inflected humbly and honorifically, which implies a conversation with someone of higher social standing, in this case the customer vis-à-vis the owner. This is followed by “*soriya*,” which I have translated as the “well” in “Well, the shop across the way.” “*Soriya*” is a colloquial contraction of “*sore wa*,” an emphatic conjunction that conveys the speaker’s strong emotion in regard to the topic to be introduced thereafter; in English, perhaps this “well” would be said with a rolled eye. The use of colloquial terms that conjure corresponding visual (read: extraverbal) cues, in conjunction with the unruliness of the length and structure of the sentences, gesture toward a conversation—that is, a dialogue—in progress. Both the opening of “Legend” and Tyler’s translation invite the reader into that conversation.

The opening of “Legend” is perplexing, however, insofar as, although there is undeniably a conversation taking place, the text does little to orient the reader concerning the subjective positionality of the interlocutors. Certainly, as Tyler’s translation suggests, the act of interlocution implies a subject. The status of the subject, however, remains in ambiguous implication, thereby bringing into question the notion of “self-evident” subjectivity. Initially, the narrative effaces the presence of an “I,” presenting in its place a single “objective” narrator. The unity of the garrulous paragraph—minimal punctuation and paragraph breaks, the shopkeeper’s

¹⁷ Tyler, p.271-272.

dialogue presented as indirect discourse—gestures towards a single narrative force. The gaze of this force is panoptic: it penetrates the psyche of both the masses (“all of the customers”) and the individual shopkeeper (“the thought process of this good-hearted business woman was *certainly*”). Given the cognitive breadth of the narrator’s gaze, the reader can safely assume that the narrator is objective. This safety is reinforced by the absence of the term “I.” It is precisely this sensation of safety, however, that the opening paragraph plays on. It is not until the last sentence that the “I” is deployed. This deployment, moreover, follows a sentence that projects subjectivity, or perhaps subjects, in the third person: “all the customers come and go aimlessly like silhouettes flickering on the wall of a cave...they make no sound, they move their hands and mouths darkly and silently. I too am one of those silhouettes.”¹⁸ The legerdemain here is that what the reader thought was an “objective” monologue is actually dialogic, subjective narration.¹⁹ The subject has been subsumed by the narrative itself, unable to narrate itself into tangible being.

As such, the opening of “Legend” is in the space between my translation (in which the belated presence of a narrating I should startle us) and Tyler’s (in which a gregarious conversation is incontestably in motion.) In Tyler’s words:

Who is speaking to whom in these opening lines is knowledge we acquire only as we read along...In the original text, the momma san’s monologue is not set off as direct speech, and her identity as speaker...is initially withheld from us...In addition...she is overridden by a second unidentified voice...Commencing in medias res, withholding identification of the initial speaker(s), and superimposing a narratorial voice that comments on the text like a talking head or a roving microphone...Ambiguity is introduced to catch the reader off guard; and by

¹⁸ Ishikawa, p.325.

¹⁹ Ishikawa employs a similar tactic in “Jesus of the Ruins” (*Yakeato no iesu*, 1946), a critically acclaimed short story often anthologized with “Legend” in which an intellectual has an epiphany due to his encounter with Jesus/a derelict, lice-infested street urchin in a black market. “Jesus” begins with narration such as, “Under the blazing sky of a hot summer sun, amidst choking dirt and dust, a cluster of makeshift stalls has sprung from the land...For today is July 31, 1946, and come tomorrow, the first of August, official notice has been served that the market is to be closed for good.” (Tyler, 72). This narration leads the reader to the false assumption of third-person, “objective” narration. It is only after approximately ten pages of such narration that the narrator presents himself as an “I.”

commencing in medias res, Ishikawa prepares the way for the introduction of new and improbable imagery.²⁰

Tyler has provided us with two insights. First, what is initially taken as monologue is actually conversational narrative imbued with silence, hence Tyler's use of the term "speaker(s)." Moreover, this challenge to the narrative-epistemology-ontology triangle, Tyler continues, "prepares the way for the introduction of new and improbable imagery." The aforementioned "Chinaman," which we will discuss again in the conclusion, is a testament to the direction of this "newness" as it is seen in Ishikawa's postwar fiction. The postwar period presented not only an opportunity for Japanese authors to break the wartime narrational silence, but also to silence those (more often than not, female and/or formerly colonized) voices that did not mesh smoothly with the new narratives. In the figure of the African-American soldier, an amalgam of both racial difference and Occupational might, however, Ishikawa encounters an Other that cannot be colonized and must be addressed.

Silence and the Narration of Desire/Desire of Narration

The next moments of silence are interspersed throughout *watashi's* confession of his three desires. The three desires are described as "desires that no one knows" (*hitoshirezu*), which implies the ineffability of the desires. *Watashi* presents the three desires with the following preamble: "By the way, if you want to know why in the world I'm running around various provinces without a home to return to, it's because I harbor (*idaku*) three desires of which no one knows."²¹ This narrative is the first telling of secrets that were heretofore unspeakable. As such, the stakes are doubled; *watashi's* sharing of these secrets embodies both an urge to fulfill said desires and his desire to tell the tale of this fulfillment to its completion.

²⁰ Tyler, p.204, 273.

²¹ Ishikawa, p.327; Tyler, p.60.

Here, we are reminded of Peter Brooks' "exploration of the conjunction of the narrative of desire and the desire of narration," in which he suggests that "narratives both tell of desire—typically present some story of desire—and arouse and make use of desire as dynamic of signification."²²

This conjunction is explicitly embodied by *watashi*'s first desire: to find a repairman for his broken watch. Just as the watch measures time in staccato, *watashi* narrates a tale riddled with analeptic and proleptic shifts. *Watashi*'s watch starts malfunctioning as he evacuates his house during one of the fire bombings of Tokyo that became a commonplace of the war's dénouement. The watch's unreliability is exacerbated on August 15, 1945, as *watashi*, now wandering throughout Japan in an attempt to realize his three desires, is struck in the chest by the sack of a fellow train rider who loses his balance upon hearing news of the Emperor's announcement of defeat.

Watashi's desire to have his watch repaired is doubly suggestive. First, the broken watch hints at the buckling of time's ability to provide significance. Time is often seen as an infinite stream of progression. In its infinity, time guarantees the connection between past and present as well as the certainty of the future. In the words of Takano Yoshitomo, "The watch is connected to the permanence...of time...the watch signifies history as the limitless continuation of time."²³ With defeat, however, came a significant blow to time's authoritative "limitlessness:" "what can be called the energy of a history that has continued to exist for a long time underwent an unavoidable, sudden about face due to the loss of the war; the watch's disorder and suspensions allegorizes the state of disarray of that time."²⁴ Nowhere is a more haunting support of Takano's conjecture to be found than in the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Research Center, which houses a

²² Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, p. 37, 48.

²³ Takano Yoshitomo, "Ishikawa jun sengo no shuppatsu," p.66.

²⁴ Takano Yoshitomo, "Ishikawa jun sengo no shuppatsu," p.66.

collection of mangled clocks frozen at 11:02—the time of the detonation of the second atomic bomb—that survived the onslaught. “Indeed,” as *watashi* rationalizes the “static and unchanging condition” of his life, “so total was my loss that I no longer knew who I was or what I had once been, when it came time to recall events of the not so distant past, or how I had felt or reacted at the time. I found that I had no memory of them. They might as well have belonged to another—perhaps previous—lifetime, for that is how remote they had become in terms of my present circumstances.”²⁵

Moreover, the broken watch can be read as, to use an English idiom, a sign of the times. In *watashi*’s eyes, there is something immeasurably malfeasant about the present moment: “These days (*konnichi*) the circumstances are such that timepieces are broken pretty much everywhere; there is no way to find the standard of an exact time.”²⁶ *Watashi*’s proposed solution to this predicament is to set the watch by estimating the time according to the weather and his disposition. The only problem with *watashi*’s self-styled chronology is the fact that he has, since birth, been of shoddy disposition, thereby making his sporadic, less-than-stellar health a sporadic, less-than-stellar criterion for the measurement of time.

Here, *watashi*’s watch reminds us of the phoenix mentality that pervaded postwar Japan and the seismic activity that threatened to debunk such mentality. In the contemporary moment (note the use of “*konnichi*,” or “the present day” and later the use of “*konnichiteki jyōken ni oite*,” or, “given the conditions these days), the construction of legitimate standards is an impossibility—the principal legitimizers (the military, the emperor) have been literally decrowned. In lieu of a standard from on high, the body itself becomes the standard-bearing

²⁵ Tyler, p.59; Ishikawa, p.326. There is not much one can do to improve upon Tyler’s translation, thus I have used it here.

²⁶ Ishikawa, p.326; Tyler, p.58

apparatus.²⁷ The postwar body, as well as the subjectivity which bodies supposedly house, however, was under siege—*watashi*'s ailment is a case in point. Perhaps such subjects, to reiterate Gordon's insight, were not robust enough to complete the Sakaguchian task at hand:

For these people, the surrender was a moment when past experience and values were rendered illegitimate. They decided to chart a totally new course, whether personal, on behalf of a national community, or both. Other listeners [to the emperor's August 15th declaration of defeat] already struggling to find food and shelter in bombed-out cities, fell into a condition of despair and passivity...The clinical word for exhaustion—*kyodatsu*—was one defining term for the state of mind of Japanese people in these early postwar years.²⁸

Watashi's broken watch, then, indicates a prime time to break away, "to chart a totally new course." This cartography, however, can be accomplished only if a broken self on broken time is up to the task:

This can be read as the moment in which to resuscitate the "time of individuality" (*"ko no jikan" wo yomigaeraseru*) that was undeniably sucked up by the concept of "the time of the collective/community" (*"shudan/kyōdōtai no jikan"*) during the wartime system...More than the "time of the collective/community" that the watch itself represents, what is important is the self's attempt to exist in the center [of collective time]. Moreover, the watch is out of order...The allegorality of the out of order watch truly means that the self (*jiko*) has broken away from the mad fascism that raged before the war...In other words, the watch, which is the first desire, is an announcement of the break from the crazed time in which the individual was buried by the totality...²⁹

For our purposes, the key term here is "announcement" (*kokuchi*). Defeat brought with it a silencing of the Mars' song that accompanied war, and such silence could aggrandize melancholic *ennui*. It is the sound of the watch that breaks the silence and motivates *Watashi* to go on living. Indeed, when *watashi* feels that the bleakness of the postwar landscape will overwhelm him, his watch breaks the silence as if proclaiming "*sore ga mada mada toiu fu ni*," which can be translated as "as if it were saying 'not yet, it's not time for that (read: listlessness)"

²⁷ For more on this topic, see Douglas Slaymaker's *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*.

²⁸ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, p.226, 229.

²⁹ Ik-koo Hwang, "Senryō to no sogū—Ishikawa Jun Ōgon densetsu ni okeru sengo jiyūyo," p.129 The word *kuruu* is used both to describe a watch that is out of sync as well as insanity or senility. The "madness" of the watch, and, by proxy, the madness of time/the times, is a central facet of the excerpted passage.

yet.”³⁰ As such, the watch has been anthropomorphized—it speaks to and encourages *watashi*. The watch becomes a substitute for the Other, an African-American soldier in the case of “Legend,” that has yet to emerge and engage *watashi* in life-sustaining dialogue.

If the watch speaks through silence, *watashi*’s second wish—to purchase a new hat—speaks in silence. *Watashi*’s favorite hat was incinerated in the fire that claimed his home. In lieu of his favorite hat, *watashi* grabbed the only thing that was available to him: the hat he wore when he served as a member of the Imperial forces. *Watashi* is embarrassed to be seen in the hat in this day and age and longs for a hat worthy of “a real human (*ma-ningen*).”³¹

Watashi’s desire to exchange his wartime garb for a hat that “a real human” would wear is undoubtedly an issue of sartorial politics. Fashion can be woven “into a complex signifying practicing of creating...selves” which serves as “a display of class distinction...a cultural marker of privilege and difference.”³² In some cases, Nan continues, fashion can be mobilized to construct and verify one’s humanity. *Watashi*’s search for a hat that “a real human” would wear is an attempt to speak through this “complex signifying practice.” As a visual medium, any signifying that takes place in fashion is extraverbal, that is, tacit.

The silent significance of this new hat is intimately related to the watch. The hat was the only item available at the time of the firebombing (read: the conclusion of the war) and *watashi* continues to wear it in the contemporary moment (read: the postwar.) Whereas the watch is a testament to the discontinuity between the war and postwar periods, the old hat is a staunch

³⁰ Ishikawa, p.327; Tyler, p.60.

³¹ Ishikawa, p.327; Tyler, p.60.

³² Nan Enstad, “Fashioning Political Identities: Cultural Studies and the Historical Construction of Political Subjects,” p.748.

testament to the possibility of continuity between the epochs.³³ The army hat, and the system of power which such regalia implies, has literally survived the war. That *watashi* continues to don the hat speaks to, in the words of Andō Hajime, the “remnants of war authority” that figuratively and literally rest on *watashi*.³⁴ As such, *watashi*’s desire to find a new hat tacitly speaks his desire to enter postwar society with “freedom...and spiritual liberation (*seishin no kaihō*).”³⁵ With a watch that points to a disjunction between the then of the wartime past and the now of the occupation and a hat that silently indicts his complicity, *watashi* has been placed in a precarious position vis-à-vis war responsibility and guilt.

The third and final wish—to be reunited with an unrequited object of desire—is the lynchpin of *watashi*’s triangulated desires. With this desire we again see the doubleness of the narrative of desire/desire of narrative make itself manifest by way of silent desire/the narrational breaking of silence. *Watashi* introduces his object of desire as one that he has trouble articulating due to his embarrassment. *Watashi*’s embarrassment stems from the fact that the topic at hand is the matter of a war widow with whom he is infatuated. After mustering the courage to tell the tale, *watashi* explains that their relationship is shrouded in silence: *Watashi* couldn’t muster the courage to confess his feelings and thus never found out how his love feels about him. His third wish, then, is to vocalize his heretofore silent desire.

Approximately one year before the point at which the narrative opens, or December of 1944, *watashi* spent an evening drinking *sake* with the woman, known to the reader only as *kono hito* (literally, “this person”), and her then-husband in their house in the hills. The husband

³³ Orbaugh makes a similar argument concerning the man who continues to wear army boots, *heitaigutsu no otoko*, in Ishikawa Jun’s “Yakeato no iesu.” Although the article has shifted from the feet, a locale figuratively seen as the bastion of stability and mobility, to the head, a locale figuratively seen as the storehouse of perception, cognition, and memory, our arguments share a certain affinity.

³⁴ Andō Hajime, Ishikawa Jun ron, p.123.

³⁵ Ibid.

experiences a common side-effect of drinking too much *sake*: incapacitation. At this point, *watashi* decides to take his leave. As he descends the hill and attempts to navigate the dark and silence of the night, the woman guides *watashi* with gentle words: “‘Please watch your step. Now turn to the left. Yes, now to your right,’—she spoke warmly to me in this manner. It was almost as if we were star-crossed lovers who, after exchanging our vows, were forced to part.”³⁶

I previously suggested that the process of defeat and occupation left Japanese subjectivity discombobulated and in a search for a “standard-bearing apparatus.” Here, at least from what can be seen in Ishikawa’s Occupation-period fiction, the “subject” typically refers to middle class, male intellectuals and the female body becomes such an apparatus. It is only what Hélène Cixous has referred to as the fluidity of femininity that can bear the stresses of postwar life and give birth to a new way of life. In this decidedly phallogocentric conception of reconstruction, enervated men depend on such images of femininity for revitalization. Mobilizing Brooks’ notion of desire and narrative, Douglas Slaymaker articulates the relationship as such: “Brooks’ description of narrative maps exactly to what is found in postwar writing. The men write of women who structure the universe and who hold the key—indeed *are* the key—to the symbolic order...The woman’s almost mystical body takes on the source of universal power and knowledge; to master and possess the woman’s body would then provide the key to the universe and to oneself.”³⁷

Watashi longs not for the female body, but the female voice; it is the female voice that becomes a mystic source of universal power, knowledge, and self. For *watashi*, the stability and the guiding force (it is the female voice that literally directs *watashi*) of the female voice comes

³⁶ Ishikawa, p.332; Tyler, p.69.

³⁷ Douglas Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction* p.31-32.

from its connection to antiquity. *Watashi*'s description of his fateful encounter with "this person" is ostensibly marked with Japanese "tradition." *Watashi*'s account of his encounter with the female voice is peppered with the diction of classical prose and poetry: the *Kōjien* dictionary draws its example sentences for "exchanged vows" (*chigiri wo kawas*) from *Konjaku monogatari*, *Taketori monogatari*, and *Genji monogatari*; the example sentence for "forced to part" (*kaeru kinuginu no koibito*, literally "the parting of lovers whose robes [once] overlapped," a poetic image that describes the classical practice of lovemaking amid multiple layers of robes and redressing and parting the next morning) is excerpted from the *Kokinwakashū*. Such diction is juxtaposed with auxiliary verbs from classical prose, the negation of "*naru*" in *michi naranu chigiri* (connotatively in the vicinity of "star-crossed lovers," a term so commonly employed in classical narrative that it has become a set phrase which refers to amorous bonds that are illicit, or that don't follow the proper protocol and therefore have no prospect of blooming in full) is a case in point. Moreover, this diction and conjugation work nicely in concert with Ishikawa's decision to have his works published in the old orthography, which lends a material aspect to *Watashi*'s nostalgia for days gone by. The cumulative impact of "the language the narrator uses here" is that it "makes the scene and her speech sound like an episode from literary antiquity, in contrast to his current situation of chaos."³⁸

The key held by the female other, at least in the ear of *watashi*, is its voiced link to the stability of the past. In sharp, audible contrast to the stable voice of the woman is *watashi*'s chaotic silence. Still lost in the contemporary moment, *watashi*'s desire to reunite with the woman stems from his longing to speak his previously muted passion. As such, *watashi* attempts to regenerate himself through the language of the past.

³⁸ Marilyn Bolles, "Recovery from the Ruins: The Body and Intellectual Struggle in Ishikawa Jun's Occupation Period Fiction," p.182.

The Dialogics of Silent Desire

Watashi acquires his opportunity to break the silence (and in so doing, rejuvenate himself) thanks to a bit of serendipity that lives up to the moniker *Legenda Aurea*. After travelling the country in vain, *watashi* decides to abandon his quest to fulfill his third desire. His health has taken a miraculous turn for the best, his watch isn't as finicky, he finds a hat worthy of a real human—with everything falling into place, *watashi* decides to turn his desire to finding a good cup of coffee. *Watashi's* espresso Odyssey is what brings him to the restaurant in Yokohama with which the story begins.

As *watashi* sits in silence a la a silhouette in the restaurant, a woman dressed completely in red takes the seat next to him. The woman, and now the legendary miracles begin to accumulate, is no other than the woman for whom *watashi* searched. The woman makes her voice heard before *watashi's* (*saki ni kuchi wo kitta no wa sono hito*) by striking up a conversation with him, pulling both her body and voice intimately close to him. Moreover, her tongue is polyglot: the woman quickly turns her attention to the storekeeper whose monologue initiates the narrative and speaks to her in a “familiar” (*narenareshiku*) tone. The “familiarity” that the woman exhibits in her dialogue is juxtaposed with *watashi's* silence. As the woman speaks with the storekeeper, *watashi* notices that her handbag is full of Lucky Strikes, chocolates, and “other goods that weren't produced in this country.”³⁹ The woman's possession of foreign goods and her abundance of chocolates in particular—a trope of Occupation period fiction—is a sure sign of her affiliation with the demimonde.

Faced with his chance at wish fulfillment, *watashi* finds himself at a loss for words; the woman has never spoken to *watashi* with such startling intimacy. *Watashi's* inability to speak—

³⁹ Ishikawa, p.331; Tyler, p.67.

his lost voice—reminds us of the gesture toward the precarious position of his subjectivity with which the narrative begins. *Watashi* finally manages to wring a few words out of his throat (*yatto aisatsu wo shiboridashite*), an honorifics-laced inquiry as to the woman's residence. The woman replies with a casual, "in the 'Hama.'" ⁴⁰ It is at this point that *watashi* begins to doubt and subsequently re-legitimize the mystical, idealized power he had vested in the female voice:

Say it was the way she used words (*kotobazukai*), say it was the way she put herself together, say it was her demeanor—there was nothing about her that would make one think that she was from a good family, but there was also nothing about her that made her look like someone who had met with the misfortune of losing her husband and home in the fires [of war]. But there was something about the reverberation of the way she said "'Hama,'"—and maybe it's just my imagination—it sounded just like she said "Honmoku," and that by "Honmoku" she meant the area that had been partitioned off especially [by the Occupation forces as a red-light district.] This shocked me; I couldn't believe my own eyes, I couldn't believe my own ears. There was only one image of her that lingered in my eyes, there was only one voice of hers that lingered in my ears. [Here, *watashi* recounts their star-crossed parting from the previous year.]...And now, this figure of hers that I saw before my very eyes in this makeshift restaurant, this voice of hers that I heard so close to me was, *for me (watashi ni totte)*, without a doubt none other than the figure of the past, the voice of the past. My body was pervaded with nostalgia. ⁴¹

The woman has clearly undergone a metamorphosis—in a subsequent passage, the narrator will use the image of the butterfly to describe her new form—due to the war. Her new language (*kotobazukai*) produces and reproduces a caesura between her "now" (the 'Hama) and her then (being from a good family, having lost a husband to the war). It seems that this caesura has been facilitated by the most intimate of exchanges with the Other, hence the conflation of "'Hama'" and "Honmoku." Concomitantly, this sonic conflation attests to *watashi*'s inability to process the discontinuities (of place, of self, of other) between the past and the present; as the signals that delineate the woman's present reality accumulate, *watashi*'s tuner begins to malfunction. Without delving too deep into speculation, perhaps *watashi*'s inability to process fluid shifts speaks to his (read: the Japanese male intellectual's) lack of intimate exchange with Others.

⁴⁰ Ishikawa, p.332; Tyler, p.70.

⁴¹ Ishikawa, p.332; Tyler p.68.

Recall that the ticking of *watashi's watch*, a decidedly inanimate simulacrum, has served as his motivational force. In lieu of perceiving the changing times, *watashi* has fixed the image of femininity statically in the past—a common piece in the phallogocentric repertoire—and it is through this fixity that he attempts to gain access to the “stability” of the past.

Almost every moment of the concluding passages of “Legend” speak to subject reconstruction through silence. After convincing himself that the woman that sits before him is the one that occupies his memories, the two:

left the restaurant and, although we didn't have a verbal consensus, we set out toward Sakuragichō station as if we did. Just then, this person [the woman] casually took hold of my arm and, while taking a glance at the profile of my face, said, “Your face is pale; some things never change.” Maybe she was having fun, maybe she was making fun of me. But even without her having said it, I had already felt the vitality of the blood in my body gradually fading, I felt my flesh emaciating, I was shaken by the chills, my hands and feet were languid, I was having trouble breathing—my constitution had suddenly started to decline. And then, my new hat awkwardly twisted to the side and the tick-tock crying of my watch fell silent, its hands already still.

This silent encounter, however, is obviously not the one that will reconstitute *watashi*. *Watashi's* position vis-à-vis the woman is ambiguous; as Yamaguchi Toshio astutely notes, at this point in the narrative we don't know if the woman has taken *watashi's* arm because she sees him as a friend of her deceased husband (a bridge to the past) or as a customer (the next moment in her present.) Due to this ambiguity, the relationship with the woman that *watashi* so desires does not have the grounding quality he assumed it would have, it does not satisfy the nostalgia for days gone by of which *watashi* reminisced. To the contrary, the relationship exposes the ephemeral quality of the rejuvenation *watashi* felt after he gave up his search. With this, silence sets in.

With his watch indicating another break in time, *watashi* experiences what he considers a complete severance from the woman and all that she means to him:

As we approached the station, the person who had until this point pressed her body against mine suddenly pushed me aside and started running to another place. I steadied my wobbly legs and, upon looking in the direction in which she had gone, I saw someone towering above the heads of the crowd, magnificently tall, miraculously black—there was a single powerful soldier standing there. The black soldier (*kuroi heishi*) had a beautiful lightweight rose pink muffler tied stylishly around his neck, and, when he shouted something or other I couldn't make out, the rows of his pristinely white firm teeth glistened like ores. And the body of the woman dressed completely in red was clinging tightly to the thick chest of the soldier, just as a butterfly lands on the trunk of a tree. Her back was turned to me and it didn't even say "adieu," and [even without putting it into words her silent back] indicated that she would never turn and look back in my direction.⁴²

This silent severance, however, turns out to be a connection, the woman connected to the soldier and *Watashi's* gaze connected to both. It is through the interconnection of the three (*not* the solitary gaze of the one) that the text makes good on the promise of miracle implied by the genre of the golden legend. Criticism of "Legend" tends to filter the text through *watashi*, a move that is more than valid insofar as the storytelling is aligned with *watashi's* positionality. This reading, however, fragments the interconnectivity of the three, making the presence of the black soldier a case of "insult to injury" ("...and the extra fillip of the soldier's color serves to *underscore* the shocking, spectacular nature of the *narrator's* experience) and the woman as a vehicle in *watashi's* process of self-recovery ("...this woman's existence...must always be grasped *within (ni oite)* the relationship she has with *watashi*.)⁴³

What this reading fails to capture is: 1) how the text focalizes on *watashi's* subjective position in order to expose its fragility and 2) that this fragility is stabilized only through the mutual interdependence, the intersection between the "self" in flux and the "others." Given the text's link with Christian hagiography, the image of the holy trinity (an image Ishikawa was certainly familiar with given his students in French literature, philosophy, and Catholicism) is apt. We have already seen how *watashi* can be viewed as the central piece of this text. But recall the fact that this *watashi* is enervated, one of many "silent silhouettes" in the narrator's

⁴² Ishikawa, p.333; Tyler, p.70.

⁴³ Orbaugh, p.459, my emphasis; Takano, p.69-70, my emphasis.

words. The previous excerpt suggests that the black soldier and the woman, both figures associated with the silent periphery in the iconography of modern Japanese literature, are powerful centralities of the miracle to take place, bodies up to the task of renarrativizing occupied Japan.

The woman has clearly undergone a metamorphosis, albeit one that *watashi* has yet to see clearly. Andō Hajime refers to “this person” as a St. Maria figure, which redirects our attention both towards the female body as the source of (eternal) life and towards Ishikawa’s “Kayoi Komachi” (“Visits to Komachi, 1947) in which a man analogous to *watashi* is reinvigorated after his discovery of St. Mary and Ono no Komachi in the body of sex workers. It is of critical import, however, that the reader’s gaze does not reproduce that of *watashi*’s; the transformed female figure should be seen as more than simply the source of vigor for the male, it should be seen as life itself. In his treatise on the transformation of the woman in “Legend,” Fukumoto Seiji suggests that scholarship on the female image in “Legend” can be divided into two camps. The first “read despair (*shitsubō*) in regard to the woman’s postwar transformation and, taking this as a point of departure, attempt to relate *watashi*’s movements” to the despair *he* feels upon viewing the transformed figure.⁴⁴ This, Fukumoto continues, is to be contrasted with arguments that “grasp the woman as one who has transcended *Watashi*, and thereby drives him,” in her transcendence, to revitalize himself.⁴⁵ What both of these lines of argumentation mitigate is the power of transformation *qua* transformation: “Even if the ‘from despair, rebirth’ (*zetsubō kara no saisei*) argument of various critics is correct, the first to accomplish this rebirth is the woman,

⁴⁴ Fukumoto Seiji, “Ishikawa jun “Ōgon densetsu:” Nyonin no henbō ni tsuite,” p.77.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

and in that sense, the true protagonist (*ma no shujinkō*) of this work is none other than the woman.”⁴⁶

The black soldier too makes a strong case for his centrality in the miracle with which the text concludes. Ishikawa’s staging of the tripartite connection—the woman physically clings to the soldier, an entity who literally towers above the masses; *watashi*’s gaze locks on this same, “central” point—is the first indication of such centrality. This is coupled with the narrator’s diction vis-à-vis the soldier. The soldier is described as “*ayashii made ni iro no kuroi*,” which I originally translated as “miraculously black.” A more literal translation of this description might read: “his color so black it was uncanny.” “*Ayashii*” is a multivalent word, which encompasses the notions of the weird or the occult as well as the questionable, suspicious, or the unreliable. Etymologically, the word represents the adjectival embodiment of the desire to make a sound when confronted with the wondrous or the otherworldly, the “ah-some.” That this adjective is used to describe the blackness of the soldier places him in the realm of, to quote the *Kōjien* definition, the “miraculous” (*reimyō*).⁴⁷ Pace the arguments of blackness as a signification of inferiority on Darwin’s ladder, it is possible that blackness represents something greater:

When Ishikawa’s “The Legend of Gold” is seen as a hagiography, the question of who is the saint is pursued and, more often than not, the “woman” becomes the focal point...However...the existence of the Occupational army, an existence that thoroughly demolished the interiority and individuality of the woman “from a good home,” should be questioned more than anything else. From start to finish, the “occupation” as a deterministic factor participates in the background of the “woman’s” transformation...If seen in this manner, we understand that the appearance of an Occupational soldier as represented in the text is an extremely effective sign...⁴⁸

What we have, then, is a legend of a saint that has three saints. It is in this dialogic trinity that *watashi* is revitalized. “Legend” provides us with a final vital intimation of the fact that it is

⁴⁶ Fukumoto Seiji, “Ishikawa jun “*Ōgon densetsu*.” Nyonin no henbō ni tsuite,” p.91.

⁴⁷ Interestingly, the only other time the term “*ayashii*” appears in the text is when the narrator attempts to describe the feeling in his chest as he parted from his love.

⁴⁸ Ik-koo Hwang, “Senryō to no sogū—Ishikawa jun *Ōgon densetsu* ni okeru sengo jyūyo,” p.140-141.

not *watashi*, the woman, or the black soldier as a single “first person,” but the nexus of the three that tell the story of the postwar. This intimation is gleaned through the temporality of the hagiography as literary genre. Tales of saintly miracles typically begin with some loss of equilibrium and conclude with a miracle that simultaneously restores balance and attests to the power of and in the teachings of Christ. *Watashi*’s physical and metaphysical ails seem to be the loss of equilibrium in question. What is the time of the miracle that restores balance? The narrative presents one red herring— *watashi*’s watch and body seem to right themselves. This amelioration, however, is shown to be fleeting when *watashi*’s desires turn from inanimate objects (the watch and hat) to animated ones (the woman and, perhaps, the black soldier). The unquestionable miracle occurs in the final paragraph:

What was I supposed to say to call out to her? Was I supposed to say, “Please watch your step?” Was I supposed to say “Turn to your left?” Was I supposed to say, “Now turn to your right?” There was no word that I could possibly say, just a feeling of shame so strong it could kill me. Without comprehending anything, I ran at full speed toward the mixed crowd of people forming a whirlpool in the center of the plaza in front of the train station. Upon doing so, as I ran, the blood in my body began to circulate vigorously, my breathing was regular; my constitution was smoothly restored in an instant. And then, at some point my warped hat straightened itself and the watch in my breast pocket began to pleasantly sound with a tick-tock.⁴⁹

If we trace the grammar of this passage, the time of the onset of the miracle coincides with the phrase, “Upon doing so, as I ran.” In the Japanese, this phrase reads: “*Suru to, hashiru koto ni shitagatte.*” The “*to*” here is a particle that marks conditionality, i.e. upon the condition of doing X, with the “X” here being *watashi*’s dash into the masses. The conditional marker “*to*” is juxtaposed with “*shitagatte*,” which means “to obey, follow, or abide by,” as in “to obey the teachings of Christ (*Iesu no oshie ni shitagau.*)” The onset of this miracle, moreover, is preceded by a particular series of events. The first in this series is the connection of the three characters, the woman and soldier intertwined and *watashi*’s gaze wrapped around the newly formed couple

⁴⁹ Ishikawa, p.333-334; Tyler, p.70-71.

in turn. This is followed by silence, in which *watashi*'s thoughts are iteratively inundated with the phrase "what was I supposed to say." The "I" in and of itself cannot speak. In his search for the proper words, *watashi* finds himself mimicking the words the woman used to guide him during that fateful parting. *Watashi*, however, refuses to internalize the "feminine" speech, the grounding speech of a lost home, which he initially assumed was the object of his desires—"there was no word [here, the "word" is the reiterated word of the feminine as it is preserved in *watashi*'s memory] I could possibly say." Without this stabilizing presence, *watashi* experiences a kind of death by shame, shame because of his desire and shame at what the vicarious enactment of his desire has engendered. Now completely lost, completely severed from past desires/desire for the past, *watashi* immerses himself in the crowd. It is at this point that the conditions of miracle have been met.

Although the argument can—and has—been made that this conclusion marks *watashi*'s defeat, that is, his inability to fulfill his third and final desire, the miraculous conclusions suggests otherwise. Recall that *watashi*'s physiology is intimately connected to wish-fulfillment; it is after repairing his watch, finding a new hat, and abandoning his desire to find the woman that *Watashi* experiences momentary reprieve from his ailments. The conclusion, then, with its miraculous depiction of animation—animation of *watashi*'s hat, watch, and self—suggests that the desire has been satiated. If this is the case, *watashi*'s desire to speak his feelings to the supposed bastion of the past has been fulfilled by connecting with the woman and the black soldier such that the *need* for a material connection to the past is subsumed in the ineffable miracles of life in the present moment. Such fulfillment of desire is nothing short of miraculous; desire interacts with and transacts this miraculous moment. Indeed, Andō posits that "the world

of the “holy” is formed by the imagining of the world of desire.”⁵⁰ Here, desire is best seen not as Oedipal—that is based on lack and repression—but as Anti-Oedipal—that is constitutive of the connections of life and the prime mover behind the will to perpetuate life.

All that is said here—perhaps it could be characterized as Sakaguchi’s notion of debasing and living—happens in a moment of silence. What is spoken between *watashi*, the woman, and the black soldier is never put into words. Nevertheless, it still speaks to the desires of *watashi*. We turn to citation, itself a kind speaking via silencing one’s own voice to vocalize through the medium of another, to recapitulate the unspeakable things spoken and the implausibility of first person singular narration in “Legend:”

It [the second parting of *watashi* and the woman] is described as: “Her back was turned to me and it didn’t even say “adieu,” and [even without putting it into words her silent back] indicated that she would never turn and look back in my direction,”—but this is the imaginary whispering of *Watashi* himself. Simultaneously, it is also a stone cast at him. “Adieu” in French and, in addition to this...Japanese [and] Chinese (Cantonese) leaks from “the store across the way.” With these, as well as the woman’s interweaving of bits of a language, the American English that runs throughout Yokohama, that is completely different from French, Japanese and Chinese, an undialogical dialogue (*hitaiwateki taiwa*) is formed. It is by way of these means [undialogical dialogues] that a collapsed self must support itself.⁵¹

The Legend of “The Legend of Gold:” Silence, Dialogue and Censorship

“Legend” was initially published in the March 1946 edition of *Chuō Kōron*. This version of “Legend” was apparently deemed suitable for publication by the SCAP Civil Censorship Detachment (CDD.) Later that year, however, the text was reevaluated to determine whether or not it was suitable to be included as the eponymous story in a collection of Ishikawa’s short fiction. “Legend” did not pass its reexamination unscathed. Judging from the marginalia of a “Legend” manuscript submitted for critique to the CDD before the publication of the collection of short stories, the CDD didn’t sanction the text’s tacit gestures towards international,

⁵⁰ Andō, p.137.

⁵¹ Yokote Kazuhiko, “Ōgon densetsu wa ni do to tsukurareta,” p.23-24.

multilingual interconnectivity. The first red flag occurs on the first page, in which the storeowner refers to the “Chinaman across the way.” The CDD censor has flagged this phrase because it is “critical of China,” a member of the victorious Allied powers.⁵² The second interdiction substitutes “Lucky Strikes,” a reference that I previously claimed was a surefire sign of the woman’s involvement with the Occupation-sanctioned demimonde, with the *kanji* characters for tobacco and elides any mention of American goods in the woman’s handbag. This substitution and elision can be seen as an attempt to sanitize the particularity of the exchange of the (Japanese) female body for (an American G.I.’s) goods. With “tobacco” the reader knows that the woman has acquired black market goods, but the source remains ambiguous—yet another attack on the multilingual aspect of Ishikawa’s “undialogic dialogue.”

The final act of censorship was to remove the black soldier from the penultimate passage. The CDD’s explanation for such a critical deletion is simply “fraternization;” indeed, the CDD had a history of strictly proscribing depictions of relations between the Occupational forces and the Japanese citizens they were supposed to regulate. Given the terseness of the rationale for censorship—“fraternization”—it is difficult to pinpoint whether or not the soldier’s race played a factor in this censorship, although we can speculate that a critique of the Occupation’s segregationists policies would be a cause for concern. Whether we are more convinced by scholars such as Suzuki Sadami, who claims that it is the blackness of the soldier that drew the ire of the censors, or Tyler, who suggests that the depiction of fraternization is the target of censorship, it is unarguable that the removal of this scene, in concert with the deletion of the reference to China and Lucky Strikes, would dismantle the multilingual “undialogical dialogue” the text constructs.

⁵² The University of Maryland, College Park’s Gordon W. Prange Collection of Occupation Censored Materials houses this manuscript.

It is at this moment in the publication history of “The Legend of Gold” Ishikawa tacitly subverted the threat of censorship and brought about the legend of “The Legend.” Although Ishikawa refused to publish the second, censored version of “The Legend of Gold” in a collection of 1947 short stories, the collection *itself* is entitled *The Legend of Gold*. Literary critics speak of the effect of Ishikawa’s stratagem of publishing a short story collection in which the eponymous narrative is only paratextually present with the marvel that one typically reserves for, well, legends: Yamaguchi Toshio describes *The Legend of Gold* as “the publication of a curious (*kimyō*) collection of stories in which the representative text has fallen out;” Takano Yoshitomo avers that “and thus a book the likes of which is rarely seen in this world (*yo ni mo mare naru tankōbon*)—a *Legend of Gold* in which the “Legend of Gold” was not presented—came into the world”; Tyler claims that “when the monograph *Ōgon densetsu* appeared early in 1947 sans the offensive story, the title called attention to the missing text by virtue of its “remaining absence.”⁵³ The legend of “The Legend,” a legend that “calls” to us “by virtue of its ‘remaining absence,’” does its mysterious work in a manner analogous to that of “The Legend” itself; even in, or perhaps, more fittingly, precisely in moments of silence desire is voiced. These moments of speaking silence, however—and this is a crucial component of Ishikawa’s postwar oeuvre—occur dialogically (in this case the “dialogue” between Ishikawa and the censors), not in “first person singular” narratives.⁵⁴

Satirized Silence: Blackness, Silence, and Kojima Nobuo’s “American School”

From Omega to Alpha: A *Priori* Blackness and “American School”

We have until this point considered Ishikawa Jun’s “The Legend of Gold” as a case study in the conversations that happen in silence between “blackness” and “Japaneseness” under the

⁵³ Yamaguchi p.12; Takano Yoshitomo, from *Ishikawa Jun kenkyū*, p.125; Tyler p.221.

⁵⁴ Yamaguchi Toshio has written on the way in which Ishikawa’s postwar prose challenges the authority of the *shishōsetsu*, or “I-novel.”

Occupation. Pace the arguments on black-Japanese monolingualism, “Legend” suggests that, even during the audible chokehold of the Occupation and the aftershocks of the postwar period that still jumbled Japanese voices and subjectivity, speech is possible through blackness and silence. The impossibility of first person singular narration under question in “Legend,” however, is an impossibility engendered by the enervation of the postwar male Japanese intellectual. As such, the text begins with the silent desire of *Watashi*. *Watashi*’s silence is in this sense self-derived, self-contained, and self-sufficient. *Watashi* is the roving Alpha; “blackness” and “femininity” the supplements with which his journey concludes.

Kojima Nobuo’s (1915-2006) notion of postwar Japanese enervation and silence derives from a markedly different context. First, both Kojima’s fiction and critical works are a testament to his sincere devotion to satire; his interest in satire is documented as early as his 1941 undergraduate thesis on the role of comicality in Thackeray. Satire, with its emphasis on crownings and decrownings, is intimately linked to power dynamics. According to critical assessments, Kojima’s satire tends to focalize itself through the eyes of the enervated; his texts have been characterized as “satiric literature dependent upon the weak” (*jakusha ni yoru fūshi bungaku*) in which “the weak laugh (*jakusha ga warau*)” and “have an opportunity to feel superiority (*yūetsukan wo motsu kikai ga aru*).”⁵⁵

The postwar milieu was a vexed period for an author interested in power and satire. “Legend” has already provided us an occasion with which to discuss the issues of censorship that hampered what the CDD viewed as subversive speech acts. Kojima’s “Amerikan sukūru” (“The American School,” 1954)—a text that one member of the thirty-second Akutagawa prize selection committee described as “a work that tenaciously pursues the human inferiority

⁵⁵ Rizawa Yukio, “Kojima Nobuo ni okeru fūshi to chūshō” (Farce and Abstraction in Kojima Nobuo), p.13.

complex, a powerful work of epochal significance that satirizes the Japanese of that period”⁵⁶—was written two years after the “conclusion” of the Allied Occupation of Japan and takes the reader back to 1948, the meridian of the occupation. Given Kojima’s interest in the subversive power of satirical speech, here the term “occupation” includes but also points beyond physical occupation to the occupation of, to begin with Michael Molasky’s conjecture, memory as well as language and expression. Greenblatt’s articulation of “linguistic colonialism,” a phenomenon analogous to the occupation of expression, is particularly revelatory. In the eyes of the linguistic colonialist, “the New World is a vast, rich field for the plantation of the English language.”⁵⁷ Moreover, the colonialist mechanisms that deracinate the linguistic landscape “reflect a fundamental inability to sustain the simultaneous perception of likeness and difference...they either push the [Other] toward utter difference—and thus silence—or toward utter likeness—and thus the collapse of their own, unique identity,” yet another brand of silencing.⁵⁸

Kojima’s “American School” tells the story of three Japanese teachers of English and their varying responses to the encroaching colonialist threat of English as they visit an American school in Japan during the Occupation. As such, the text approaches silence from a different angle than “Legend.” Here, it is not the self that silently searches for a moment to speak with/through the other, but the very encounter with the Other that both evokes silence and affords moments of silent self-construction. In shifting from “Legend” to “American School,” we also shift Otherness from the position of omega to alpha. Take the opening of “American School:

⁵⁶Hirose Masahiro, “Neitibu supīkā no inai eikaiwa: Senji sengo no renzoku to “Amerikan sukūru,” p.6.

⁵⁷ “Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century, from *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*, p.16.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.31.

Even though 8:30, the designated meeting time, had come and gone, the supervising civil servant was nowhere to be found. . . All of the thirty some odd instructors made the climb to the Educational Affairs Department on the third floor and were shuffled back to the plaza below. The order to gather in the plaza below had not been given at the logistics meeting that had taken place a week ago. At the logistics meeting, the civil servant from the Supervisor's Department who was to be the conductor of the observational tour of the American school had, after taking attendance, expressed several points of caution. Number one among them was that they were to strictly adhere to the designated gathering time. Number two: wear clean clothes. The second this second decree was given, a ruckus broke out amongst the teachers. Number three: Be silent. Upon hearing this dictum, the ruckus gradually died down.⁵⁹

This passage lucidly expresses the ubiquity of the Occupation and the silence it induces. There is colonial bittersweetness about the fact that Japanese teachers have been granted permission—that is, of course, assuming that they can follow the rules of conduct suiting the colonialist exchange—to walk six kilometers to the American school in Japan. Ishikawa's *watashi* travels the entire country and doesn't encounter a sign of the Occupation until the text's conclusion. For the teachers of "American School," the narrative literally and figuratively cannot move until the rules of engagement with the Other have been determined. The name of the game is a satirical negotiation between silence, cross-cultural dialogue and identity (re)construction and the first other is, again and again, the black Other.

Silence and the Hauntology of Blackness

Although "American School" is populated by "thirty some odd" Japanese teachers of English, the story is focalized primarily through the eyes (and mouths) of three teachers: Yamada, a former Imperial soldier-turned-English teacher, Michiko, the "sole woman" and most gifted speaker of English of the group, and Isa, the head English instructor who has a seriocomic phobia and neurosis concerning his spoken English. Isa is, as head instructor, in many ways the fulcrum of the text; although it is through the triangulation of the three teachers that the reader

⁵⁹ Kojima Nobuo, "Amerikan sukūru," p.228-229 (Hereafter "Kojima").

gets a view of the American school, Isa's encounters with the various manifestations of the Occupational Other center the text's journey.

The black Other in particular haunts Isa throughout the American School. I am thinking in particular of Derrida's notion of hauntology. Hauntology—a term whose homophonic punning on ontology is visible in print and otherwise silent even when voiced—invites us to study the lingering presence of absent figures and the presence of figures that have yet to arrive. “And even if it [the ghost for our purposes] is not *actually present*,” Derrida tells us, “it affects *in advance*...It affects and bereaves it in advance, like the ghost it will become, but this is precisely where haunting begins.”⁶⁰ Derrida goes on to note that the ghost's time is marked by “the untimeliness of its present, of its being ‘out of joint.’”⁶¹ Isa's encounters with blackness are multiple and narrated through several temporal shifts. The haunting fluidity (both temporal and qualitative) of Isa's perpetual encounters with the black Other, as well as the other Others with which this encounter is juxtaposed, represents an attack on the various identities, the ontologies, that interact throughout the narrative; once a given identity is “represented,” a subsequent passage throws that identity into question, and this questioning forms a kind of chain reaction in which the current question must be reconsidered vis-à-vis previous inquiries and the inquiries to come. The cumulative effect of this perpetual motion is a narrative that silently speaks to the postwar Japanese identity in flux and the role that language plays in its reconstitution and de-constitution. In order to observe this motion in its full force, it is imperative that we do not monologize the productive moments of silence interwoven into the dialogue between “blackness” and “Japaneseness” in “The American School.”

⁶⁰ Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, p.161.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Isa's first encounter with blackness precedes the beginning of the central narrative of "American." At the logistics meeting, Yamada suggests a rule of his own: that the Japanese teachers speak only in English—a technique that the text refers to as the "all method"—in order to show their English-speaking prowess. Upon hearing this, Isa "lets out a cry that sounds like a shriek" and says "that's preposterous, that's preposterous."⁶² The narrative then analeptically shifts to a period well before the "narrative proper" in order to explain Isa's preposterous shrieking. Some time before the logistics meeting (we can assume that, given the activity, the time is the elections engineered by the Occupation), Isa was relegated the task of translating for an African-American Occupational soldier. The task is, as we shall see, memorable for a variety of reasons. The discrepancy between the story time and the narrative time of Isa's first encounter with blackness—Isa meets the soldier before the logistics meeting and the narrative is obligated to take the reader back to that first encounter in order to explain Isa's response at the meeting—is revelatory. It both reminds us of the potential of literary discourse vis-à-vis the Other described in the introduction and is also indicative of Kojima's black Other, an Other whose presence lingers even in absence.

Isa is given this task "simply because he is the lead English teacher."⁶³ Being the head teacher, however, does not qualify Isa to translate English. He has "never once had a conversation in English in his life," "feels something like a ticklish embarrassment" whenever he has to speak English in class, and once feigned illness for two days in order to shirk his observational teaching requirement. Fearing what will happen if he dodges his responsibility with the military administration, Isa reports to duty. Isa greets the soldier with a phrase that he has practiced for days in advance: "My humble apology for keeping you waiting; this is truly an

⁶² Kojima, p.230-231.

⁶³ Kojima, p.231.

egregious offense.”⁶⁴ The black soldier doesn’t understand this “overly orthodox and polite” English, which forces Isa to repeat the phrase several times.⁶⁵ Isa subsequently gives up on the possibility of communicating in English and, with the exception of two words—“stop, go”—falls silent.

His frustration at the boiling point, Isa jumps out of the jeep and hides in the trees along the road. Upon being discovered by the black soldier, Isa articulates his frustration in Japanese: “Hey!...What if I made you speak in Japanese. And said that there would be no mercy if you couldn’t. How do you think that would go?”⁶⁶ Isa’s expression of malcontent in regards to the linguistic colonialist overtones of his ordeal evokes a literal face-to-face encounter with the Other:

His partner [the black soldier] brought his lonely looking black face with its neatly shaven mustache right up to Isa’s face and tried to hear what he was saying. Only his neatly shaven mustache had *an odd air of civilization*. It was almost as if he thought that if he could just get close enough he would be able to understand the meaning of Isa’s rapid fire Japanese. Isa deliberately repeated what he said in this rapid fire manner. Once he realized that the words coming out of Isa’s mouth were Japanese, the black corporal spread out his arms and hunched his shoulders. If we *look at it from the black man’s perspective*, the fact that Isa spoke hardly any *American English*—and just when the soldier thought he was going to talk he spoke in Japanese—was *probably* enough to make him [the soldier] feel a foolish sense of inferiority—his lonely face took on an even more lonely look and he drove.⁶⁷

In her exegesis of the face-to-face encounter with the Other in Levinas, Diane Perpich suggests that the Levinasian face “makes an ethical claim that compels the hearer without ever becoming audible.”⁶⁸ The face ethically compels us—silently yet audible—in part due to its unrepresentability: as Levinas begins “Ethics and the Face:” “The face resists possession, resists my powers. In its epiphany, in expression, the sensible, still graspable, turns into total resistance

⁶⁴Kojima, p.231.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.232.

⁶⁶ Kojima, p.233.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.233 All emphasis are my own.

⁶⁸ Diane Perpich, *The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas*, p.54.

to the grasp.”⁶⁹ Isa’s encounter shares a certain affinity with Levinas’ articulation of the face-to-face—the trauma associated with Levinas’/Kojima’s encounters immediately come to mind—and it is crucial that our reading of Kojima maintains the level of responsibility vis-à-vis the notion of the “ungraspability of the face” to which the text itself responds.

One can easily monologize Isa’s depiction of the black soldier (—but would this monologue speak the ethics of the face?) It is not a difficult operation to read Isa’s discombobulation in regard to the soldier’s “odd air of civilization” by way of a mobilization of the notion of hierarchy—a scheme that certainly invites unidirectional monologue and is never too far off in the horizon of the linguistic colony. Molasky, for example, suggests that, “The choice of a black GI for this role could either be read as evidence of America’s commitment to democracy or as proof of Japan’s thorough fall from power (since the Japanese are now subjugated ‘even to blacks’). The latter, less generous, interpretation is supported by the story’s brief depiction of his...‘incongruously civilized air.’”⁷⁰ Mobilizing hierarchy as a hermeneutic apparatus, a reading paradigm that ever-so-easily enters the conversation whenever blackness is the topic of discussion, is clearly at play here: the black GI is either “evidence of America’s commitment to democracy” (or representative of Japan’s move upward from backwards fascists nation-state to a proper democracy) or “proof of Japan’s thorough fall from power” (the proximity to blackness inevitably signifying a downward slide on the race ladder.) With hierarchy, only linear moves are allowed: notice the “either/or” binary logic that governs the analysis. This linearity effectively shuts down interpretative possibility. Certainly there are more than two reasons one could think of for the choice of the black GI with his “odd air of civilization”: perhaps Kojima is lampooning the irony of segregated individuals proctoring free

⁶⁹ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.197.

⁷⁰ Michael Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory*, p.198.

elections; perhaps Kojima intimates the failure of the Double V campaign; perhaps we are to read intertextually vis-à-vis works such as Fukuzawa's *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (*Bunmeiron no gairyaku*, 1875); perhaps this evinces the fact that Isa is unreliable as a racialized narrator, *et cetera*. The issue here is not whether Molasky's conjectures are right or wrong; indeed, both of Molasky's comments are apposite. Rather, the "issue" is how the logic of hierarchy evokes monologization, gives us reason to conclude, stop interpreting—to, in short, fall *unproductively* silent—and how this silence reproduces the silence that Kojima satirizes throughout "American School."

If we keep listening even in moments of silence, we will hear something—perhaps this something will resonate more clearly because of the silence. In Isa's first encounter with the black soldier, for example, we are reminded of the fact that English is not monolithic. The reason that the soldier has trouble deciphering Isa's stuffy English is that he expected a different variant of the language, namely "American English." Here, the narrator uses the term *beigo* (American English), a term that should be differentiated from the *eigo* (English) that pervades the text. Indeed, the reference to *beigo* rather than *eigo* shows us, "by way of the verbal exchange between the black soldier and Isa, both the class difference within the English language and also makes tangible the difference between "English" and "American English."⁷¹ (We will return both to the "verbal exchange" [*yaritori*] between Isa and the soldier and the various responses to the tangibility of a non-self identical English language.) The black soldier has brought to the text the expectation of an English that differs from the Occupation-sanctioned English that Isa has studied—an English imbued with race and class difference. Moreover, this expectation has been brought by way of free indirect discourse. The narrator delves into the

⁷¹Yamamoto Yukimasa, "Hisenryōki-ka ni okeru kotoba no fūkei--Kojima Nobuo 'Amerikan sukūru' wo megutte," p.128.

thoughts of the black soldier and reproduces his portion of a *dialogue* that is occurring between him and the mute Isa. Initially, unlike the free indirect discursive reproductions of Japanese characters, the narrator and the black soldier are buffered with phrases such as “*if [we] look at it from the black man’s perspective (kokujin ni shite mitara).*”⁷² By the end of the first section, however, the buffers between the proximity of the narration and the soldier break down: “Ultimately, the black soldier stopped worrying about Isa. Yes, he was dragging Isa along and driving him around as if he were escorting a customer, but, even if he served no purpose, at the very least he would be a stick to ward off miscreant seditious Japanese as he drove around the remote country roads.”⁷³

The very act of narrating blackness, then, has changed the perspective of our (presumably Japanese) narrator: now he (he is also presumably male) can see how Japan would be threatening to a black male soldier. Although the verbiage was marked by several moments of silence, the exchange has left its traces both on Isa and the soldier. Their second encounter occurs as the teachers wait for the tardy ringleader. Isa is, of course, silent. Upon spotting the black soldier, Isa begins to eat his lunch because: “There’s no limit to the when or the who of being addressed in English in a danger zone like this, but Isa’s intuition was something along the lines of if he could only manage to put food in his mouth, then they couldn’t ask anything of him.”⁷⁴ Just as Isa’s silence is a testament to the mark his exchange with the soldier has left upon him, the soldier verifies that he is imbued with a trace of the silent Isa. Yamada, an imperial-turned-linguistic soldier in what he sees as the army of Japanese English teachers, zealously addresses any Occupational soldier within earshot in English. When he serendipitously approaches the

⁷² Kojima, p.233.

⁷³ Kojima, p.233.

⁷⁴ Kojima, p.246-247.

black soldier, the soldier, puzzled by Yamada's combination of zeal and immobility, salutes him with the phrase he has learned from Isa: "My humble apology for keeping you waiting; this is truly an egregious offense." Yamada is confused by the overly ceremonious English and assumes that the soldier is duplicating the speech of the (still) absent supervisor.

Here we have a Bakhtinian dialogue *par excellence*. Indeed, the words in this dialogue are half someone else's. Isa's speech mingles with the soldier's, Yamada becomes the next link in the chain of interlocution, and Yamada assumes that these words befit a public servant, namely the (still) absent Shibamoto. Dialogue here too is "double voiced;" not only is the moment dialogic, it comes through a dialogic exchange between Yamada and the soldier. It seems difficult to continue the argument for monologism in the face of such textual evidence. If the "American School"—a work that received the Akutagawa Prize and has been described as "in many respects the story of all Japanese after the war...the story will likely remain the most significant statement of the humiliated but determine [sic] Japanese psyche following the Second World War"—must be dismissed, deemed "exceptional," or have certain sections censored in order to promulgate the monologue hypothesis, perhaps we should read for silence rather than silence the text itself.⁷⁵

Isa's next encounter with the soldier occurs as the teachers make the six kilometer trek from the meeting place to the American school. "American School" highlights the notion of mobility in the postwar world in a manner reminiscent of "The Legend of Gold." The odyssey to the American school represents the text's most poignant depiction of the mobility and lack thereof of the occupied: at one point the narrator describes the movement of the teachers as "dragging along like prisoners," some ten pages later Yamada fantasizes about the hypothetical

⁷⁵ Gessel, *The Sting of Life*, p.210-211.

differences between the teachers' current situation and how the situation would change if they were participating in an army march.⁷⁶ Also reminiscent of "The Legend" is the importance of sartorial politics in "American School." Isa feels uncomfortable wearing his old army boots as the teachers make the march to the American school. Isa decides on ill-fitting leather shoes in lieu of the army boots and thus, "every step" toward the American school causes him "agony."⁷⁷ Michiko, who has the foresight and adaptability to bring a pair of high heels and a pair of running shoes, uses her masterful English skills to negotiate a spot in an army jeep for Isa, who by this point is barefoot and hobbling.

Now in its third haunting reiteration, it comes as no surprise to the reader or Isa that the operator of the jeep is the black soldier; Isa "had a premonition that he would meet the black man again today."⁷⁸ Here, the "pre-" of "premonition," or the "yo" of "*yokan*," signifies something that has been completed in advance (*arakajime*—here too we are reminded of Derridian haunting.) Kojima mobilizes this preordained moment to breathe life into the black character and provide the reader with information that precedes this current moment. After his election tour with Isa, the soldier is perplexed and tries to determine if Isa's taciturnity was a sign of discrimination or of his lack of linguistic acumen. The soldier checks Isa's file in the Education Department and, with nothing to point toward the latter, assumes that the former must be the case. The soldier decides to exact his revenge on Isa by pulling a pistol on Isa and asking him: "So which is it? Are you not going to speak English? 'My humble apology for keeping you waiting; this is truly an egregious offense.'—say it one more time!"⁷⁹ His revenge now chilled

⁷⁶ Kojima, p.239, 249.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.243.

⁷⁸ Kojima., p.255.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.257.

and served, the soldier laughs out loud, reveals that the gun is a toy, and starts sings snatches of a jazz number.

A monologic reading requires us to downplay the significance of this exchange because the passage devotes textual space to the creation of interiority and motives of the black soldier. Moreover, Isa's comments on the "oddly civilized" air of the soldier—a prime piece of ammo if one wants to read "American School" as a Japan-centered monologue based in stereotypes—have been satirically inverted; now a barefoot Isa is being driven and bamboozled by modern inventions and listening to the soldier reproduce a brand of music almost synonymous with modernity: jazz. In the words of Kumagai Nobuko, "The black man, liltily absorbed in jazz, and Isa are depicted contrastively...Isa, the obstinate Japanese teacher of English, and the frank black American soldier symbolize the defeated Japanese and the victorious Americans."⁸⁰ Finally, the soldier has combated what he saw as disdain (*keibetsu*) with the subversive power of laughter. Kojima would write in *Contemporary Times and Satirical Literature* that "the upper class and the aristocracy are, just like the common people, ultimately nothing more than ridiculous people with weaknesses. The spectators [of satire] learn this and are relieved. This relief calls forth laughter from within the spectator."⁸¹ Kojima has brought us into messy territory: the black soldier is emblematic both of the victorious American regime and also makes use of the weapon of the weak—satire—vis-à-vis the narrator's commentary on his "inferiority." It is precisely, however, such messiness that makes it difficult to incorporate "American School" into the monologue argument.

⁸⁰ Kumagai Nobuko, "Kojima Nobuo 'Amerikan sukūru' imejarī ni miru 'shishōsetsu,'" p.114; 115.

⁸¹ See Rizawa, p.14.

This messiness, however, should not lead us to mitigate the importance of the dialogues that occur throughout the text, indeed it should haunt us. As the soldier and Isa are about to part, the soldier feels that their meeting was predestined (*innen asakaranu*) and prophesizes that they will meet again. The soldier's prophecy is not actualized per se; with the exception of a brief passage in which the soldier finds his son and enters the school grounds, the soldier is not seen or heard from again. The soldier does, however, continue to haunt—that is make his presence felt and voice heard even in absence and silence—after his corporeal exit; Isa claims that the prophecy “sent a chill through his heart” (*kokoro no naka de gyo to shita*), a phrase that, particularly in the Japanese original, is befitting an uncanny encounter of the third kind.

The soldier drops Isa off outside the gates of the American school. This placement put Isa in the proximity of “a flow of pure, beautiful words reminiscent of the murmuring of a small stream.”⁸² Although Isa can't decipher the meaning of the words, they “seemed not to be of this world”⁸³—again, another phrase often associated with phantasmagoria. Isa realizes that the mellifluous voices belong to a group of schoolgirls who are conversing in English. Isa's spiritual response to this English is markedly different from what had been his characteristic visceral response of fear, aggression, and retreat. The difference, and this is a difference we came across in “The Legend” as well, seems to be the in the gender of this English. Kojima's women are marked with a certain fluidity that allows them to cross both physical and linguistic borders, hence Kojima's use of the conceptual metaphor of liquid—small stream, flow, et cetera—to describe feminine language. The flow of feminine language is reproduced by Emily, a teacher who “is tall and beautiful like the ladies who appear in American movies,” who tends to Isa's wounded feet. Much like the English of the schoolgirls, Emily's language is described as “words

⁸² Kojima, p.258.

⁸³ Kojima, p.259.

that flow on like the water of melted snow in spring.”⁸⁴ Isa is caught in this feminine flow of language because of the soldier, who is physically absent but continues to haunt Isa in silence; to continue the previous passage, Isa “finally realized, from the flow of the woman’s conversation that streamed like the water of melted snow in spring, that the reason he was in this predicament was thanks to the officiousness of that black soldier.”⁸⁵ Moreover, Isa’s response to said predicament is also dictated by the absent soldier. The reason Isa falls “silent like a mute” in the face of Emily’s kindness is that, “when he thought about what he should do if...he were showered with questions...by the large number of foreigners that surrounded him, the despondent feeling he had when he was in the jeep a while ago came back and resurrected (*yomigaette kuru*) itself again.”⁸⁶

Isa’s fear vis-à-vis the haunting presence is rooted in a threat that (if the job is done right) often accompanies hauntings: possession. Here, anxiety regarding possession refers both to the potential loss of possession(s) (say, the loss of one’s nationally/linguistically bound self-identity) as well as the ghastly overtaking of the other within the self, an other that knows no boundaries. As Derrida articulates the phenomenon, “The difference between *inhabit* and *haunt* becomes here more ungraspable than ever...Persons (guardians or possessors of the thing) are haunted in return, and constitutively, by the haunting they produce in the thing by lodging there their speech and their will like inhabitants.”⁸⁷ After the exchange and lodging of speech, a constitutive haunting occurs in which the “original possessor” is haunted to the extent that the border between haunting and inhabiting itself becomes ethereal. In what is perhaps the most oft-quoted

⁸⁴ Kojima, p.261.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Kojima, p.261

⁸⁷ Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, p.158

passage of “American School,” Isa ponders his fear of possession, of losing himself to the other that now inhabits him:

He wondered why he had until that point so loathed, so feared the language that was this kind of flow of beautiful voices. Something whispered inside him: (Japanese people speaking English like foreigners—ha!—what foolishness. If you speak like a foreigner, you will become a foreigner...) I will become a different person. That’s the only thing I can’t take.⁸⁸

The “something” (*mono*) that whispers inside Isa is reminiscent of the “something” from *mono ni tsukareru*, one Japanese phrase for being possessed. This reminiscence is magnified by the parenthetical phrase that follows, which gives the impression of a separate entity, a “different person,” talking in and through Isa. Insofar as Isa is inhabited by the black soldier, the soldier’s prophecy is fulfilled.

The conclusion of “American School” takes on an eerie light when read vis-à-vis Derrida’s notion of haunting. Molasky suggests that Isa and the cast of “American School” are susceptible to haunting because they cling to a monolingual, monolithic (ontological) notion of the relationship between a native language and identity. In response to Molasky’s claim, Yamamoto argues that the conclusion of the text provides “the possibility of [moving towards] bilingualism,” the possibility of rethinking the (hauntological) border between self and other that is safeguarded by language.⁸⁹ In the final passages of “American School,” Yamada suggests that he and Isa perform model teaching using the “all method,” to which Isa decides he will either have to punch Yamada or quit his job. As a discombobulated Isa debates which solution he will employ, Michiko asks Isa to let her borrow his chopsticks; she has forgotten to bring her own. Isa hands her the chopsticks like “an unskilled relay runner who takes off before he has fully released” his baton. Michiko—the perfect picture of hybridity with her chopsticks in hand and

⁸⁸ Kojima, p.259.

⁸⁹ Yamamoto, p.133.

high heels on foot—loses her balance and falls. After the debacle, the principal of the American school outlaws displays of the “kamikaze spirit” by disallowing Japanese teachers from taking the lectern, and he prohibits wearing high heels just to be safe.

The final lines close the text with what seems to be a silent eulogy for the “possibility of bilingualism:”

It seemed that there was no amount of time that could pass which would make Yamada translate Principal William’s declaration, so Mr. Shibamoto [the tardy public servant] nudged Yamada’s chest. With this, Yamada finally came back to himself [has Yamada been haunted as well?] and, without saying a single thing, went directly toward the exit, running as if he were trying to escape. After Yamada, Mr. Shibamoto and the other Japanese teachers clumped together and went after him as if they had remembered something [have the other Japanese teachers forgotten themselves as well?]. And Isa had, once again, been left behind all alone.

With Isa “all alone,” can we assume that the haunting has come to an end. Or is the ghostly presence still palpable? Is Isa’s current solitude—he is “left behind all alone” in the American school—somehow different from the solitude he pursued as he attempted to avoid the journey to the school? The question here remains unanswered, and this incompleteness in and of itself is certainly important.

If we seek answers, however, we will have to turn elsewhere in Kojima’s oeuvre. One place to look for Kojima’s elaboration of the “possibility of bilingualism” and bilingual dialogue is one of the few novel-length works in his repertoire, the 1965 *Hōyō kazoku* (*Embracing Family*.) Peppered with the sardonic comicality that would become Kojima’s trademark, *Embracing Family* tells the story of the Miwa family’s attempt to rebuild the walls of their house as their home crumbles. Shaken by his wife’s affair with George, an American GI, Shunsuke wants to enclose his property with a tall fence, a kind of suffocating family embrace. Tokiko astutely notes that the fence will “ruin everything,” that no amount of physical or linguistic barriers can impede the exchange—yet again acted out through the female body—between

postwar American and Japan; just as the new house develops leaks through which the outside literally seeps in, it is none other than George whom the family invites to turn the house into a home.⁹⁰

Shunsuke, his character upgraded from Isa's English teacher to a professor fluent in both American and Japanese literature, serves as a linguistic conduit between George and Tokiko. Indeed, "whereas Isa introspectively says 'Japanese people speaking English like foreigners—ha!—what foolishness. If you speak like a foreigner, you will become a foreigner....'" Shunsuke cross-examines the American youth who has had a relationship with his wife in English and, as he is "translating" the break-up of his wife and the youth, chides the youth in English."⁹¹ Pace the conclusion of "American School," which ends with a mute Yamada lost in translation and Isa mired in silent solitude, Shunsuke slips into English as he expresses his pathos.

Even with this increase in bilingual, dialogic fluency, however, it is in silence that Shunsuke speaks his interiority the most audibly. Trying to cope with the impending death of his wife by way of breast cancer, Shunsuke pleads with us, or, to use language closer to the original Japanese, "asks for our help:"

Without uttering a single word out loud, why is it that this is what Shunsuke screamed in the depths of himself as he was shopping: "We are companions. We are humans with numerous unfixed troubles. Yes, I am a man shopping, but please try not to think of me just as a man shopping. I want to be with you as a human; that's why I'm addressing you *in this way* right now. We are in a relationship even though we don't see or know each other. But it can't stay this way. This is precisely why we are friends."⁹²

With this, Shunsuke has brought us back to Morrison's insight on the nexus of silence, trauma, and friendship: "And since the victim does not have the vocabulary to understand the violence or

⁹⁰Kojima Nobuo, *Hōyō kazoku*, p.90.

⁹¹Tsubouchi Yūzō, "*Wakareru riyū ga ki ni natte*," p.18.

⁹²Kojima Nobuo, *Hōyō kazoku*, p.156-157.

its context...friends...would have to fill those silences with their own reflective lives.”⁹³ The way in which Shunsuke addresses us is through an appeal that makes a claim to interconnectivity even though it doesn’t “utter a single word out loud.” Although we can never answer definitively (and isn’t this the beauty of silence?), Isa’s finishing silence is most likely not the silent crescendo of a monologue, but silence of the Morrisonian manner—that is silence that waits for interlocution to fill the void.

Conclusion: From “I-novel” to “We-novel”

“The Legend of Gold” and “American School” share numerous commonalities: both texts are set during the Occupation, both are focalized primarily by middle-aged, intellectual, Japanese men yet laud widowed middle-aged women as the true survivors of the war, both end with the focalizing character juxtaposed with a crowd (*watashi* running into one, Isa left out of one), both were nominated for the Akutagawa Prize and seen as exemplary of the on-the-ground status of Occupied Japan, and both are fascinated with silent communication. Our study has revolved around the shared blackness between the two texts. The appearance of the black soldier in the conclusion of “Legend” comes as what seems to be literally a *deus ex machine*. “American” presents blackness that informs the narrative even before it begins and continues to haunt the tale even in its absence during the finale. Although structurally inverted, both dialogues with blackness are “as a metaphor for transacting the whole process of [in this case, the narration of Japanese identity in postwar Japan]...may be something [that Japan] cannot do without.”⁹⁴

As we take inventory of the commonalities of the two novellas, we should also emphasize that both texts see the “I” as something that is constructed and narrated dialogically. By the 1946

⁹³ Toni Morrison, “Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature,” p.259.

⁹⁴ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, p.47.

“Legend,” the “I-novel” (*watakushi-shōsetsu* or *shishōsetsu*) had already breathed its last breath. In the words of Van Gessel, “In any list of casualties of the Pacific War, on the Japanese side one would have to included the steadfast literary construct of self that had been forged by the prewar “I” novelists. The novelists of this generation [the “war generation” writers]...have taken apart the central “I”...bending and then breaking the vertical pronoun that had seemed so sturdy and unassailable in the *shishōsetsu*...”⁹⁵ (To be sure, however, the dead and expired do return to haunt us now and again.) The fiction of Ishikawa and Kojima cosigned the DNR. Okuno Takeo describes Ishikawa Jun as a literary figure “far removed” from the “binding curse of the I-novel” of “established Japanese literature.”⁹⁶ Kojima’s postwar works have been characterized as “an attempt at a new type of literature...a move from the so-called I-novel to what could even be called the relationship novel.”⁹⁷ In the epilogue to “American School,” Kojima himself claimed that if readers are taken aback by the construction of his “I,” part of the blame is to be put on their familiarity with the Japanese literature of the past.

It is difficult to read through scholarship on the *shishōsetsu* without coming across the disclaimer that the “I-novel” *can* be written in the third person. Part of Ishikawa and Kojima’s dismantling of the *shishōsetsu* is the elongation and implosion of this adage: the reader is moved from an “I” that can thrive within (what is usually a) “He” to an “I” that cannot be narrated in the first-person singular, an “I” that is only audible through the plurality of the first-personae. In Kojima and Ishikawa, the plurality of the first-person—and this too represents a move away from the thematic and narratological homogeneity of the I-novel—is constituted by a dialogue with the “Other” that becomes a part of one’s self. As Takemae Eiji suggests in *Inside GHQ*:

⁹⁵ Van Gessel, *The Sting of Life*, p.3,5.

⁹⁶ Okuno Takeo, “Ishikawa Jun no shōsetsu no gainen,” p.152.

⁹⁷ Makibayashi Koji, “Kojima Nobuo no hōhō: ‘Americkan sukūru’ no bunseki wo tooshite,” p.10.

The Allied Occupation of Japan and its Legacy, blackness was a visible component of the creolized Japanese self that was produced during the postwar period; it seems to be more than coincidence that the Japanese Association for Negro Studies (*Neguro kenkyū no kai*, now the Association of Black Studies) was founded in 1954, the year in which “American School” was published and received the Akutagawa Prize.

Insofar as this dialogue continues even in moments of silence, monologic reading seems to flatten both our readings of the text (should we ignore blackness that has been censored or removed from the story?) and our dialogues about the text (should we monologize our study?) As noted in the introduction, the spirit of the monologic argument is important: there is a way in which an argument that supports speaking desire in silence can become complicit to the silencing of the Other that pervaded and continues to pervade the modern era. I present this argument in the face of such danger in an attempt to counteract what I see as a more pressing threat: the very real possibility that, having grown accustomed to monologue, that is to ignoring the voice of the Other, it is a virtual impossibility for us to hear the subaltern who do not or cannot speak. By excavating the silence in postwar narratives such as those of Ishikawa Jun and Kojima Nobuo, we begin to hear the heretofore censored and haunting voices of that moment. These voices seem to speak to use somewhere between Masao Miyoshi’s conjecture that “...writing in Japan is always something of an act of defiance. Silence...invites and seduces all would-be speakers and writers...To bring forth a written work to break this silence is thus often tantamount to the writer’s sacrifice of himself” and Bakhtin’s dictum of language as “a living, socio-ideological

concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language...lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's.”⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Masao Miyoshi, *Accomplices of Silence*, p.xv; Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” p.291-292.

Chapter Two

In the Beginning: Geneses, Genealogies, Blackness and Ōe Kenzaburō

And God stepped out on space
 And he looked around and said:
"I'm lonely—I'll make me a world..."
 Then God smiled, And the light broke
 And the darkness rolled up on one side
 And the light stood shining on the other,
 And God said: That's good!...
 Then God sat down
 On the side of a hill where He could think;
 By a deep, wide river He sat down; With His head in His hands,
 God thought and thought,
 Till He thought,
"I'll make me a man!"

—James Weldon Johnson, "The Creation"

Someday, I intend to write about my observations concerning this issue in greater detail, but I think that contemporary Japanese literature and black literature have qualitative similarities...Black American authors—Baldwin in particular—who have made themselves through the means provided by the Western worldview are a great stimulus vis-à-vis the sense of difficulty I have [regarding the creation of literary works].

—Ōe Kenzaburō, "On the Sense of Difficulty: My Experience of Literary Creation"

Introduction: Toward a Re-reading of Blackness in Ōe Kenzaburō

On December 7, 1963, the Tokyo branch of the Association for Negro Studies (*Kokujin kenkyū no kai*, now Association for Black Studies) commemorated the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation with a symposium of speeches, poetry readings and movie viewings. Ōe Kenzaburō (1935 -), by this point already an Akutagawa Prize recipient and rising star of the literary world, took part in the festivities by delivering a talk entitled "Negro American Literature and Modern Japanese Literature." December 7, 1963, then, is most likely the "someday" on which Ōe mused "in greater detail" about the "qualitative similarities" between black and Japanese literature alluded to in the second epigraph. As such, "Negro American Literature" would seem to be an ideal place to begin a study of Ōe Kenzaburō's writing of

blackness. There is, however, no recording of Ōe's 1963 speech and, according to my personal correspondence with the writer, Ōe himself has no documentation or recollection of what was said on that day.¹

In lieu of “Negro American Literature and Modern Japanese Literature,” I propose that we begin by recalibrating our methodological approach to reading Ōe's literary creation of blackness. This recalibration should address the fact that Ōe writes not black literature, but black *literatures*, that is to say that the blackness in Ōe's texts comes in two modes. A considerable amount of research has been devoted to the representation of blackness in Ōe's fiction, on what I have called his use of the black Japanese literary mode; this chapter, which ponders the genesis of a kind of blackness in Ōe unrelated to issues of fictional representation, is indebted to the thorough scholarship by which it is preceded.² The scholarly fixation on the representation of blackness in Japanese literature, however, has caused myopia vis-à-vis both the presence of what I call black Japanese literature—a body of literature that engages dialogically with African American literature and stems from postwar Japanese authors' reading and incorporation of the tropes and techniques of black literature into their own literary endeavors—as well as the hermeneutical, literary historical and ideological impetuses and significance of Japanese authors' engagements with black literature.

¹ Ōe, ever the writer, communicates primarily by way of handwritten letter. I wrote to him in August of 2010 to inquire about “Negro American Literature and Modern Japanese Literature,” which is listed in a program for the 1963 symposium held by the Association for Negro Studies. Ōe replied on September 21, 2010. Although he has no recollection of the speech, in his letter he wrote that he “feverishly” (*nechū*) read the works of James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison and Chester Himes in the early 1960s. My thanks to Professor Michael Bourdaghs for facilitating my correspondence with Ōe.

² Scholarship that takes up the representation of blackness in Ōe's “Prize Stock” includes: Russell's “Taishū bungaku ni miru Nihonjin Kokujinkan (The Japanese View of Blacks as Seen in Popular Literature)” from *Nihonjin no kokujin kan* (The Japanese View of Black People) and “Race and Reflexivity,” Norma Field's “Neitibu to eirian, nanji to ware: Ōe Kenzaburō no shinwa, kindai, kyokō (Native and Alien, I and Thou: Ōe Kenzaburō's Myth, Modernity and Fiction), Tetsushi and Hiromi Furukawa's “Nihon no sengo shōsetsu ni okeru ‘kokujin’ (‘Blacks’ in postwar Japanese novels) from *Nihonjin to Afurika-kei Amerikajin* (The Japanese and African Americans), Ted Goossen's “Caged Beasts: Black Men in Modern Japanese Literature” and Michael Molasky's “A Darker Shade of Difference,” from *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory*.

Ōe's case is a fascinating one insofar as his oeuvre engages with both modes.³ Moreover, Ōe left an essayistic paper trail between the years of 1961 and 1968 documenting the rationale behind his attempt to transition from Japanese black literature to black Japanese literature. Take, for example, Ōe's justification for his first trip to America: "I wanted to show the interest that I have in the way in which black authors (*kokujin sakka*) have continued to write a literature of their own even under the deep influence of European literature."⁴ By my count, Ōe has penned some seventeen essays, articles and speeches in which he attempts to recreate himself as a kind of "black Japanese" author by resituating his literary techniques and thematic concerns in close proximity to those of African American literature. This resituating exemplifies a fundamental shift in Ōe's engagement with black people, culture and literature; Ōe attempts to transition from gazing at black bodies—a view of blackness that previously characterized Ōe's Japanese black literature and, after Ōe resituates his writing, becomes associated with the "white"/"Western" gaze—to examining the world alongside black authors as a fellow "colored" (*yūshoku jinshu*) writer from post-Occupation Japan.

"Looking back on my student days," Ōe reminisces, "I realize now that my literary background existed on a delta surrounded by Sartre [and] Norman Mailer...I look back on those days and realize that, although I had thought that my songs were sung in my own voice, I was singing them only in Sartre's voice, like a grotesque, red-cheeked puppet that belonged to a

³ Although I do not see the two modes as mutually exclusive, Ōe's 1957 "Shiiku" (Prize Stock) and 1958 "Kurai kawa, omoi kai" (Dark River, Heavy Oar) and "Tataikai no konnichi" (Today the Struggle) are closely aligned with what I call Japanese black literature insofar as these narratives are propelled primarily by the Japanese narrator's gaze and author's representation of the black male body. Some of Ōe's post-1961 works—primarily *Sakebigoe* (*Outcries*, 1963), but also moments in *Kojinteki na taiken* (*A Personal Matter*, 1964) and *Man'en gannen no futtobōru* (*The Silent Cry*, 1967) are informed by Ōe's reading of Wright, Baldwin and Ellison.

⁴ Ōe Kenzaburō, "Amerika no yume" (*American Dream*), p.184. "American Dream," which Ōe penned before his inaugural journey to the U.S., is not to be confused with *Dreams of a Traveler in America* (*Amerika ryokōsha no yume*), a series of essays written in commemoration of his travels in America.

ventriloquist.”⁵ Ōe also acknowledges, however, the debt that his early works owe to his readings in black literature circa 1961; it was “around the time when the Asia-Africa Writers Conference was held that I [Ōe] began to carry black literature (*kokujin bungaku*) and works concerning Africa with me and nothing else and read them like a man who had been washed onto a deserted island.”⁶

Ōe’s writing of racial identity in his early works is not composed on a delta, but on a rhizome: Twain, Sartre, and Mailer—Ōe’s “triumvirate of Western influences”—each made vexed attempts to discuss blackness literarily, attempts with which Ōe was intimately familiar; Ōe was an avid reader of Wright, Ellison, Baldwin, and Himes; Ōe has created both fictional and nonfictional accounts of American and Japanese race relations on numerous occasions. Rather than beginning with stereotypes and searching for their “reflections” in Ōe, here we will genealogically consider the creations and recreations of blackness that occur in Ōe’s essays written between 1961-1968, the years in which Ōe was markedly devoted to a project of constructing an analogical link between his own “Japanese literature” and “black literature,” and his fiction, namely the 1963 *Sakebigoe* (*Outcries*), in which Ōe translates the program set in his nonfictional works into fictional form. I begin with a consideration of Ōe’s debt to Twain and Sartre. Twain and Sartre provide Ōe with the fundamental building blocks—fear of the racialized Other and existential ontology—of Self-Other relations as it is witnessed in his Japanese black literary works such as “Shiiku.” Beginning in 1961, however, Ōe rechannels his writing of racial fear and existential ontology through his readings of black literature. The primary implication of this rechanneling: a change of allegiance in a game of racial politics—Ōe

⁵ Ōe Kenzaburō, “Dai sanbu no tame no nōto,” from *Genshuku na tsunawatari*, pg.155, as cited in Yasuko Claremont’s *The Novels of Kenzaburo Ōe*.

⁶ Ōe, “Ryūkeisha no dokusho” (The Readings of an Exile), p.2-3.

resituates himself within close proximity to fellow “minority” authors in a show of transpacific racial solidarity.

This resituating entails two gestures. Ōe begins with the dialectics of the racial gaze—a phrase that I borrow intentionally from Sartre studies to describe Ōe’s positing of an analogous existential dilemma experienced by postwar black and Japanese people living under the disciplinary power of the white gaze. The second gesture, in which Ōe stresses the pedagogical power of African American literature and its ability to assist all minor writers in overcoming the aforementioned existential dilemma, represents Ōe’s discovery of what he calls “the greatest hint in regard to [the solution of] not only the black problem (*kokujin mondai*), but to all of the problems surrounding Japanese people (*Nihonjin wo meguru subete no mondai*) as well” in African American letters.⁷

Ōe between Twain and Sartre

Ōe and Twain: Fear and Freedom

To reiterate, by “Japanese black literature,” I mean a mode of writing blackness in Japanese literature in which the narrational gaze fixates on a black character, thereby making the representation of black characters a constitutive feature of the text. Works written in this mode assume that “real” black people exist in the extraliterary realm of the “real” world and that these black people can be represented, or re-presented, in literature. As such, one telltale prognostic of the onset of the Japanese black literary mode is when Japanese authors have “real” encounters

⁷ Ōe, “Fukashi ningen to tayōsei (Invisible Men and Diversity),” p.39. I use “minor” here in the manner suggested by Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. I argue in a subsequent section that Ōe and Sartre diverge in their interpretations of the “minority” of black literature—Sartre’s interpretation rooted in Hegelian dialectics, Ōe’s closer to that of Deleuze and Guattari.

with black people; with the presence of black Occupation soldiers, for example, comes the postwar literary trope of the *kokujinhei* (black soldier). Indeed, many postwar authors' desire to write Japanese black literature stems from their experiences with what Wayne Booth might call flesh-and-blood black soldiers. Ōe is no exception. In a nonfictional account of his first encounter with a black soldier, Ōe writes:

I can't forget the feeling of fear (*kyōfu*) and disgust, but in addition to those feelings the kind of reverence (*isshu no ikei*), that I felt the first time I saw a black soldier who represented the victorious army. The black soldier walked around my village. He looked at the girls, messed with the dogs and whistled as he walked. And I, just an elementary school student (*shōgakusei no boku*), broke out in a sweat all over my body as I watched him vigilantly.⁸

Under the reflectionist paradigm of Japanese black literature, Ōe's fictional representations of the relationship between an elementary school boy, who is, a la Ōe's nonfictional recount, identified only as Boku, and black soldiers in works such as "Prize Stock" and "Konnichi no tatakai" (The Struggle Today, 1958) would be considered a re-presentations of his "actual" encounter with blackness. The mundaneness of the simple sentence with which Ōe's description of the black soldier begins—"The black soldier walked around my village"—is a testament to the power of the mere presence of black soldiers in postwar Japan in generating narratives of blackness in postwar Japanese literature.

My intention here is not to argue that the Japanese black literary mode is not present in Ōe's early fiction. Rather, I am interested in what is effaced when we read Ōe's blackness solely as it is embodied in the representation of black soldiers. Of all the instantiations of cross-cultural encounter in "Prize Stock," my nomination for most revelatory moment is admittedly idiosyncratic; amidst the attempts to copulate with goats and deaths by hatchet, I inevitably return to the moment when the narrator describes the black soldier as "singing a song in a low,

⁸ Ōe, "Sengo sedai no imēji" (Images from the Postwar Generation), from *Ōe Kenzaburō Dōjidai ronshū 1* (Ōe Kenzaburō, Collected Contemporary Essays, Vol. 1), p.16.

thick voice that mysteriously arrested us with its rawness, a song that tried to assail us with its lament and cry.”⁹ I would argue that this line is parabolic, that Ōe is suggesting a method of conveying blackness that runs alongside and often up against the elevation of representation seen in the Japanese black mode. This second mode is akin to the Negro spiritual: its language is coded, it carries the weight of historical baggage, it is marked by interlocutory exchanges between speaker (writer) and listener (reader) and it is ultimately irreducible to the content that it represents. By focusing exclusively on the representation of the black body, a focus that is in many ways endorsed by Ōe’s early short stories with black characters, we deny ourselves even the opportunity to engage with this second mode. Reading for this second mode provides us with a kind of Negro spiritual sung throughout Ōe’s works from 1957 to 1968. What I find particularly interesting about this “spiritual” is the techniques and implications of its shift from codes and historical baggage indebted to Twain (fear) and Sartre (the gaze and existential ontology) to rechanneling those codes and baggage through black literature.

Let’s begin where Ōe begins, with Twain (1835 – 1910). One morning, when Ōe was nine and the Pacific War was in its penultimate year, Ōe’s mother woke at dawn, packed a kilogram of rice—precious cargo at the time—and left for the city through the forest of Ōe’s island home. She returned with a doll for Ōe’s sister, some cakes for his brother, and the two volumes of the 1941 Iwanami translation of *Huck Finn* for Ōe. Ōe, who was not an avid reader before *Huck Finn*, claims that Twain “opened the world of literature” up to him.”¹⁰ *Huck Finn* would also serve as Ōe’s opening to the world of American race relations. Shelley Fisher Fishkin suggests that one of *Huck Finn*’s contributions to the conversation on American race relations is that it highlights “the role black voices and traditions played...in shaping all of

⁹ Shiiku, p.120.

¹⁰ Ōe, “Toni Morrison to *Hakkuruberī Fin no bōken* (Toni Morrison and the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn).”

American culture” and “underline[s]...the importance of changing the stories we tell about who we are to reflect the realities of what we’ve been.”¹¹ Ōe seconds Fishkin: “I was really taken by the phrase ‘light out’ that wraps up *Huck Finn*, a phrase that, now that I think about it, seems like something a black person would say (*kokujin ga hanashi sō na*). And I thought: Okay. I’ll light out for a new territory too.”¹²

If Twain does indeed tap “into the zeitgeist of his time and ours in ways we are still uncovering,” Ōe excavates Twain by recasting *Huck Finn*’s depiction of race relations as a battle between fear and freedom onto 1960s black/Japanese-white race relations.¹³ As Ōe’s “representative American hero,” Huck becomes Ōe’s exemplar of the fear and courage required to encounter and overcome the normative, disciplinary power of white America.¹⁴ In an essay in which Ōe rehearses Huck’s decision to “steal Jim out of slavery,” for example, Ōe quotes at length from the sixteenth and thirty-first chapters of *Huck Finn* in order to dramatize the fear-freedom dilemma. In the sixteenth chapter, Huck’s conscience begins to “pinch” him due to Jim’s jubilation as he approaches freedom: “Jim said it made him all over trembly and feverish to be so close to freedom. Well, I can tell you it made me all over trembly and feverish, too, to hear him, because I begun to get it through my head that he was most free—and who was to blame for it? Why, *me*.”¹⁵ Huck’s fear and trembling in the face of freedom is evoked by his conscience decision to free Jim *contra ius commune*, represented here by Miss Watson: “Conscience says to me, ‘What had poor Miss Watson done to you, that you could see her nigger go off right under your eyes and never say one single word?’”¹⁶ In the thirty-first chapter, Huck resolves himself to

¹¹ Shelley Fishkin, “Foreword,” *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, p.xxvi.

¹² Ōe, “Toni Morrison to *Hakkuruberī Fin no bōken* (Toni Morrison and the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn).”

¹³ Shelley Fishkin, *Lighting Out for the Territory: Reflections on Mark Twain and American Culture*, p. 11.

¹⁴ Ōe, “*Hakkuruberī Fin to hīrō no mondai* (Huckleberry Finn and the Problem of the Hero),” p.354.

¹⁵ Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, p.123.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

his fearful predicament, eternal damnation, in order to ensure both Jim's freedom and his own. Here too Huck is "trembling" and "most dropped in my tracks I was so scared" because he "got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it."¹⁷ The desire to free Jim, however, overpowers the fear:

"All right, then, I'll go to hell"...It was awful thoughts, and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head; and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn't. And for a starter, I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go for the whole hog."¹⁸

Huck's moral fortitude—Huck is, to highlight Twain's pun, "in for good"—in the face of fear is captured by the Iwanami translation that Ōe cites; Nakamura Tameji, translator of the Iwanami edition of *Huck Finn* that Ōe received as a child, renders Huck's "awful thoughts, and awful words" as "*sore wa osoroshii kangae de ari, osoroshii kotoba de atta.*"¹⁹ Huck becomes a paradigmatic figure for Ōe: "In comparison to Tom Sawyer, who is within the bounds of societal order, Huck Finn is out of bounds as he freely chooses a hell all his own. As such, it was possible for us—children of Japan in the age of...fear and animosity toward America—to see Huck as a free hero who wasn't collusively fixed to America."²⁰ Huck's fearless decision to "go to Hell" and "light out for the Territory" becomes a blueprint to the road to freedom from fear for Jim, Huck, and, as Ōe extrapolates, postwar Japanese people who are just as bound to American order as Tom Sawyer. As Ōe begins his Nobel Prize lecture, "The whole world was then [WWII] engulfed by waves of horror. By reading *Huckleberry Finn* I felt I was able to justify

¹⁷ Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, p.270, 271.

¹⁸ Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, p.272.

¹⁹ As cited in Ōe's "Jigoku ni yuku Hakkuruberī Fin," p.240

²⁰ Ōe, "Jigoku ni yuku Hakkuruberī Fin," p.240.

my act of going into the mountainous forest at night and sleeping among the trees with a sense of security which I could never find indoors.”²¹

Ōe and Sartre: The Language of Existential Race Relations

As a segue from Ōe’s conversations with Twain to those with Sartre, I would like to consider Ōe’s reading of *Huck Finn* against Toni Morrison’s. Morrison, like Ōe, reads a significant amount of fear into Huck’s dilemma. Her introduction to *Huck Finn* begins: “Fear and alarm are what I remember most about my first encounter with Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.”²² This fear becomes the “leading question” for Morrison as she reads *Huck Finn* to determine “what does Huck need to live without terror, melancholy and suicidal thoughts?”²³ Morrison’s answer: Jim. Insofar as “there will be no ‘adventures’ without Jim,” Jim becomes a kind of plaything for Huck (and especially Tom), an “ill-made clown suit that cannot hide the man within” to be “dismissed without explanation at some point.”²⁴ In Morrison’s reading, then, the “freeing” of Jim is more along the lines of a dismissal. The dismissive component of Jim’s freedom is exacerbated by Tom’s “perverse” silence concerning the fact that Jim is already free. Jim is thus “unnecessarily freed,” and Huck’s subsequent exodus to the Territory (current-day Oklahoma) is a kind of false escape that signifies Huck’s “engagement with (rather than escape from) a racist society.”²⁵

In spite of their affinities—the prominence of fear, the emphasis on Huck’s decision to go to Hell and its implications—we see a crucial difference in Ōe and Morrison’s respective readings. The absurd, or in Morrison’s words, “unnecessary” nature of Jim’s freedom in turn

²¹ Ōe, *Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself: The Nobel Prize Speech and Other Lectures*, p.107.

²² Toni Morrison, “Introduction,” from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, p.xxxi.

²³ Ibid., p.xxxiv.

²⁴ Ibid., p.xxxix, p.xxxv.

²⁵ Ibid., p.xli.

compromises the freedom supposed in “lighting out for the Territory,” a moment that is, as we have seen, inspirational for Ōe. Morrison questions if the territory, “that undefined space, so falsely imagined as ‘open,’ [will] be free of social chaos, personal morbidity... Will it be free not only of nightmare fathers but of dream fathers too?”²⁶ Morrison’s positing of a false freedom from the father figure clearly undermines Ōe’s visualization of Huck’s freedom from an omnipotent America.

Why is it, then, that Ōe proposes such a laudatory reading of Huck even in light of such Morrison’s undermining? The difference in their readings is due in part to the fact that Ōe conceptualizes Huck as an existentialist hero, and thus the “absurdity” of freeing a free slave does not give Ōe as much reason for pause.²⁷ Ōe delineates Huck’s freedom in the face of absurdity in “Huckleberry Finn and the Problem of the Hero” as follows:

Huckleberry Finn becomes what is called an existentialist hero. Mark Twain prepared a loophole for Huck: Black Jim is a black man who has actually already been set free. As such, Twain ensures that Huck Finn ultimately can get by without going to hell. Huckleberry Finn, however, has already decided to go to hell once and he will light out for the Territory once again. Thus, we can hardly doubt the fact that Huckleberry Finn will eventually go down a road that leads to a hell with no exit.

The discrepancy between the two readings is evoked by Ōe’s mobilization of existentialist philosophy vis-à-vis *Huck Finn*, a mobilization that is, as we will discuss momentarily, itself intertwined with Ōe’s studies of black thought and culture.

The “existentialist hero” that Ōe sees in Huck is undoubtedly informed by Ōe’s extensive

²⁶ Toni Morrison, “Introduction,” from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, p.xli

²⁷ The other part is the two author’s respective views on the place of minstrelsy in Twain’s portrayal of Jim. Twain studies remains divided on whether Twain’s view of Jim is more aligned with the patrons of minstrel shows, who viewed black buffoonery with little to no irony, or the black minstrels themselves, in many ways the patron saints of black comedy who often guilefully used the medium for social critique and deftly sidestepped the possibility of persecution as they challenged the ideological status quo of race. Morrison falls squarely into the former camp. Although Ōe does not address the issue directly, he does use the term “kuronbō Jimu” (Nigger Jim) when quoting the Iwanami translation and “kokujin Jim” (black Jim) when referring to the character in his own voice, which suggests that he separates the minstrel from the man and thus falls into the latter. If such a divergence is present, this too might account for the differing readings.

reading of Sartre. To say that Ōe, whose University of Tokyo undergraduate thesis was titled “On the Image in the Novels of Sartre,” is a Sartre specialist is to state the obvious. What might not be as obvious, however, is the fact that Ōe’s exhaustive reading of Sartre in the late 50s to early 60s would verse Ōe in black existentialism and provide Ōe with a language with which to discuss antiracism and black-white-Japanese race relations; in the words of Jonathan Judaken, it may “surprise some readers” that “there are few figures who have had a greater influence on the critical theories applied to ‘race’ and whose own praxis served so consistently to destabilize racial and colonial oppression” as Sartre.²⁸

John Treat has argued persuasively that “the dark sketch of the human condition which Sartre draws prefigures the state of Hiroshima described in [*Hiroshima*] *Notes*,” a collection of essays researched, written and published concomitantly with Ōe’s readings in African American literature.²⁹ Analogous to his mobilization of Sartre in *Hiroshima Notes*, Ōe reconfigures the template provided by Sartre to conceptualize the relationship between black/Japanese people and white Americans. Given that much of Ōe’s discussion of race relations is in dialogue with Sartre’s existential ontology, and that Ōe’s disagreement with Sartre at a key juncture leads Ōe to search elsewhere—namely, black literature—for a solution to his existential dilemma, let us begin by rehearsing the basic tenets of Sartre’s existentialism as it is proposed in *Being and*

²⁸ Jonathan Judaken, “Introduction,” from *Race After Sartre*, p.1.

²⁹ John Treat, *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb*, p.234. Ōe conducted fieldwork in Hiroshima from the summer of 1963 to 1964 and published his findings in installments in the journal *Sekai*. The 1965 *Hiroshima Notes* compiled the *Sekai* essays. In 1961, the Asian-African Writers Conference, which saw itself as the literary counterpart to the Bandung Conference, held an emergency meeting in Tokyo. Ōe attended as a member of the Japanese delegation, and it is “around the time of the Asian-African Writers Conference...that I [Ōe] began to carry black literature (*kokujin bungaku*) and works concerning Africa with me and nothing else and read them like a man who had been washed onto a deserted island.” (Ōe, “Ryūkeisha no dokusho [The Readings of an Exile],” p.2-3). Ōe published *Outcries*, which I would argue is his first work of black Japanese literature, in 1963 and the aforementioned “American Dream,” in which he discusses his interest in black literature, in 1965—the same year as the publication of *Hiroshima Notes*.

Nothingness and the foundation these tenets form for Sartre's and Ōe's philosophy of existential antiracism.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre posits three kinds of being: the ontic being-in-itself (*etre-en-soi*) of the object world, the free being of human consciousness that must define its being for itself—hence being-for-itself (*etre-pour-soi*), and our being as it is gazed upon by others in the world, our being-for-others (*etre-pour-autrui*). When “the look” of the Other falls upon us, Sartre suggests, we become objects defined by the Other. It is “only for and by means” of “the Other’s infinite freedom” that “my possibles can be limited and fixed.”³⁰ Sartre, like Ōe, sees human exchange as inevitable—at times violent—conflict, the clashing of two freedoms trying to define themselves and the Others around them. Many respond to the freedom of human being-for-itself with what Sartre calls bad faith (*mauvaise foi*). To be in bad faith is to live a life without, to borrow Sartre’s term, authenticity; we are in bad faith when we conflate our refusal to choose with an inability to choose or, alternatively, when we essentialize either our own or the Other’s being-for-itself in order to avoid the anguish of choice.

Sartre, who studied in Germany during the rise of Hitler, researched and wrote *Being and Nothingness* during the Nazi occupation of France, visited the Jim Crow South and was the target of assassination attempts for his role in the fall of the Fourth Republic, saw race and racism as classic examples of bad faith. Take for example Sartre’s discussion of “the oppression of Blacks in slavery in the U.S.A.” The slave owner presents himself, in bad faith, as a kind of in-itself-for-itself (*en-soi-pour-soi*), a being that is both conscious and the foundation of its own being. As a god-like figure, the slave owner “freezes the other into an object” and now has a basis for

³⁰ Sartre’s “look (*le regard*)” is occasionally translated as “the gaze.” I employ the “gaze” translation for the remainder of this chapter. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p.362.

the self-generation of his own subjective being.³¹ Indeed, the slave owner's self-creation and justification comes as the word of God:

Noah, according to Genesis, condemned all the Blacks, the sons of Ham, to perpetual slavery. Here there is certainly an underlying bad faith... When one is not yet certain about being in accord with the Bible, one says that the Black can be a slave since he *is not* Christian... But since, at the same time, they [black slaves] were prevented from becoming Christians, they [slave owners] knew quite well that Christian faith lay within their possibilities. In other words, that the Blacks are something other and more than what they are.³²

Quoting *Being and Nothingness*, Jonathan Judaken extrapolates that “the objectification of your being, the designation of your essence by an Other, does not define who you are for-yourself.”³³ The “objective conditions which structure our choices—class, race, place, the body, and the gaze of the Other” require “an interiorization and a subjectivizing” and “only have the meaning that an individual confers upon them;” hence “Blacks” being “something other and more than what they are.”³⁴

Alongside Sartre's support of antiracism, however, came his Hegelian critique of the Negritude Movement and the prophecy of its demise: “This minor moment [of Negritude] is not sufficient in itself. These black men who use it know this perfectly well; they know that it aims at preparing the synthesis or realization of the human being *in a raceless society*.”³⁵ Sartre's path to racial good faith is homogenous insofar as there is only one racial way of being—the synthetic, “raceless” society—that is in good faith, race itself being, as we witnessed in Sartre's slavery example, both a creation and creator of bad faith. Œe and Sartre, however, have differing visions of the power of “minor moments.”

³¹ Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, p.563.

³² Ibid.

³³ Jonathan Judaken, “Sartre on Racism: From Existential Phenomenology to Globalization and “the New Racism,” from *Race after Sartre*, p.27.

³⁴ Judaken, p.27.

³⁵ Sartre, “Black Orpheus,” p.327.

We will return to Ōe's divergence from Sartre momentarily. In the interim, I would like to consider Ōe's rechanneling of fear and existential ontology through his thoughts on African American culture and literature.

Creative Nonfiction: Ōe on the Dialectics of the Racial Gaze and the Pedagogical Power of Black Minor Literature, 1961-1968

Ōe's nonfictional works on Japanese-American race relations written between the years of 1961-1968 create a narrative in which African Americans and the Japanese are analogously assaulted by the white gaze. Insofar as the assault is analogous, Ōe's narrative continues, both the Japanese and African Americans—and, Ōe will argue, the gazers themselves—have much to learn from black literature, a literature formed under a contentious relationship with the white gaze and clearly interested in the visibility and invisibility of race.

A set of recurring terms serve as the lynchpin of Ōe's nonfictional creation. Ōe's dialectic of the racial gaze is characterized by the intense fear (*kyōfu*), a term that Ōe carries over from his reading of Twain, evoked by the white gaze (*hakujin no me/miru*). It is through this frightening gaze that both the postwar Japanese and post-Jim Crow African Americans come to know themselves qua Japanese/African Americans—a conceptualization that Ōe carries over from his reading of Sartre. In the case of white-Japanese and white-black relations, this fear of the white gaze is due to the illusory (*gensō*) notion of a monolithic (*ichiyōsei/ichimenka*), authoritative (*kyōken*) America and manifests as violence (*bōryoku*). The ubiquity of the gaze, moreover, evokes a desire both for invisibility (*fukashi*) and freedom (*jiyu*) from the gaze. From here, Ōe considers the end games to the fear and violence that surrounds Japanese-American race relations posited by African American literature. “Invisibility” is the bleakest of these end games, a kind of disappearing from the field of the gaze. In lieu of invisibility, Ōe offers

diversity (*tayōsei*) as an alternative avenue to challenging the myth of the monolithic authority of American power. To reiterate, Ōe underwrites this entire narrative by beginning from the assumption of affinity and analogy between the postwar, post-Occupation Japanese relationship with white America and the post-slavery, pre/post-Jim Crow relationship of black Americans with white America.

Dialectics of the Racial Gaze 1: Fear

Ōe's dialectics of the racial gaze is characterized by the intense fear (*kyōfu*) evoked by the white gaze (*hakujin no me/miru*) in both black Americans and Japanese people. It is through this frightening gaze that both the postwar Japanese and post-Jim Crow African Americans acquire illusory knowledge of themselves qua Japanese/African Americans. I say "both black Americans and Japanese people" because Ōe's dialectic assumes that the postwar African American existential condition is the closest analogue to the postwar Japanese existential condition and thus Ōe cites, as we will see, examples of postwar black and Japanese existential struggles almost interchangeably.

Ōe presents fear as the rudimentary response of black and Japanese people who fall under the white gaze. Take for example the representation of racial fear in the beginning of Ōe's "Huck Finn Goes to Hell," the inaugural piece in a quintet of essays entitled "Dreams of a Traveler in America" that Ōe published in the left-leaning *Sekai* from September of 1966 to October of 1967. Somewhere between diary entries and political reportage, the five essays document Ōe's first trip to the United States in the summer of 1965. "Huck Finn Goes to Hell," and thus "Dreams of a Traveler in America," begin with extreme fear:

America. I will never be completely free (*jiyu ni naru koto wa nai*) from the mystical power that grips my chest whenever I hear the word 'America.'...The first and greatest feeling of terror

(*kyōfukan*) in my life was brought about by the word “America.” Our country fought with America. America might take my mother and...me—just a little boy—and make us lie face down on the paved roads of our village and crush us with their tanks. And if the skin on my face wasn’t hurt too badly by the shock, America might make a little lamp shade with it as memorabilia of its trip to Japan. And if it managed to do a particularly good job and make it look really Japanese, America might give the lamp shade to the President of the United States...America might eat the flesh of a Japanese person.³⁶

In this excerpt, America is represented as a bodiless actor—personified, yet bodiless nevertheless. The initial bodilessness of America is crystallized here both by the stylistics of the opening line, a sentence without appendages that both begins and ends with a free-floating “America,” and the repetition of the phrase “the word America,” (*Amerika toiu kotoba*). This is in stark contrast to the Japanese body. Ōe’s Japanese body in pain is marked by its ethnicity: America “eats the flesh of Japanese people” (*Nihonjin no niku wo kuu*), makes lamp shades that are “particularly Japanese” (*Nihonjin...rashiku*), *et cetera*.

By highlighting the “Japaneseness” of the bodies within which America instills fear, Ōe opens a space within which to interrogate the heretofore disembodied American bodies which instill said fear. These American bodies turn out to be racialized à la their “Japanese” counterpart, with some races in closer proximity to their Japanese counterpart and others at more of a distance. The black body in white-black relations maintains a relationship with fear and pain analogous to the Japanese body in white-Japanese relations. The white body remains in a similar pose—instigator or agent that instills and commemorates fear and pain—even as Ōe’s analyses shift from white-black relations to white-Japanese relations and back again. In “Invisible Men and Diversity (Fukashi ningen to tayōsei),” the fifth and final installment of “Dreams,” Ōe creates a fear that hangs ubiquitously over black Americans, that is, a fear reminiscent of the Japanese fear vis-à-vis whiteness with which “Huck Finn Goes to Hell” begins. Ōe writes:

³⁶ Ōe, “Jigoku ni yuku Hakkuruberī Fin” (Huckleberry Finn Goes to Hell), p.229.

What many journalists saw (*midasu*) even in the face of the heavyweight champion of the world before a bout... was the face of one young black boy that harbored a fear (*kyōfushin*) with the potential to erupt in insanity... We don't have to simply stop with Cassius Clay; the reason why we are humanely and deeply moved by the impression of a pre-bout black boxer captured by fear (*kyōfushin*) is because the fear (*kyōfushin*) he harbors regarding the violence (*bōryokuteki naru mono*) he is about to directly endure in a matter of minutes is connected to the gigantic fear (*kyōfushin*) that drenches the roots of his daily existence as a black man.³⁷

Here in the closing essay of the quintet, Ōe returns to the first essay and constructs an analogue between Japanese and black fear vis-à-vis whiteness. The similarities in the diction of the two passages is unmistakable: the Japanese fear of American soldiers is referred to as “the greatest fear” (*saidai no kyōfu*), the black fear recorded by American journalists is “gigantic fear” (*bōdai na kyōfushin*). The representation of fear in the two passages is also of a like kind. Both feelings of fear are evoked by phantasmagoric violence—the tank that has yet to crush the Japanese family, the punch that has yet to land on the pugilist's face. Fear arises in both cases from pain to be inflicted on young, non-white, males (Ōe as a child, Ali as a “young man”). Both memories of fear are permutated into commemorative objects—Ōe's lampshade/the journalists' reports of Ali—by white American actors. Finally, both of these singular examples of black/Japanese fear vis-à-vis whiteness are deemed representative of the ubiquity of fear of whiteness among postwar African Americans and the Japanese.

As such, Ōe's postwar Japanese fear finds its analogue in 1960s black America. On the following page of the essay, Ōe makes the link explicit for readers not familiar with the argument built over the series of essays: “Swollen fear of white people... lies at the heart of... fight[s] between... black brothers. Surely we can understand this violence if we compare it to the radicalization of the individual's violent crimes in states that are conducting large-scale wars.”³⁸ Given that Japan was only two decades removed from the conclusion of its fifteen-year

³⁷ Ōe, “Fukashi ningen to tayōsei” (Invisible Men and Diversity), p.140.

³⁸ Ōe, “Fukashi ningen to tayōsei” (Invisible Men and Diversity), p.141. My emphasis.

war and in the throes of the Vietnam War, the “we” here signifies the assumedly all-Japanese readership of *Sekai*.

Dialectics of the Racial Gaze 2: The White Gaze as Violent Catalyst

As the previous depiction of Ali suggests, Ōe presents the ubiquity of the white gaze as a catalyst for black and Japanese fear and violence as the inevitable manifestation of that fear. During his time in the United States in the summer of 1965, for example, Ōe went to Atlanta to see Morehouse College and “primarily to visit the headquarters of the SNCC and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s SCLC.”³⁹ The “first memorable scene” (*saisho ni mita inshō teki na nagame*) Ōe witnesses in Atlanta as he heads for the headquarters of the Student *Non-Violent* Coordinating Committee was “the spectacle (*kōkei*) of two black people fighting on a street corner in a black neighborhood as if their lives depended on it.”⁴⁰ As Ōe awaits the moment in which he can discuss this incident with black intellectuals, he begins to “see (*midasu*) not violence (*bōryoku*), but stark-naked fear (*kyōfushin*)” in the fighting men.⁴¹ After his “discovery” of fear in the black Atlantans, Ōe “tastes a strange experience that goes beyond [seeing the spectacle of the fight]: what I actually experienced was the presence of the gargantuan eyes of white people (*hakujin no me*) on the backs of the two fighting men, and the eyes were gazing fixedly (*mitsumeteiru*) at the men.”⁴²

Ōe posits a fear of the white gaze embodied by the “fighting brothers” that finds its analogue in postwar Japanese. Directly following his recollection of his childhood fear of America, Ōe rehearses the story of a young “idiot boy” from a village near his hometown who is convicted of sexually assaulting and murdering a young girl. Ōe’s description of the murder is

³⁹ Ōe, “Fukashi ningen to tayōsei” (Invisible Men and Diversity), p.141, p.142.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.140.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

gratuitous in its violence; at one point the boy takes a bamboo spear and runs it through the girl's vagina to the base of her neck.⁴³ Ōe writes that the responsibility for such gruesome violence lies not on the hands of the youth, but on fear mongered by “the illusion of America that exerted power over my village, the raping, slaughtering America,” on the “homogenized (*jyunichi*) America that was the target of [his village's] fear (*kyōfushin*) and animosity.”⁴⁴ Just as it is the fear crystallized by living perpetually under the white gaze that is responsible for black-on-black violence in Atlanta, just as Bigger's first murder is instigated by his “hysterical terror” upon being seen by a blind white woman, Ōe's murderous youth living under the disciplinary gaze of SCAP “has no choice but to revive the frightening illusion (*osoroshi gensō*) that once held all of Japan.”⁴⁵

Moreover, Ōe's essays recount his own firsthand experience, that is, the “reality” of the analogous position shared by blacks and the Japanese vis-à-vis the white gaze. During his first trip to the U.S., Ōe spent most of his time at Harvard as a participant in the Kissinger International Seminar. After being mocked by four white students at Harvard Square on August 15, 1965—Ōe's anniversary of frightening American violence on Japanese bodies *par excellence*—Ōe claims that he is reminded of Chester Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, particularly the following passage: “Little Riki Oyana singing ‘God Bless America’ and going to Santa Anita with his parents the next day...I was the same color as the Japanese and I couldn't tell the difference. ‘A yeller-bellied Jap’ coulda meant me too. I could always feel race trouble,

⁴³ Initially used as training weapons at military academies, Japanese civilians, Okinawans in particular, were issued and trained in the use of *takeyari*, bamboo spears, for civil defense purposes in the case of an Allied invasion. The use of this wartime relic in a postwar homicide between Japanese civilians, in conjunction with the homicide taking place in an air raid shelter, is indicative of the lingering and liquid fear and violence Ōe attributes to prolonged war.

⁴⁴ Ōe, “Jigoku ni yuku Hakkuruberī Fin” (Huckleberry Finn Goes to Hell), p.230.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

serious trouble, never more than two feet off.”⁴⁶ After falling under the white gaze himself, Ōe begins to comprehend the analogous position between the two, to “see himself as one and the same” with “the Nisei Japanese who were sent to internment camps and the black youth who begins to fear his premonition that he shares a like fate with the interned.”⁴⁷ Ōe “began to see myself through the eyes (*me*) of those American cartoonists. I, the very same person who had until that time slipped into the hustle and bustle of Harvard Square without feeling the least bit out of place, now discovered myself alone standing there as a disgusting, bucktoothed, bespectacled Japanese like those in the comics...and felt something within the realm of fear.”⁴⁸

It is important to note that it is not America per se, but the illusion (*gensō*) of an homogenized (*jyunichi*) American gaze that prompts such fear. In “After the Collapse of the Image of ‘Mighty America’...,” Ōe writes that “Japanese people will be able to comprehend the real America for the first time only when we have been freed (*kaihō*) from the simplified, flattened (*ichimenka*) image of mighty America, if we...look (*mitsumeru*) at America as it actually is with new eyes (*atarashii me*).”⁴⁹ Ōe returns perpetually to this notion of an imagined, homogenized America: “When we think of America and Americans...we think of a flat (*ichimenka*) America—America is the enemy; if an American spots (*mitsukeru*) a Japanese person, he’ll crush us to death with a tank...we held a one-dimensional (*ichimenteki*) image of America.”⁵⁰

The Pedagogical Power of Black Literature 1: Ellison and the Power of Minor Literature

In March of 1961, the Asian-African Writers Conference held an emergency meeting in

⁴⁶ Chester Himes, *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, p.4-5.

⁴⁷ Ōe, *Jigoku ni yuku Hakkuruberī Fin* (Huckleberry Finn Goes to Hell), p.237.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.236.

⁴⁹ Ōe, “Kyōdai na amerika-zō no kuzureta ato ni” (After the Collapse of the Image of ‘Mighty America’...), p.31.

⁵⁰ Ōe, “Amerikaron” (On America), p.99.

Tokyo, which Ōe attended as a member of the Japanese delegation. It was “around the time when the Asia-Africa Writers Conference was held that I [Ōe] began to carry black literature (*kokujin bungaku*) and works concerning Africa with me and nothing else and read them like a man who had been washed onto a deserted island.”⁵¹ Ōe was clearly stimulated by the conference, especially by Aaron Tolen, a member of the Cameroonian delegation. Ōe was drawn to Tolen’s argument of the writer’s task, which was based in Tolen’s advocacy of Negritude. Ōe writes that Tolen’s approach served both as his introduction to Negritude and was “the best discussion of politics, and in the end the most profound [discussion of] literature.”⁵² According to Tolen’s Negritude-centered “image of the responsibility of the author:” “the author is one who stands in the moment of the present while gazing steadily at the future, and thus, the author must always be the vanguard, the first line of defense against the... problems (*mondai*) that the people (*minshū*) consider essential (*honshitsuteki*).”⁵³

Following what Sartre would call *littérature engagée*, both Ōe and Tolen see the writer as a kind of civil servant committed to alleviating sociopolitical ills by transforming the questions of the day into communicable narratives. In so doing, the writer crafts the channels of communication that in turn shape the avant-garde in the battle against oppressive ideologies, which is, in Ōe’s case, the reductive gaze of an illusory American monolith. The writer’s task, be it the black poet championing the value of Negritude or the Japanese essayist assaying the illusion of monolithic American might, is to communicate how we might overturn such reductive master narratives. “For me,” Ōe writes in an article published some four months after the Asian-African Writers Conference in which he considers what he has learned from the gathering, “the

⁵¹ Ōe, “Ryūkeisha no dokusho” (The Readings of an Exile), p.2-3.

⁵² Ōe, “Ajia Afurika ningen no kaigi” (Asia-Africa Meeting of Humans), p.339.

⁵³ Ibid., p.340.

most important thing in my literature and my actual life is my intent to stir up discord in state power.”⁵⁴ Following the program set by Tolen in which the author speaks as the vanguard of the people, Ōe goes on to suggest that, “Whenever the image of a desperately brave student I saw on a newsreel or that of a young father who has erupted in grief I saw standing on the train comes to mind, I remember that the most essential motif of my literary interests is my intent to stir up discord in state power. I realize this attempt in the form of novels and plays; I am obligated to make it into a reality.”⁵⁵

Ōe’s mobilization of Tolen prompts us to reconsider Ōe’s self-proclaimed Sartre-Mailer delta such that the vertex of African and African American writers is included. Although 1960s Japan would see several conflicting modes and methods of “protest,” Ōe’s essays uphold African American literature as exemplary of effective literary protest. Preceding his declaration of stirring up discord as his literary obligation, Ōe confesses that “the way [he] receives stimuli from Richard Wright has come to take on a different tone” and assesses “contemporary black literature” to be “most likely the literary venue at which the spirit of resistance and rebellion has become the most severe motif.”⁵⁶

The way in which black literature could serve as an exemplar of protest literature in general is fairly intuitive. Ōe’s assessment of 1960s black literature meets the party line of poets such as Amiri Baraka, who in “Black Art” infamously decried that “we want ‘poems that kill.’/Assassin poems, Poems that shoot guns./Poems that wrestle cops into alleys/and take their weapons leaving them dead.” What may not be as intuitive, however, is the logic behind the bridge Ōe creates between the “Japanese problem” and black literature. Here it might help us to

⁵⁴ Ōe, “Kyōken ni kakushitsu wo kamosu kokorozashi (Intent to Stir Up Discord in State Power),” p.64.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ōe, “Kyōken ni kakushitsu wo kamosu kokorozashi (Intent to Stir Up Discord in State Power), p.64.

think, as Ōe does, of black literature as a “minor” literature in the sense posited by Deleuze and Guattari. Minor literatures, whose language can be “compared in another context to what blacks in America today are able to do with the English language,” are characterized by their “high coefficient of deterritorialization” vis-à-vis “major” literatures.⁵⁷ Minor literature’s capacity to deracinate the (semantic, ontological, ideological, political, *et cetera*) stronghold of major discourses makes minority “the revolutionary condition...for every literature within the heart of what is called the great (or established) literature.”⁵⁸ Given Ōe’s assumption that Japanese and African American literature are analogously minored by the illusions of power and homogeneity upheld by American racial discourse, he turns to black literature as an “American ‘minor’ literature” that stirs up discord for both African American and Japanese readers, that “overthrows ontology, gets rid of beginning, ends and origins, a sense of fixity and fixation.”⁵⁹

Take for example the chain reaction that ignites when Ōe begins to question black existentialism:

What were black people to Japanese people? Have we seen (*midasu*) humanity itself in black people? In the transparent shadow of black people, those “invisible men,” have we ever glimpsed (*kaimamiru*) our very own yellow faces?...What are black people to Japanese people? This is the first sound of an inquiry that reverberates infinitely and continues to ripple outward. What are Koreans to Japanese people? What are Chinese, what are Japanese people themselves? To Japanese people are the contemporary Japanese themselves “visible men” or “invisible men?”⁶⁰

Ōe’s infinite reverberations that continue to ripple outward are reminiscent of the revolutionary power of Deleuze and Guattari’s minor literature; Ōe’s questioning of the revolutionary importance of black existentialism to Japanese people ends with inquiries that might evoke the deterritorialization of Japanese identity from its postwar existential quagmire.

⁵⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, p.17, 16.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁵⁹ Mary F. Zamberlin, *Rhizosphere, Gilles Deleuze and the “Minor” American Writings of William James, W.E.B. DuBois, Gertrude Stein, Jean Toomer, and William Faulkner*, p.10.

⁶⁰ Ōe. “Fukashi ningen,” p.137.

Ōe sees in black literature “destructive power” (*hakairyoku*) that “crushes the protective covering of naïve deception [that exists] between white Americans and black Americans” and presents the “truth of their intertwinement.”⁶¹ Black literature qua minor literature is, according to Ōe, the art form best equipped to free both black and Japanese people from “the mystical power that grips [their] chest whenever [they] hear the word ‘America.’”⁶² “Among the black arts,” Ōe writes, “isn’t the only field in which Japanese people can directly touch the spirit and pathos of black people, can comprehend it and be moved by it without losing the fact that they are Japanese, the black literature of Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison?”⁶³

Ralph Ellison’s literature in particular, with its simultaneous positive affirmation of black identities and upheaval of American paradigms of static black identity, presents Ōe with an alternative to Sartre’s “raceless society.” diversity. Ōe first met Ellison in the summer of 1965; Ellison was the final lecturer for the Kissinger International Seminar. After the lecture, Ōe and Ellison discussed their mutual support of the Ellisonian project of diversity. The exchange left a lasting mark on Ōe. In “Invisible Men and Diversity,” Ōe follows an account of this meeting with Ellison by quoting the following excerpt from *Invisible Man*:

Whence all this passion toward conformity anyway?—Diversity is the word. Let man keep his many parts and you’ll have no tyrant states. Why, if they follow this conformity business they’ll end up by forcing me, an invisible man, to become white, which is not a color but the lack of one. *Must I strive toward colorlessness?* But seriously, and without snobbery, think of what the world would lose if that should happen. America is woven of many strands; *I would recognize them and let it so remain.*⁶⁴

Following Ellison, Ōe too contends that diversity, or *tayōsei*, can serve as a panacea for fear based on racial myopia. To reiterate, Ōe presents the illusion of America as a monolithic source

⁶¹ Ōe, “Gendai bungaku to sei (Sex and Contemporary Literature),” p.266.

⁶² Ōe, “Jigoku ni yuku Hakkuruberī Fin” (Huckleberry Finn Goes to Hell), p.229.

⁶³ Ōe, “Kokujin no suijaku to katsuryoku: Āto Bureikī to sono gakudan (The Enervation and Energy of Black People: Art Blakey and his Band),” p.22.

⁶⁴ Ōe, “Fukashi ningen to tayōsei (Invisible Men and Diversity),” p.139-140; Ellison, *Invisible Man*, p.435 my emphasis.

of aggression as the cause of Japanese Ameriphobia. Ōe mobilizes a matrix of terms to articulate and highlight the notion of the “monolithic:” “*ichimenka*,” (which I have translated as “flattened” or “one-sided”), *tanitsuka* (simplified or unified), *ichiyōka* (homogenized), *et cetera*. The common denominators of these terms are readily apparent to speakers of Japanese. First, each includes the character which denotes singularity, “一” (read in the previous terms as either “*ichi*” or “*itsu*.”) In addition to this, all three end with “*ka*”—化—, a suffix similar to the English “-ization” that denotes the process of transformation. As such, Ōe’s “America” as instigator of racial fear takes multifaceted racial identities and reductively transforms (in addition to its suffixal duty, the character for “*ka*” also appears in the verb *bakeru*, “to transfigure,” “appear in disguise,” or “corrupt”) them into something monolithic, and thereby “flattened,” “simplified,” “homogenized,” *et cetera*.

Although Ōe will at times use the English “diversity,” his Japanese translation of the term, *tayōsei*, is telling; the prefix “*ta*,” semantically in the vicinity of the English *poly*-, stands in direct protest of the monolithic treatment of Others implied by the “*ichi*” of “*ichimenka*,” “*ichiyōka*,” *et cetera*. Ōe’s advocacy of “diversity” suggests that renewing a Japanese-American dialogue not doomed to repeat the violence and fear of the countries’ shared past must be predicated on seeing each Other for what they truly are: diverse. Ōe writes:

Ellison tells us in that postwar novel [*Invisible Man*] that in order for America to survive from now on, Americans will have to live with the diversity of Americans, the diversity that each human has, the diversity of white people, the diversity of black people. And isn’t *this* the aspiration of America? I too think that diversity is the issue...From here on us Japanese people too will have to acknowledge the diversity of the entire world, including America...and at the same time the diversity of Japanese people. It is from here that we must think about our future and our relationship with America. It seems that it is only when we do this that independence will become a possibility for Japanese people.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Ōe, “Amerikaron” (On America), p.102.

Given the reference to the American Occupation in a passage which precedes what I have translated here, Ōe's use of the term "independence" is clearly one loaded with the weight of historical baggage. Ōe will return again and again to "diversity" as a method of easing the psychological burden, the melancholy, of moving under such weight; it is Ōe's "hope that we...use our imaginative power, and see [individuals] not as invisible men, but that we train our eyes (*me*) and see them as they *should be seen* (*miru beku*): as real people with diversity. It is in this way that we must protect ourselves from becoming 'invisible men.'"⁶⁶ To borrow Ichijō Takao's articulation, we can "note the fact that Ōe was influenced by Ellison, that Ōe paid attention to their contemporaneous issue of diversity, and that Ōe took up [Ellison's project of diversity] as his central literary thesis."⁶⁷

Ōe's summer trip to Los Angeles, which took place some five weeks after the Watts Riots of 1965, solidified his commitment to the "project of diversity." Media coverage of the riots ensured that the spectacle of black violence was on full display, and thus Ōe wonders if the "all too vivid faces of individual rioters being displayed (*utsusu*) on television, newspapers, magazines and especially *Life* will impede the civic life of Watts, which has now returned to normal."⁶⁸ After actually speaking with the people of Watts, however, Ōe realizes that the attention of national media outlets will not "impede" (*shishō*) life in Watts because such outlets don't see or show Watts, that it is precisely in the midst of such spectacles that we make others invisible. "The cameraman of *Life* magazine who reports the violence (*bōkō*) of Watts in colorful pictures," Ōe tells us, "saw the image of violence (*bōkō*) associated with people participating in the riots, which means he actually saw the conglomeration of fear (*kyōfushin*),

⁶⁶ Ibid., "Fukashi ningen," p.145.

⁶⁷ Ichijō Takao, "Ōe Kenzaburō to roku jyū nendai no 'amerika': Rarufu erison no iwayuru 'tayōsei' wo megutte (Ōe Kenzaburō and 1960s 'America': The 'Diversity' of Ralph Ellison)," p.11.

⁶⁸ Ōe. "Fukashi ningen," p.144.

but he did not see (*miru*) the actual individual faces of these ‘invisible men,’ black people.”⁶⁹ Ōe clarifies this seeing that does not see as follows: “In other words, the white cameraman and the thousands of thousands of reader’s eyes (*dokusha no me*) behind him ...only viewed (*utsusu*) black people as they are seen in the minds of white people—that is, as a kind of graphic exposition of fear (*kyōfushin*), and fear here equals violence—and not their [the black folks of Watts] individual faces.”⁷⁰

Although Ōe initially posits that invisibility ensures that the gazing eyes of *Life* will not “impede” the rebuilding of Watts, he quickly shifts to a discussion of the way in which *Life* has not seen Watts at all. In so doing, *Life* sees, to borrow Ōe’s articulation, “*nothing* but invisible men,” and it is precisely this mode of gazing that makes Sisyphus’ job that much more difficult. Another way of putting this is to say that Ōe is a good reader of Ellison. *Invisible Man* begins with the narrator recounting his decision to end an altercation with a “tall blond man” who, “perhaps because of the near darkness,” manages to see the invisible upon realizing that “the man had not *seen* me, actually.”⁷¹ This is followed by the battle royale scene, in which being blindfolded, a kind of pseudo-invisibility, does little to stave off the narrator’s fear of the gazing spectators; indeed, he “stood against the ropes trembling.”⁷² It is not until he begins to see through his blindness that his fear abates: “Everyone fought hysterically. It was complete anarchy. Everybody fought everybody else. No group fought together for long...[but] *with my eye partly opened now there was not so much terror.*”⁷³

I’d like now to return to that divergence between Ōe and Sartre. To be clear, I am not arguing that Ōe’s reading of Ellison is some kind of direct, purposeful rejection of Sartre. What

⁶⁹ Ōe. “Fukashi ningen,” p.145.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ellison, *Invisible Man*, p.3-4, emphasis in original.

⁷² Ellison, *Invisible Man*, p.18.

⁷³ Ellison, *Invisible Man*, p.19, my emphasis

we do see here, however, is an affinity—Ōe's illusory homogeny and Sartre's bad faith—followed by a divergence, Sartre's reading of Negritude as aiming for a "raceless" society versus Ōe's support of Ellisonian diversity and "recognizing" race and letting it remain as it is. Ōe and Sartre have differing interpretations of "minor" moments. For Sartre, Negritude is to be synthesized. For Ōe, the bad faith of race is engendered not by the notion of race itself, but by the frightening imbalance of power in the economy of the racial gaze, an imbalance that evokes fear, violence and a homogenized vision of our racial Others. Ōe's divergence from Sartre stems in part from Ōe's concern with opening a space in which good faith and racialized, minoritarian identity can co-exist. Ellisonian diversity as Ōe interprets it allows us to be our racial selves without sadistic—here in the Sartrean sense—appropriation of our racial Others.

After reading *Invisible Man*, meeting with Ellison, and traveling to major metropolitan cultural hubs of black America, Ōe resets the origins of his creative nonfiction of race relations. The terms that were originally informed by Sartre's existentialism—or Ōe's existential antiracism—and charted a course through *Huck Finn* are now filtered through *Invisible Man*. This new beginning is indicative both of Ōe's valuation of Ellison as well as his desire to supplement the narrative of existential antiracism with Ellisonian diversity; Ōe suggests that the beginning and the end of our racial bad faith can be read in *Invisible Man*. Allow me to translate at length an excerpt from Ōe's 1968 "On America," a speech given after Ōe's encounter with Ellison, while highlighting the recurring terms and annotating the way in which these terms are redirected through *Invisible Man*. This excerpt succinctly presents Ōe's narrative of race relations as it is channeled through *Invisible Man*:

How is this type of Japanese person, the kind that has lived under the image of an unilaterally (*ichimenteki*) mighty America, going to fill in their psychological cavities (*anaboko*)?...I consider the words of Ralph Ellison, the black author (*kokujin no sakka*)...to be a remarkably

clear hint. In the end of *Invisible Man*, Ellison provides us with a suggestion. The black youth who is the protagonist of the novel...secludes himself in a manhole [*Playing on the black-Japanese analogue, Ōe uses the same term, anaboko, to describe both the narrators' underground hideout and the "psychological cavity" of the postwar Japanese*] all his own and tries to think about what America is. The impetus [for his meditation] is the Harlem riots (*bōkō*, literally an "act of violence.")...During the riots, one crazed movement leader rides in on a steed while brandishing a spear...The other black people [*here Ōe is signaling the diegetic level of the Invisible Man*] who see (*miru*) this find it funny...This kind of black violence, however, is actually not funny. When viewed from the all-too sober eyes of black people (*kokujin no me*) they [*this time the readers of the Invisible Man*] too don't deem it simple comedy. It is something miserable, something dangerous. The youth determines that we must try to think of a way to rescue ourselves from this kind of comedy, from all of this danger and misery. The youth concludes that Americans have to be rescued from homogenization (*ichiyōka*) and simplification (*tanitsuka*)... Homogenization (*ichiyōka*)...poisons Americans, and it is precisely diversity (*tayōsei*)—Ellison uses the word "diversity"—that we must protect, we must preserve the varying attributes of humans [*the reverberation of Sartre's humanist mandate which claims that our freedom depends upon protecting the freedom of the Other in all its iterations is unmistakable*]...If we protect diversity, tyrant states won't be born. [*Although Ōe doesn't cite Ellison, this is, as the following line in Ōe's speech suggests, most likely a reiteration of the narrator's musing from the manhole: "Let man keep his many parts and you'll have no tyrant states." As such, Ōe finds the answer to Sartre's call to protect existential humanist freedom in Ellison.*]...This is what Ellison says in his novel that was published right after the war ended. I too think that *diversity* (*tayōsei*) is the central issue...Japanese people must learn to recognize the diversity of America and the entire world.⁷⁴

In this 1968 speech, Ōe's diction and thematics don't veer from those of his earlier writings on Japanese-black-white relations. We still see the same two movements—the dialects of the gaze and the revolutionary power of black literature as a minor literature—the same attending terminology (fear, eyes, violence, cavities, homogenization, *et cetera*) and the same positing of the pedagogical relevance and analogical applicability of black literature to Japanese readers that we saw throughout Ōe's early and mid-1960s essays. Here, however, the terms and themes we have traced from sources as diverse as Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* to Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go* are all filtered through *Invisible Man*. Take Ras, the "crazed leader" from the *Invisible Man* that Ōe refers to in the passage. Ras, surrounded by fear and violence as he charges directly into the white gaze of the police, becomes the embodiment of deadly racial illusions *par excellence*, so much so that references to other works of black literature become

⁷⁴ Ōe, "Amerikaron," p.100-101.

superfluous. Again, this privileging of *Invisible Man* is a testament to Oe's subscription to Ellisonian diversity; after the embodiment of illusion *par excellence*, *Invisible Man* provides us with an exegesis on diversity, the elixir for authentic, disillusioned being *par excellence*.

The Pedagogical Power of Black Literature 2: Oe from Mailer to Baldwin and Negritude

Concomitant with his rerouting of his conceptualization of racial fear and existential ontology through Ellison, Oe also reroutes his conceptualization of sexualized racial identities from a path that traverses Mailer to one through James Baldwin. Mailer and Baldwin went several rounds on the topics of black masculinity and sexuality from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. Although Mailer was and would remain one of the nodes of Oe's "delta," Oe sides with Baldwin throughout the debate. Keeping in mind Oe's commentary on the March 1961 Africa-Asia Writers Conference, Oe's advocacy of Baldwin coincides with his introduction to the Negritude movement. The two events—Oe's advocacy of Baldwin and introduction to Negritude—synergize; it is Oe's understanding of the importance of Negritude that ignites his support for Baldwin and, reciprocally, it is through siding with Baldwin that Oe expresses his support of Negritude, which Oe understands as the positive affirmation of black identity via literature.

Mailer's 1959 *Advertisements for Myself* included at least two essays that would have caught Baldwin's eye. In the first, "The White Negro," Mailer delineates the birth, life and death of hipsters. Mailer's "white Negroes" are "American existentialists." Here, we see in Mailer what we saw in Sartre and Oe: an interpretation of black American being through the language of Sartrean existentialism and an explication of the significance of black existentialism to non-black beings. In the face of a "human nature" that has given us world wars, the Holocaust, M.A.D. and witch hunts, Mailer's "white Negroes" (read: American hipsters) realize that "the only life-

giving answer is to accept the terms of death...to set out on that uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self. In short, whether the life is criminal or not, the decision is to encourage the psychopath in oneself.”⁷⁵ Freed from the conformist values of (white) American society, hipsters turn to Negro values, culture, and language as a beacon in the search for the psychopath within. The template provided by the “Negro,” within whom “it is...no accident that psychopathy is most prevalent,” has two pillars: violence (“the psychopath murders...out of the necessity to purge his violence, for if he cannot empty his hatred then he cannot love”) and love (“not love as the search for a mate, but love as the search for an orgasm more apocalyptic than the one which preceded it. Orgasm is his therapy.”)⁷⁶ By “absorb[ing] the existentialist synapses of the Negro,” white Negroes are able to live in good faith.

In addition to Mailer’s image of “the Negro” as a hypersexualized, violent model of psychopathy, Baldwin also took umbrage to Mailer’s “Evaluations: Quick and Expensive Comments on the Talent in the Room.” Mailer’s assesses Baldwin as “too charming a writer to be major” and “incapable of saying ‘Fuck you’ to the reader.”⁷⁷ “Even the best of his [Baldwin’s] paragraphs are sprayed with perfume,” and his works amount to “noble toilet water.”⁷⁸ It is important to note that Mailer’s exultation of the hip Negro as the white Negro’s heteronormative ideal of virility and violence is not unrelated to his critique of Baldwin as a “minor” writer. In “The White Negro,” Mailer notes that “of course one can hardly afford to be put down too often, or one is beat, one has lost one’s confidence...one is impotent in the world of action and so closer to the demeaning flip of becoming a queer.”⁷⁹ Following his put down of Baldwin’s “perfumed” prose in “Evaluations,” Mailer offers the following apologia: “I have a

⁷⁵ Norman Mailer, *Advertisements for Myself*, p.339.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.346, p.347.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.471.

⁷⁸ Norman Mailer, *Advertisements for Myself*, p.471, 472.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.352.

terrible confession to make—I have nothing to say about any of the talented women who write today...I do not seem able to read them...Indeed I doubt if there will be a really exciting woman writer until the first whore becomes a call girl and tells her tale.”⁸⁰ Baldwin, who is “impotent” and all-too close to the “demeaning flip of becoming a queer,” becomes in turn a minor writer only one step removed from the women writers elided in Mailer’s “Evaluation.”

Baldwin’s response to Mailer’s critique of his queer lack of virility and venom was staged in “The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy” and *Another Country*. For our purposes, *Another Country* is of particular import. As the subtitle of “The White Negro”—“Superficial Reflections on the Hispter”—suggests, Mailer’s borrowing of Sartrean existentialism is piecemeal. Mailer’s freezing of black masculine (hyper)sexuality, essentialization of the valor of heteronormative sexual conquest over homosexual relations, and unidirectional appropriation of black sexual vigor in order to cure the existential strife of whites only can be described in Sartrean terms as a sadistic attempt to create a white in-itself-for-itself. *Another Country* is a two-pronged rebuke of Mailer’s sadism, a search for an alternate realm in which love goes beyond the black-to-white heterosexual search for the next apocalyptic orgasm. Rather than the static heteronormativity and effaced homosociality of the world of “The White Negro,” *Another Country* provides us with a diverse network of homo-, hetero-, and bisexual relationships. Rufus Scott, a black jazz drummer and the central node in the network, commits suicide in the first fifth of the novel. With his death, the possibility of “absorbing” the “existentialist synapses of the Negro” through heteronormative emulation of his violence and hypersexuality is nullified. Vivaldo, a working class man of Irish-Italian descent and friend of Rufus, begins to empathize with and understand Rufus posthumously via a relationship with Eric, a former lover of Rufus.

⁸⁰ Norman Mailer, *Advertisements for Myself*, p.472.

With this, Baldwin effectively turns the interracial, heteronormative sadism of Mailer on its head: if Mailer's estimation is that "to submit to another man—as Vivaldo does—is to be 'put down'; it enervates the hipster, sapping him of his heterosexual vigor and transforming him into a 'queer,'" then "In *Another Country*...Baldwin reframes this dynamic [sic] asserting that far from being debilitating, sexual submission produces the affective transformations and embodied identifications that Mailer is after in "The White Negro."⁸¹

Ōe published commentary on *Another Country* throughout the early 1960s, his comments always lauding the transformative impact both the novel and Baldwin had on his own writing. Comments such as "I really love *Another Country*. I would keep this book by my side and try to think about my own problems" are indicative of Ōe's approval.⁸² Mailer, however, was not as fond of *Another Country*. Mailer deemed *Another Country* "abominably written" and Baldwin an author doomed never to be a major figure in African American letters.⁸³ Mailer's disapproval of *Another Country* presents a significant dilemma for Ōe, effectively forcing him to choose between the novel that has inspired him and one of the authors he considered to be a part of the "delta" upon which he built his authorial foundation. Ōe's decision went with Baldwin. Ōe claimed that he wrote *Outcries* as he read *Another Country* and that his satisfaction with *Outcries* was due to the fact that he surrounded its protagonist with an ethnically diverse cast of sympathetic semi-protagonists, "a new plan that I [Ōe] was taught by Baldwin" via *Another Country*.⁸⁴ Insofar as Ōe's *Outcries* is informed by Baldwin's *Another Country*, Ōe contends, "I must admit that *Outcries* has a weakness akin to those Mailer pointed out in *Another Country*."⁸⁵

⁸¹ Brandon Gordon, "Physical Sympathy: Hip and Sentimentalism in James Baldwin's *Another Country*," p.92.

⁸² Ōe, "Konnan no kankaku ni tsuite—Wa ga sōsaku taiken (On the Sense of Difficulty: My Experience of Literary Creation)," p.92.

⁸³ Norman Mailer, "Norman Mailer vs. Nine Writers," p.60.

⁸⁴ Ōe, "Konnan no kankaku ni tsuite," p.93

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.93

Although Ōe's essays don't specifically comment on the homophobia underlying Mailer's critique of Baldwin's "weakness," he aligns himself with Baldwin nevertheless.⁸⁶ While conceding that following the teaching of Mailer "might have made *Outcries* a better novel," Ōe "places an extremely deep, even what can be called a personal trust, in Baldwin."⁸⁷

Ōe's championing and studying of Baldwin is a microcosmic example of the black-Japanese analogue and pedagogical power attributed to black literature that we see in his creative nonfiction. It is simultaneously an example of Ōe's investment in Negritude and its importance to non-black putative minorities. We have briefly discussed Ōe's introduction to Negritude at the hands of Tolen. Upon Ōe's reading of *Another Country*, the baton of Negritude ambassador is passed from Tolen to Baldwin; Ōe once wrote that the exploration of black identity performed by the search for "negritude" in *Another Country* embodies "the most fundamental (*mottomo kihonteki*) theme of literature."⁸⁸ Central to the Negritude movement was the creation of transnational communities, *Another Country*'s Eric being representative of Negritude's Harlem-to-Paris, Martinique-to-Algeria wingspan. As such, when Ōe writes that "Of course, I will never have an opportunity to sit at the same table with the kind of Americans that Mailer writes about," he is alluding to the possibility of a black-Japanese imagined interracial community where he *can* pull up a chair, hence his description of being "drawn in (*hikareteru*)" by the affirmative

⁸⁶ Ōe does, however, take up the issue of masculine homosocial/homosexual exchange and its function in the formation of masculine identity in *Outcries*.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.94

⁸⁸ Ōe, "Dosutoefuskī—*Hakuchi* to Bōrudouin (Dostoevsky—*The Idiot* and Baldwin)," p.472. Ōe's use of "Negritude" is idiosyncratic and does not fully signal the history that scholars of black literature would typically associate with the term. Given that Ōe's Negritude refers primarily to Baldwin and Ellison rather than Senghor and Césaire, his usage is closer to the literal meaning of the word, "blackness," than it is to that of Negritude intellectuals. The parenthetical gloss that often accompanies the use of "Negritude" in Ōe's works, *kokujuin de aru koto* (literally: the fact that [X] is a black person), attests to Ōe's literal rather than literary historical use of the term. Although, based on my readings, the extrapolation is executed uncritically, there is a sense in which Ōe follows the Negritude movement's positing of universal, transnational blackness amongst all black artists by cross-applying the "Negritude" introduced to him by Tolen to black authors *en masse*, including Baldwin and Ellison.

expression of Negritude performed by black artists, “the first among them being James Baldwin.”⁸⁹

In lieu of a Conclusion: *Outcries* between the Authentic and the *Authentique*

In lieu of a conclusion proper, I would like to consider *Outcries* (Sakebigoe, 1963), the story of a *zainichi* Korean youth named Kure Takao and his obsession with the possibility of a life of Sartrean good faith for social minorities, as a text that translates the nonfictional narrative created by Ōe into fictional form. This analysis of *Outcries* functions in lieu of a conclusion insofar as this fictional text itself recapitulates Ōe’s nonfictional commentary on the dialectics of the racial gaze and exhibits the pedagogical power of black literature. In his nonfictional commentary on *Outcries*, Ōe claims that his decision to thematize the existential crisis of a social minority, as well as the ethico-politically fraught murder that serve as the apex of Kure’s crisis, is “ultimately rooted in Richard Wright, its color [*irodori*] has traces of” Wright’s *Native Son*.⁹⁰ Ōe also claims, we will recall, that he overcame the writer’s block he encountered as he began to compose *Outcries* when he decided to surround Kure with a diverse cast of semi-protagonists, “a new plan that I [Ōe] was taught by Baldwin’s” *Another Country*.⁹¹

Outcries’ technical and intertextual amalgamation of black and Japanese literature is embodied by one of those semi-protagonists, Tora. “He [Tora] was the mixed-blood (*konketsu*) child of an American Negro father and an immigrant mother of Japanese descent. He saw himself as a morass of black blood (*kokujin no chi*) and yellow blood (*ōshokujin no chi*) and called himself a racial ‘tiger’ (*tora*)...[He formerly] went by Tiger (*taigā*)...we called him Tiger

⁸⁹ Ōe, “Amerika no yume (American Dream),” p.184; “Modan jazu to boku jishin (Modern Jazz and Me Myself),” p.542.

⁹⁰ Ōe, “Ryūkeisha no dokusho (The Readings of an Exile),” p.3. Ōe also suggests that the title “Sakebigoe” is a translation of the trope of lamentation that Ōe reads in Wright’s *Native Son* and *Uncle Tom’s Children*.

⁹¹ Cf. Ōe, “On the Sense of Difficulty: My Experience of Literary Creation,” especially p.93.

(*tora*).”⁹² In this passage, the narrative completes the interpretive work for the reader, thereby ensuring that the notion of black-Japanese hybridization embodied by the moniker “Tiger” is clear. The representation of a biracial youth complicates the Japanese black literary paradigm of works such as “Prize Stock,” in which a Japanese protagonist gazes at silent black bodies, and is itself representative of Ōe’s repositioning of himself as a “colored” author. Moreover, Tora’s name, “Tiger,” is presented as a signifier in motion: it begins in a neutral position bracketed by quotation marks, moves once to the Japanese phonic approximation of the English “tiger”—the *katakana taigā*, and settles on the *kanji* 「虎」, thereby bestowing a Japanese name upon Tora. Tora’s entry into the Japanese linguistic system of signs reinforces the aforementioned racial hybridization with linguistic hybridization.

Reminiscent of the argument made in his 1960s nonfiction, *Outcries* presents Kure and Tora as analogous figures who live in fear of the racial gaze. Both Kure and Tora are under the watch of “gigantic green eyes...that peer into them...These are the eyes of the outside world.”⁹³ Here, the gaze is racialized by way of eye color: the gazer is, we are to assume, white and both Kure and Tora are, we are to assume, phenotypically analogous and have brown eyes. Still tracing the path laid out in his nonfiction, Ōe’s *Outcries* suggests that life under such racialized disciplinarily gazes evokes fear, so much so that Kure and Tora live in “an age of fear, an age when everyone is waiting for a salvation that comes much too late [and]...mistakes someone else’s faraway cry for help for their own voice.”⁹⁴

Kure, “just like Tora wants to go to Africa,...wants to go somewhere else” in order to free himself from the frightful power of the racial gaze.⁹⁵ Before he can make his escape,

⁹² Ōe, *Sakebigoe* (*Outcries*), p.24.

⁹³ Ōe, *Outcries*, p.77.

⁹⁴ Ōe, *Outcries*, p.7.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.29.

however, fear in *Outcries* manifests precisely as Ōe's nonfiction portends: in violence. Tora is shot and killed by two military police who cannot determine whether or not he is a "Negro." In death, Tora provides Kure with a path for escape. Kure imagines that "the blood that spills from Tora's body is carried away by the angels of the African jungle back to a heaven for black people...Tora finally returned home to Africa."⁹⁶ After Tora's death, Kure "realizes that, if he...doesn't have an adventure so grand that it puts his own life in danger, then he will never be free, never feel the relief of living in a land that is all his own."⁹⁷

We will recall that, after positing a Sartrean existential analogue between black Americans and the Japanese, Ōe's nonfictional account of black/Japanese-white race relations diverges from Sartre's vision of a "raceless society" and turns to black literature in search of a solution to the shared existential dilemma of postwar African Americans and the Japanese. In *Outcries*, this divergence occurs at the juncture of Sartre's notion of the *authentique* and Baldwin's notion of the authentic. Sartre tells us that it is only by way of a raceless society that racial minorities can live *authentique*, good-faith lives. In *Another Country*, the novel that Ōe claims inspired the diversity of *Outcries*' *dramatis personae*, Baldwin "attempts to forge [an]...*authentic existence* in the United States" for black people by interrogating "the cultural landscape that defames, debases, and...destroys black...life, productivity, and genius."⁹⁸ After the death of Tora, Kure attempts to forge an identity that is both *authentique*—that is, of Sartrean good faith—and *authentic*, that is, full of the complexity that Baldwin's *Another Country*

⁹⁶ Ōe, *Outcries*, p.144.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Charles P. Toombs, "Black-Gay-Man Chaos in *Another Country*," p.105. My emphasis.

attributes to human identity and not homogenized by racial or racist ideology.⁹⁹ Kure articulates the intersection of the *authentique* and the authentic as follows:

‘*Authentique*: authentic, right, certain, unmistakable, real, unmistakably of a certain land.’ Kure Takao wrote this in the notebook that contained his philosophical treatise and would sometimes invoke the French *authentique* [written in French in the Japanese original] as he pursued his feverish sickness. *L’homme authentique*, according to Kure, is one who lives in the real world with a firm grasp on his civil rights (*shiminken*). The authentic, the people of a country, the real people of a country, the people that are unmistakably of that land. I don’t know why, but I know that he was not an *authentique* human and that this was the fundamental source of his anxious, thirsty, febrile disease.¹⁰⁰

I agree with Michiko Wilson that Kure Takao is an “existentialist hero,” that the murder he commits is both an exercise in existential freedom and a desperate bid to “secure the authentic life,” and that his existential dilemma is rooted in the fact that “he [Kure] had not been able to...live with authenticity in this world [from] the time his mother forced him to live as the fake Japanese Kure Takao, instead of the Korean Ochan,” Kure’s Korean name.¹⁰¹ I would add to Wilson’s insights only the fact that the “authenticity” of *Outcries* has a second valence that is related to yet not synonymous with the *authentique*: “authenticity” as a call to recognize the diversity and complexity of racial being and ensure that such being is not scathed by the reductive ideologies of racial oppression. This second valence is signaled in the previous passages by Ōe’s references to Kure’s desire for “civil rights” (*shiminken*) and the existential violence caused by a maternally-imposed *sōshi kaimei*.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ By “full of the complexity that Baldwin...attributes to human identity and not homogenized by racial or racist ideology,” I refer primarily to what might be called the identitarian desegregation advocated in Baldwin’s nonfictional works. For one example among many, consider Baldwin’s “Here Be Dragons,” one of his later essays from the 1985 *The Price of the Ticket*. Baldwin reminds us that, “Each of us, helplessly and forever, contains the other—male in female, white in black, black in white. We are a part of each other. Many of my countrymen appear to find this fact exceedingly inconvenient, and so very often do I. But none of us can do anything about it.” (Baldwin, “Here Be Dragons,” p.690).

¹⁰⁰ *Outcries*, p.144. My emphasis is underlined.

¹⁰¹ Michiko Wilson, *The Marginal World of Ōe Kenzaburō: A Study in Themes and Techniques*, p.41. The translation of Ōe here is Wilson’s.

¹⁰² I read in Kure’s mother’s decision to bestow a Japanese name upon her zainichi Korean son reverberations of the *sōshi kaimei* policies, which between the years of 1939-1945 obligated ethnically Korean subjects of the Japanese empire to adopt Japanese-style family names. Even after the USAMGIK’s 1946 issuing of the Name Restoration

Insofar as this second valence of authenticity is informed by Ōe's reading of Wright's *Native Son* and Baldwin's *Another Country*, we witness in Ōe's *Outcries* precisely the program delineated in his nonfiction on the dialectics of the racial gaze: a turning from the Sartrean dilemma of race to the pedagogical power of black literature. In *Outcries*, we observe the same two movements—the dialects of the gaze and the revolutionary power of black literature as a minor literature—the same attending terminology (fear, eyes, violence, authenticity, *et cetera*) and the same positing of the pedagogical relevance and analogical applicability of black literature seen in Ōe's 1960s essays on the dialectics of the racial gaze. Ōe's repetition of these two movements across literary genres exemplifies both his rich engagement with black literature and culture during the 1960s and the “great stimulus” black literature provided in relation to Ōe's

Order, some zainichi Koreans opted to keep their Japanese-style names in order to—to borrow the term from black literature—“pass” and avoid discrimination.

Chapter Three

Even Signifyin(g) Monkeys Fall from Trees: Misidentifying Pronominal Politics and Nakagami Kenji on the Fiction of *Burakuness*

The effects of performatives, understood as discursive productions, do not conclude at the terminus of a given statement or utterance...The reach of their signifiability cannot be controlled by the one who utters or writes, since such productions are not owned by the one who utters them. They continue to signify in spite of their authors', and sometimes against their authors' most precious intentions.

—Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*

The experiences of millions of Black souls could hardly be summarized in myths of unity aimed at freeing us from the vicious unanimity of identity imposed on us...Black folk have historically fought the menace of the third-person pronoun *they*...with the equally elusive unity of the first person plural pronoun *we*. Such an understandable strategy has had a whiplash effect:...our efforts to define who "we" are cut against the complexity of our Blackness and sacrificed the depth of variety for the breadth of unity.

—Michael Eric Dyson, "Introduction," *Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness?*

Japanese people will be able to comprehend the real America for the first time only when we have been freed from the simplified, flattened image of mighty America, if we...look at America as it actually is with new eyes.

— Ōe Kenzaburō, "After the Collapse of the Image of 'Mighty America'"

For many Japanese people, the immediate postwar period was certainly the first time they saw the real America...with their own eyes...As of late, it seems that we've finally come to the realization that an "American" is not just white Jack and white Betty but also black Tom and Indian Sue and Mexicans and Puerto Ricans and Easterners too...the America of racial amalgamation...the real America.

— Nakagami Kenji, "The Real Voice of America"

Introduction: Even Signifyin(g) Monkeys Fall from Trees

We can't help but hear the reverberations of Ōe's styling of America as an ethnically-diverse nation in Nakagami Kenji's (1946-1992) "The Real Voice of America." Nakagami's rendition of "the real America" repeats many of the tropes—*i.e.* a "real," racially-diverse America over and against the illusory image of America held by the wartime Japanese, the

discovery of this real America during the postwar period, the visible verifiability of American diversity with “one’s own eyes,” *et cetera*—established by Ōe. Even in the midst of such repetition, however, we notice moments of difference and revision of Ōe’s scheme. Nakagami, for example, shifts the verification of American diversity from the visible to the audible: as the title of the essay suggests, Nakagami’s search is for “the real voice of America.” Moreover, Nakagami’s shift in emphasis from the visible to the audible engenders a second difference between the two writers; Nakagami emphasizes, at times painstakingly, the role of narrative voice in the writing of ethnicity. Ōe seems quite comfortable and justified speaking within and as a representative of what we must assume is a Japanese “we,” hence phrases such as: “when we [read: Japanese people] think of America and Americans (*Wareware ga Amerika toiu kuni, Amerikajin wo kangaeru baai ni*).”¹ Pace Ōe, in “The Real Voice,” Nakagami first deploys the proper(?) noun *Nihonjin* (Japanese people) and subsequently replaces it with the subject pronoun “we” (*wareware*), the very pronoun with which Ōe begins. In so doing, Nakagami creates a schism between the proper nominalization of Japanese people and his own pronominal inclusion in the Japanese “we.” In short, as Nakagami *repeats* the lexicon of Ōe, he also *revises* that very lexicon, first by separating the Japanese from the “we” that Ōe presupposes “comfortably and justifiably,” then by infusing a bevy of other proper nouns (*i.e.* Puerto Rican, Mexican) in the space between the Japanese and the “we,” and, finally, by deploying the “we” after the bevy such that we can no longer assume—comfortably or justifiably—who belongs in that “we.”

Such repetition to the end of revising his antecedents writing of Japanese literature, is characteristic of Nakagami’s signifyin(g). By “signifyin(g),” I refer to Henry Louis Gates’ articulation of literary traditions as legible processes of formal revision. “Writers Signify,”

¹ Ōe, “Amerikaron” (On America), p.99.

Gates tells us, “upon each other’s texts by rewriting the received textual tradition.”² Signifyin(g) texts are “written in the language of the tradition, employing its tropes, its rhetorical strategies, and its ostensible subject matter,” and thus situate themselves vis-à-vis literary traditions by way of repetition. Insofar as this repetition works, however, to create and assert the signifyin(g) writer’s singular authorial voice by way of revision—as we have seen, for example, in Nakagami’s “The Real Voice”—signifyin(g) texts repeat in the hope of breaking the template set by the iterations by which they are preceded and informed, hence Gates’ summation of signifyin(g) as “repetition with a signal difference.”

“Signification,” and, to be clear, here Gates intends the nominal form of signifyin(g), “is a theory of reading that arises from Afro-American culture; learning how to signify is often part of *our* adolescent education.”³ Given that the argument made in this chapter hinges on the possibility of Nakagami signifyin(g) on black and black Japanese literature such that both—and ultimately, I will argue, Gates’ notion of signifyin(g) itself—are “repeat[ed] and revers[ed] simultaneously...in one deft discursive act,” we will have to take seriously the questions of if and how Nakagami, a *buraku* author, gains access to knowledge that is part of “our” black education.⁴ I answer this set of questions not only by an examination of the confluences of Gates’ and Nakagami’s “educations,” but also, and more germane to the argument made here, by

² Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*, p. 124.

³ Gates, “The Blackness of Blackness: A Critique on the Sign and the Signifying Monkey,” from *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the “Racial” Self*, p.235.

⁴ Ibid., p.236. The *buraku*, literally the “hamlet,” refers to neighborhoods that were once the *de jure* and now the *de facto* designated residential areas of the *burakumin*, Japanese largest social minority group. Given that there is no ethnic difference between the *burakumin* and “mainstream” Japanese, in tandem with recent archival discoveries of the porous nature of the borders of *buraku* communities, defining the term “*burakumin*” is a difficult task. We do know that the outcast status of the modern *burakumin* was codified during the Tokugawa period and is typically attributed to supposed ancestral links to outcastes who held “impure” occupations— leather workers, undertakers, slaughterers, *et cetera*.

a close reading of what I call the pronominal politics of Nakagami's fictional and nonfictional signifyin(g) as well as that of Gates' critical articulation of signifyin(g).

By "pronominal politics," I mean both the way in which "pronouns show how different identity alignments work in real time," that is, how our pronominal choices attest to political alignments and affiliations, and the way in which "each use of a pronoun constructs some part of the speaker's identity," that is, how our pronominal choices create the very political identities to which we attest to align.⁵ If nominal politics embodies what is typically a violent process of naming and, thereby, identity creation and subsequent political inclusion at the cost of excluding those parts that do not properly align with that which has been named, then pronominal politics reproduces this process while facilitating the speaker's circumvention of the power struggles and tedious deliberation that accompany acts of naming.

Misidentification is Nakagami's blockade against such circumvention. By misidentification, I mean something akin to Judith Butler's articulation of disidentification. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler describes disidentification as the "failure of identification" that occurs when signifiers do not completely overlap with that which they signify and the subsequent "sense of standing under a sign to which one does and does not belong."⁶ Misidentification names the inaccuracies, effacements and omissions that inevitably arise when we attempt to identify individuals, whose complexity and excess outrun the simplicity of our identifications. Nakagami posits such misidentification between both individuals and the terms that identify them—that is, first person singular misidentification—and between collectives and the banner that communally binds misidentified individuals—that is, first person plural

⁵ Jennifer Cramer, "Do We Really Want to Be Like Them?": Indexing Europeaness through Pronominal Use," p.620.

⁶ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* p.219.

misidentification. As such, pronominal politics becomes for Nakagami a fraught territory filled with the possibility of fluid political motion and anesthetizing identitary violence.

This chapter discusses Nakagami's signifyin(g) on the "received tradition[s] from both African American and *buraku* writings" and the suggestion that, through signifyin(g), Nakagami explores *burakumin* "identities through solidarities with minoritarian writers outside of Japan serve as models for text-world relations unavailable in Japan."⁷ The possibility of *buraku*-black solidarity, present in Nakagami's oeuvre as early as his 1967 "Me, at Eighteen" (*Ore jūhassai*) and as late as his 1988 *Buffalo Soldiers*, is foundational in Nakagami's search for alternative models of writing minority identity which he can repeat to the end of revising mainstream constructions of *burakumin* identity. Nakagami's approach to writing minority identity, however, juxtaposes solidarity and identification fluidity and misidentification. In Nakagami's fiction and cultural criticism, any attempt to "identify" minorities and subsequently form solidarities based on the similarities between these ethnically-marked individuals—that is, any attempt to construct a minority "I" and "we"—is also simultaneously a misidentification, a case of mistaken/mis-taken identity. As such, our reading of Nakagami will be enriched by wedding McKnight's insights to Tansman's: Nakagami's signifyin(g) also "confirms an identity as it highlights its provisional, self-created nature...his characters are suffocated by patterns of repetition from the past that also allow them to stay alive; they work to form an identity while struggling to shed it."⁸ This vacillation between identification and misidentification both situates Nakagami at the epicenter of the transpacific discussions of civil rights for socially marginalized communities that were prominent when he began publishing in the 1960s and puts him in

⁷ Anne McKnight, *Nakagami, Japan: Buraku and the Writing of Ethnicity*, p.135. McKnight's "Inaudible Man" presents cogent analysis of Nakagami's *buraku*-black signifyin(g) circa 1968, the year in which *On the Japanese Language* was published. I will argue here for expanding the timeframe of Nakagami's engagement with the black arts to cover the two-decade period from 1967-1988.

⁸ Alan Tansman, "History, Repetition, and Freedom in the Narratives of Nakagami Kenji," p.258.

dialogue with thinkers such as Jean-Luc Nancy and Giorgio Agamben, who meditate on the possibility and ethics of communities not formed on the presupposition of shared identity.

I begin with a brief definition of signifyin(g) and a consideration of Nakagami's entry into what I call a signifyin(g) circle. From here, I outline Nakagami-style signifyin(g) by first analyzing the fictional signifying of *burakuness* that Nakagami writes against and juxtaposing such signifying with the signifyin(g) Nakagami performs to the end of revising the writing of *buraku* and black bodies in Japanese literary discourse. I conclude with a reading of Nakagami's *On the Japanese Language* (Nihongo ni tsuite, 1968) that is both distant and close—"distant" insofar as it employs the novella as a touchpoint for a broader consideration of the importance of signifyin(g) to Nakagami's literary project; "close" insofar as it concentrates on the novella's thematic, stylistic and intertextual interplay between signifyin(g), identification and misidentification.

I also argue that this interplay has significant ramifications for Gates' notion of signifyin(g) and the pronominal politics to which Gates adheres. Naoki Sakai suggests the reason "that we(!) do not normally expect theory of a person if he or she is from Asia is, in fact, a negative corollary of another statement: namely, theory is something that we normally expect of a person if he or she is from the West or Europe."⁹ Nakagami's theoretical acumen poses a serious challenge to the assumptions upon which the logical fallacy Sakai outlines are based; Nakagami's signifyin(g) provides us with an opportunity to fine tune and revise Gates' articulation of the term itself—or, Nakagami signifies on signifyin(g).

⁹ Naoki Sakai, "Theory and Asian Humanity: On the Question of *Humanitas* and *Anthropos*," p.442.

Even Signifyin(g) Monkeys Fall from Trees: Nakagami's Entry into the Signifyin(g) Circle

Much ink has been spilled in attempts to describe signifyin(g). For our purposes, we will follow the definition of signifyin(g) proposed by Gates in *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*. Gates' signifyin(g) has two primary modes: vernacular and literary. For Gates, signifyin(g)—its “g” represented parenthetically to signal the term's roots in the g-dropping black vernacular—begins in the black vernacular's acts of semantic appropriation. Just as the term “signifyin(g)” itself phonetically repeats the “standard” English “signifying” even as it points its listeners in new semantic directions, signifyin(g) begins with a repetition of words that imbues those words with new semantic life; we hear signifyin(g), Gates avers, when words such as “down” or “baby,” which once served in the ideological economy of terms that limit and stereotypically circumscribe black identity, are co-opted and imbued with new semantic life in the black vernacular. In the words of Gates, signifyin(g)'s process of semantic appropriation “has been aptly described by Mikhail Bakhtin as a double-voiced word, that is, a word or utterance, in this context, decolonized for the black's purposes ‘by inserting a new semantic orientation into a word which already has—and retains—its own orientation.’”¹⁰

In addition to referring to the black vernacular's semantic appropriation of “Standard” English terms, Gates' signifyin(g), following Mitchell-Kernan's insight that “signifying...refers to a way of encoding messages or meanings which involves...an element of indirection,” is also synonymous with figural black language. As such, Gates' literary signifyin(g) is a kind of translation of the dialogic (literally double-voiced) and figural nature of vernacular signifyin(g) into literary form. Literary signifyin(g) manifests in African American literature in three modes: as “explicit theme,” as “implicit rhetorical strategy,” and “as a principle of literary history.” For

¹⁰Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*, p.50.

the time being, we will focus on the third manifestation of literary signifyin(g): signifyin(g) as a principle of literary history—it is through this mode that Nakagami enters the signifyin(g) circle. The double-voiced figurality of the black vernacular becomes, for Gates, “a metaphor of Afro-American formal [literary] revision.”¹¹ Just as two signifiers (read: two people who are signifyin[g]) playing the dozens might exchange, repeat and revise the phrase “you so ugly,” two black authors, say, the Zora Neal Hurston of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and the Toni Morrison of *The Bluest Eye*, exchange, repeat and revise the literary tropes of black beauty and femininity. As such, literary signifyin(g) can be considered a brand of African-American intertextuality. By repeating and revising a shared set of thematic and formal techniques, Hurston and Morrison, as well as the other authors with whom they share tropes and themes, form the nodes of the tradition that we call black literature.

Take for example Gates’ meditation on the relationship between the titles of Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1940) and *Black Boy* (1945), and Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952). *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, two texts written during the apex of Wright’s love affair with Naturalism, begin with adjectives which suggest presence—“native” and “black”—and nouns that gesture toward diminutive masculinity, “son” and “boy.” *Invisible Man*, a work which Ellison claimed was more “experimental” and “modern” than its protest novel antecedents, is signifyin(g) both structurally and semantically. *Invisible Man* is in dialogue with the rhetoric of *Native Son* and *Black Boy* insofar as the former title repeats the latter’s two-word premodified noun phrase structure. Moreover, *Invisible Man* (both the title and the thematics of the text itself) revises the black experience by replacing the presence of “colored natives” with the

¹¹ Ibid., p. 124.

absence of invisibility and juxtaposing this absence with the maturation of “sons” and “boys” into “men.”

I find no fault in Gates’ theorization of what the black tradition includes; I do question, however, what is excluded. Although the intertextual relationship between *Invisible Man* and *Black Boy* is undeniably, one would be equally hard-pressed to construct an argument that persuasively posits the *lack* of an intertextual relationship between Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and H.G. Wells’ *The Invisible Man*. A much richer reading of Ellison’s signifyin(g) would emerge when it is viewed vis-à-vis both Wright and Wells, vis-à-vis a more inclusive definition of its “tradition;” in addition to its signifyin(g) on the reductive realism of the protest novel, Ellison is also keenly aware of what Fanon calls the “fact of blackness”—whereas white invisibility is science fiction, black invisibility is in fact a fiction.

It is at this juncture that Gates’ signifyin(g) monkey falls from the tree. Those familiar with the work of Gates will know that he posits the figure of the Signifying Monkey, “he who dwells at the margins of discourse, ever punning, ever troping, ever embodying the ambiguities of language” as “our trope for repetition and revision, indeed our trope of chiasmus.”¹² Speakers of Japanese will be familiar with the adage “*saru mo ki kara ochiru*”—even Homer nods, or, literally, even monkeys fall from trees. In defining literary signifyin(g) as a principle in which *shared language* serves as the adhesive of literary traditions, Gates’ Signifyin(g) Monkey falls from the treetops, providing access to “our trope” (with the “our” of “our trope for repetition and revision” here clearly signifying black authors) to writers of all stripes. Although Gates begins by asserting that “whatever is black about black American literature is to be found in the identifiable black Signifyin(g) difference,” the sharability of language forces him to concede

¹² Henry Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*, p.6, p.52.

that: “Signifyin(g), of course, is a principle of language use and is not in any way the exclusive province of black people, although blacks named the term and invented its rituals.”¹³ We will return to the tension between sharable language and black ownership exhibited in the previous assertion in the third section. For the time being, we should note the implication of Gates’ articulation of literary signifyin(g). Black authors are born not in the hospital, but in the library. We determine the “race” of literature by reading it into the tradition of, in our case, black literature by which it is preceded. Gates tells us that “the blackness of black literature is not an absolute or metaphysical condition...Rather, the ‘blackness’ of black American literature can be discerned *only through close readings*. By ‘blackness’ here I mean *specific uses of literary language that are shared, repeated, critiqued, and revised*.”¹⁴ As such, authors who share, repeat, critique and revise the language “of the tradition” can be born in libraries well beyond the borders of the United States.

I will argue in the following section that Nakagami shares in the language of signifyin(g) in order to say that which he cannot signify in Japanese, his estranged native tongue. Nakagami’s musing, for example, on whether or not “*buraku*—not ‘black,’ but *buraku* is beautiful” clearly shares an affinity with the semantic appropriation and double-voicedness that Gates ascribes to the black vernacular.¹⁵ When Boku, the narrator of Nakagami Kenji’s *On the Japanese Language*, bemoans, for example, that “Just like black people lament that they are invisible men [“invisible men” in English in the Japanese original], maybe I have become an *inaudible man*,” he is clearly sharing, critiquing, repeating and revising—that is, signifyin(g)

¹³ Ibid., p.xxiv; p.90.

¹⁴ Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*, p.121. My emphasis.

¹⁵ Nakagami Kenji, “Shimin ni hisomu sabetsu shinri (The Latent Discriminatory Mindset of Ordinary Folk),” p.42.

upon—the black literary tradition of Wells and Ellison. It is because of such affinity that I find signifyin(g) a useful tool in thinking about Nakagami’s misidentification of pronominal politics.

Before continuing down this line of inquiry, however, I want to explicitly state that the affinity I sense between Gates and Nakagami does not emerge simply because the two are both “minorities.” Rather, Nakagami enters into what I call the signifyin(g) circle precisely as Gates’ theory portends: by way of shared reading and language. The primordial soup for Gates’ theory of signifyin(g) is the amalgamation of: 1) his extensive reading in African American literature; 2) his knowledge of Yoruban folklore—particularly Esu, the Yoruban trickster god and 3) his graduate training at Yale circa 1975, during the apex of the Yale School. We will recall from the previous chapter the influx in the accessibility of black literature in 1960s Japan as well as the profound impact this access had on authors such as Ōe Kenzaburō. We know from both primary and secondary sources that Nakagami was intimately familiar with the works of Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison and Ōe Kenzaburō. We also know of Nakagami Kenji’s relationship, both personal and working, with anthropologist Yamaguchi Masao. Yamaguchi conducted extensive fieldwork in Africa and his studies of the trickster figure draw extensively on Yoruban folklore. In works such as “Folklore of the Jester,” Yamaguchi Masao writes on what he calls the “ambiguity of Esu (*Esu no ryōgisei*).” We will discuss momentarily Nakagami’s conjecture of black characters in Japanese literature as trickster figures; Nakagami mentions Yamaguchi by name as he attempts to extrapolate the trickiness of literary blackness. Moreover, those familiar with Nakagami Kenji will know of his close personal and intellectual relationship with philosopher and social critic Karatani Kōjin. Karatani was a visiting professor at Yale in 1975, the same year that Gates began his Ph.D. work. Karatani returned from Yale with an interest in the very same literary theorists, namely theorists such as Jacques Derrida and

the Yale School critics, that Gates was studying as a Ph.D. candidate. Moreover, we should hastily complicate the image of Nakagami as a passive receptor of Karatani by noting that Nakagami himself had a personal relationship with both Derrida and his philosophy.

What we see here, then, is the formation of interlocking signifyin(g) circles which, for example, connect Gates to Nakagami by way of Yamaguchi Masao and Wole Soyinka (who introduced Gates to Yoruban culture and mythology) or connect Nakagami to Gates via Karatani or—most germane to our study—in which a relationship between Gates and Nakagami is mediated by their shared reading of black literature. It seems safe to argue that the affinity between Gates and Nakagami is not coincidental, nor is it based simply on the fact that both are “minorities.” Rather, it is based on shared readings and shared dialogue, the fact that they both take part in the same tradition of literary and anthropological scholarship.

Nakagami Kenji and the Significance of His Signifyin(g)

Alternative Discursive Universes: The “All Romance Incident” as Counterexample to Nakagami’s Signifyin(g)

Gates sees signifyin(g) as the confrontation of “parallel discursive universes,” as an “extended engagement between...separate and distinct yet profoundly—even inextricably—related orders of meaning.”¹⁶ In the twists and turns of semantic appropriation, dialogue and intertextual linking manifested in signifyin(g), Gates continues, we “bear witness to a protracted argument over the nature of the sign itself.”¹⁷ The rationale behind Nakagami’s signifyin(g) begins to emerge when it is juxtaposed with those “parallel discursive universes” with which it collides and argues over the “nature” of the sign “*buraku*.”

¹⁶ Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*, p.45.

¹⁷ Ibid.

The “All Romance Incident” (*Ōru romansu tōsō*) gives us a telescopic view of these colliding discursive universes; the incident set many of the postwar precedents for the “proper” literary handling of the *buraku* and the *burakumin* that Nakagami writes against. In October of 1951, *All Romance*, a pulp fiction magazine, published Sugiyama Seiichi’s “Tokushu buraku,” a story on the turbulent times and squalid conditions of life on the *buraku* streets.¹⁸ The eponymous “*tokushu buraku*” is the Shichijō *buraku* of Yanagihara, Kyoto. At the time of the publication of “Tokushu buraku,” Sugiyama moonlighted as a pulp fiction author and spent his daylight hours as an employee of the Kyoto sanitation and hygiene department. Sugiyama’s portrayal of the Shichijō *buraku* was supposedly based on the “reality” of the squalor of *buraku* life that he witnessed during his day job; his short story was deemed an “expose” (*bakuro shōsetsu*) by *All Romance*. The story’s protagonist, Koichi, is a practicing physician who lives and works in the Shichijō *buraku*. The plot whirls within a love quadrangle between Koichi, Junko (Koichi’s love interest, a bootlegger’s daughter from the *buraku*), a prostitute who propositions Koichi named Yasuko (who is, unbeknownst to Koichi, Junko’s sister), and Yoshitarō (a low level gangster torrentially engaged to Yasuko). The plot of Sugiyama’s expose of the “reality” of *buraku* life reads like a Japanese fantasy of the chain reaction of preordained calamity set off at *buraku* birth: two detectives charged with investigating the *buraku*-operated bootlegging industry are murdered in a *buraku* bar, the murders set off riots between the *buraku* and the police, the riots ignite a conflagration, the fire is followed by a monsoon that floods the *buraku* and the flood is followed in turn by a typhoid epidemic.

Sugiyama’s “Tokushu buraku” contains a constellation of the recurring tenets of the “mainstream” Japanese literary discursive universe’s construction of the *buraku* and *burakumin*:

¹⁸ From the interwar to the early postwar period, the “*buraku*” was often referred to by the moniker “*tokushu buraku*,” or “specially-marked *buraku*.”

1) both the *buraku* and *burakuness* (that is, the identifying characteristics of the *buraku* and *burakumin*) are “realities” that exist *a priori*, fundamentally, and essentially; 2) this reality can be represented in language; 3) this represented reality is both communicable and transitive; and 4) communicability is followed by the desire to contain the *buraku* and *burakuness*. The reality of the *buraku* and *burakuness* of Sugiyama’s “Tokushu buraku” exists *a priori* to “Tokushu buraku” insofar as the story is (supposedly) simply a re-presentation—or, as *All Romance* advertised, an “expose” (*bakuro*)—of the reality of the Shichijō *buraku*. Or, as the narrator describes Koichi’s sentiment upon entering the *buraku*: “Koichi, who owned a clinic in the Yanagihara *buraku*, had already heard the reality of it (*jijitsu no aru koto*), but he was still shocked severely when he really saw it with his own eyes (*genjitsu ni mokugeteki*).”¹⁹ As such, Sugiyama’s linguistic representation of the *a priori* reality purports a realist, one-to-one correspondence between the signifying words of his text and the signified reality upon which it is based. In the case of Sugiyama’s literary “expose,” such representational signs are what Watanabe Naomi calls *shirushi*, or the “marks” or “signs,” that label the *buraku* and *burakumin* as such. *Shirushi* have much in common with the stereotype: both are literally signs that can be repeated across time *without* a signal/single difference. The children of Sugiyama’s “Tokushu buraku,” “puss-eyed, pockmarked and snotty-nosed, frolic nearly naked in vacant lots;” the men are criminals, gangsters and brutes who spend their days in bars where “a beer bottle might come flying your way if you didn’t watch your mouth...[where] everyone spoke their mind and spoke it loudly—or just got drunk, fell over, and threw up wherever it ended up;” the women are almost supernaturally alluring, and are willing to sell their charms for the right price: Yasuko “would do anything, even sell my body” to get out of the *buraku*.²⁰ The filthy, disease ridden

¹⁹ Sugiyama Seiichi, “Tokushu buraku,” p.561.

²⁰ Sugiyama Seiichi, “Tokushu buraku,” p.570. The term used here is “*Pansuke*,” a derivation of “*pan pan*.”

child, the ne'er-do-well, the licentious vixen—all of these represent the formative synthesis of the *shirushi* (i.e. pockmarks) and the stereotype (i.e. filthy *burakumin* children).

My nomenclature for the third tenet and fourth tenets—the communicability and transitivity of the *buraku* and *burakuness*—itself does a bit of signifyin(g). By “communicable,” I mean first Sugiyama’s assumption that the aforementioned linguistic representations of the *buraku* and *burakuness* can be communicated to others, in this case, the readers of “Tokushu buraku.” I also mean the assumption that *burakuness* is a kind of infection. From theories that posit *burakumin* status to ancestral links to impure occupations that contaminated (*kegare*) *burakumin* bloodlines to Sugiyama’s implication that physical and marital entry into the *buraku* was tantamount to “transcending (read: transgressing) race” (*jinshu wo chōetsu*), mainstream discourse on the *burakumin* often confronts the fear that *burakuness* itself might be communicable and overrun its predetermined borders. In addition to being communicable, mainstream *buraku* discourse posits *burakuness* as transitive in the mathematical sense: if two children are *burakumin* children, then those two children are identical in the *a priori* reality of their *burakuness*, in the “*shirushi*” that label them *burakumin*, in the communicability of their filth, *et cetera*.

In tandem, the communicability (recall the Latin *communis*, that which is held in common) and transitivity of *burakuness* are the building blocks of a *buraku* community that travels over time and (national) space; the *burakumin qua* imagined community is constructed and individuals are included and excluded from said community based on their relationship with communicable and transitive *burakuness*. In order to assuage fears of contamination, mainstream discourse on the *buraku* typically features a desire to contain the *buraku* and *burakuness*. As Timothy Amos argues, the “master narrative” of *burakumin* history would

suggest that as early as the Tokugawa period one witnessed “limitations...placed on [the] movement, residence, occupational change...marriage...even clothing and hairstyles” of early modern individuals based on their “status (*mibun*).”²¹ Such containment, here in the sense proposed by Greenblatt, is also enacted in literary texts. Sugiyama’s story, for example, pace its claim to “transcend race,” provides only two paths for the future of the *burakumin*: Koichi and Junko’s intra-*buraku*/*burakumin* marriage or Yasuko and Yoshitarō’s exile (Yasuko attempts to desert the *buraku* only to be brought back into the fold; Yoshitarō takes the trope of *burakumin* exile to its ultimate extreme: death.) The containment of Sugiyama’s fictional *buraku* is best summed up by Yasuko: “*burakumin* will always be *burakumin*.”²²

In the 1951 *All Romance Incident*, the discursive universe of Sugiyama, who took up the tradition of writings on the *burakumin* by non-*burakumin* authors, collided with that of the National Committee for Buraku Liberation (NCBL, *Buraku kaihō zenkoku i’inkai*) and the Kyoto Branch of the NCBL, which was supposedly representative of *burakumin en masse*. Kyoto-born Asada Zen’nosuke, the chairman of the Buraku Liberation Kyoto Committee (BLKC, *Buraku kaihō Kyoto-fu i’inkai*), and the BLKC launched a protest campaign against Sugiyama, *All Romance*, and the city of Kyoto. It is important to note that, even as Asada and the BLKC protested “Tokushu buraku” as a “discriminatory story (*sabetsu shōsetsu*),” they were actually in agreement with the first three tenets of Sugiyama’s discursive universe. The BLKC assumed that the *buraku* and the *burakumin* exist *a priori* to their creation in Sugiyama’s story world and that the reality of the *buraku* and the *burakumin* could be signified in language with a one-to-one correspondence between the “reality” of the *buraku* and the “reality” of the story world. The problem with Sugiyama’s story was that its reality misaligned with the “truth” of the Shichijō

²¹ Timothy Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, p.41.

²² Sugiyama Seiichi, “Tokushu buraku,” p.570.

buraku. The BLKC's official denunciation (*kyūdan*) aimed first at exposing the inaccuracies of Sugiyama's portrayal of the *buraku* by citing and deriding the text's stereotypical, derogatory depictions of the *buraku* and *burakumin*.²³ The opening of the denunciation amounted to a challenge of the aforementioned *shirushi*, that is, the signifiers, used to represent the *buraku* and *burakumin*, the signified.

Moreover, the BLKC—itself a branch of the NCBL, which was reformed in 1946 as a conglomerate of *burakumin* organizations disbanded during the wartime era—also assumed that *burakuness* holds within it the communicable and transitive marks of a community. The BLKC's denunciation posits two communities: the *burakumin* within the *buraku* and the “Japanese” community that contains the *buraku* within its borders and yet is separate from it. The BLKC entitled their denunciation: “How Are We to Fight the Municipal Government: The Central Tenets of the *All Romance* Discrimination Denunciation.” The “we” here signifies and binds together the first community posited by the BLKC: the community of Shichijō *burakumin* and the larger *burakumin* community of the BLKC and NCBL, which transitively represents (here in the mathematical sense) and communicates on the behalf of the Shichijō community. In addition to this community, the BLKC denounced Sugiyama because his misrepresentative communication of *burakuness* is the foundation upon which a discriminatory non-*buraku* Japanese community is constructed. The BLKC argued that the depictions of the *buraku* in Sugiyama's story “proliferated [anti-*burakumin*] discrimination to the 30,000 readers” of the *All Romance* community and that the Kyūjō Public Health Department's—Sugiyama's employer—claim that the incident was “a personal matter in the private life” of Sugiyama “tells the story

²³ Unconvinced that the legal system would provide them with an opportunity to air their grievances, the NCBL often resorted to *kyūdan* (糾弾), extralegal “denunciations” of discrimination. These denunciations typically consisted of publications and/or gatherings in which offenders were publically and verbally chastised.

(*monogataru*)” of the Department’s communal and systemic discrimination and apathy toward the *burakumin* community.²⁴

The fundamental divergence of Sugiyama’s and the BLKC/NCBL’s discursive universes occurs only at the fourth tenet. Whereas Sugiyama and mainstream *buraku* discourse communicates to contain *burakuness*, the BLKC/NCBL adamantly opposed containment. In its denouncement, for example, the BLKC juxtaposes the opening of “Tokushu buraku,” in which Koichi gets off a train at Kyoto station and enters the sprawling Shichijō *buraku*, with the Takayama municipal government’s plan to plant trees around Kyoto station. “Although a row of trees sounds nice,” the BLKC extrapolated the insidious logic behind the shrubbery as “the government’s plan...to hide ‘the sprawling *tokushu buraku* called Yanagihara’ behind a row of trees...so it can’t be seen from the windows of the train.”²⁵ The imbedded quotation in the previous passage is the BLKC’s citation (a term that should resonate on multiple valences) of Sugiyama’s description of the *buraku*. Connecting the story world to the real world, the BLKC argued that rather than hiding (*mekakushi*) and containing the *buraku*, the government should invest in its renovation—just as Sugiyama should invest in ameliorating his fictional *buraku*. The remainder of the denunciation enumerates the ways in which the city should go about improving the *buraku*. Rather than containment, then, the BLKC called for activism that would correct the source of hyperbolic misrepresentations such as Sugiyama’s: the dire reality of *burakumin* life.

The BLKC’s denunciation of Sugiyama, which posited systemic origins and communal responsibility for anti-*buraku* literature alongside a call for activism, would set the precedent for

²⁴ BLKC, “Wareware wa shisei to ika ni tatakau ka: *Ōru romansu sabetsu kyūdan yōkō* (How Are We to Fight the Municipal Government: The Central Tenets of the *All Romance Discrimination Denunciation*,”) p.541, 542.

²⁵ Ibid., p.546.

postwar *burakumin* cultural protest. Nakagami's discursive universe, however, contests both that of the mainstream and the precedents set by the NCBL. Nakagami did not deem the *buraku* and the *burakumin* as entities that exist fundamentally "in the world" *a priori*. Rather, he saw the *buraku* and the *burakumin* as *monogatari*—literally "narrated things." Here, *monogatari* signals first Nakagami's fascination with the literary genre as such, particularly the emphasis the genre places on oral communication, complex familial structures, and the bizarre as a generative force. Following Karatani, Nakagami's "*monogatari*" also refer to "*monogatari*...in a more fundamental sense," in which *monogatari* is more than a literary genre confined to antiquity, but a mode of writing still viable in the modern era and constituted by the carnivalization of "a series of repetitive rituals."²⁶ Nakagami's writings, particularly post-1977 works such as *Karekinada* (*The Sea of Withered Trees*), harness the power of the *monogatari* to destabilize the story of *a priori* reality itself. Pace the precedents and protocols set by the NCBL, Nakagami deemed "differentiating between good *monogatari* and bad *monogatari*, writing *monogatari* that enlighten us and decry the ignorance of anti-*buraku* discrimination unimportant."²⁷ Nakagami's objective, Yomota continues, is "an experimental attempt to borrow the form of the *monogatari* in order to catch and relativize all that has been narrated and believed by means of a...fabricated *monogatari*."²⁸

In a seemingly counterintuitive gesture, although Nakagami was a prolific author and saw the *buraku/burakumin* as narrated realities, he was also unconvinced that the *buraku* and *burakumin* could be fully represented in language with a one-to-one correspondence between the signifier and the signified. In the words of Nakagami: "Words are lies. Meaningless. Dubious

²⁶ Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, p.163.

²⁷ Yomota Inuhiko, *Kishu to tensei: Nakagami Kenji* (Noble Births and Transmigrations: Nakagami Kenji), p.104.

²⁸ Yomota Inuhiko, *Kishu to tensei: Nakagami Kenji* (Noble Births and Transmigrations: Nakagami Kenji), p.106.

from the very moment we bring together words like a pile of rocks.”²⁹ As such, every linguistic representation of the world, every attempt to bind a signified to a signifier, is also a misrepresentation. In the *All Romance Incident*, for example, what is elided in the back and forth between Sugiyama and the BKLC is fact that the story is not about *burakumin* per se, but resident Koreans who live in the Shichijō *buraku*: Koichi, Junko, Yasuko and Yoshitarō are all of Korean ancestry. The misrepresentation of the *burakumin* and *zainichi* Koreans in “Tokushu buraku,” Nakagami would argue, is a synecdoche for the misidentification that inevitably accompanies linguistic identifications.

Given his mistrust of language, Nakagami also questioned the communicability and transitivity of *burakuness* and whether a community, *burakumin* or otherwise, could be based on such a community. Nakagami’s writings, which almost obsessively repeat and revise the space of the *buraku* and the *burakumin*, can be seen as Nakagami’s attempt to communicate *burakuness* sans the stereotypical connotations of (medical) communicability and (mathematical) transitivity that hamper the writings of his predecessors. It is only at the fourth tenet that Nakagami—and then only partially—concurs with the BKLC; Nakagami was intimately invested in the project of contesting the containment of the *buraku* and the *burakumin*. Nakagami, however, saw the assumptions of *a priori burakumin* identity, representative language, and communicability and transitivity as the discursive devices that contained the *buraku*; the NCBL’s process of denunciation struck down single signs but did little to address the discursive system that generated such signs. Nakagami’s dilemma, then, is to rewrite *buraku* and *burakumin* narratives that both resist containment and sidestep the linguistic and communal pitfalls of its parallel discursive universes.

²⁹ Nakagami Kenji, “Toki wa nagareru (Time Goes By),” p.239.

Nakagami's primary response to this dilemma: the writing of a chasm between the *buraku* and the *roji*—a fictional space in Nakagami's story world that is reminiscent of but never identical to the *buraku*—and a chasm between the “real world” *burakumin* and the “I” of Nakagami's fictional characters, who are, like the *roji* they inhabit, reminiscent of but not identical to other (always fictionalized) *burakumin* characters. Anne McKnight has, quite aptly, deemed this tactic Nakagami's writing of the *buraku* under erasure. “In other words, it is possible to read a suggestion of *buraku* identity through form, syntax, or allusion, without affirmation in semantic or positivist content.”³⁰ Such erasure of the *buraku* and the *burakumin*, McKnight continues, “is interested in exploring what has constituted the historicity of *buraku* experience and discrimination but without making it a transcendental,” and, in so doing, in prying *burakuness* from its containment without reification.³¹

Rather than the signifying of these alternative discursive universes, Nakagami turns to signifyin(g) in the space between the *buraku* and the *roji* left by his erasure. For the remainder of this chapter, I would like to argue the following case: even as Nakagami turns to black literature in search of models of writing under erasure, he turns and turns and turns, never fully turning to a one-to-one correspondence between the *buraku* and those spaces “outside” of Japan to which he turns, never filling the space opened by erasure or reproducing the tactics of those alternative discursive universes. As such, Nakagami's attempts to identify with other minority writers are always accompanied by misidentifications of those writers, of the Self, and of the communities that might be forged between the two. Nakagami's signifyin(g) is signifyin(g) *par*

³⁰ Anne McKnight, *Nakagami, Japan: Buraku and the Writing of Ethnicity*, p.73.

³¹ Ibid.

excellence; Nakagami “dwell[s] at the margins of discourse, ever punning, ever troping, ever embodying the ambiguities of language.”³²

Nakagami, Signifyin(g) and Identifyin(g)

Nakagami Kenji scholars agree that Nakagami identifies with minority writers. Eve Zimmerman, for example, writes that “Nakagami...takes us beyond the borders of Japanese literature entirely...he envision[s] his own place within Japan by cultivating a view from the outside, stressing his affinity to writers from other minority cultures.”³³ Nakagami’s 1966 “Ore, Jūhassai” (Me, at Eighteen) provides one of the earliest examples of Nakagami’s “*buraku*” literature signifyin(g) and identifying with black literature. The title of the story hints at one of the text’s primary concerns: the narration of a first-person singular identity. The narrator of “Me, at Eighteen,” a Japanese youth referred to primarily as “I” (*Ore*), is never identified as *burakumin*. The narrative begins, however, by situating the narrator’s friends in a black intertextual network. Nishikawa, one of Ore’s friends, “Loved Negro spirituals and modern jazz. Nishikawa had ‘Swing Low, Sweet Chariot’ and Bud Powell in his head, and this made his face look different from everyone else’s.”³⁴ Passages such as this provide Bakhtinian dialogue between the voices of Ore and Nishikawa and the “reverberations of Thelonious Monk that...echoed throughout his room.”³⁵ Nishikawa’s participation in this dialogue marks his very identity; having “a head full of black music” alters the physical *shirushi* by which Nishikawa can be identified.

³² Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*, p.52.

³³ Eve Zimmerman, *Out of the Alleyway: Nakagami Kenji and the Poetics of Outcaste Fiction*, p.4

³⁴ Nakagami Kenji, “Ore, Jūhassai (Me, at Eighteen),” p.10.

³⁵ Nakagami Kenji, “Ore, Jūhassai (Me, at Eighteen),” p.10.

Although the narrator, whose name, Tooru, means “to pass,” is never explicitly marked as *burakumin*, he does intimate his *burakumin* status by signifyin(g). Upon receiving a letter from Yuri, his girlfriend, Ore:

slipped the letter between the pages of the novel I was reading...I slipped the letter, still in Yuri’s white envelope, between the pages where Rufus has relations with a white woman. I swelled up with laughter when I imagined the look of shock on her face if I were to run into Yuri like this and tell her: “your letter, look, it’s in here,” and have her read the page the letter was sandwiched between.³⁶

The “Rufus” referred to here is Rufus Scott of James Baldwin’s *Another Country*. We will recall from Ōe’s critique of *Another Country*, translated into Japanese in 1964 by Takashi Nozaki as *Mō hitotsu no kuni*, that the novel sent tremors through the American literary scene when it was published in 1962 due to what was then considered graphic, radical representations of interracial sex. What we have here is literal intertextuality: by slipping a letter from his girlfriend between the pages where Rufus “has relations with a white woman,” the narrator of “Me, at Eighteen” intimates his *buraku* identity by having a black voice, namely that of Baldwin and his protagonist, reverberate dialogically within a work of *buraku* literature.

If we are to read “Me, at Eighteen” and its representation of the narrator’s “I,” then, we will also have to read black literature, namely Baldwin’s *Another Country*. This need for what McKnight calls parallax reading comes to a crescendo in a section of “Me, at Eighteen” entitled “Good Luck.” In the previous section, “Love,” Yuri and the narrator have a date on a boat—Yuri admires how “lucky” the couple is; the narrator is enthralled with how “sexy” Yuri is. In “Good Luck,” the narrator is assaulted by six men as he and Yuri leave the boat walking hand in hand. The beating is grotesque and gratuitous in its violence, and it makes the narrator wonder:

³⁶ Ibid., p.17.

Why are they punching me? They surrounded me after I got off the boat holding hands with Yuri and tried to lynch (*rinchi*) me. Had seeing me on a boat with a woman stimulated the frenzy of this pack of dogs? No doubt Yuri's crying as she watches me from beneath the shade of the Chusan palms of the high grounds over there. Every time they hit me her words—"We're lucky, aren't we?"—float to the top of my mind. Sexy, sexy, that's what I said. Sexy, sexy, we're lucky, aren't we? I repeated the mantra meaninglessly like a cheap, skipping record...

When the pack was convinced that I couldn't get back up, they spat on me and dispersed. I was shocked that the protagonist of that novel came to me again and again like something out of a dream from the midst of pain so agonizing it might make me faint. Sexy, sexy, the words are spinning... Yuri's shocked face looks weird.³⁷

The narrator's "lynching" clearly harkens back to the previous passage in which he wonders how amusing Yuri's face would appear if she found her letter between the pages of *Another Country*.

If the reader is to identify the reason for the lynching, we must turn to the page in "that novel" where Ore keeps Yuri's letter. In his first sexual encounter with Leona, *Another Country's* Rufus frames his act of interracial sex as an act of violence: "nothing could have stopped him, not the white God himself nor a lynch mob arriving on wings. Under his breath he cursed the milk-white bitch and groaned and rode his weapon between her thighs... He beat her with all the strength he had and felt the venom shoot out of him, enough for a hundred black-white babies."³⁸

Although the sexual act between Rufus and Leona is consensual, their interracial sex brings with it the weight of the history of violence, both discursive and somatic, associated with the myth of the black rapist. Rufus is haunted by this myth. As such, Rufus' violent assault of Leona is a failed attempt to beat this myth by way of a consensual penetration of her (white) feminine purity: hence the figuration of his penis as a weapon, his thrusts as a beating and his ejaculation as ballistic. The violence of Rufus' assault is matched only by the metaphysical and physical lynching that awaits Rufus, "protects" Leona, and contains black masculinity on the proper side of a sexualized color line.

³⁷ Nakagami Kenji, "Ore, Jūhassai (Me, at Eighteen)," p.23-24.

³⁸ James Baldwin, *Another Country*, p.22.

The actual lynching of Ore is signifyin(g) on Rufus' impending lynching. Unlike Leona and Rufus, the narrator and Yuri have not engaged in any sexual activity—to answer the narrator's question of why he is being assaulted, it is indeed the mere sight of the *burakumin*(?) narrator with Yuri that activates the history of violence associated with the *buraku* rapist, triggers the “frenzy of [the] pack of dogs” and instigates the lynching, a disciplinary measure intended to contain *burakuness*. In signifyin(g) (rather than “signifying”) the rationale for the lynching, Nakagami effectively resists the first three tenets of his competing discursive universe. The narrator of “Me, at Eighteen” has not been named a member of the *burakumin* and thus does not exist qua *burakumin a priori*. (We will discuss momentarily the generative power Nakagami ascribes to acts of naming.) There is no one-to-one correspondence to *buraku* “reality” and the “reality” represented in literary language. Rather, *burakuness* is mediated by blackness; we are obligated to read either English or Japanese in translation as we surmise the identity of the narrator. *Burakuness*, as an entity that has yet to be named or represented, is not directly communicable or transitive. Nakagami has simultaneously upheld the fourth tenet: containment of *burakuness* has been subverted by its dispersion across multiple national literatures, by reading *burakuness* into literary locales beyond the borders of Japan and the buraku, i.e. Rufus' Harlem.

“Me, at Eighteen” provides us with a cursory sense of the technique of Nakagami's signifyin(g). For the remainder of this section, we will consider the motivation behind Nakagami's mobilization of black literature and music as one of the primary accompaniments to his signifyin(g) concerto. We know that—from Ōe Kenzaburō to Arthur Rimbaud, from William Faulkner to Korean short stories and folk music—Nakagami located potential interlocutors with whom he could identify and start signifyin(g) all over the map. Black music

and literature, however, becomes one of Nakagami's earliest and most frequent signifyin(g) partners, partners Nakagami identified/with which he identified in the formative years of his career. For Nakagami, black music and literature become more than interlocutors, but one of the foundations upon which his signifyin(g) language is built.

To hear Nakagami's setting of this foundation, we'll have to fast forward approximately a decade, from the 1966 "Me, at Eighteen" to Nakagami's 1977 roundtable with Noma Hiroshi and Yasuoka Shōtarō and the 1978 *Kishū: Ki no kuni, ne no kuni monogatari* that was inspired by the roundtable. Prompted by the unfolding events of the Sayama Incident, in 1977, the *Asahi Journal* commissioned a series of roundtable discussion on discrimination in Japan. Noma and Yasuoka, who translated and introduced Alex Haley's *Roots* to the Japanese reading public in 1977, presided over the twelve roundtables. Nakagami Kenji was the fourth participant in the roundtable series, and he engaged with Noma and Yasuoka in a wide-ranging conversation on "the latent discriminatory mindset of ordinary folks" that revolved around anti-*burakumin* discrimination. After the 1977 *Asahi Journal* roundtable discussion, Nakagami was commissioned by Senbon Ken'ichirō—the roundtable series was the brainchild of Senbon—to write a series of essays for the journal. Nakagami was unsatisfied with the tenor of the roundtable discussion, so Senbon and Nakagami decided that the essays would be documentaries based on actual fieldwork of the *buraku* areas of what was formerly known as the Kishū province, which includes present-day *Wakayama* prefecture, where Nakagami was born, and Mie prefecture. The essays culminated in *Kishū: Ki no kuni, ne no kuni monogatari*, or *Kishū: Stories of the Country of Trees, Country of Roots*.

The "*ne*" or "roots" here was signifyin(g) on black literature. Senbon suggested that Nakagami model his historiography on that of Alex Haley's 1976 *Roots*. Concomitant with its

wildly successful Japanese publication, TV Asahi broadcast the *Roots* miniseries on eight consecutive nights from October 2 through October 9, 1977. As the *Asahi Shimbun*'s advertisement for the televisual event suggests, *Roots*, a television series about generational change among a family of black slaves, was billed as a story for "the entire human race," including the Japanese. Senbon and Nakagami saw Haley's search for roots as an endeavor with importance that crossed linguistic and national barriers. Just as *Roots* challenged the writing of the black body in American history, *Kishu: Stories of the Country of Trees, Country of Roots* was a salvo against the writing of the *buraku* body in Japanese history; in the words of McKnight, "Nakagami used *Roots* as a template for excavating and reporting untold stories that are important to writing a national history."³⁹

In *Kishū: Stories of the Country of Trees, Country of Roots*, Nakagami suggests that simply challenging the representation of the *buraku* body in Japanese history and letters is insufficient. In order to get to the root of the problem, one must address the violence inherent to discursive constructions of identity itself. As he writes the *buraku* and *burakumin* in *Kishū* into Japanese history in Japanese language, however, Nakagami encounters a conundrum best articulated by Caribbean American critic and poet Audre Lorde: "the master's tools will never

³⁹ McKnight, *Nakagami, Japan*, p.107.

【全国広告】 1977年(昭和52年)10月1日 土曜日 (4)

わが家の友だち10チャンネル
テレビ朝日

ルーツ週間いよいよ明日(10/2)から!

全人類に捧げる魂のメッセージ

●毎日よる8:00 → 全篇12時間

テレビ朝日 サ・ビッグスト イベント

ROOTS
ルーツ

原作/アレックス・ヘイリー
解説/淀川長治

第29回
本年度エミー賞
9部門獲得!!

作品賞
主演男優賞
助演男優賞
助演女優賞
監督賞
脚本賞
フィルム編集賞
音楽編集賞
作曲賞

連続8日間放送!

2日(日)夜8:00-10:48	さらば母なる大地アフリカ
3日(月)夜8:00-8:54	誇り高き奴隷
4日(火)夜8:00-8:54	最後の脱走
5日(水)夜8:00-8:54	わが妻 わが娘
6日(木)夜8:00-8:54	愛するもの達の別離
7日(金)夜8:00-8:54	マンディンカの誓い
8日(土)夜8:00-8:54	自由への賭
9日(日)夜8:00-10:48	遙かなる新天地を求めて

●「ROOTS-ルーツ」解説者の淀川長治氏
無残なアメリカ黒人奴隷の歴史!
しかも
見事なるホームドラマの感激!

●「ROOTS-ルーツ」12時間マラソン試写会での反響!

「これだけ強い愛を、私は知らない感動の全編にいまもふさふさ」
加東康一氏(芸能評論家)

「エネルギー、ゴージャス、息もつかせぬ見ごたえでした」
林 孝子氏(映画評論家)

「ありきたりの豪華など通用しない。しばらくは、言葉も、何もかも
こなかった」
細川博史氏(横浜区・学生)

「長時間を全く感じさせない立派な出来であり、見る人に何かを
与えることは絶対であろうと思われる」
小川陽子氏(横浜市・主婦)

「アメリカの広大な国土が生んだ偉大な『悲劇』」
河野洋平氏(宇都宮・コピーライター)

An advertisement from the October 1, 1977 evening edition of the *Asahi Shimbun* for the Japanese television premier of *Roots*. Above the English title of “*Roots*,” the advertisement frames the story as “a message of the spirit for all mankind,” or, as the superimposition of Japanese over the English title suggests, a message of the spirit for all the kinds of men.

dismantle the master's house.” Take for example the following musing on the grass in Ise.

Nakagami writes that:

Grass is grass. That's what we think, but then I wonder if the essence of grass is not the actual reality of grass in and of itself (本質), but “grass,” as in the word that we apply to it... Words exist (在る) here... If reigning over words is the work of the “emperor,” a godlike figure, then calling grass by its given name, grass, writing and recording it by this name, is imperial syntax (統括)—it is to be subject to [imperial rule]. With that said, what is grass when it is displaced from the syntax (シンタクス) of the “emperor?” ... If I am to reject the syntax of the words of the “emperor,” it can't be done in the gargantuan, written words of the country of *waka*; I will have to resist imperial syntax by bringing in some other language, some words that are of a different kind....

Nakagami begins with a meditation on the arbitrariness of the relationship between the signifier and the signified. Indeed, “grass” could be signified by any array of signifiers; grass by any other name would smell just as sweet. It is what Nakagami calls “imperial syntax” that rules over and ties signifiers and signifieds together, giving them semantic order just as syntax gives sentences their “proper” syntactic order. In so doing, imperial syntax makes grass, grass (or, more significantly, makes *burakumin*, *burakumin*.) In the process of solidifying relationships between signifiers and signifieds, Nakagami argues, imperial syntax privileges signifiers over signifieds, hence Nakagami's claim that “words exist” and have a life that takes precedent over the things that they signify. Words discursively engender and give identity to the *burakumin*.

Imperial syntax signifies many things for Nakagami, but it is primarily a metaphor for the relationship between language, power and the oppression of minority groups. As such, it is a kind of shorthand for the first three tenets of the discursive universes with which Nakagami's story world competes: we might say that Nakagami considered both mainstream representations of the *burakumin* and the Burakumin Liberation League's (*Buraku kaihō dōmei*, the post-1955 incarnation of the NBL) response to this representation as susceptible to the rule of imperial syntax. Nakagami's writing challenges imperial syntax, as we have seen, by including narrators

who are never explicitly identified as *burakumin* and only are signifyin(g) their identity, and by breaking the rules that govern the Japanese language itself—by inserting syntactical patterns based on jazz rhythm or by inserting foreign languages into Japanese.

Nakagami suggests that challenging imperial syntax requires us to “bring in some other language, some words that are of a different kind.” This imported language would have to be double-voiced: it would have to both speak to the *buraku* struggle against imperial syntax but also be beyond the sovereignty of the imperial syntax’s reign. Nakagami’s first importation is that of African American literature and rhetoric. The 1977 roundtable evinces Nakagami’s reliance on two components of black language and literature: the language of signifyin(g) and the trope of passing.

Throughout the discussion Nakagami borrows, or is signifyin(g), on black issues in order to discuss *buraku* issues. Take for example Nakagami’s injection of the *mot d’ordre* “black is beautiful” into the roundtable discussion. Nakagami argued that:

Nakagami: By the way, there’s a saying that goes “black is beautiful (*burraku izu byutifuru*).” That’s how I feel. Just like the people who discriminate [against the *burakumin*,] I think that we should have *buraku*. It’s an extreme argument, isn’t it?...But if “*buraku*”—not “black,” but *buraku* is beautiful...then it doesn’t matter if we have equality, it doesn’t matter if there are differences. Taken to the extreme, my argument would be exactly like that of the Black Panthers—maybe we should make a separate *buraku* nation. In my mind, that’s how important the culture of the *buraku* is. It’s so important that that we should establish a separate *buraku* republic. That’s how I feel. Maybe we should make a separate nation inside Japan, take Shikoku and designate it the land of the *buraku*. (laughs)

Yasuoka: So now you’re going to discriminate against us? (laughs)

Nakagami: Of course, that [the story of a *buraku* nation] was just fiction. But this is the kind of ardor we must bring to [our view of *buraku* culture].⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Nakagami Kenji, “Shimin ni hisomu sabetsu shinri (The Latent Discriminatory Mindset of Ordinary Folk),” p.42-43.

Here, Nakagami crosses linguistic borders and breaks the rules of Japanese signification, making the English word “black”—which in 1977 was typically translated as “*kokujin*”—hold within it the word “*buraku*,” and thus a dialogue between Nakagami and the black is beautiful movement emerges. By supplementing *buraku* language with black language, Nakagami attempts to write “fictions” that are antidotes rather than poisons, that is, he tries to write fictions that do not identify *buraku* in terms of imperial syntax but still hold venom in the face of the reductive identifications of the *burakumin* made in imperial mainstream discourse. By supplementing *buraku* talk with the language of black talk, Nakagami challenges the essentialist writing of the *buraku* and *burakumin* in imperial syntax by signifyin(g) on it rather than signifying in it.

Nakagami’s most prominent act of signifyin(g) during the 1977 roundtable was his mobilization of passing. Nakagami introduces passing into the roundtable almost as a non sequitur: “By the way,” Nakagami interjects, “this is a little removed from the *buraku* problem, but there’s a literary term called ‘passing.’”⁴¹ Yasuoka gives a brief definition of passing, and Nakagami responds with a reference to Leila from John Cassavetes’s 1959 *Shadows* and a claim that “it’s easy to pass in Japan.”⁴² Noma substantiates Nakagami’s claim by asserting that America, unlike Japan, faces the problem of “racial discrimination” (*jinshu sabetsu*) and that racial difference is legible in a way that *burakumin*-Japanese difference is not. Nakagami concurs: “And that’s why it can hide. I started with a reference to Tanizaki’s *In Praise of Shadows*, but, in short, it’s easy to slip into the shadows [as a *burakumin* minority in Japan].”⁴³

In a masterful act of signifyin(g), Nakagami juxtaposed his discussion of the ease with which one can pass in Japan with a performance of such passing. Throughout the roundtable,

⁴¹ Nakagami Kenji, “Shimin ni hisomu sabetsu shinri (The Latent Discriminatory Mindset of Ordinary Folk),” p.34.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

Nakagami makes several references to a young *burakumin* writer he knows. This writer—even as he knows that there’s “no sense in hiding” his *burakumin* identity—passes and hides half of himself from the parts of the *buraku* he can’t bear to see. This partially passing writer that Nakagami Kenji knows is none other than Nakagami Kenji; at the time of the roundtable, Nakagami had yet to “come out” as a *burakumin* writer. In his coda to *Kishū: Stories of the Country of Trees, Country of Roots*, Senbon divulges that Nakagami requested that his use of the first person to discuss aspects of his *burakumin* identity be changed to the third person.

Nakagami is clearly playing a game of pronominal politics. In passing, Nakagami momentarily shifts the weight of narrating *buraku* issues as a *burakumin* from himself to a third person two degrees removed from the roundtable. This borrowing of passing allows Nakagami to resist imperial syntax: the “reality” discussed in the roundtable is a fiction that Nakagami focalizes at will, there is no reductive one-to-one correspondence between Nakagami’s reality and his narration thereof, there is not only no transitive equality between Nakagami and any other *burakumin*, there is no simple transitive equality between Nakagami’s narrating “I” and itself. In narrating *burakumin* identity in passing and under erasure, Nakagami’s resistance counters the reductions common to both mainstream discourse on the *buraku* and the discourse of organizations such as the *BLL*, which was at times vocally critical of Nakagami’s refusal to congeal the signifier (his “I”) to the signified (the “reality” of *burakumin* identity). Moreover, even as it resists imperial syntax, Nakagami’s passing provides him a trope with which to undermine containment: much like Leila’s *tour de force*, the performance from *Shadows* upon which Nakagami’s signifyin(g) repetition is based, Nakagami—who is in the esteemed company of Yasuoka and Noma, as a member of an esteemed list of invitees to the roundtable series, in the

esteemed pages of the *Asahi Journal*—and his performance is an improvised subversion that exposes the arbitrariness of the demarcating lines of cultural containment.

Nakagami, Signifyin(g) and Misidentifyin(g)

It is clear that, in works spanning from his short fiction in the 1960s to nonfictional reportage and roundtables from the late 1970s, Nakagami is signifyin(g) on black language and literature. Nakagami identifies in Civil Rights era black language and literature a mode of minority discourse with which the *burakumin* can identify and mobilize in the struggle against imperial syntax. Such identification, however, runs the risk of positing the very kind of one-to-one correspondence between blackness and *burakuness* that Nakagami's signifyin(g) aims to undermine. As such, alongside Nakagami's signifyin(g) and identifyin(g) with black language and literature, we also witness moments of signifyin(g) and misidentifyin(g). Just as Nakagami writes a chasm between the *buraku* and the *roji* and refuses to bridge the gap between the "I" of his prose and the "I" of his lived experiences, Nakagami refuses also to identify completely with black language and literature. In a sense, Nakagami's works signify on themselves, repeating and revising the identifications made throughout in order to misidentify them. Such misidentification ensures that Nakagami's identifications with other minority groups don't replicate the discursive violence of the construction of *buraku/burakumin* identity that he challenged. As Watanabe Naomi suggests, Nakagami would amount to just another "discriminator" if his critique settled for a power inversion; Nakagami negotiates a rewriting of the stereotypes of the *buraku* that is "peerless" (*hirui nai*) and singular with a pluralizing

resistance of the “desire to be extraordinary” (*tsune naranu mono he no yokubō*) that breeds discriminatory narratives.⁴⁴

There is extensive misidentification throughout both “Me, at Eighteen and the 1977 roundtable—two of the texts which also evince Nakagami’s identification with black language and literature. To begin with the roundtable, we will recall that Nakagami is identifying and signifyin(g) throughout the roundtable in order to say that which he cannot signify in Japanese without falling prey to the rule of imperial syntax. Even as he borrows terms from 1960s-1970s black culture and literature (*i.e.* black is beautiful, passing), Nakagami posits black literature as a limited form of protest. Nakagami deemed “literature of denunciation” (*kyūdan no bungaku*) and “screaming novels” (*sakebi no shōsetsu*) as acts of isolated protest that don’t address the systematic depth and breadth of discrimination. Nakagami’s refutation of the efficacy of such denunciations is a kind of scattershot: he simultaneously addresses the shortcomings of the BLL’s advocacy of denunciation, the limited scope of “screaming novels” of black Japanese literature such as Ōe Kenzaburō’s “Outcries,” and also the protest novels of black literature, *i.e.* authors such as Richard Wright, who inspired Ōe’s outcries.⁴⁵ In the words of Nakagami:

There’s this young author who was born in the *buraku*, and he’s really unsatisfied when he reads novels about discrimination. They [the novels] are really shallow. Is the problem [of discrimination] really this shallow?—he thinks to himself. It’s like, someone says you’re smelly, so you lash out violently; is the *buraku* problem really that shallow?...It’s deeper, thicker...Take the black protest novel (*kokujin no kōgi no shōsetsu*), for example. Well, Baldwin is a little different, and Wright has some pieces that cut deep, but if you really think about it, it’s just minority literature...Decrying discrimination, that’s nothing but minority literature, it’s boring.⁴⁶

The irony of this claim is that Nakagami borrows a black literary technique—here too Nakagami is passing in his third-person discussion of “a young author born in the *buraku*”—in order to

⁴⁴ Watanabe Naomi, *Nihon kindai bungaku to “sabetsu”* (Modern Japanese Literature and “Discrimination”), p.140.

⁴⁵ Nakagami Kenji, “Shimin ni hisomu sabetsu shinri (The Latent Discriminatory Mindset of Ordinary Folk),” p.51.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.48-49.

articulate the shortcomings of a black literary technique. We see a similar gesture on the following page, in which Nakagami asserts that the logical endpoint of belief in the beauty of blackness is liberation from the demands of minority literature and realization that minority authors “think of themselves as more special than they actually are.”⁴⁷

This juxtaposition of identifying with black language and literary techniques and misidentifying with what he calls “minority literature” is a testament to Nakagami’s negotiation of the singularity of the experience of the ethnicized “I” and the possibility of its connection with a minoritarian “we” on a global stage. This negotiation is a precarious one for Nakagami. Nakagami does respect the unique, localized nuances of a given minority struggle, or, in his words, “as the title of Baldwin’s *Another Country* aptly shows us, black people have local problems.”⁴⁸ As his very citation of Baldwin suggests, however, Nakagami also sees minority language as something that crosses borders and speaks to Others in transnational locales. The very translatability of language and subsequent transnational community which might be built upon such translatability calls into question the uniqueness of the localized nuances of a given minority struggle, or, in Nakagami’s words, “these problems [*i.e.* the “Korea problem” or the “black problem”] are just one part of the problem...If we see the *buraku* problem as a world problem, I get the feeling that we will no longer be able to see the *buraku* problem.”⁴⁹ This is in part what Watanabe refers to in his previous conjecture: although Nakagami identifies with minority writers in his search for a new language with which to write the *buraku*, he also misidentifies with them to ensure that he does not reenact the discursive violence of identifying or privilege one set of identities at the expense of another.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.50.

⁴⁸ Nakagami Kenji, “Shimin ni hisomu sabetsu shinri (The Latent Discriminatory Mindset of Ordinary Folk),” p.53.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.51

Nakagami's editing of "Me, at Eighteen" bears witness to the two-step of his signifyin(g) and simultaneous identifyin(g) and misidentifyin(g). Ore, the narrator of "Me, at Eighteen," identifies with Rufus, the protagonist of Baldwin's *Another Country*, and this is the reason why he recalls Rufus after his lynching. Nakagami's writing of the narrator's recalling of Rufus, however, varies depending on the edition of "Me, at Eighteen." "Me, at Eighteen" was first published in the March 1966 edition of the literary magazine *Bungei shuto*. It was republished in 1977 as one of the eponymous tales of a short story collection entitled *Jūhassai, umi he* (Eighteen Years Old, to the Sea). There is a conspicuous difference in the 1977 version's repetition of the 1966 lynching. The 1966 version reads:

I was shocked that the protagonist of that novel came to me again and again like something out of a dream from the midst of pain so agonizing it might make me faint. Rufus' ridiculous words came and slipped nonchalantly from my mouth. "You mean, everybody ain't a animal like me? Hey, bitch, you mean everybody ain't a animal like me, or you mean ain't a animal like you?" If Yuri comes over, this is what I'll tell her: "This is good luck? Hey, bitch, am I the one with the good luck, or are the punks beating me the ones with the good luck?" I feel my consciousness slipping away. Yuri's shocked face looks weird. Laughter swells up from the depths of my belly.⁵⁰

Compare this to the 1977 version, which was reprinted concomitantly with Nakagami's misidentifying roundtable discussion:

I was shocked that the protagonist of that novel came to me again and again like something out of a dream from the midst of pain so agonizing it might make me faint. Sexy, sexy, the words are spinning. I feel my consciousness slipping away. Yuri's shocked face looks weird. Laughter swells up from the depths of my belly.⁵¹

The 1966 version is Gatesian signifyin(g) *par excellence*. The narrator cites and repeats the words of Rufus with a signal difference; Rufus addresses Leona and American race relations, Ore repeats and signally reroutes his addresses toward Yuri and anti-*"burakumin"* sentiment.

The 1966 version's signifyin(g) on *Another Country* highlights Ore's identification with Rufus.

⁵⁰ Nakagami Kenji, *Nakagami Kenji zenshū* 1, p.584.

⁵¹ Nakagami Kenji, "Ore, Jūhassai (Me, at Eighteen)," p.23-24.

With such identification, we can clearly map a correspondence between Nakagami's work and Baldwin's; the narrator's questioning of who is "a animal" is a lucid translation of Rufus and Leona's final exchange.

In contrast, the 1977 version is signifyin(g) on a Baldwin under erasure. Whereas the 1966 version refers to Baldwin by name (*i.e.* after a verbal altercation with his sister, the narrator "picked up Baldwin's novel and flew out of the room, leaving my sister behind all alone"), the 1977 gestures towards a text similar to Baldwin's but never explicitly named as such (*i.e.* now the narrator "picked up the novel I was reading and flew out of the room, leaving my sister behind all alone.")⁵² With such misidentification, we can no longer pinpoint with authority the source of the original that the narrator repeats; the "novel I was reading," for example, may or may not be *Another Country*. In lieu of a search for the original, the indeterminacy introduced by signifyin(g) misidentification puts the onus on the reader, and in so doing makes the reader cognizant of the fact that any act of identification and interpretation is an inherently political act. The reading that I proposed earlier—that the narrator's lynching is akin to the preordained lynching that Rufus fears—for example, is an interpretation and identification of the "Rufus" mentioned that I impose on the text at the expense of other interpretations and identifications. As such, it is also a kind of misidentification that limits and mistakes (mis-takes) the hermeneutical possibilities of the text. "Me, at Eighteen" ends with a warning of the dangers of such identification. After the "lynching," Ore and his friends decide to exact revenge on his assailants. As they prowl the night looking for the assailants, however, they inadvertently run over a police officer, only to discover that this "police officer" was a con artist impersonating an officer. The charlatan officer—himself a false authority figure charged with identifying and

⁵² Nakagami Kenji, *Nakagami Kenji zenshū* 1, p.580; "Ore, Jūhassai (Me, at Eighteen)," p.19.

containing delinquents—is a synecdochal representation of the disidentification that accompanies any check of our identification.

If the 1966 signifyin(g) and identifiyin(g) version of “Me, at Eighteen” is a “lucid translation” of Rufus and Leona’s final exchange, the 1977 signifyin(g) and misidentifiyin(g) version obligates the reader to take responsibility for an opaque translation rife with the possibility of misidentifications. It also obligates the reader to take responsibility for our part in the politics of filling interpretative gaps and leaping the chasm between the *buraku* and black, between identities. Such opaque translation, which is, for Nakagami, a prerequisite for communication (cross-cultural or otherwise), denaturalizes the ease with which we might identify and build a community with “fellow minorities.”

Signifyin(g) On the Japanese Language

Nakagami took up the issues addressed thus far—the possibility of signifyin(g) on black language and literature in Japanese, *buraku*-black identification/misidentification and the role such identification/misidentification might play in rewriting the fictions of *burakuness*, and, the point most recently introduced into our discussion, the opacity of translation and the difficulty of forging communal links in the wake of misidentification—in his 1968 novella *Nihongo ni tsuite* (On the Japanese Language). *On the Japanese Language* was both set and published during the Vietnam War. The narrator, a Japanese youth named Saitō but referred to throughout the narrative as “Boku,” or “I,” is hired ostensibly to introduce an African-American soldier, Ludolph L. Witt, on R & R leave to the pleasures of post-war Tokyo nightlife. Beneath the veneer of altruistic hospitality, however, resides Boku’s real job: he has been hired by a group of activist students to persuade the soldier to desert his duties by way of subtle inculcation of the

(post-war) “Japanese” virtues of peace (*jiyū*), democracy (*minshushugi*), and a pacifist constitution (*heiwa kenpō*).

On the Japanese Language is a crucible in which the affinity between a disillusioned Japanese student movement, dissatisfied with the Vietnam War and the US-Japan Security Treaty-sanctioned American military presence in Japan, and a disillusioned African American nation, still waiting on the promise of the Double V campaign to materialize and now shifting to a Civil Rights Movement with teeth, is tested and mined as a potential source for black-Japanese transnational, transracial solidarity. As the novella’s title suggests, however, this overtly political question is preceded by a questioning of the politics of language use, namely the politics of ownership of a “native language,” of communicating in translation, and of searching for a *lingua franca* with which to construct transnational, transracial solidarity. Here, the novella will serve as a touchpoint for a discussion of Nakagami’s manifestation of the three modes of signifyin(g) delineated by Gates—signifyin(g) as “implicit rhetorical strategy,” “as a principle of literary history” and signifyin(g) as “explicit theme.”

Nakagami’s “*Monku*.” Signifyin(g) in the Time of the Other

Before attending to textual analysis of *On the Japanese Language*, I would like to situate the narrative both within its own framing of time and within a literary historical timeline. One of the most eminent aspects of the orthography of *On the Japanese Language* is its measurement of time. The story of *On the Japanese Language* occurs within the five-day period allotted to Boku to complete his job. The passage of time in *On the Japanese Language* is marked by a kind of broken clock: the progression of each section of the story is signaled by the repetition of a single character: “*natsu*,” or “summer.” “Summer” appears twenty-three times throughout the novella.

At each appearance, the character is offset from both the paragraph that precedes it as well as the paragraph it precedes. Moreover, this “**natsu**” is one of the few terms presented in bold type. This presentation gives the twenty-three “summers” the appearance of being transfixed, frozen between the rest of the text and the white space which borders it off from the narrative.

One response—perhaps the reader’s initial response—to this presentation of time is to consider Ludolph’s period of R&R as a kind of liminal time. Between the stalemate war of Vietnam and the peace on American soil resides Japan, itself a liminal space of pseudo/neo-colonialism which enables the war with Vietnam but, as a country now reconfigured as a pacifist nation, does not “participate” in the war itself. This spacial liminality is juxtaposed with temporal liminality; Boku and the Ludolph are frozen in time between a spring that has ended and a fall that the text never shows the reader. This response, however, is one that reminds us of Johannes Fabian’s writings on the “other” and the politics of “time.” Fabian argues that anthropological studies has cultivated a denial of coevalness, in which the anthropologist puts the other in her (temporal) place by denying the simultaneity of an Other which exists in real time before our very eyes. The construction of a liminal space becomes a kind of defense mechanism in which, rather than encountering the otherness, we border off and temporally asphyxiate it.

In lieu of such a reaction, a second response, perhaps one that is more in tune with *On the Japanese Language*, is to think of the text as in jazz time. It is “well know that Nakagami, who spent the late 60s in Shinjuku during the heyday of the jazz café,” his favorite haunt being Jazz Village, “repeatedly referenced jazz music in his essays, interviews and writings on *monogatari*.”⁵³ Nakagami makes no secret of his interplay with jazz:

⁵³ Sugahara Maiko, “Nakagami Kenji ‘Jūkyūsai no jeikobo:’ jazu hyōshō wo megutte (Jazz as Symbolism in Nakagami Kenji’s Nineteen Year Old Jacob),” p.1.

I should say this discreetly, but my early works, the length of my phrases, the extensive use of metaphor, the brevity of my phrases around the time I was writing *Misaki* [The Cape, 1975], the placement of punctuation, the repetition of phrases in *Karekinada* [The Sea of Withered Trees, 1977], all of this is extremely natural in jazz...Jazz is the great key to analyzing my novels and literary criticism.⁵⁴

Given the opening of the story proper of *On the Japanese Language*—"Summer It was the beginning of summer. I was reading a short essay on bebop-era jazz and waiting for Naoko [in 'a small modern jazz café named Monk']. I was surrounded by the teeming...enveloping sound of an avant-garde sax that twisted around me like a coil"—it is clear that jazz might serve as a "great key" to the time of the text.⁵⁵

Consideration of the technical "repetition of phrases" that Nakagami claims is informed by his love of jazz facilitates a reading of the signifyin(g) repetition of "summer" seen throughout *On the Japanese Language*. Quoting Jelly Roll Morton, Gates suggests that signifyin(g) repetition in jazz begins with a riff, with riffs seen as "a figure, musically speaking."⁵⁶ The riff provides "'what you would call a foundation,' 'something you could walk on,'" and the signifyin(g) jazz improvisario walks all over the riff as she repeats and revises it into a creation that is both new but related to its foundation.⁵⁷ Atsuko Ueda describes *On the Japanese Language* as a "*monogatari* with a circular structure" that, even as it circles in on itself, does not preclude Boku from undergoing change.⁵⁸ This structural repetition that allows for a signal difference can be read as the novella's riffin(g) on jazz time.

⁵⁴ Nakagami Kenji, *Hakai seyo, to Airā wa itta* (Ayler Said Destroy It), p.17.

⁵⁵ Nakagami Kenji, *Nihongo ni tsuite* (On the Japanese Language), p.130.

⁵⁶ Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literature*, p.105.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Atsuko Ueda, "'Nihongo' de kataru koto, 'Nihongo' wo kataru koto: Nakagami Kenji *Nihongo ni tsuite* wo megutte (Narrating in the 'Japanese Language,' Narrating the 'Japanese Language': Nakagami Kenji's *On the Japanese Language*)," p.343.

Nakagami's vision of jazz begins with the *kōdo*, a signifyin(g) term that refers simultaneously to the Japanese homophones "chord" and "code." Eschewing a technical definition, Nakagami asks us let the chord symbolize that which defines jazz qua jazz. Whereas other musical genres (here Nakagami name checks Miles Davis and the blues) cling to the chords/codes by which their composition is legislated,

jazz is different from other musical genres: the music that the black people who crossed [the Middle Passage] and came to America made is rooted in the law/system (chord/code *et cetera*) held within jazz, yet jazz also realizes and stands in irritation at the fact that this very law and system is also a device used to oppress the development and rolling change inherent to the genre of modern jazz, which runs over in freedom.⁵⁹

In its "irritation," jazz repeats the chords and codes at its foundation in order to overturn and destroy them by means of those very chords and codes. If, as Nakagami suggested, jazz is one of the keys to analysis of his literature and literary criticism, repetition that longs for "development and rolling change" is one of the doors it unlocks. Nakagami argued that the struggle against chords witnessed in jazz is feasible both in narrative fiction as well as in the stories of our lives, thereby wedding his interest in narrative structure with identity politics. Nakagami writes, for example, that "John Coltrane is more than a mere jazz artist; to me, he was a literary problem (*bungaku no mondai*) then [when Nakagami first encountered Coltrane in the late 60s] and he is a literary problem now."⁶⁰ Nakagami also writes, for example, that we might better understand what he calls jazz's fight to annihilate (*muka no tatakai*) chords/codes if we consider chords/codes and law/system as "nature" (*shizen*); free jazz musicians such as Coltrane "blow to overthrown and twist backwards the chords/codes, the "nature" that, from the moment people are

⁵⁹ Nakagami Kenji, *Hakai seyo, to Airā wa itta* (Ayler Said Destroy It!), p.29. I agree with Eve Zimmerman and Ken Ito that "*hō/seido*" (law/system) is best translated as "code." In *Ayler Said*, however, Nakagami uses both *hō/seido* and *kōdo*—a fact that substantiates Zimmerman and Ito's reasoning. To avoid confusion, I have translated *hō/seido* as law/system and *kōdo* as "code."

⁶⁰ Nakagami Kenji, *Hakai seyo, to Airā wa itta* (Ayler Said Destroy It!), p.29.

born into this world, they can no longer invade or even touch.”⁶¹ What is at stake in the struggle against chords/codes goes beyond the sonic and into the realm of the literary and ontological.

In writing his early works in jazz time, Nakagami is plotting an escape from the rhythms and foundations of *monogatari*. After stating his indebtedness to jazz, for example, Nakagami writes that, “I think that people can really understand quite honestly what I mean when I say ‘*monogatari* is my enemy’ and ‘the destruction of the fixed form of the *monogatari*’ as an extension of the free jazz movement executed in jazz by the likes of John Coltrane and Albert Ayler.”⁶² The “development and rolling change” of jazz, however, as sweet as the sound may be, provides no easy exit from the patterns of *monogatari*. Nakagami’s outline of the difficulty of escape begins with the assertion that “chords/codes=nature, law/system=nature and *monogatari*=nature.”⁶³ In the transitive logic of imperial syntax, that which is deemed “natural,” the “essence” or “root” of an entity (be it, as we have noted, a piece from the jazz repertoire, a work of literature or a human identity), is equal to the way in which it is encoded, systematized and narrated. Insofar as jazz “struggles” (*tatakai*) against “nature,” it also struggles against *monogatari*. In the face of the *monogatari* of jazz, “real” jazz searches for the singular reality of jazz. This search, however, faces a conundrum insofar as “reality (*shinjitsu*) itself is a lie. What I mean by that is the word ‘reality’ itself is in the midst of a *monogatari*.”⁶⁴ The development and rolling change of jazz, insofar as it signifies on systematized chords/codes, is never fully

⁶¹ Ibid., p.30.

⁶² Let us be clear on the timeline: Nakagami’s documented interest in *monogatari* can be traced back to his 1979 “*Monogatari no keifu: danshō*” (A Genealogy of the Monogatari: Fragments), published more than a decade after *On the Japanese Language*. Nakagami’s interest in jazz and its possible avenue to a “destruction of the fixed form” of identities narrated in Japanese, however, is palpable as early as *On the Japanese Language*, hence my suggestion to read the novella vis-à-vis Nakagami’s articulation of jazz time and its destructive force.

⁶³ Nakagami Kenji, *Hakai seyo, to Airā wa itta* (Ayler Said Destroy It!), p.36.

⁶⁴ Nakagami Kenji, *Hakai seyo, to Airā wa itta*, p.43.

released from those chords/codes, which are themselves equal to the narrated illusions of *monogatari*.

Although the possibility of escaping the prison house of chords/codes and *monogatari* is bleak, Nakagami does find one potential exit: exchange (*kōtsū*). Nakagami's *kōtsū*, which signifies on Marx's *verkehr* and the Japanese word for "transit," "emphasizes relations between parts in a fluid system rather than fixed meaning" and as such is "useful for understanding how narratives stretch beyond one character, work or author."⁶⁵ Such exchange is, in the words of Nakagami, "precisely what can annihilate jazz's equivalency to *monogatari*."⁶⁶

In *On the Japanese Language*, the repetition of "summer" can be read as Nakagami exchanging riffs with the likes of Baldwin and Ellison, two authors who figure prominently in the text's intertextual network, on the time that Boku and Ludolph spend together. These riffs repeat the codes by which *burakuness* and blackness are written in the Japanese language with a Coltrane twist in the hope imbuing them with "development and rolling change." Analogous to his figuration of the blues, Nakagami claimed that "storytelling has its basic...fixed rhythm" that, if let to its own devices "will carry you through."⁶⁷ Repetition *without* a signal difference of these codes leaves one without "any progress...powerless"—that is, with the blues.⁶⁸ Although it is "impossible to overturn these *monogatari*" completely, Nakagami's repetitions "work closely with them, shift them a little, try to rearrange them," by way of exchange.⁶⁹ Even in the face of the impossibility of overturning *monogatari*, Nakagami continues, like Monk and

⁶⁵ Anne McKnight, *Nakagami, Japan*, p.129.

⁶⁶ Nakagami Kenji, *Hakai seyo, to Airā wa itta*, p.43.

⁶⁷ Eve Zimmerman, *Out of the Alleyway: Nakagami Kenji and the Poetics of Outcaste Fiction*, p.151. The passage quoted here is from an interview of Nakagami conducted by Zimmerman; the translation of Nakagami is Zimmerman's.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.152

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Coltrane, to blow in jazz time, convinced that when the “characters of a *monogatari*” are written “by an ethnic author *qua* ethnic author” there always remains the possibility that a “unique folklore (*dokuji no fōkuroa*)...will be born.”⁷⁰

This, then, is Nakagami’s “*Monku*,” the name of the jazz cafe in which Boku and Ludolph spend the majority of their repeating summers. “*Monku*” signifies (is signifyin[g]) simultaneously: Thelonious Monk—Nakagami’s “entry point into a new world” of exchange with jazz and black culture, *monku* (文句) as in a phrase or expression, and the second meaning of *monku*, a complaint or verbal protest.⁷¹ It is somewhere at the intersection of exchange, expression and verbal protest that we are to understand the story of *On the Japanese Language*, a story with repetitions that revisit in order to revise.

Signifying on the Black Japanese Literary Tradition

On the Japanese Language’s repetition of exchanges between Boku and Ludolph aims to disharmonize and revise the chords/codes of minority identity represented within the story. Before proceeding to a reading of the story’s revisions, I would like to situate *On the Japanese Language* within the Japanese literary tradition of writing blackness. In addition to the revisions that occur on the diegetic level, *On the Japanese Language* also disrupts and sets new precedents for the literary tradition of chords/codes by which Japanese literature might write blackness.

On the Japanese Language earned Nakagami a nod for the 1968 Gunzō New Author Award. Noma Hiroshi, a member of the award committee, argued that one could “clearly see the

⁷⁰ Nakagami Kenji, “Toshi shōsetsu no minamoto wo tsuku anyu toshite no sogai ya sabetsu: Toni Morison-cho ‘Aoi me ga hoshi’ shohyō (Discrimination and Alienation as Originary Metaphors in the Urban Novel: A Review of Toni Morrison’s “The Bluest Eye),” p.472.

⁷¹ Nakagami Kenji, *Hakai seyo, to Airā wa itta* (Ayler Said Destroy It!), p.36.

influence of Ōe Kenzaburō” in *On the Japanese Language*.⁷² I’d like to take Noma’s assessment a step further: Nakagami’s connection to Ōe’s representation of blackness connects him in turn to the predecessors of Ōe. Pre-Nakagami literary representations of blackness tend to share three common denominators. First, these representations are supposedly literary re-presentations of the author’s “real” encounters with blackness. Nagai Kafū’s 1908 *America Monogatari* (*Amerika monogatari*), which includes stories that purportedly represent Kafū’s encounter with black people during his travels in America, is a prototypical example. Second, black characters tend to be nameless, with their function or definitive characteristic (*i.e.* *kokujinhei*—“black soldier”) doubling as their moniker. Third, the namelessness of black characters is permissible because they tend to be peripheral. Their place on the margins is exemplified by the structure of character relationships: two common patterns are the Mark Twain-inspired adolescent Japanese boy/silent black soldier tandem (*i.e.* “Prize Stock,” Itsuki Hiroyuki’s *Umi wo mitteita Jonii, Johnny Who Saw the Sea*, 1967) or the all-Japanese triangle relationship (*sankaku kankei*) with a black character attached tangentially (*i.e.* “American School;” “The Legend of Gold” is a permutation of this pattern). In tandem, these tendencies provide “realist” depictions of simple, silent black characters that are a degree removed from the real stories of Japanese literature.

In the previous chapter, I suggested that Ōe and his turn to black Japanese literature begins to overturn these tendencies, *i.e.* giving black characters names and writing black characters into central positions by way of borrowed black literary tropes. Building on Ōe, Nakagami eschews an overturning of these tendencies and instead skewers the logic upon which these tendencies themselves are based; Nakagami questions the possibility of ever representing the “reality” of blackness. Moreover, in the process of revisiting Ōe’s black Japanese literary

⁷² As quoted in Shibata Shōji, *Nakagami Kenji to Murakami Haruki: “Datsu-roku jyū nendai” teki sekai no yukue* (Nakagami Kenji and Murakami Haruki: Farewell to the 60s), p.20.

techniques, Nakagami posits a tradition of writing blackness in Japan. Here, “tradition” is used in the sense proposed by Gates, in which traditions are born by way of repeating and revising a set of shared literary techniques and tropes. Nakagami’s 1989 lecture “Ōe Kenzaburō, the Early Years: On ‘Shiiku’” (*Shoki no Ōe Kenzaburō—Shiiku o chūshin ni*) is a case in point. In a section of the lecture entitled “Written without Trickster Theory,” Nakagami argues that the black soldier in *Shiiku* is a trickster figure, and it is through this trickster that a narrative tradition emerges. Although the black soldier in *Shiiku* is being held captive, he captures the Japanese boy who is guarding him and holds the boy captive. Nakagami responds to this situation of a hostage holding a hostage with the following:

If we think through this hostage with a hostage situation using the logic of the trickster, we will see that the situation is also the union (*gattai*) of the black man, an outsider, and “Boku,” [the adolescent protagonist of “Prize Stock.”] One is confined, and another is confined by the one that was originally confined—this gives rise to the union. And it is through this union that narration (*katari*) emerges, that narration is born.⁷³

For our purposes, two aspects of this passage are noteworthy. First, Nakagami’s analysis here is reminiscent of Gatesian signifyin(g). As a kind of repetition with a signal difference, the trickery of a hostage taking a hostage becomes the foundational union for the birth of narratives. The term *gattai*, as does the English “union,” has the connotation of both a “fusion” and “copulation.” As these unions produce copies that both contain traces of their antecedents and are yet are their own entities, narrative traditions are born. As Nakagami attempts to situate the writing of blackness in Ōe’s *Prize Stock*, for example, he turns to comparative analysis: “Now [the lecture was delivered in 1989] there is a young author named Yamada Eimi or something like that, and she writes stories about love affairs with black people in works like *Bedtime Eyes*. But Ōe’s work is much rawer than a work like *Bedtime Eyes*, it draws a much richer picture of

⁷³ Nakagami Kenji, *Shoki no Ōe Kenzaburō—Shiiku wo chūshin ni* (Ōe Kenzaburō, the Early Years: On ‘Shiiku,’ p.299.

black people as the Other.⁷⁴ It is telling that Nakagami turns not to another text penned circa 1957, the year in which “Prize Stock” was published, as he attempts to situate the text within Japanese literary history. Rather, Nakagami bounds over almost three decades of Japanese literary history to Yamada Eimi’s 1985 *Bedtime Eyes*. The reason for this leap, I would argue, is that Nakagami is positing a “tradition” of writing blackness in Japanese literature.

Second, Nakagami deems Ōe’s writing of black characters in the trickster mode as the “proper” way and Yamada’s as an alternate, less vital branch of this tradition due to its lack of trickery. To extrapolate what Nakagami means by “trickery,” we must turn to the work of Yamaguchi Masao, whom Nakagami cites by name in “Written without Trickster Theory.” Yamaguchi, a personal colleague of Nakagami’s, conducted extensive fieldwork in Nigeria on Yoruban folklore and the trickster deity Esu. (We will recall that Gates’ signifyin(g) is also informed by his studies of Esu.) Yamaguchi characterizes Esu as a “prankster” (*itazuramono*) defined by his “double-meaning” (*ryōgisei*). Esu is “double-meaning” for—fittingly enough—two reasons: because he, as a messenger and interpreter god, “engages with both the realm of the divine and the human world” and because he carries out his work “on the border between order and anarchy.”⁷⁵

When Nakagami refers to writing black characters in the trickster mode, he is in direct contestation of the pre-Ōe/Nakagami literary tradition (or of the tradition as it is constructed by Nakagami), which considered blackness something that could be represented in all of its reality by the transparent language of Japanese and yet tangential to the central stories of Japanese literature. According to Nakagami’s trickster-based writing of blackness, any empiricist

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.298.

⁷⁵ Yamaguchi Masao, *Dōke no minzokugaku* (The Folkloristics of Buffoonery), p.204.

attempt—that is, one not based on the trickster theory—will capture, at best, only half of Esu’s identity; Esu, as that which enables interpretation and identification, always remains on the border between the order of identification and anarchy of misidentification. Nakagami’s admission in *Jazz and Bombs* (*Jazu to bakudan*, 1982) that *On the Japanese Language* is only “halfway based on a true story” (*hanbun jitsuwa*) and that the “real” Ludolph was a white soldier (Nakagami writes Ludolph as a black character in order to make the story more “interesting”) is a testament to Nakagami’s eschewal of an empirical writing of blackness for a signifyin(g), literary one.⁷⁶ Moreover, in his role as messenger, Esu is far from tangential to the central story; rather, the transactions of Esu between the two realms generate narrative. As his interpretation of “Prize Stock” suggests, Nakagami too sees generative power in such black trickster figures. In *On the Japanese Language*, Nakagami brings the trickiness of writing blackness to bear on the black Japanese literary tradition itself: bestowing the name “Ludolph” upon his black character and giving his character a voice (albeit a voice mediated by translation and writing), inserting Ludolph as a central node in the triangle relationship between Boku and Naoko, writing Ludolph’s reality as one that can never fully be grasped by Boku—all of these techniques are indicative of Nakagami’s attempt to rewrite the tradition of black Japanese literature. Nakagami’s task vis-à-vis the black Japanese literary tradition is reminiscent of Boku’s task as he ponders how to introduce Ludolph to the regulars of *Monku*. As a kind of intervention, the introduction of Ludolph by Nakagami/Boku will alter the trajectory of the audience’s reception of Ludolph. “If I introduce him as a black soldier,” as Boku sketches the first trajectory, “they

⁷⁶ Nakagami Kenji, *Jazu to bakudan* (*Jazz and Bombs*), p.32. In 1967, Nakagami published “Kokujin-hei to Nihon no wakamono (The Black Soldier and the Japanese Youth),” a short story that would serve as the template for *On the Japanese Language*. “The Black Soldier” too features a character named Ludolph L. Witt. This Ludolph, however, is more in the mold of the literary precedents set by Japanese black literature. As such, *On the Japanese Language*’s extended rewriting of Ludolph is another testament to Nakagami’s eschewal of realist empiricism for a signifyin(g) rendition of blackness.

will call this young black man ‘black soldier’ forever. If I introduce him as Ludolph L. Witt, they will get to know him unaware of the reality that this black soldier is a black soldier...Ludolph L. Witt is both: a young black man and a soldier of the U.S. Army.”⁷⁷

Signifinyin(g), Identifiyin(g) and Disidentifiyin(g) *On the Japanese Language*

I have argued that Boku and Ludolph’s exchanges on jazz time repeat and revise the chords/codes by which they are written and that this diegetic rewriting is a microcosmic example of the literary historical rewriting embodied by *On the Japanese Language*. Now let us turn to the text to determine how this rewriting plays out.

Initially, Boku feels distant from Ludolph—at one point he describes the gulf between them as a “fissure,” or *kiretsu*—and sees him as nothing more than a tool to be used to complete a well-paying job. Members of the United Front of Students, an organization reminiscent of the *Zenkyōtō*, select Boku as their “symbol of the youth of democratic, pacifist Japan” and pay him 3,000 yen per day to spend five days with Ludolph.⁷⁸ Boku’s primary responsibility during the five-day interim is to subtly inculcate Ludolph, to corrode his fighting spirit with Japanese “peace, booze and women” and subliminally influence him to desert America’s empire-building campaign in Vietnam. Boku’s initial intuition is that he is not a good fit for the job, both because he is politically apathetic (“I have absolutely no interest in politics...the outcome of Vietnam has nothing to do with me”) and because the “fissure” between him and Ludolph might be too wide to traverse (“I didn’t have the slightest idea how I was to...influence the black soldier and...make him...desert [the war effort].”)⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Nakagami Kenji, *Nihongo ni tsuite (On the Japanese Language*, hereafter “Nihongo”), p.149.

⁷⁸ Nihongo, p.135.

⁷⁹ Nihongo, p.133; Nihongo, p.139.

As the exchanges between Boku and Ludolph progress, the fissure between the two seems to close as Boku purportedly gets to “know” and “understand” (*wakaru, rikai*) Ludolph. Boku’s first inkling of his affinity with Ludolph occurs when he discovers their shared ambivalent sense of belonging to their native countries. Boku begins to “feel that I can understand (*rikai*) what the black soldier is saying. I can understand a black soldier who can’t speak in English vociferously and frankly the way that white soldiers, burly as rugby players, do. Even if all of that is a lie cleverly constructed and wrapped up in the race problem, I can still understand it.”⁸⁰ The burgeoning sense of identification that Boku feels, that is, the closing of the “fissure” between them, is signified by their analogous position as readers of black literature. The members of the United Front of Students, for example don’t realize that “he [Ludolph] is a black person, an invisible man [the English “invisible man” is used in the Japanese original]” and that his “psychological state” must be “understood” as such.⁸¹ This is in contrast to Boku, who—as he tries to persuade Ludolph to desert the war effort now out of a complicated concern for his well being—worries that “maybe the black soldier can’t hear my words. Just like black people lament that they are invisible men, maybe I have become an *inaudible man*.”⁸² Nakagami’s signifyin(g) on Ellison’s masterpiece simultaneously underscores the provisional social and thus ontological status of hyphenated being and posits a level of mutual understanding between those who reside in such provisional spaces. Ludolph becomes “a phantom...that dives into [Boku]’s eye,” an invisible entity made visible only from the vantage point of shared marginalization.⁸³

⁸⁰ Nihongo, p.161.

⁸¹ Ibid., p.179.

⁸² Ibid., p.193. Emphasis in original.

⁸³ Nihongo, p.178.

Boku's identification with Ludolph that is made legible through signifyin(g) on *Invisible Man* predicates an epistemological shift made legible through *Nobody Knows My Name*. Before Ludolph becomes visible to Boku, the two ponder whether a youth who is putatively a symbol for democratic, pacifist, post-war Japan can understand the Vietnam War from the perspective of a black American soldier. "To be honest," Ludolph admits, "I don't think you can understand my thoughts on the issue. Nobody knows my name [the English 'nobody knows my name' is used in the Japanese original.]"⁸⁴ As Boku begins to see Ludolph, however, he also begins to know him. Boku "thought that I understood the feeling of instability that the black soldier embraced; it was like losing your way at a dead end and only being able to fluster about. Nobody knows my name! I took the title of that novel by a black author, transposed it onto Ludolph L. Witt and thought that I could shout: I'm the only one who knows who you are!"⁸⁵ Again, it is crucial that we keep in mind that Nakagami's signifyin(g) is aimed both at the jazz-time exchanges between Boku and Ludolph and the literary history of writing blackness in Japan. By having Boku refer to Ludolph once as "the black soldier" and once again as "Ludolph L. Witt," Nakagami simultaneously highlights Boku's epiphany and suggests that he knows the name of Ludolph (and Baldwin) in a way that his literary predecessors have yet to grasp.

Boku's identification with Ludolph is underwritten by *On the Japanese Language's* signifyin(g) on *Nobody Knows My Name*. In intertextually invoking *Nobody Knows My Name*, however, this act of signifyin(g) also suggests a misidentification between Boku and Ludolph. Much of Baldwin's essayistic project was devoted to destabilizing what might be called the segregation of American identity. The titular essay of Baldwin's *Nobody* is a case in point. The

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.162

⁸⁵ *Nihongo*, p.192

essay begins with Baldwin's musings of the "Northern Negro" revenant's vision of the South.

The black traveler:

...sees the world, from an angle odd indeed, in which his fathers awaited his arrival, perhaps in the very house in which he narrowly avoided being born. He sees, in effect, his ancestors, who, in everything they do and are, proclaim his inescapable identity. And the Northern Negro in the South sees, whatever he or anyone else may wish to believe, that his ancestors are both white and black. The white men, flesh of his flesh, hate him for that very reason. On the other hand, there is scarcely any way for him to join the black community in the South: for both he and this community are in the grip of [an] immense illusion.⁸⁶

The black traveler in another country is confronted by two phenomena. First, he encounters the inescapability of an identity defined by the intersection of his past and his present in a foreign land. This identity makes itself manifest only when we travel beyond the borders of our native communities and encounter individuals from other communities—*i.e.* when Baldwin's "Northern Negro" goes to the South or when Nakagami's Ludolph goes to Japan. Baldwin reminds us that the traveler's state of namelessness is a kind of "inescapable identity" dependent upon and intertwined with the Other. Second, this journey beyond the borders of our home exposes the contingency of communal belonging. For Baldwin, "inescapable identity" is not followed by the formation of a community of people who identify with one another. Rather, this inescapable identity is in actuality a misidentification—*i.e.* the "Northern Negro" is, "whatever he or anyone else may wish to believe" also a Southern Negro and a "white." As such, the namelessness of the revenant is also coupled with homelessness: the traveler, now misidentified, can no longer join a community based on the "immense illusion" of identity. Nakagami, signifiyin(g) on Baldwin through Boku, concurs: "Oh Ludolph, you're even telling me that the United States of America is 'your country' ['my country' in English in the Japanese original.] The United States of America is an illusion (*gensō*)...I'm being manipulated by the illusion of a democratic,

⁸⁶ James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name*, p.98-99. My emphasis.

pacifist ‘Japan’ as a symbol of its youth, and he’s being manipulated by an illusion of America many times more powerful than Japan’s.”⁸⁷ The parallelism of this last sentence suggests that it is precisely Boku and Ludolph’s act of finding their “inescapable identities” and thus identifying with one another that also serves as the precursor to misidentity and awakening to the “immense illusion” of identity-based communities. The “asymmetry” (*hitaishōsei*) that Ueda reads between Boku and Ludolph’s respective relationships with their home communities even within the symmetry of their shared status as exiles from their respective home communities is a testament to the interplay of identification, misidentification and precarious itinerant belonging examined in *On the Japanese Language*.⁸⁸

In the following section, I will address Nakagami’s take on the implications of misidentification vis-à-vis community building, that is, the pronominal politics of a misidentified “I” attempting to join some “we.” For the time being, I would like to take stock of the misidentification that runs concurrent to identification in *On the Japanese Language*. The premise of *On the Japanese Language* itself is a kind of misidentification: Boku, literally a *faux amis* and atypical composite of Japanese youth, presents himself to be something he is not in order to gain a vantage point from which to “observe”—at times the text employs the English “observe,” at others the Japanese *kansatsu*—and perhaps persuade Ludolph. Upon reading Ludolph’s diary, arguably another kind of black literature, however, Boku realizes that he is not simply the observer, he is also being observed. In a diary entry recording the day Ludolph first met the members of the United Front of Students, Ludolph notes his desire to become a “social scientist” alongside another reference to *Nobody Knows My Name*. Upon reading the diary,

⁸⁷ Nihongo, p.194.

⁸⁸ Atsuko Ueda, “‘Nihongo de kataru koto, ‘Nihongo’ wo kataru koto: Nakagami Kenji *Nihongo ni tsuite wo megutte* (Narrating in the ‘Japanese Language,’ Narrating the ‘Japanese Language: Nakagami Kenji’s *On the Japanese Language*),” p.337.

Boku realizes that he has misidentified Ludolph, a black man who is both a soldier and a budding social scientist. Reminiscent of Nakagami's writings on the black character in Japanese literature as trickster, Boku, as an observer who is also observed, feels as if he has "been snared by the trick (*torikku*) played on him by the notebook."⁸⁹

As the narrative progresses, such moments of peripetia begin to compile and magnify the intensity of the misidentification that runs concurrent to Boku and Ludolph's identification. The United Front of Students stages a photograph of Ludolph and Boku and plan to publish the photograph in a student paper with an article that claims that Ludolph has decided to desert the war effort. The article is, by the admission of the United Front, a "fictional *monogatari*."⁹⁰ The identification Ludolph and Boku have made is not enough to break the codes/chords of the article and photograph's *monogatari*-like representation of the two. In an attempt to escape these codes/chords, Boku suggests that the two get visas and abscond to some other country beyond the reach of the US and Japan. Ludolph, however, does not believe that such a space exists. In Ludolph's bleak view, there is only one avenue to a space beyond the reign of American imperial syntax: death. The final moment of peripetia occurs with Ludolph's suicide attempt; Boku implores Ludolph to desert so that his life can be spared only to have his implorations serve as a precursor to Ludolph's suicide attempt.

Nakagami identifies and signifies on black language, music and literature in order to create an amalgamated language that can represent *burakuness* without falling victim to imperial syntax. For Nakagami, however, any linguistic representation—even a language that begins as a *buraku*-black hybrid—runs the risk of employing the self-sufficiency and self-identity

⁸⁹ Nihongo, p.168.

⁹⁰ Nihongo, p.187.

supposed by imperial syntax. Misidentification serves as a constant reminder of the discord/discode, the unbridgeable chasm between signifiers (*i.e.* “minority” or “I”) and signifieds (*i.e.* Boku and Ludolph as fellow minorities or my Self and my first person singular references to myself). Nakagami’s misidentification asks us to read irreducible singularity into linguistic representations of minorities even as these minorities attempt to construct politically viable groups.

Nakagami’s negotiation of the singularity of the “I” and the community—which implies some kind of commonality—of the “we” is informed by a transpacific dialogue with one of the nodes in Nakagami’s signifyin(g) circle: James Baldwin. Baldwin asked questions similar to those posed by Nakagami concerning the pitfalls of identity formation from the other side of the Pacific; Baldwin wrote that “our passion for categorization, life neatly fitted into pegs, has led to an unforeseen, paradoxical distress; confusion, a breakdown of meaning. Those categories which were meant to define and control the world for us have boomeranged us into chaos; in which limbo we whirl, clutching the straws of our definitions.”⁹¹ Both Baldwin and Nakagami agree that it is only “within this web of ambiguity, paradox [that we]...can we find ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves.”⁹² Nakagami’s tricky turn to black literature and music, the exchanges with the Other on the other’s jazz time—in short, Nakagami’s signifyin(g)—present throughout *On the Japanese Language*, is done in search of a method to write such that he is freed from imperial syntax and returned to the complexity of misidentifications, or, in the words of Nakagami: “Free. I loved the word then and I love the word now; there’s no changing that.”⁹³

⁹¹ James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, p.15.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁹³ Nakagami Kenji, *Hakai seyo, to Airā wa itta*, p.45

The freedom that Nakagami seeks, however, seems to come with a price. If Nakagami's respite from imperial syntax occurs in the space opened by vacillations between the exchange of the chords/codes of *monogatari* and the new rhythms produces by misidentification's moments of discord/decoding, Ludolph's suicide attempt is an ominous omen. The suicide attempt implies that one cannot reside in the space opened by such vacillations and exchange in perpetuity, that the free jazz produced in such spaces must be silenced. In short, Nakagami's fiction might ultimately succumb to the containment it so vehemently challenged. Before accepting this implication, I would like to conclude by asking the following question: what comes after the near-death experience of Ludolph? The answer that *On the Japanese Language* provides to this question also helps us answer, I will argue, one of the central questions of Gates project.

Translating Signifyin(g) and Pronominal Politics

I previously referred to an "internal contradiction" in Gates' academic agenda. One reads in Gates's *Signifyin(g)Monkey* two impulses. Gates' first impulse is to present his intellectual work as translatable. There is a kind of double translation that occurs as Gates articulates signifyin(g); Gatesian signifyin(g) is translatable insofar as the concept is both informed by non-African American literary terms and theories and itself crosses color lines and speaks to broader discourses of literary studies. Even as he claims that signifyin(g) is indigenous to black literature, numerous moments in *The Signifyin(g) Monkey* evince Gates' desire to translate signifyin(g) into and out of the terminology of the (white) Western academy. As such, Gates' "desire here [in *The Signifying Monkey*]" is "to demystify the curious notion that theory is the province of the Western tradition, something alien or removed from a so-called noncanonical

tradition such as that of the Afro-American.”⁹⁴ Alongside Gates’ impulse to translate signifyin(g), however, is also the impulse to lay claim to black literature as “ours” (read: as the property of “African Americans.”) Gates’ is a theory that is “generated from within the black tradition itself,” by which Gates means a theory based on the black vernacular and with genealogical links to a time before the Middle Passage.⁹⁵ As such, this tradition is “ours,” and thus not colonized by the Western academy. “Certainly,” Gates explains, “theoretical traditions are related by analogy”—and it is this “analogy” that assures signifyin(g)’s translatability—“but it seemed to me,” Gates continues, “that an ideal way to confound Eurocentric bias in this project was to explore the black vernacular.”⁹⁶

It is somewhere between Gates’ two impulses—the impulse to translate signifyin(g) and the impulse to figure the black vernacular, which is based on a “learning [of] how to signify [that] is often part of our adolescent education,” as a possession of the black critic that is recalcitrant in the face of (Western) academic colonialism—that the internal contradiction arises. Although Todorov is clearly confused concerning Gates’ motivations when he writes that “its author [Gates] seems to be reinstating what he himself referred to as the “dangerous trope” of “race:” if “racial differences” do not exist, how can they possibly influence literary texts,” Gates vertiginous pronominal politics is partially to blame for Todorov’s misreading.⁹⁷ On one page, Gates implores Todorov to “please note, M. Todorov, that I wrote ‘critic of black literature,’ and not ‘black critic.’”⁹⁸ On the very next page, however, Gates accounts Todorov’s misreading to the fact that “I was engaging in a *black cultural game*, M. Todorov, one known as ‘signifying.’ I was *signifying upon* Bate, as my *black readers* would know from their familiarity with this coded

⁹⁴ Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifyin(g) Monkey* p.xx.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifyin(g) Monkey*, p.xx

⁹⁷ Tzvetan Todorov, “‘Race,’ Writing, and Culture,” p.371.

⁹⁸ Henry Louis gates, “Talkin’ that Talk,” p.406.

exchange. As Louis Armstrong said, “If you have to ask...!”⁹⁹ There is an undeniable inconsistency between the desire to open black literature via translation to all “critics of black literature” and the claim that “black readers” have hermeneutic access to black literature, no questions asked—a delectably ironic claim given that this exchange was occasioned by a special edition of *Critical Inquiry*.

Let me be quick to add that any contemporary, so-called “minority” literary critic should grapple with this internal inconsistency—the desire to both deconstruct and reconstruct minority literature. Invoking Derrida, Gates’ introductory essay to the *Critical Inquiry* collection poses the dilemma as follows: “We must master, as Jacques Derrida writes...how ‘to speak the other’s language without renouncing [our] own.’”¹⁰⁰ Gates falls short of “mastery” and into the internal contradiction between his desire to translate and pronominal political agenda. With perhaps a dash of hyperbole, Adell summarizes Gates’ conundrum as follows:

And so, we are at once forced to confront Gates’s Eurocentrism, for it seems that the more the black theorist writes in the interest of blackness, the greater his Eurocentrism reveals itself to be....As Gates goes back in an effort to resurrect the myth of Esu as ‘the primal figure in a truly black hermeneutic tradition,’ he must employ the research technologies of postmodernism and post-structuralism, so much so that they [Esu and the Signifying Monkey] “speak” like transmogrifications of all the hermeneutical...and rhetorical...paradigms post-structuralism has made ready-at-hand for him.¹⁰¹

If Gates is to speak in tongues as Derrida, he must realize that black literature is not “ours,” no more than theory is “theirs.” Such a realization would call for Gates to: recalibrate “his own” language such that it is cognizant of the fact that it is already shot through with the language of the other (read: renege on his framing of signifyin(g) as “indigenous to the black cultural matrix”) and relinquish the myth of the black vernacular as originary as well as the

⁹⁹ Ibid., p407. Italicized emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁰ Henry Louis Gates, “Writing ‘Race’ and the Difference It Makes, p.13.

¹⁰¹ Sandra Adell, “The Crisis in Black American Literary Criticism and the Postmodern Cures of Houston A. Baker, Jr., and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.,” p.533-534.

essentialist inscription of the black reader as its rightful interpretive descendant that follows from this myth (Diana Fuss provides an astute reading: “What makes the vernacular...so powerful a theme in the work of...Gates...is precisely the fact that it operates as a phantasm, a hallucination of lost origins. It is in the quest to recover, reinscribe, and revalorize the black vernacular that essentialism inheres in the work of...[an] otherwise anti-essentialist theorist.”)¹⁰² Reading Nakagami, a member of Gates’ signifyin(g) circle who wrestled with many of the same texts and questions as Gates, would aid Gates considerably in his recalibration.

On the Japanese Language is framed by a narrative that addresses the selfsame issues—if and how we can translate our “native tongues,” how these translations alter our ownership of languages, and how the language of pronominal politics constructs our individual and group identities—that Gates and Todorov debated. Insofar as Nakagami addresses these issues by way of a framing narrative, he addresses them through a kind of signifyin(g), a kind of repetition with a signal difference. The repetition of the first paragraphs in the last paragraphs of *On the Japanese Language* is unmistakable. The first paragraphs read:

If you came across a foreigner (*gaikokujin*) who couldn’t comprehend a single word of Japanese, from which word would you begin to teach him Japanese?

“See you,” “How’s it going,” “liquor,” “women.” Or maybe you would show him a postcard colored in garish primary colors and teach him that this is the renowned FUJIYAMA, and maybe you would explain to him that the Japanese state and Japan itself brim with marvelous lyric poetry?

Courage, that’s probably where I’d start.

That’s what I wrote in his notebook. I can’t imagine that the word I wrote in Japanese—**courage**—was comprehensible to a twenty-year-old foreigner who would have had desperate difficulties even telling Japanese apart from Swahili from Vietnamese. To this day, I still think all the time about the meaning of the Japanese that I taught him. Even I don’t fully understand the meaning of this one word, “**courage**,” and I’m talking to you in Japanese right now; can you picture a twenty-year-old foreigner headed to the battle front, surrounded by the hot stench of grass, mumbling now and again the one Japanese

¹⁰² Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, p.90.

word that he remembers, “**courage?**” I want to know: if it were you, from which Japanese word you begin to teach him...?¹⁰³

Compare these to the closing paragraphs of *On the Japanese Language*. The narrator, now being interrogated concerning his role in Ludolph’s suicide attempt, revisits the line of inquiry with which the novella begins:

“Courage,” that’s it, I think. That’s what I wrote in the black soldier’s notebook. *Help me!* That’s what the black soldier cried.

The police officer started at my face intently, ridiculing me with his glare. And what about you, could you understand the words that the black soldier cried—*Help me!* Can you translate the English “*Help me!*” into the Japanese that we use? I taught the black soldier the Japanese word “**courage**” without fully knowing what it means.

A soft feeling of nausea suddenly struck me from deep within my body. In that small, hot interrogation room, I turned to the police officer who was scorning and sneering at me and asked him: “If it were you, and you met a foreigner who didn’t know anything about Japanese, what words would you teach them first?” That’s what I want to know. Faced with a foreigner who doesn’t know a single thing about Japanese, what kind of Japanese would you teach him—that’s what I want to know.

The police officer smiled condescendingly, as if my words, trailing off and unclear, were not Japanese, but the words heard in the vicinity of Thailand or Burma.

I felt my entire body being twined by a fear that, in this room, the officer’s derisive laughter would swallow my words, it might even make my body dissolve. I babbled repeatedly words that would hardly voice themselves deep in my body. From which word would you start teaching Japanese—that is what I want to know.¹⁰⁴

If the repetition we sense between the opening and closing frame narratives is indeed an act of signifyin(g), it will go beyond simple repetition to repetition with a signal difference. The frame narrative’s signifyin(g) is a double play on Nakagami’s behalf insofar as the closing frame narrative repeats, critiques and revises both the opening narrative *and* the logic of the essentializing readings of minority group solidarity with which some readers (*i.e.* the BLL, Gates) might approach *On the Japanese Language*, a work of “ethnic” literature. In the opening frame narrative, the reader is led to assume that the narrator, although he doesn’t “fully” comprehend certain words of the Japanese language, is in control of his mother tongue. The

¹⁰³ *Nihongo*, p.129. Capitalized “Fujiyama” and “courage” in bold print in the original.

¹⁰⁴ *Nihongo*, p.206-207. “Help me!” in English in the Japanese original.

narrator's mastery is evinced by the fact that he "is talking to you in Japanese right now." The responsibility for misunderstanding lies on the shoulders of the foreign youth, who can't differentiate "Japanese from Swahili or Vietnamese."

Pace Gates, however, Nakagami's closing frame narrative suggests that the moment we begin to search for a translation of our "native languages" is the moment that we come face to face with the fact that we do not own our native tongues. After the reader has traversed the central narrative, which thematizes the cross-cultural dialogue between the Japanese Boku and the black Ludolph, and arrived at the closing frame narrative, Nakagami shifts the responsibility for misunderstanding onto the narrator's (read: the "native speaker's") shoulders. In stark contrast to the opening frame, it is now the narrator's "trailing off and unclear" Japanese that can't be differentiated from the "words heard in the vicinity of Thailand or Burma." Moreover, within the closing frame's syntactical repetition of "that's what I want to know," we notice syntactical deviation. To mimic the syntax of the Japanese original, the narrator exclaims twice that "I want to know that (*Boku wa sore wo shiritai*), only to have the final sentence of the novel flip this syntax on its head, thus becoming "That is what I want to know (*Sore wo boku wa shiritai*)." Just as the narrator's fear that he is losing control of his native language is twisting, twining, and making his body dissolve, so too is his syntactic control of language twisting and (over)turning. What I am here calling Boku's loss of his native language has been articulated by Atsuko Ueda as the "slippage (*zure*) between Boku's singular linguistic system and 'Japanese'" and by Nakagami himself as the "distance (*kyori*) between 'Japan' and 'me.'"¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Atsuko Ueda, "'Nihongo de kataru koto, 'Nihongo' wo kataru koto: Nakagami Kenji *Nihongo ni tsuite wo megutte* (Narrating in the 'Japanese Language,' Narrating the 'Japanese Language: Nakagami Kenji's *On the Japanese Language*)," p.345; Nakagami, "Watashi wa 'Nihon'-jin na no ka (Am I from 'Japan?')," p.345.

Derrida avers that such babble “ruptures the rational transparency” of “the human community” in order to “interrupt colonial violence or...linguistic imperialism.”¹⁰⁶ Reading the opening frame narrative against the closing frame suggests that Nakagami would concur. The opening frame narrative posits three subject positions: there is the first person singular of the “I” (*Boku*) of the narrator, the second person singular of the “you” (*anata*) to whom “I” asks where to begin teaching Japanese, and the third person singular of the “he” (*kare*). As a native Japanese speaker, Boku supposedly belongs to the “we” of the Japanese state. It is this sense of belonging to the Japanese state that prompts Boku to speak on behalf of Japan in search of a word that might “explain to him that the Japanese state and Japan itself is brimming with marvelous lyric poetry.”¹⁰⁷ Note Boku’s use of the third person singular to refer to Ludolph: “he,” that is, Ludolph, does not belong to the Japanese state. Ludolph’s belonging to a different polity is signaled both by his unfamiliarity with the Japanese language and by the epithets “twenty-year-old foreign youth” and “foreigner,” which occur four times in the two-page opening narrative. Between the “I” and the “he” is the “you” that Boku implores to answer his inquiry. Given that this “you”—an unspecified, ambiguous narratee whose position is superimposed upon that of the reader—is a fellow Japanese speaker who might be able to answer Boku’s question, we are to assume that the “you” of the narratee/reader, like Boku, belongs to Japan by virtue of the adhesive of language.

The pronominal politics of the closing narrative, however, repeat such hasty assumptions in order to critique and implode them. We have already discussed Boku’s loss of the Japanese language and subsequent loss of self and sense of belonging: by the closing frame narrative, Boku clearly does not belong to the Zamyatian we (*wareware*) of the United Front, the

¹⁰⁶ Jacques Derrida, “The Tower of Babel,” p.226.

¹⁰⁷ *Nihongo*, p.129.

connection between Boku and Ludolph has been undermined by misidentification, and Boku is left “shaking as if he has almost completely lost [his] ability to speak” a native language he no longer controls.¹⁰⁸ The closing frame also destabilizes and makes the reader misidentify the third person singular. Ludolph, himself on the brink of death after his suicide attempt, is referred to throughout the narrative as either “the black soldier,” (*kokujin-hei*) or Ludolph. As such, when the closing frame reiterates the term “foreigner”—*i.e.* “Faced with a foreigner who doesn’t know a single thing about Japanese”—the reader cannot be sure that this “foreigner” refers to Ludolph, who has until this point been referred to by either his proper name or black soldier. Rather than a reference to Ludolph in particular, the “foreigner” of the closing narrative seems to refer to a more abstract case—what is *one* to do when faced with a dialogue with a foreigner that requires translation? The closing frame narrative’s shift from the particular to the hypothetical is highlighted by the elision of the “twenty-year-old youth” epithet, which was used to identify Ludolph. As such, the narrative has effectively split the third person singular into multiple singularities. This split in the third person is juxtaposed with an analogous split of the second person. Recall the opening frame’s superimposition of the narratee and the reader and Boku’s appeal to this narratee/reader to help him teach the Japanese language as a fellow representative of the “Japanese state.” In the closing frame narrative, the second person is occupied both by this narratee/reader and the police officer, a representative *par excellence* of the Japanese state, whom Boku directly addresses. This representative *par excellence*, however, not only has no answer to Boku’s question, his voice is the catalyst of Boku’s loss of voice and self. After his exchanges with Ludolph—himself a figure that both does and does not belong to the United States—Boku can no longer effectively communicate with the representative authorities of

¹⁰⁸ *Nihongo*, p.203.

Japan, and thus can no longer assume that he belongs to the Japanese community by virtue of the adhesive of language.

After Ludolph's suicide attempt, then, *On the Japanese Language* leaves us with an "I" that is "dissolving" (*yōkai*) and losing possession of its native language, a "he" that has been split into multiple singularities, and a divided "you" with which a first-person plural solidarity can no longer be underwritten by way of a shared mother tongue. We should note, however, that even after such "ruptures"—Ludolph's suicide attempt being the ultimate rupture—Boku continues to search desperately for a translation of the Japanese language so that he might speak with the Ludolph. As the "I," "he," and first "you" dissolve, Boku continues to implore the second "you," the narratee/reader, to answer his question: "If it were you, and you met a foreigner who didn't know anything about Japanese, what words would you teach them first?"¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the only potential community that Boku has left is the one with a "you" that, like him, does not own a native tongue and will speak in translation—hence Boku's question: "Can you translate the English *'Help me!'* into the Japanese *that we use?*"¹¹⁰ Note that Boku's native language is not something that he owns, but something that he borrows, shares, and uses with other speakers. Boku's perpetual search for translation is indicative of Nakagami's answer to the question how we are to speak the other's tongue without renouncing our own. *On the Japanese Language* posits "'English' and 'Japanese' [as] unequivocally designated language areas that are brought about only by way of translation." As such, the text provides us with a literary counterpart to Derrida's philosophical treatment of the necessity of translation.¹¹¹ Derrida deems "the law of a translation" as "both necessary and impossible...translation [as] duty, and debt, but the debt one

¹⁰⁹ *Nihongo*, p.207.

¹¹⁰ *Nihongo*, p.206.

¹¹¹ Ueda, p.345.

can no longer discharge.”¹¹² As a permanently insolvent debt, speaking in translation obligates Boku to always search for the language of the Other without renouncing his own. Such a search, Derrida suggests, will lead to two conditions: first, fissures in “universal tongue[s],” “unique genealogy” and the “peaceful transparency of the human community,” and, second, new forms of community in which we “belong without belonging.”¹¹³

Conclusion

Nakagami’s vacillation between identification and misidentification, his refusal to submit fully to any imperial syntax—even the syntax of his “native” language, his constant struggle to communicate via translation rather than originary language, in a word, his signifyin(g), exemplifies the act of “speaking the other’s language without renouncing [our] own” to which Gates aspires. It is easy to sympathize with the frustration Gates might feel upon reading Nakagami: Gates, who took up the project of reading black literature in age when the academy saw identifying with such work as intellectual anathema, is now being asked to misidentify with that very body of literature. Nevertheless, such misidentification, Derrida and Nakagami would argue, the ability to “belong without belonging,” is the crucial starting point from which Boku and “you” (the second you) might become a member of a truly inclusive “we,” hence Boku’s search for the place to begin teaching the Japanese language even after Ludolph’s suicide attempt.

I turn to Judith Butler to articulate the burgeoning possibility of building miscommunities alluded to in the conclusion of *On the Japanese Language*: “Does politicalization always need to overcome disidentification? What are the possibilities of politicizing *disidentification*, this

¹¹² Derrida, “The Tower of Babel,” p.226.

¹¹³ Ibid.

experience of *misrecognition*, this uneasy sense of standing under a sign to which one does and does not belong?”¹¹⁴ Nakagami’s politicalization of misidentification asks us to see terms such as “black” and “*buraku*” as a “permanent site of contest.”¹¹⁵ As a permanent site of contest, such terms never fully exhaust and define identities and thus never definitively dictate the terms on which others might join political communities. Such permanent contest would require of Gates a double movement: “to invoke the category [*i.e.* of black, of *buraku*], and hence, provisionally to institute and identify *and at the same time* to open the category as a site of permanent political contest...to interrogate the exclusions by which it proceeds, and to do this precisely in order to learn how to live the contingency of the political signifier in a culture of democratic contestation.”¹¹⁶

Although such a double movement, “open[s] up a difficult future terrain of community, one in which the hope of ever fully recognizing oneself in the terms by which one signifies is sure to be disappointed,” Nakagami entrenches himself on this terrain as he struggled to repeat and revise the essentializing constructions of *burakuness* in imperial syntax.¹¹⁷ Nakagami’s double movement obligates him to trade the stability of an essential identity and group solidarity for a vantage point from which to highlight the cursory nature of essential identities and group solidarities. Nakagami parlays the loss of an essentialized identity—he once claimed, for example that “I don’t need to be in Japan; I don’t need to be Japanese”—into the gain of a transient misidentity that can join communities situated well beyond the borders of Japan—hence Nakagami’s claim in the very same text in which he loses his “Japaneseness” that: “wherever I

¹¹⁴ Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p.219.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.221.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.221.

¹¹⁷ Butler, p.221

go, people mistake me for a native. It happened in Hong Kong, it happened in Macau...it happened in New York.”¹¹⁸

I have tried to add the following to the scholarly consensus that Nakagami turned to multiple traditions of minority writing across the globe in his search for an alternative to imperial syntax: that his turn to black language, literature and music in the late 1960s formed a foundation upon which his future writings would build, that this informative engagement with blackness spanned from his early 1960s short fiction to his late 1970s *buraku* cultural criticism and 1980s speeches and reportage such as *Ōe Kenzaburō, the Early Years: On Shiiku*, and that Nakagami perpetually grappled with the problem of balancing his identification with blackness with his desire to safeguard against the formation of a *buraku*-black based imperial syntax. The language and tropes of black literature provide Nakagami with a template for writing himself into and out of two communities simultaneously; even as he forms solidarities with transnational minority groups in order to build an amalgamated language that won't buckle in the face of imperial syntax, he signifies both on the master('s) trope and the tropes of *burakumin* cultural protest, both of which would ask him to essentialize his identity in a manner that is no less violent than that of imperial syntax, to mitigate his first person singularity.

I'd like to conclude by taking Nakagami up on his suggestion regarding the necessity of translation. The following is a translation of an excerpt from Nakagami's *Buffalo Soldiers*. The translated passage, the token's signifyin(g) in particular, synthesizes many of the arguments I have made here. In the excerpt, Nakagami relays what we are to assume is a true story from his time in New York City circa 1988. A friend of Nakagami's has invited him to watch the dance rehearsal of an all-black dance troupe. Nakagami writes that:

¹¹⁸Nakagami Kenji, *Hakai seyo, to Airā wa itta*, p.54, 21.

I watched the black men and women rehearse for an hour.
 And then I made up my mind.
 I would join their all black group, dance with them as a black person who came from Japan.
 I am black.
 Inescapably black.
 Of course, this is me we're talking about, so I've never once thought about trying to escape from my blackness.
 I know that black is beautiful.
 I know that black is purity.
 My knowledge of this, my sensibility regarding it, in a word it is the first salvo in the body's battle against language.
 No, if we account for the fact that I'm a black person who came from Japan, this is language's first challenge to the body...

[Now on his way home, Nakagami] Went down the stairs to get on the subway in the Bronx and was about to buy a token. When I pulled a dollar out of my wallet, a young black person standing next to the ticket gate said "You wanna buy a token?" and presented the tokens he had in the palm of his hand. A token's a token no matter if I buy it from the booth in the station or from the youth hanging out there. And I knew that, in Harlem or in the slums, subway tokens were used as currency. The youngster probably found the token in the back of a taxi or on the street and came here to sell it. And he's black. I'm black too. In other words, we're brothers.

OK, I'll buy it from you. I bought two tokens from him for two dollars... Those two tokens. When I put the tokens in, the turnstile's bar didn't budge. The coins were, in other words, fake. I'd been duped by the fake coins; the black woman in the booth who sold me a real token clicked her tongue in sympathy.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Nakagami Kenji, *Baffarō Sorujā* (Buffalo Soldier), p.251-253.

Chapter Four

Narration and the Color Line: Black Authority, Transracial Narration and Yamada Eimi

Here in lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being Black... This meaning is not without interest to you, gentle reader, for the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color-line.

—W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks*

At certain times I have no race, I am *me*. When I set my hat at a certain angle and saunter down Seventh Avenue, Harlem City, feeling as snooty as the lions in front of the Forty-Second Street Library, for instance. So far as my feelings are concerned, Peggy Hopkins Joyce on the Boule Mich with her gorgeous raiment, stately carriage, knees knocking together in a most aristocratic manner, has nothing on me. The cosmic Zora emerges. I belong to no race nor time. I am the eternal feminine with its string of beads.

—Zora Neale Hurston, *How it Feels to be Colored Me*

I've always liked James Baldwin, so I've always thought that if he could write the way he did, then I can write the way I do.

—Yamada Eimi, *Tokyo Journal*

Introduction

It seems that the problem of the color line outlived Du Bois' prognosis. The black author, however, didn't fare as well. We left the black author and the notion of black authority in critical condition, refused to pronounce it irrevocably dead, and promised to call the paramedics at a later time. Nakagami's signifyin(g) brings us to the precipice of what can be called the death of the black author. If, as Gates contends, "the blackness of black literature is not an absolute or metaphysical condition, as Ellison rightly maintains, nor is it some transcending essence that exists outside of its manifestations in texts. Rather, the 'blackness' of black American literature can be discerned *only through close readings*. By 'blackness' here I mean specific *uses of literary language that are shared, repeated, critiqued, and revised*," and Nakagami Kenji, a "Japanese" author, has proven himself to be a highly capable close reader who shares, repeats, critiques, and revises black literary language, then the signifyin(g) monkey

has, to borrow the Japanese idiom, fallen from the tree.¹ The impact upon landing has left the black author in a comatose state.

It is precisely at this moment, a moment in which the black author seems to be breathing her last breaths, that we should ask two questions. First: what is a black author? Indeed, if reading black literature has taught us anything it is that blackness thrives and survives long after the death knell has been sounded. So too is it with black authority; in the words of Sean Burke, “the concept of the author is never more alive than when pronounced dead.”² Even after Gates has (albeit complicity) exposed the theoretical underpinnings of what Charles Davis called “the mixed heritage of the black novel,” we still have little to no trouble identifying black authors and “putting them in their place” in the curriculum, in the classroom, in the bookstore, *et cetera*.³ And with good reason. The first question to be asked investigates the ideological impetus behind that “good reason.” The question is, then, if the signifyin(g) monkey has survived the fall, what are the constitutive characteristics of what we call black authors?

The second question that must be addressed as we consider the status of the black author after she has signified herself to death is as follows: how is it that black authority continues to function as the borders of black literature become more and more diasporic, more open to the

¹ Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*, p.121. My emphasis. We see a similar gesture in *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the Racial Self*. Cf. p.275 of *Figures*: “In literature, blackness is produced in the text itself only through a complex process of signification. There can be no transcendent blackness, for it cannot and does not exist beyond manifestations in specific figures. Jes Grew, put simply, cannot conjure its texts; texts, in the broadest sense of the term (Charlie Parker’s music, Ellison’s fictions, Romare Bearden’s collages, etc.), conjure Jes Grew.” “Or again in his foreword to *The Collected Works of Phillis Wheatley*, p. xviii: “Literary works configure into a tradition not because of some mystical collective unconscious determined by the biology of race or gender, but because writers read other writers and *ground* their representations of experience in models of language provided largely by other writers to whom they feel akin. It is through this mode of literary revision, amply evident in the *texts* themselves—in formal echoes, recast metaphors, even in parody—that a “tradition” emerges and defines itself.” Each of these assertions point to the basis of black literature as sharable language that is not rooted in some illusion of the transcendental race of the author. The expression “*saru mo ki kara ochiru*” (even monkeys fall from trees), often used to admonish overconfidence, implies that even those who have mastered a given domain can make mistakes and fall from grace.

² Sean Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, p.7.

³ See Davis, “The Mixed Heritage of the Modern Black Novel.”

inclusion of authors such as Nakagami Kenji? This question is clearly invested in the possibility of transracial narration⁴. The notion of transsexual or transgendered narration doesn't strike us as odd; texts spanning from the *Tosa nikki* to Elaine Showalter's "Critical Cross-Dressing: Male Feminist and the Woman of the Year" invite us to question the porousness of the borders of authorial sexuality. Yet, for all the critical emphasis on identity as construct and the distinction between what Wayne Booth calls the "flesh and blood" author and the implied author of works of literature, the notion of a Japanese person writing like/as a black author seems to leave us with more questions than the notion of, say, a man writing like/as a woman. To list a few of those lingering concerns: What happens to black literature if/when it can be written in Japanese? Why is the "authenticity" of *African-American* literature, a literature that seems to be undeniably diasporic, so tangled with English composition? How do transracial authors fit into the canons of their "native" tongues? What happens to the fixity of race in moments of transracial narration?

Yamada Eimi (1959-) is a prime candidate (or perhaps suspect) for the position of addressing the intersection of transracial narration and the possibility of black authority after its demise. Yamada (nee Yamada Futaba) began reading black literature in high school (she was particularly enthralled by the words and works of Baldwin.) This affinity toward black literature would gradually evolve into a penchant for black music and black men. Her marriage to Craig Douglas, a black soldier formerly stationed in Yokosuka, would take her to New York, Douglas's hometown, for extended periods of time. These various encounters with blackness highly inform Yamada's literary landscape: her complete works to date include literally thousands of pages of short stories, novellas, novels, manga, literary criticism, dialogues,

⁴ As it is mobilized here, the "trans-" of "transracial" does not imply transcendent. I use the term as it used in adoption studies, that is, to denote narration in which non-black authors claim and/or are read as composing "black narratives."

autobiography and “how-to” guides that feature African Americans and African-Americana as their focal points.

These encounters were also formative in the creation—both her self-styled creation and creation at the hands of readers and critics—of Yamada’s authorial persona. As she wrote in the afterword to *Soul Music Lovers Only*: “My heart is always a sista. I’m the only sista in the world who can handle Japanese beautifully.”⁵ Here, Yamada uses the Japanese characters for “black woman” (*kokujin-jo*) and transliterates them with the reading “sista” in *katakana*. Yamada twists, turns, and often recreates the Japanese lexicon and grammar, in this case presenting the reading of a Japanese *kanji* compound as a word from black parlance, in an attempt to get Japanese to speak black talk. Given her signifyin(g), it comes as no surprise then that Yamada immediately comes to mind when we ask questions concerning transracial narration and post-death black authority. As Richard Okada frames his reading of Yamada, “How does the notion of a ‘borderless world’ affect other borders: of identities, of home bases, of texts? Do those who labor under the aegis of something called ‘Japanese literature’...have anything to learn from such studies?...[Upon reading Yamada] One of my main concerns will be to resituate the question of identity formation and the problematic of the ‘subject position’ within the global issues relevant to Yamada’s discourse.”⁶

It should also come as no surprise that her works are surrounded by controversy; writing and speaking in the black voice has often been seen as a sign of dissent. Yamada’s literary debut, the 1985 *Beddo taimu aizu* (*Bedtime Eyes*), immediately ignited scandal. With its no-holds-barred depiction of a love affair between a Japanese jazz singer and a black soldier told

⁵ Yamada Eimi, *Soul Music Lovers Only* p.214-215. All translations of Japanese are my own unless otherwise specified.

⁶ Richard Okada, “Positioning Subjects Globally: A Reading of Yamada Eimi,” p.112;113.

from the female perspective, *Bedtime Eyes* sent tremors through the patriarchal, xenophobic components of the Japanese literary establishment, readership, and mass media. (And if they didn't feel the tremors, the aftershocks—i.e. published nude modeling pictures Yamada took with black lovers—certainly did the trick.) Yamada's detractors label her works "*mondai sakuhin*," "problem texts," pointing to their flat, over-sexualized, Self-serving, reifying, and ultimately racist and stereotypical depictions of black men on this side of the Pacific and to their scandalous, philogynistic handling of Japanese men on the other. Yamada's exponents laud the realism, feminism, and ethics of her texts and often charge the other side of misreading or under- and over-reading her works. Arguing that Yamada's texts are or aren't racist would be a much easier and, in my opinion, more unproductive task than agenda that waits us. Rather than weigh in on either side (it seems to me that there is a little truth on both sides, that Yamada's texts are a perhaps unwitting testament to the complex and contradictory nature of writing race: a text can be both racist *and* feminist, both self-serving *and* ethical) and partake of the interpretative violence that inevitable occurs under the force of that weight, I am interested in the stunning parallels between Yamada's predicament—whose transracial narration has effectively placed her between members of a Japanese audience who want her to write more like a proper Japanese woman and an American audience that wants her to write more proper representations of blackness—and the predicament the African American author has faced since the inception of the term.

In short, Yamada Eimi crosses many lines, but here we will consider the issues surrounding her claim of crossing the literary color line. I return to the color line, and bring with me the risks associated with such a return, because I, along with thinkers such as Samira Kawash, believe that (in literary studies in particular) we "might be tempted to ignore or forget

the constitutive power of the color line itself as it produces and organizes knowledge, power, and subjectivity.”⁷ “Because I write novels in Japan that deal with black folks,” Yamada bemoans, “I get it from two sides. There are those who think ‘you’re one of those broads that likes black people’ and those who think that I deal with black people stereotypically, that I’m really a racist.”⁸ Yamada’s position as an author “in between” provides us with an opportunity to answer our central inquiries—how do the possibilities of interracial intertextuality and transracial narration impact the authoritative borders, that is, the color lines which govern “blackness” and “Japaneseness”—by way of analysis of her texts and criticism of those texts. In this I follow the suggestion of Rey Chow: “Questions of authority, and with them hegemony, representation, and right, can be dealt with adequately only if we insist on the careful analyses of texts, on responsibly engaged rather than facilely dismissive judgments, and on deconstructing the ideological assumptions in discourses of ‘opposition’ and ‘resistance’ as well as in discourse of mainstream power.”⁹

We will answer these two questions in three parts. First, we will trace several foundational moments in the history of the concept of black authority. I trace these moments in order to delineate what I call the black author function. Although the approach is certainly viable, rather than thinking of the doubleness of black literature, its “signifyin(g),” as a characteristic inherent to black linguistic works of art, I propose that we—tentatively and experimentally—consider it as a discursive maneuver, an extension of the color line logic socioculturally and sociopolitically mobilized in order to construct and police the bounds of black authors. Second, we will consider reconstructionist interpolations of black authors and

⁷ Samira Kawash, *Dislocating the Color Line: Identity, Hybridity, and Singularity in African-American Narrative*, p.4.

⁸ Yamada Eimi and Yoshida Ruiko, *Burakku no rizumu ni deau toki* (When We Meet the Black Rhythm), p.60.

⁹ Rey Chow, “Theory, Area Studies, Cultural Studies: Issues of Pedagogy in Multiculturalism” from *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies*, p.115.

literature and their deconstructability through Japanese literature. Analogous to what Kenneth Warren has referred to as the “untenability of a literary color line,” the reconstructionist theories rehearsed here set the parameters and draw the borderlines for black authorship, but they inevitably do so in such a way that non-black authors can fulfill the criteria for black authorship. With this, a space is opened for a reading of Yamada Eimi as a “black” author.¹⁰ The third section doubles back on the first two. We will first explore the criticism of Yamada Eimi and consider the affinity between that critique and the critiques of black authorship presented in the first section. We will subsequently investigate the techniques Yamada’s texts employ in order to imply a black author and combat the criticism that plague them. These transracial narrational techniques, many of which are borrowed from the very lexicon of anti-essentialism that theorize “postmodern” black authority, leave Yamada’s authorial persona somewhere between Japanese and black, a betweenness that in many ways mirrors that of black authors. Or, to recapitulate, if we take seriously Yamada’s claim to speak like, as and for black folks, then there is a sense in which her predicament is one that black authors have faced since the inception of the term “black author” and critics of black literature have spent decades trying to articulate—perhaps disregarding the color line as Yamada (putatively) does will shed light on this shared predicament.

Part I: Multiple Audiences and the Value and Values of Black Authors

Although it goes without saying, perhaps it goes better with saying that it is impossible for a single work of criticism to definitively answer the question “what is a black author.” This essay is certainly no exception. What I would like to do here is pinpoint a constellation of ideas

¹⁰ Kenneth Warren, *What Was African American Literature?*, p.120.

that recur in early modern to modern treatises on the nature of black authority; we will get a stellar parallax view of this constellation when we turn to critic's readings of Yamada Eimi.

The question being asked here—what is a black author, or rather, how was “black authority” defined and delineated in early modern American discourse during the birth of African American letters—is clearly indebted to Foucault. Foucault reminds us that the notion of the author, or the author function, “does not develop spontaneously as the attribution of a discourse to an individual. It is, rather, the result of a complex operation which constructs a certain rational being that we call ‘author.’”¹¹ This “complex operation” produces authors that are both “seen as a historical figure at the crossroads of a certain number of events” and yet it “does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects—positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals.” Moreover, the Foucauldian author, and the signature of the author's name in particular, “performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, *assuring a classificatory function. Such a name permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others.*”¹² As such, the reader of the authored text must receive the work “in a certain mode” and with a “certain status.”¹³ In light of Foucault's claim that “the author function does not affect all discourses in a universal and constant way,” the search for the black author function is a search for the peculiarities of black authority: who are the “historical figures” at the crossroads of black authority, what is the nature of the “several selves” of black authors, how was the black author function mobilized in order to define,

¹¹ Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” p.110.

¹² Ibid. p.107.

¹³ Ibid.

classify, group, define, and differentiate “black literature” from “non-black literature,” how does this classification dictate the reader’s reception of the black-authored text?¹⁴

To be perhaps overly schematic for the sake of clarity, in early modern American literature, the following constellation of writing and reading paradigms are brought about by the black author function : 1) the manifestation of what Foucault calls the “several selves” of the black author via a written negotiation with the disciplinary power of multiple audiences and multiple gazes; 2) black literary criticism that questions the intersection of the representation of “black values” vis-à-vis the value of black literature qua literature; and 3) a determination of an author’s “blackness” by way of literary content as it pertains to the first two issues rather than the racial makeup of the author.

African American Literary Criticism: 1773-2000, a reader that presents a significant collection of African American literary “manifestoes, credos, prefaces, introductions, interviews, and critical essays” in order to “broaden critical inquiries into the function of African American literary art, the role of the African American writer, and the artistic responsibility of the audience,” begins with the following inquiries:

- 1) What are the responsibilities of African American writers to their art forms? To themselves? To their audiences?
- 2) What are the responsibilities of audiences, particularly black audiences, white audiences, and others, to African American literary art?¹⁵

Although this essay rehearses only a fraction of the treatises included in Ervin’s reader, we agree on the fact that black authors are often defined by how they answer, that is, their responsibility, to multiple audiences, multiple gazes. Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark* is premised on the

¹⁴ Foucault, p.109

¹⁵ *African American Literary Criticism: 1773-2000*, p.1-2, 9.

suggestion that the birth of white American literature assumed a homogenized audience even as its material was mined from the plurality of racial identities in America. Black authors never had the (should we say) privilege or (should we say) myopia required to assume a singular audience; from Du Bois' double consciousness to Gates' signifyin(g), black authors rarely pictured themselves as a member of a singularized audience. The lineage black authors envisioned themselves to be in was—more often than not—pluralized, tracing its roots both through African and Anglo-European sources. When I refer to the pluralized audience of black authority, I refer both to the black author's ability to write to and for multiple audiences and the author's participation in several audiences.

Before this responsibility to themselves or to their audiences, if we are to follow Ervin's sequencing, the African American writer is responsible to "literary art forms." The overwhelming majority of contemporary theoretical meditations on literary blackness (and we will explore several of these theoretical meditations in part two) considered "black literature" to be a phrase that denotes the primacy of "blackness" to "literature." Once the terms of blackness have been established, the challenge is to see if this blackness can be made literary. In earlier, namely eighteenth through early-twentieth century compositions on the makeup of black literature, the connotation of the term is effectively inversed. There was little question as to whether or not blackness could be made literary: laws that prohibited teaching the "three Rs" to slaves or slave narratives produced by white Americans served as tacit promissory notes of blackness' ability to become literary. To the contrary, the emphasis was placed on the literature, or rather the qualification or disqualification of the literariness of black works. The question was not if blackness could be made literary, but if literature could be "blackened" and still be considered literature or—if we shift our viewpoint to that of black readers, writers, and those

interested in “representative” black voices—if “Literature” was a viable avenue through which to narrate black experiences. This conundrum often placed race in a secondary position; writing “black literature” was not simply a matter of writing with a black hand. The value of the literary content vis-à-vis the values of those who attempted to write it often vied for the spot as primary determinant of what constitutes black literature. As such, the race of the author gradually takes a backseat to an analysis of the “race” of the literature, or to considerations of how an author negotiates her “black American values” (even if the author is say, only half black or Jamaican) with the “proper” value of literature.¹⁶ We will witness this process play out among: Phillis Wheatley, Olaudah Equiano, Charles Chesnutt, James Baldwin and, in the final section of this essay, Yamada Eimi.

Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784) whose name was an amalgamation of *The Phillis*, the slaver that kidnapped her, and the Wheatley’s, the Boston family that taught Phillis English as well as the Greek and Latin classics, is in many rights the matriarch of African American literature. The inception of African American literature at the hands of Wheatley traversed a curious labyrinth. Wheatley mastered the English language “in sixteen months time from her arrival [sic]” and subsequently turned her attention to poetry, particularly the verse of Milton and

¹⁶ There is a considerable amount of affinity between the argument I make here and the argument Kenneth Warren makes in *What Was African American Literature*, a text I came across after crafting and drafting what is written here. In *What Was*, Warren argues that “African American literature” is a literary genre born of and confined to a particular historical moment, namely the moment in which Jim Crow underwrote the possibility of an author speaking on behalf of the black race en masse. Remember that Foucault suggests that authors become necessary only when individuals must both own and own up to works of literature, that is, when they must be punished for the words on the page. As such, Warren’s emphasis on Jim Crow, the literary value of black literature, and the debatable nature of the “blackness” of black texts is an inspiration to my research. I take issue, however, with Warren’s provocative use of definitions and periodization to the end of declaring the “end” of African American literature. If read through Warren, the argument presented here suggests that African American literature, and, by proxy, authors, are not dead. Rather, we have entered a new iteration of African American literature, an iteration in which the fragmented logic of late capitalism rather than Jim Crow underwrites African American literature such that “non-black” (whatever that might mean) authors make contributions to the genre as well.

Pope.¹⁷ By 1772, Wheatley had completed a poetry collection. This, it would seem, should mark the genesis of African American literature. Wheatley, however, could not find a publisher for her collection because Boston publishers were incredulous as to whether or not a black slave could produce verse of the caliber of Wheatley's collection. The fact that Wheatley had written the poetry, in concert with the fact that John Wheatley vouched for its authenticity, was not enough to produce publishable black literature. Wheatley was black, her poetry was literature, and yet she could not couple the two into black literature because "Numbers would be ready to suspect they were not really the Writings of Phillis."¹⁸

Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* would not become publishable African American literature until it passed what Gates calls "surely one of the oddest oral examinations on record."¹⁹ Eighteen of Boston's most distinguished citizens, including His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson, then governor of Massachusetts, and John Hancock, examined Wheatley to determine if she was capable of composing the poetry written in her collection. Apparently, Wheatley passed; her 1773 *Poems on Various Subjects* was prefaced with an "Attestation," signed by the committee that served as a written testament to the fact that "We whose Names are under-written, do assure the World, that the Poems specified in the following Page, were, (as we verily believe) written by Phillis, a young Negro Girl."²⁰ With this, we have one of the origins of publishable African American literature...in London; Wheatley had trouble procuring a publisher in Boston even with the attestation attached and would have to turn to London publishers in order to find a market for her work.

¹⁷ John Wheatley, from *The Collected Works of Phillis Wheatley*, p.vi.

¹⁸ "Attestation," from *The Collected Works of Phillis Wheatley*.

¹⁹ *The Collected Works of Phillis Wheatley*, p.ix.

²⁰ "Attestation," from *The Collected Works of Phillis Wheatley*.

At the very onset of black literature, Wheatley was literally subjected to an audience with multiple readers. Her poetry—which heavily featured both Biblical allusions and references to sun worship, was inspired by the works of Pope and Milton, and was often composed in heroic couplets—would also set the precedent of the Black author’s negotiation of literary value and value systems within multiple audiences and the reading of race rooted in this negotiation. Wheatley’s case carried significant gravitas due to the fact that Wheatley challenged the 18th-century discourse on the proper place of blacks in the chain of being. Voltaire was convinced that, “Genius, which is rare everywhere, can be found in all parts of the earth. Fontenelle was wrong to say that there would never be poets among Negroes; there is presently a Negro woman who writes very good English verse. She is named Phillis Wheatley.”²¹ Thomas Jefferson was not as convinced: “Comparing them by their faculties...it appears to me that in memory they are equal to whites; in reason much inferior...Among the blacks is misery enough, God knows, but no poetry...Religion indeed, has produced a Phyllis Whately [sic]; but it could not produce a poet. The compositions published under her name are below the dignity of criticism.”²² As the “enlightened” thinkers of her day debated the literary value of her works and its relation to her black values, others would begin to read the race of her texts: “Phillis Wheatley has been condemned for more than a century by whites and blacks alike for failing to espouse in any way the plight of her race...The common view, in effect, is that she was the white man’s ideal of a good ‘nigger’—so good, in fact, that she was almost white.”²³

Wheatley has engendered a tripartite template—on trial by multiple audiences, held responsible for both the value of her literature and the values they present, having her race read

²¹ Voltaire, *Oeuvres Completes*, as cited in *Critical Essays on Phillis Wheatley*, p.33.

²² Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, as cited in *Critical Essays on Phillis Wheatley*, p.42.

²³ R. Lynn Matson, “Phillis Wheatley—Soul Sister?” p.222-30.

“not because of some mystical collective unconscious determined by the biology of race or gender, but because writers read other writers and *ground* their representations of experience in models of language provided largely by other writers to whom they feel akin [which is, in Wheatley’s works, Pope and Milton]”—that we will see applied again and again to the black authors who were to follow her. Let us tentatively and with tongue placed firmly in cheek call this template the black author function. I will argue that Yamada is read vis-à-vis a similar function which might be called the black Japanese author function. For the remainder of this section, I would like to survey several reiterations of this function.

Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797) was eleven when he was kidnapped from present-day Nigeria. Equiano had the (relatively speaking) good fortune of being purchased by a British naval captain and spent his adolescence seafaring, being taught letters and Christianity by fellow sailors, and saving money to purchase his freedom. With the four gifts he acquired from the seas—a cosmopolitan view of the world, a voracious appetite for reading, a staunch belief in the precepts of Christianity, and freedom—Equiano became a vocal participant in the British Parliament’s 1780s debate on whether or not the slave trade should be abolished. His most significant contribution to the discussion was the 1789 *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*. The trifold juxtaposition of Equiano’s undeniable humanity as verified by his acumen and ability to narrate, his at times gruesome depictions of the horrors of slavery, and a firm belief in the Christian ethics of Western society culminated in a two-volume indictment of the peculiar institution. *The Interesting Narrative* left its mark both as a call to arms for social change and as a founding moment in the slave narrative genre.

A significant reason for the potency of both *The Interesting Life* in particular and the slave narrative genre in general was its position vis-à-vis the black author function. We see in the very title of Equiano's narrative a testament to its ability to speak to and for a pluralized audience: there is Olaudah Equiano, the African slave who introduces us to the ways of the Eboe people, and Gustavus Vassa, the name Equiano received from his British master, or a signification of Equiano's forced and subsequent voluntary entry into the Western world.²⁴ As Valerie Smith explains: "Equiano's narrative retains a quality of doubleness that correlates with the complex interrelation between his origins and socialization. That duplicity makes possible his authority over his form and its implicit ideology."²⁵

We see too the negotiation of value and values in the slave narrative. Although they can be read as literary works of art, the value of the slave narrative was defined primarily against the agenda of the abolitionist movement. To have written testaments from former slaves was invaluable insofar as they both proved the humanity of the black "species" and made apparent the atrocity of slavery. Moreover, this value was juxtaposed with the notions of humanity, freedom, compassion and brotherly love as they were delineated in the Christian and Enlightenment value systems. In the words of Equiano:

Permit me, with the greatest deference and respect, to lay at your feet the following genuine Narrative; the chief design of which is to excite in your august assemblies a sense of compassion for the miseries which the Slave-Trade has entailed on my unfortunate countrymen. By the horrors of that trade was I first torn away from all the tender connexions that were naturally dear to my heart; but these, through the mysterious ways of Providence, I ought to regard as infinitely more than compensated by the introduction I have thence obtained to the knowledge of the Christian religion, and of a nation which, by its liberal sentiments, its humanity, the glorious freedom of its government, and its proficiency in arts and sciences, has exalted the dignity of human nature.²⁶

²⁴ In 1792, Equiano married Susannah Cullen of Cambridgeshire and raised a family in Britain.

²⁵ Valerie Smith, *Self-Discovery and Authority in Afro-American Narrative*, p.13.

²⁶ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*, p.140.

Given that the value of the “so wholly devoid of literary merit” slave narrative—a value that would in turn determine which texts were published and purchased—was intimately connected with the predominately white abolitionist movement, it was only a matter of time before the race of the narratives and the narrativity of race would come into question.²⁷ The necessity of this question was exacerbated by rampant amanuensis, in which white authors would transcribe, edit, “edit,” in some cases produce, and preface slave narratives in order to verify their authenticity and value. Within Equiano’s claim that “understanding is not confined to feature or colour,” or Douglass’ claim that “for a time...[I] was made to forget that my skin was dark and my hair crisped” by working with the abolitionist movement, there lies the germ of the destabilization of the absoluteness of race, the suggestion that race is interpretively read and not written in stone, that accompanies the black author function.²⁸

We have witnessed the jurisdiction of the black author function at the birth of both African-American poetry and the slave narrative. We now turn to the turn-of-the-century to see the black author function play out in the works of Charles Chesnutt. Before the literary sleuthing of Gates that reestablished Wilson’s place in the black literary canon, many referred to Charles Chesnutt as “the first Negro novelist.”²⁹ Chesnutt, who was “biologically and self-professedly a man of color, although not visibly so,” was intimately interested in the plurality of his literary audience and heritage. In Chesnutt’s summation, “substantially all of [his] writings, with the exception of *The Conjure Woman*, have dealt with the problems of people of mixed blood.”³⁰

Chesnutt was clearly cognizant of the pluralized nature of the black literature within

²⁷ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*.

²⁸ Equiano, p.150; Frederick Douglass. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*, p.370.

²⁹ Charles Chesnutt, “Post Bellum, Pre Harlem,” p.546. All Chesnutt excerpts taken from *Charles W. Chesnutt, Essays and Speeches*.

³⁰ *Charles W. Chesnutt, Essays and Speeches*, p.xxiii; Chesnutt, “Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem,” p.547.

which his literary value and values were negotiated: “If the term ‘Negro Literature’ is taken in the broad sense in which it is being used nowadays, as including books by colored writers and books about the Negro, and if by the word ‘literature’ is meant merely books and other writing, there has been for a long time a very large body of Negro literature...”³¹ Here, “books about the Negro,” which Chesnutt deems a subset of “Negro Literature” in the broader sense of the term, refers to texts written by non-black authors. What narrows “Negro Literature” is not the “Negro,” but the “Literature:” “when we come to literature in the narrower sense, that is, to *belles lettres*, ‘beautiful writing,’ imaginative writing, such as poetry or fiction...nothing of this sort worthwhile, by any high standard, had, up to our own day emanated from colored American writers, and for the best of reasons.”³² This “best reason” is that the writer, in Chesnutt’s view, needs “a background of freedom and culture. The Negro in America had no such background.”³³ As such, Chesnutt claimed that the value of black literature was often nullified by a hyperbolic fixation on salacious black values: “The Negro novel, whether written by white or colored authors...reveal such an intimate and meticulous familiarity with the baser aspects of Negro life...that one is inclined to wonder how and from what social sub-sewers they gathered their information.”³⁴

Du Bois, whose authority as a black author was challenged by *ad hominem* attacks of his “mulatto” ancestry, argued that the black artist’s work occurs between two audiences competing notions of literary value and values: “the white public” which “demands from its artists, literary and pictorial, racial pre-judgment which deliberately distorts Truth and Justices” and the “young and slowly growing black public” which “still wants its prophets almost equally

³¹ Chesnutt, “The Negro in Present Day Fiction,” p.517.

³² Ibid., p.519.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Chesnutt, “Post Bellum-Pre Harlem,” p.546.

unfree...bound by all sorts of customs that have come down as second-hand soul clothes.”³⁵

Chesnutt too would find himself trapped between “racial pre-judgement” and “second-hand soul clothes.” In “Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem,” Chesnutt explains that his publishers initially elided references to his race for fear of walking the value/values tightrope: “At that time a literary work by an American of acknowledged color was a doubtful experiment, both for the writer and for the publisher, entirely apart from its intrinsic merit.”³⁶ The publisher’s fears were subsequently legitimized:

A woman critic of Jackson, Mississippi, questioning what she called the rumor as to my race, added, “Some people claim that Alexander Dumas, author of *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Three Musketeers*, was a colored man. This is obviously untrue, because no Negro could possibly have written these books”—a pontifical announcement which would seem to settle the questions definitely, despite the historical evidence to the contrary.³⁷

In “What is a White Man,” Chesnutt noted that some states determined one’s race in the eyes of the law not by quantifying “blood,” but by reading it in one’s features and social standing. So too was the race of the author read into or out of texts.

The mobilization of literary value vis-à-vis black authority seen here is clearly rooted in the misguided early-modern discourse of the natural faculties of the “black species” and the challenge black writing presented to this discourse. As such, the birth of the black author attests to Foucault’s musings on authority and policing: “texts, books, and discourses really began to have authors...to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, that is, to the extent that discourses could be transgressive.”³⁸ We turn to one final example of the black author function in action—James Baldwin as black author—in order to observe both the reading of race after the “species” paradigm has been replaced by a new conceptualization of blackness as well as the

³⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois, “Criteria of Negro Art,” p.758.

³⁶ Chesnutt, “Post Bellum Pre Harlem,” p.546.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Foucault, “What is an Author, p.108.

transgressions posed by Baldwin. Baldwin is of particular import to our endeavor because Yamada's trespasses follow Baldwin's: Yamada has written that Baldwin is "like a God" to her and that she emulates (or is signifyin(g) on) his works.³⁹

If we understand the black author function as a schematizing device, a way of categorizing and binding texts to a given author and that author to other authors within her genre in turn, Baldwin stands in contrast to the previously reviewed authors in his attempt to contest the power of the black author function. Baldwin's negotiation with the expectations of a pluralized audience was charged by the fact that he was both black and homosexual; Eldridge Cleaver's particularly vitriolic diatribe against Baldwin in *Soul on Ice* is a case in point. Part of Baldwin's defense against this double marginalization was his construction of a singular self: "Let us say, then, that truth, as used here, is meant to imply a devotion to the human being, his freedom and fulfillment; freedom which cannot be legislated, fulfillment which cannot be charted...He [the human being] is not, after all, merely a member of a Society or a Group...He is...something more than that, something resolutely indefinable, unpredictable."⁴⁰ Given the "indefinable, unpredictable," component of Baldwinian human being, it becomes difficult to label, categorize, and attack Baldwin as an author, black, homosexual, or otherwise: "to regard him as a 'black writer' or as a 'homosexual writer' is to suggest limits on his individuality and on his treatment of his chosen subject matter. Such labeling underlines the tenacity of the very stereotypes Baldwin fights."⁴¹ We will recall that the robust singularity of Baldwin's construction of the Self was part of what attracted Nakagami to his works.

³⁹ Yamada Eimi, "Watashi wa bungaku to kokujin wo ai suru wake" ("The Reason I Love Literature and Black People), p.293.

⁴⁰ James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel," p. 12-13, from *Baldwin: Collected Essays*.

⁴¹ Stephen Adams, "Giovanni's Room: The Homosexual as Hero," p.131.

In addition to the challenge presented to the black author function by way of Baldwin's indefinable, unpredicable human being, Baldwin's claim of the inherently creolized nature of the modern American Self should also give the black author function pause. In "Here Be Dragons," one of Baldwin's later essays from the 1985 *The Price of the Ticket*, Baldwin reminds us that, "Each of us, helplessly and forever, contains the other—male in female, white in black, black in white. We are a part of each other. Many of my countrymen appear to find this fact exceedingly inconvenient, and so very often do I. But none of us can do anything about it."⁴² If "none of us can do anything about" the synthetic nature of the gendered, racialized Self, the black author function faces a serious impediment. According to Foucault's delineation, the author's name "performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a classificatory function," it "permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others."⁴³ We have now run into a bit of the "exceeding inconvenience" that Baldwin proffered: how is the black author function to "permit" us to "differentiate" black-authored texts from say, a Japanese-authored text when the two "helplessly and forever, contain the other"?

This is precisely the dilemma that the structuralist and poststructuralists accounts of black authors and black literature face even as they testify to being "organic" theories of blackness that are contained within the "black cultural matrix." These theories of "black literature" and "black authority" "helplessly and forever, contain the other," and thus inevitably provide openings for non-black authors. Before we look into these openings, we should note we have already caught glimpses of such fissures in the historical construction of the black author. In the cases viewed above, the black author function obligates us to ask a certain set of questions peculiar to black

⁴² Baldwin, "Here Be Dragons," p.690.

⁴³ Foucault, "What is an Author," p.107.

authors. First, the reader of the black author is jolted out of the realm of the homogenous and immediately asked to consider the pluralized nature of literary heritage and audience. Second, the value and values of the black author are interrogated—at times symbiotically, at others parasitically—vis-à-vis multiple audiences. Finally, the blackness of the black author is tied not to a purely biological paradigm, but to the blackness of the words on the page; black authors are born not in the hospital, but in the library. The words on the page valued in turn by competing sociocultural definitions of “black values” and “literary value.”

We will return to the black author function as it pertains to Yamada Eimi momentarily. In the interim, we will consider the ways in which structuralist and poststructuralist theories of the black author account for the challenges posed by Baldwin.

Part II: The Reconstruction and Japanese Deconstruction of Literary Blackness

Concomitant with Baldwin’s challenges to the containing capacity of the black author function, the Black Arts Movement was articulating what would come to be known as the black aesthetic. Galvanized by the Black Power Movement—Hoyt Fuller proffered that “the black revolt is as palpable in letters as it is in the streets”⁴⁴—black literati drafted the blueprint for a black literature that refused to kowtow to “universal values” (in which ostensible “universality” was seen as synonymous with white, Western, and modern), or the values of white publishers, critics, and readers. In his introduction to the 1971 *The Black Aesthetic*, Addison Gayle articulates the agenda as follows:

The question for the black critic today is not how beautiful is a melody, a play, a poem, or a novel, but how much more beautiful has the poem...made the life of a single black man?...The Black Aesthetic, then, as conceived by this writer, is a corrective—a means of helping black

⁴⁴Hoyt Fuller, “Towards a Black Aesthetic,” p.1810.

people out of the polluted mainstream of Americanism, and offering logical, reasoned arguments as to why he should not desire to join the ranks of a Norman Mailer or a William Styron.⁴⁵

In “Discovering America: Generation Shifts, Afro-American Literary Criticism and the Study of Expressive Culture,” Houston Baker argues that the Black Aestheticians were followed by the “reconstructionists.” “The proclaimed mission” of the “reconstructionists”—and Baker is thinking primarily of Gates, Stepto, and, we must imagine, himself— “was to ‘reconstruct’ [sic] pedagogy and study of Afro-American literature to reflect the most advanced thinking of contemporary literary-theoretical discourse.”⁴⁶ Although the politics and players would change, the reconstructionists maintained the Black Aestheticians’ desire for organic definitions of black literature and the discovery of uniquely black aspects of black literature; Baker suggests that Gates’ contributions to “the general project of providing adequate theoretical models for the study of Afro-American expressive traditions” represented “a coming to fullness of the project initiated by the Black Aesthetic.”⁴⁷ These reconstructionist arguments, however, are highly deconstructable, offering criteria intended to delineate black literature which can be duplicated by non-black hands. The reconstructionists came to prominence during a period in which minorities were gaining unprecedented access to the academy and the cross-pollination of ideas that occur therein; or, in less purple prose: “rather than attempting to assess the merits of the Black Aesthetic’s methodological assumptions, the reconstructionists adopted the ‘professional’ assumptions (and attendant jargon) of the world of white, academic literary criticism.”⁴⁸ The color of the prose aside, the fact remains that neither the Black Aestheticians nor the reconstructionists succeeded in formulating a theory of the blackness of black literature,

⁴⁵ Addison Gayle, *The Black Aesthetic*, p.1876.

⁴⁶ Houston A. Baker, *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory*, p.87-88.

⁴⁷ Baker, p.x.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.89.

authority, readership, *et cetera*, that cannot be duplicated by “non-black” authors. The ability to create such duplicates is crucial to understanding the possibility of transracial narration.

In 1973, Stephen Henderson sketched a critical framework for black poetry. According to Henderson, black poetry can be read and differentiated from other brands of poetry by way of three categories: structure, theme, and saturation. Structure refers to the “two traditions or levels of Black poetry—the folk and the formal.”⁴⁹ “Structurally speaking,” Henderson suggests, “Black poetry is most distinctly and effectively *Black* [when] it derives its form from two basic sources, Black speech and Black music.”⁵⁰ The thematic common denominator of black poetry is “the idea of Freedom and/or Liberation...Freedom/Liberation has been, and still is, obviously, the main objective of Black American life, and as a theme it virtually leaps from the pages of our poetry.”⁵¹ The final tenet, saturation, can itself be subdivided into two categories: 1) “the communication of Blackness in a given situation” and 2) “a sense of fidelity to the observed and intuited truth of the Black Experience.”⁵² As such, saturation can be either a “perception,” which occurs in the reader or audience in an act of black communication, a “quality,” in which there is something qualitatively black about a poem even when the blackness is not explicit, or a “condition of theme and structure.”⁵³

With this template in hand, we should be able to spot a black poem when we see one.

Let’s get to work:

Poem 1:

Our skin is not white.
Not white,

⁴⁹ Stephen Henderson, “Saturation: Progress Report on a Theory of Black Poetry,” p.102.

⁵⁰ Stephen Henderson, *Understanding the New Black Poetry*, p.30-31.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Henderson, “Saturation: Progress Report on a Theory of Black Poetry,” p.104.

⁵³ Henderson, “Saturation: Progress Report on a Theory of Black Poetry,” p.104

with baby flab and fluff.

Scorched by the sun
Battered by typhoons
Exposed to the salty ocean winds
of tropical lands
Our skin, full of luster,
is the color of wheat.

Yet the white race,
with their baby flab and fluff
The white race
brought to this island of ours
Honest John.
They stride about the island
As if they were our masters,
The white race.

Poem 2:

Imagination! Who can sing thy force?
Or who describe the swiftness of thy course?
Soaring through air to find the bright abode,
Th' empyreal palace of the thund'ring God
We on thy pinions can surpass the wind,
And leave the rolling universe behind:
From star to star the mental optics rove,
Measure the skies, and range the realms above.
There in one view we grasp the might whole
Or with new worlds amaze th' unbounded soul.

“Surely,” Henderson assures us, “some structures are more distinctly Black, more recognizably Black, than others.”⁵⁴ Which of the two poems excerpts presented above is “more recognizably Black” based on the criteria set by Henderson? Structurally, the first poem seems to have a higher level of ostensible blackness. The first poem incorporates a form of “black linguistic elegance” that Henderson deemed “virtuoso naming and enumerating.” The first poem constantly names and renames skin—white skin is “flab and fluff;” the second stanza enumerates multiple characteristics of “our” skin: scorched, battered, exposed, full, the color of wheat—and

⁵⁴ Henderson, “Saturation: Progress Report on a Theory of Black Poetry,” p.106.

also incorporates the “wordplay” and “witty gesture involved in nicknaming” in the reference to “Honest John.”⁵⁵ The first poem also includes “hyperbolic imagery” insofar as the skin of the “master,” a term that implies full development, or mastery, is infantilized. Moreover, the first poem is structured by worrying the line, a “folk expression...often associated with melismatic singing in the Black tradition.”⁵⁶ Worrying the line structures line breaks by creating “verbal parallel[s]...in which a word or phrase is broken up to allow for affective or didactic comment.”⁵⁷ For example: Yet the white race (broken verbal parallel)/with their baby flab and fluff (affective/didactic commentary)/ the white race (broken verbal parallel). The second poem excerpt does on occasion make use of “black speech structures,” especially in its use of what Henderson calls “metaphysical imagery.” The second poem, however, with its use of heroic couplets, seems to be indebted to the poetry of Pope.

The first poem also seems to be thematically blacker than the second. The first poem thematizes skin by translating the discourse of colored skin into poetic discourse. In this act of translation, poetic skin speaks out against domination: white skin is infantile, our skin has been scorched and battered and still it is the color of life-giving wheat. Although the visual discourse of skin seems to speak a monolithic truth of racial power dynamics, this thematized skin undermines the absolutism of the myth of white skin; the white skin walks around “*as if* they were our masters.” In its definition of “our skin” vis-à-vis white skin and its contestation of racial oppression, the poem’s thematics fall in line with black protest poetry. The second poem, insofar as it thematizes imagination as a universal capacity with panoramic sweep, is less black than the first. The second poem calls out to humanity universally and *en masse*: “who can sing

⁵⁵ Henderson, *Understanding the New Black Poetry*, p.33-34 “Honest John” is the nickname of US’s first surface-to-surface nuclear rocket.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.41.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

thy force,” “who describe the swiftness,” “we on thy pinions,” “we grasp the mighty whole,” *et cetera*. Although one could make an argument for the “black theme” of liberation in the universality of imagination, particularly as it is thematized in lines such as “we on thy pinions can surpass the wind” or “or with new worlds amaze th’ unbounded soul,” this is not enough to make the second poem thematically blacker than the first.

The final criterion, saturation, was and is the most discussed pillar of Henderson’s tenets. A poem that is saturated in blackness should “communicate blackness” and have “fidelity to the observed and intuited truth of the Black Experience.” Henderson also suggests that saturation can be measured by gauging the cumulative blackness of the theme and structure of a given poem. Cumulatively, the first poem was blacker than the second. As for fidelity, it seems that the first poet, caught in the maelstrom of a race struggle, has intuited more “blackness” than the poet singing the praises of Imagination. If that is the case, the first poem can officially be deemed the winner of our blackness contest. Our winner: Okinawan poet Arikawa Akira’s 1952 “Our Skin.”⁵⁸ Our runner up: first African-American poet Phillis Wheatley’s “On Imagination.”

Granted, there are a few legerdemains involved in the making of our transracial poet. First, I have presented Arikawa’s poem in translation, which surely alters the way we would read the text for blackness. I will address the issue of translation momentarily. Second, I have withheld paratextual information, namely the name of the poem and the poet. Indeed, as Henderson suggests, “knowledge of the author’s race altered our point of view, i.e., going outside of the poem changed our perspective of it.”⁵⁹ As we discussed in the previous section, however, recourse to an “outside of the poem” is not enough to construct a black author.

⁵⁸ The translation of “Our Skin” provided here is from Michael Molasky’s *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory*.

⁵⁹ Henderson, *Understanding the New Black Poetry*, p.12.

Determining the author's race is a much more difficult process than simply knowing the race of the author, a process rooted in, to quote Gates, "the text itself." is Du Bois any less of a black author because of his mixed heritage?⁶⁰ I have also picked two poems with a significant temporal gap between their compositions. Given the temporal proximity of Arakawa's poem to Henderson's scholarship, it is not surprising that their imagining of black poetry is more analogous than Henderson's and Wheatley's. The main ingredient in the success of this caper, however, comes from Henderson himself. If saturated blackness is based on observation and intuition, it is not bound by the biology of race. One of Henderson's responses to the question "What is Black poetry" is, "Poetry which is somehow *structurally* Black, irrespective of authorship."⁶¹ "What," Henderson's thought experiment begins, "distinguishes a Claude McKay sonnet from a sonnet by Longfellow?...Is it possible that, given a Black Poetic Structure, a non-Black can create in this form—as whites play jazz for example? Or as Blacks sing Italian opera?"⁶²

Henderson answers the question with a possibility and a new set of inquiries. Let us turn to theories of the black novel, a "form which would depend most on the sustained observed factual truth of the Black Experience," to further test the possibility of transracial narration. Black identity—and this is one of the few generalizations concerning blackness that I support unwaveringly—cannot and should not be defined solely vis-à-vis race.⁶³ Racial identity manifests as an indivisible aspect of a conglomerate of identity markers, including gender, sexuality, class, nationality, *et cetera*. As such, any account of the transracial accessibility of *black* literature should address these identity markers as well. To take up the issues of gender

⁶⁰ Gates, *Figures in Black*, p.275.

⁶¹ Henderson, *Understanding the New Black Poetry*, p.8.

⁶² Henderson, *Understanding the New Black Poetry*, p.9.

⁶³ Henderson, "Saturation: Progress Report on a Theory of Black Poetry," p.107.

and sexuality, both Karla Holloway's "In Revision and (Re)membrance: A Theory of Literary Structures in Literature by African-American Women Writers" and Charles Nero's "Toward a Black Gay Aesthetic: Signifying in Contemporary Gay Literature" take Gates' notion of signifyin(g) as their point of departure: Holloway quotes *Figures in Black* in order to argue the point that "the various linguistic postures within" black women's texts are "clearly intertextual" and Nero "believes" both that "the use of signifying by black gay men places their writing squarely within the African American literary tradition" and that "signifying permits black gay men to revise the 'Black Experience' in African American literature, and, thereby, to create a space for themselves."⁶⁴ Insofar as both of these conjectures are indebted to Gates, both are also flanked by the issues raised in the previous chapter: the borders of intertextuality are not safeguarded by race.

Nero highlights signifyin(g) on the representation of Afro-heteronormative sexual desire, the authority of the church, and gender configurations as the "major concerns" of writers who pen the black gay aesthetic. If an author is signifyin(g) in this manner, then the author is adhering to the *black* gay aesthetic. In Yamada Eimi's debut work, *Bedtime Eyes* (*Beddo taimu aizu*), the narrator-protagonist Kim describes her first sexual encounter with Spoon, her black paramour, as having "force" or "dynamism" (*hakuryoku*.) Kim uses the same term—*hakuryoku*—to describe the feeling she has upon seeing Sister Maria, a black woman who dances at the jazz bar where Kim works, do a seductive striptease. Kim and Sister Maria also share lovers, because Kim feels more comfortable loving with and through Sister Maria. In *Payday*, Yamada signifies on the masculine authority of the black church when Harmony, the male half of the twin protagonists of the text, has a tearful epiphany upon attending a church sermon

⁶⁴ Karla Holloway, "Revision and (Re)membrance: A Theory of Literary Structures in Literature by African-American Women Writers," p.388; Charles Nero, "Toward a Black Gay Aesthetic," p.322.

proctored by a “popular female pastor” who, surrounded by swooning female members of the congregation, preaches the gospel of “woman: the source of love (*onnatachi wa ai no minamoto*).”⁶⁵ *Trash*’s Buckey, a black gay man with whom the female protagonist of the text lives with after she escapes an abusive relationship with Rick, is depicted as a stronger masculine figure than the alcoholic Rick. Moreover, Buckey’s stable homosexual relationship provides the heroine with a model for a heterosexual relationship based on mutual respect. In all of these acts of signifyin(g) we see the ubiquity of homosocial spaces in Yamada’s works and a burgeoning black gay aesthetic.

Holloway suggests that the blackness of African-American female writer’s text is “signaled by what is essentially a ‘multiplied’” text.⁶⁶ Holloway goes on to suggest that these “plurisignant texts,” or texts that “signal the concurrent presence of multiple as well as ambiguous meanings,” are “translucent,” “or characterized by the presence of a translucent flux and identified by a shifting, sometimes nebulous text.”⁶⁷ It is by way of peculiarly black “translucence” that “a formal line of continuity” can be seen among black women writers. Holloway’s notion of translucence has already placed us halfway toward the goal of transracial narration: “the quality of translucence that reveals such plurisignant texts is also one that *complicates the identities of the tellers of the stories*. The boundaries between narrative voices and dialogue often become obscure, merging one into the other.”⁶⁸ It would seem that a Japanese voice wouldn’t have too much difficulty fusing into a tradition based on the plurality of voice. Take for example Yamada Eimi’s obscuring of the boundary between narrative voices in *Trash*: “When she woke up from her deep sleep, she noticed that a slight smile was inscribed on the tip

⁶⁵ Yamada Eimi, *Payday*, p.44.

⁶⁶ Holloway, p.389.

⁶⁷ Holloway, p.397, 389.

⁶⁸ Holloway, p.391.

of her lips...*I wonder why I'm smiling.* She thought about the cause of her slight smile and..."⁶⁹

If Yamada has stylistically taken a page out of the books of black women writers, it is due to the transmittability of blackness and black literary femininity via what Holloway calls the "intertextual nature of revision;" "during her time as a manga artist, Yamada would draw while playing black soul music...Her literary style is brimming with this musical sense."⁷⁰

In his richly informative *Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature*, Houston A. Baker, Jr. argues that it is none other than black music, namely what Baker calls the blues matrix, that provide a spatial metaphor through which we can grasp the "distinctive, culturally specific aspects of Afro-American literature and culture."⁷¹ Baker asks us to conceive of "Afro-American culture" as "a complex, reflexive enterprise which finds its proper figuration in blues conceived as a matrix."⁷² "A matrix," Baker continues, "is a point of ceaseless input and output, a web of intersecting crisscrossing impulses always in productive transit."⁷³ It is this matrix through which all forms of African-American expression, literary included, must pass in order to get their black boarding ticket; "Afro-American blues constitute...a vibrant network. They are what Jacques Derrida might describe as the 'always already' of Afro-American culture."⁷⁴ Standing at the crossroads—a familiar stopping point for the blues traveler—of Baker's blues matrix is the blues performer, or one who is able to tap into the blues code and thereby produce "blues signification." Blues signification, which is in turn "involved in...manifold interconnections with other codes of Afro-American culture," is composed of the extract of "hollers, cries, whoops and moans of black men and women" that the blues singer subsequently

⁶⁹ Yamada Eimi, *Trash*, p.370.

⁷⁰ Matsuda Ryōichi, *Yamada Eimi, Ai no sekai* (Yamada Eimi and the World of Love), p.15.

⁷¹ Baker, *Blues Ideology, and Afro-American Literature*, p.1.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁷³ Baker, p.3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.4.

codifies into “expressive instances that bear only the trace of origins, refusing to be pinned down by any final, dualistic significance.”⁷⁵ Insofar as the blues singer takes the raw material of the black experience and evokes a metamorphosis of this experience, the blues singer can be seen as a translator:

The Singer and his production are always at this intersection, this crossing, codifying and providing resonance for experience’s multiplicities. Singer and song never arrest transience—fix it in “transcendent form.” Instead they provide expressive equivalence for the juncture’s ceaseless flux. Hence they may be conceived as translators...Like translators of written texts, blues and its sundry performers offer interpretations of the experiencing of experience. To experience the juncture’s ever-changing scenes, like successive readings of every-varying texts by conventional translators, is to produce vibrantly polyvalent interpretations encoded as blues. The singer’s product...(or a successful translator’s original), constitutes a lively scene, a robust matrix, where endless antinomies are mediated and understood and explanation finds conditions of possibility.⁷⁶

Even if Baker’s blues matrix provides us an insight into the expression of “culturally specific aspects of Afro-American literature,” it does not exclude the possibility of transracial narration. Indeed, insofar as Baker constructs a spatial metaphor, the “blues singer” (note that the *race* of the singer is never specified) must be able to occupy the space of the crossroad and find “expressive equivalents” for the black experience, an experience that, by Baker’s definition, never takes “transcendent form.” If we ask if Yamada, who purports to translate the black experience into Japanese, can find such “expressive equivalents” on Baker’s terms, the question becomes in turn if Japanese people can sing the blues. Luckily, our required intellectual heavy lifting has been aided significantly by E. Taylor Atkins’ *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan*. Atkins poses the question as such:

I present the experiences of Japan’s jazz artists and aficionados with the intention of asking the reader to consider the possibility that Japanese too might be “blues people”—in Baraka’s sense of folk who not only play music but live it. In the 1960s Japanese made the case that there must be an indigenous musical analogue to the blues because both Japanese and people of African ancestry shared a history of oppression by whites. But that is far too simple and problematic an

⁷⁵ Baker, p.8

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.7

equation, and it is not what I mean by my suggestion. If blues-based music is, as Baraka, Cornel West, and others insist, an *outlook* or “mode of being” as much as an expressive idiom, then one can make a case for Japanese who identify strongly with such music...People like Hino [Terumasa, trumpeter] and Yamashita [Yosuke, jazz pianist] defied significant social pressure and outright suppression to formulate a distinctive ethos and lifestyle that danced to a jazz beat. In a society which they feel severely limits creativity and public displays of emotion, Japan’s real blues people live for individual self-expression and the yet unmade and unheard sound.⁷⁷

The term “outlook” is emphasized in Atkins’ original. It is, however, the very term that I would highlight as well. Indeed, the argument presented here is made in a similar spirit, thus the affinity of our emphatic gestures. The twentieth-century has produced remarkably potent methods of policing identity borders to the end of biopolitical gain. The expressive arts, however, although subject to and at times propagators of these methods, seem to open a space in which racial borders themselves can be interrogated—it is possible to write beyond the color line. To borrow the words of Harmony, a half-black, half-Italian self-styled blues singer who serves as the co-protagonist of Yamada’s *Payday*, Harmony sings the blues in the age of rap because: “I’m half white...that’s what my friends say when they tease me. But man, I don’t even care about that. You can’t explain people’s taste. I just want to get away from the oppression of having to like X kind of music because I’m race Y. As long as you pay respect to your roots, isn’t it all good?”⁷⁸ An important question has been posed: how does one simultaneously “respect roots” and perform *transracially*? We will return to this question momentarily. For the time being, we should take note of the phrase *raku ni naritai*, which I have translated as “want to get away from,” a more literal translation being “want to be at ease.” The *kanji* for *raku* is also employed in the Japanese term for music, *ongaku*—or an easing via sound (*on*). As such, Harmony too sees the expressive arts as a venue at which he can literally play his identity with ease.

⁷⁷ E. Taylor Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan*, p.42-43

⁷⁸ Yamada Eimi, *Payday*, p.275

The examples of Baker, Nero, Holloway, Henderson, and, before them, Baldwin, Chesnutt, Du Bois and, before them, Wheatley have given us an intimation of the precarious business of exploring identity construction while effacing the fissures within the notion of self-stabilized identity itself. In order to explore race, one must be willing to turn away from it at the very moment when it will self-destruct. This turning becomes particularly necessary as we turn towards the possibility of black anti-essentialism, as—if we can judge by the bibliographies of their books—theorists such as Baker and Gates do. Translated into the reconstructionalists' endeavor to determine the blackness of black literature, the anti-essentialist, decentering streaks in concepts such as Nero's notion of black masculinity must revert back to essentialist tactics at the very moment when race threatens to come undone.

We see, then, a kind of two-step in these treatises, a flirt and flank that deconstructs until it reaches the highly-policed borders of race. Take for example bell hooks' "Postmodern Blackness." hooks "grapple[s] with the significance of postmodernism for contemporary black experience."⁷⁹ She certainly has her hands full, often encountering black thinkers who think that "this stuff [postmodern theory] does not relate in any way to what's happening with black people."⁸⁰ The exchanges between Gates, Baker, and Joyce as well as Barbara Christian's meditation on what she calls the "race for theory" reminds us of the contentious relationship between "theory" and "authenticity" within the context of Black Studies. In "Postmodern Blackness," hooks proposes her "defense of postmodernism and its relevance to black folks" with an eye turned toward "the postmodernist critique of essentialism as it pertains to the construction of 'identity.'"⁸¹ Although "the postmodernist focus on the critique of identity

⁷⁹ bell hooks, "Postmodern Blackness," p.510.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ hooks., p.511; 513.

appears at first glance to threaten and close down the possibility that this discourse and practice will allow those who have suffered the crippling effects of colonization and domination to gain or regain a hearing,” hooks quite persuasively argues that “the critique of essentialism encouraged by postmodernist thought is useful for African-Americans concerned with reformulating outmoded notions of identity. We have too long had imposed upon us from both the outside and the inside a narrow, constricting notion of blackness...such a critique allows us to affirm multiple black identities, varied black experience.”⁸² Wonderful: we are mobilizing “postmodernist thought” in order to move away from the essentialist, “visceral” constructions of black identity, constructions which, more often than not, contain within them the policing mechanisms that obstruct black liberation.

In the very same paragraph as her claim that the postmodern critique allows for the affirmation of “varied black experiences,” however, resides the following riposte to the fear that postmodern tactics “will cause folks to lose sight of the specific history and experience of African-Americans and the unique sensibilities and culture that arise from that experience.” “an adequate response to this concern is to critique essentialism while emphasizing the significance of ‘the authority of experience.’”⁸³ How is it that the anti-essentialism of postmodern critique both guarantees the opening of multiple black experience and vouches for the *authority* of that experience? In her powerful contribution to the study of essentialism and anti-essentialism, *Essentially Speaking*, Diana Fuss proffers the following characterization of “the authority of experience,” particularly as it relates to classroom dialogues: “Rather than automatically interjecting a political note, arguments based on the authority of experience can just as often be radically de-politicizing...I remain convinced that appeals to the authority of experience rarely

⁸² Hooks, p.515-516.

⁸³ Ibid., p.516.

advance discussion and frequently provoke confusion.”⁸⁴ If Fuss’ conjecture concerning the authority of experience as seen in classroom discussions can be applied to hooks’ mobilization of the authority of experience as seen in political discussions, then hooks’ desire to have the “critical break with the notion of ‘authority’ as ‘mastery over’...not simply be a rhetorical device” or her desire for a postmodern “politics of difference” that is irrevocably wed to the “politics of racism” is significantly undermined by her dependence on the “authority of experience.”⁸⁵ It is in order to preserve race in the face of anti-essentialism—an attempt to answer the suspicion that “postmodern critiques of the ‘subject’...surface at a historical moment when many subjugated people feel themselves coming to voice for the first time” with the elixir of a guarantee that “it [postmodern anti-essentialist critique]” will not “deny that in certain circumstances this experience affords us a privileged critical location from which to speak”—that hooks turns from anti-essentialism as it approaches the borders of black identity.⁸⁶

The deconstructability of the reconstruction of “black literature,” and the subsequent turn from anti-essentialism which this deconstruction engenders in thinkers such as hooks, leaves us with several questions, implications, and memorandums we must enumerate before turning our attention more fully to Yamada Eimi. First, it might be argued that by challenging the plentitude of theories of blackness, by, to borrow the words of Kawash, dislocating the color line, we make things fall apart. Shouldn’t “Black Studies” either be fully integrated into “American Studies” or reconfigured along the lines of comparative literature? Why does, in other words, Black Studies exist? I would suggest that Black Studies is based primarily not on a theoretical necessity, but an ethico-political necessity; it is more than mere coincidence that African-Americanists so often

⁸⁴ Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, p.117 True to her advocacy of anti-essentialism, Fuss refuses to outlaw outright the role of experience in classroom discussion. For more on this topic, see *Essentially*.

⁸⁵ hooks, p.514.

⁸⁶ hooks, p.515; 516.

repeat the refrain that they “love what they do.” My intention in pushing for a more open comprehension of “black literature” is not to challenge that necessity, but is rather analogous to Butler’s work in *Bodies That Matter*:

To call a presupposition into question [here our presupposition is the link between black authority and black literature] is not the same as doing away with it; rather, it is to free it from its metaphysical lodgings in order to understand what political interests were secured in and by that metaphysical placing, and thereby to permit the term to occupy and to serve very different political aims. To problematize the matter of bodies may entail an initial loss of epistemological certainty, but a loss of certainty is not the same as political nihilism. On the contrary, such a loss may well indicate a significant and promising shift in political thinking. This unsettling of “matter” can be understood as initiating new possibilities, new ways for bodies to matter.⁸⁷

Second, the question of “authenticity” will inevitably be raised. The devil’s advocate might suggest that even if Yamada’s Harmony sings the blues, he is—and this is the generous reading—“imitating,” “inspired by,” or “appropriating” the techniques and idioms of black literature. Harmony’s harmony is not, in short, authentic. I would propose two points of consideration in regard to this claim. First, I would like to remind us once again of the etymology of “authenticity,” the Greek *authentēs*, or one who acts on one’s own authority. From its very moment of origin, the issue of authenticity is intimately entwined with the issue of authority. As such, authenticity is a policing mechanism, a way of keeping the real black in and the fake black out. What I have argued here (and this is the central thrust of part one) is that authenticity, both racial and literary, is sociohistorically specific. Indeed, thinkers such as Gates and Baker are “guided by a desire to identify and define a theory of criticism specific to the Afro-American tradition from *within that* that tradition...Paradoxically, however...the methods employed by Baker and Gates make the very notion of such authenticity suspect, to say the

⁸⁷ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex,”* p.30.

least.”⁸⁸ Second, rather than mystifying, reifying, and essentializing the authenticity of black authored texts, I suggest that we investigate the contours of the discourse of black authenticity and think through its power as a policing apparatus. E. Taylor Atkins reminds us that authenticating paradigms come in a wide variety.⁸⁹ Rather than dismissing Japanese black literature as “inauthentic,” let us reconsider why the authenticity of black literature has become so thoroughly enmeshed with the racial makeup of the author as a authenticating paradigm—rather than, say, a formal or thematic paradigm—even in the face of both the difficulty of defining race and the mixed race (and, for that matter, nationality, gender, sexuality, class, *et cetera*) of black literature. I ask, then, that we consider the question of “authenticity” vis-à-vis Valerie Smith’s insight in *Self-Discovery and Authority in Afro-American Narrative*—“the paradox that by fictionalizing one’s life, one bestows a quality of authenticity on it.”⁹⁰ Authenticity is not set in skin, but fictionalized, and it is only through reading these fictions that we see the ideological apparatuses that underpin questions of authenticity and authority.

Third, we should take note of the liminality of transracial narration. Thinkers such as Gates and hooks have opened blackness significantly. To revisit hooks: “The overall impact of postmodernism is that many other groups now share with black folks a sense of deep sense of alienation, despair, uncertainty... Yearning is the word that best describes a common psychological state shared by many of us, cutting across boundaries of race, class, gender, and sexual practice.”⁹¹ It is this opening that allows for the possibility of transracial narration. We also see, however, a yearning to hold on to race and the “authority of experience,” a turn from

⁸⁸ Sandra Adell, “The Crisis in Black American Literary Criticism and the Postmodern Cures of Houston A. Baker, Jr. and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.,” from *Double-Consciousness/Double Bind: Theoretical Issues in Twentieth-Century Black Literature*, p.120.

⁸⁹ Atkins is thinking primarily of Peter Kivy’s *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance* and the authenticating paradigms discussed therein.

⁹⁰ Valerie Smith, *Self-Discovery and Authority in Afro-American Narrative*, p.2.

⁹¹ hooks, p.514.

the sharability of blackness, even in the face of our “cut boundaries.” The reconstructionists (or anyone else for that matter) are unable to theorize a version of black literature that does not contain within it openings for the Other, but this does not throw black literature into transracial nihilism. It is precisely because of the lack housed in these theories that the borders of black literature are policed so vehemently. As such, we see alongside the opening of blackness an invigorated policing of blackness. That authors such as Yamada have encounters with the police does not make their literature any less black: from Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois to Gates and Joyce, black-on-black policing around the color line is certainly nothing new. What it does do, however, is put the transracial narrator in a liminal space, somewhere between the newfound opening—that is, the ability to “write like/as a black author”—and the author’s inability to move beyond the snares set by the police and policing mechanism such as “authenticity.”

With these caveats in place, we now turn toward part three, a turn that will revisit many of the arguments made in the first two sections. First, we will consider Yamada Eimi vis-à-vis what I have called the black author function. We begin with thoughts on Yamada’s doubled writing, her writing for two audiences. We will also review the debates concerning the value and values of Yamada’s texts as they occur on both sides of the Pacific. This review provides us with a glimpse of both the way in which critics read race into Yamada’s texts as well as the way in which they read the race of Yamada’s works. Second, moving to a rereading of part two in part three, we will consider the liminality of Yamada Eimi as a transracial author.

Part III: Yamada Eimi and Yamada Amy

With this, the stage is set to introduce Yamada Eimi. Or should we introduce Yamada Amy? Readers of Japanese will know that Yamada “Eimi,” is a *nom-de-plume* that amalgamates the character for literary or poetic composition (*ei* or *yomu*) with the character for beauty (*bi*). As such, Yamada Eimi’s penname is firmly within the Japanese tradition of literary pennames such as Yamada Bimyō. Rumor has it, however, that Yamada decided upon this name because it is, when pronounced in Japanese, a phonetic approximation of the English “Amy,” which happens to be the first name of one of Yamada’s favorite black rock singers.⁹² As such, Yamada’s penname is also along the lines of Edogawa Rampo, whose penname is a Japanese approximation of “Edgar Allen Poe” and thereby an attempt to resituate himself beyond the borders of his literary home. Although the avenue taken here is that of the politics of naming, the product is similar to what one sees in Yamada’s fiction: there is a “double consciousness, [a] sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” at work in Yamada’s literary oeuvre.⁹³

This doubleness is particularly remarkably when we remind ourselves that the advent of “modern Japanese literature” was embedded within the project of the construction of a national identity. According to Michael Weiner, this identity was engrossed with “the illusion of homogeneity,” or a “resilien[t]...narrative” of an “essentialized identity which distinguishes the Japanese from other populations.”⁹⁴ In the face of such a narrative, an author like Yamada Eimi/Amy should give us reason for pause; although we will consider the identitarian illusions that Yamada falls prey to momentarily, it is clear that the illusion of homogeneity is not one of

⁹² For more on this theorem, see Ryōichi Matsuda. A rule of thumb often taught in introductory Japanese classes is that Japanese vowels are pronounced in a similar fashion as those of Italian.

⁹³ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks*, p.615.

⁹⁴ Michael Weiner, *Japan’s Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*, p. xii, xiii.

them. Take for example Ishihara Chiaki's reading of Yamada's debut novel, the 1985 *Beddo taimu aizu* (*Bedtime Eyes*.) According to Ishihara, Kim, the narrator-protagonist of *Bedtime*, "narrates as if conveying two messages simultaneously."⁹⁵ The first message is directed toward what Ishihara calls "the good reader" (*zenryō na dokusha*). By good, Ishihara is referring not to what the term might mean in reader response criticism, but rather to a Dickensian "good and noble" reader. That is a reader of chastity and high values, a "Japanese" reader, a reader that might be offended by the ribald antics of Kim and her black lover, Spoon. The second message is a love letter to Spoon. "The message to Spoon," Ishihara contends, "is different from the message to *the good reader*....Kim's 'diary' contains two differing messages."⁹⁶ It is this twoness—one tongue in and directed toward "blackness," the other in and directed toward the "mainstream"—that is a signature of the black author, and the black Japanese author.

Literarily, Yamada's texts seem imbued with such twoness for two reasons: their thematic and linguistic duplicity. The final line of *Animaru Rojikku* (*Animal Logic*, 1996) provides a microcosm of the doubleness of Yamada's literary world. The text concludes: "Free at last, free at last, finally free at last."⁹⁷ Beginning with thematics, these words are spoken by an entity that resides within the bloodstream of Jasmine (the black protagonist of the text) and narrates the story primarily from her point of view. This supernatural element, if we are to believe the Izumi Kyōka Prize committee, is reminiscent of Japanese Romanticism as it was practiced by Kyōka (1873-1939).⁹⁸ It is, however, almost impossible for the American reader not to hear the iconic echo of Martin Luther King, Jr. in these words. Indeed, from the very

⁹⁵ Ishihara Chiaki, *Kakidashi no bigaku: Yamada Eimi Beddo taimu aizu* (The Aesthetics of Beginnings: Yamada Eimi's *Bedtime Eyes*), p.55.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.54.

⁹⁷ Yamada Eimi, *Animal Logic*, p.573.

⁹⁸ *Animal Logic* shared the 24th Izumi Kyōka Prize with Yu Miri's *Full House*. According to the Prize's website, texts selected for the award must have affinity with the spirit of Izumi Kyōka's Romanticism.

onset of the story Jasmine asks: “Do you know who the president of South Africa is now? Nelson Mandela.”⁹⁹ This temporal situating, in tandem with the concluding King-inspired passage, frames the narrative’s thematic interest within the notion of black liberation. As such, the line thematically plays to two audiences: an audience familiar with the supernatural and the trope of blood as it occurs in *Kyōka* and an audience familiar with the black prophetic tradition and the black quest for liberation as it is seen in oratory such as the “I Have a Dream” speech.

Linguistically, the line takes advantage of the mixed orthography of Japanese. In the original, the conclusion reads as follows: “Free, at Last, フリー、アット・ラースト、ついに自由。” The first iteration is given in English. The second iteration is done in *katakana*, one of the Japanese syllabaries used primarily for words from foreign languages and onomatopoeia. The *katakana* phrase replicates the sound of the English phrase in Japanese. The third iteration, which is written in *kanji* and *hiragana*, is the closest to a “translation” of the English phrase into Japanese. Moreover, given that Yamada reproduces a line from Martin Luther King, the phrase also speaks to those familiar with black rhetoric as well. We are reminded both of Henderson’s definition of “worrying the line” in black poetry and Gates’ claim that signifyin(g)—or the black rhetorical practice of repetition with a signal difference—is at the epicenter of black parlance. Here, there is a repetition, or signifyin(g) on, the notion of black liberation. The line reminds us that Japanese is liberated from itself, that the quarantine which divides black talk (“Free, at Last”) and Japanese (ついに自由, *tsui ni jiyu*, the “Japanese” translation of “finally free at last”) is not as thoroughly enforced as we might think.

⁹⁹ *Animal Logic*, p.13.

Another mode of linguistic signifyin(g) often noted in Yamada Eimi studies is her idiosyncratic use of ruby. Although the complexity of the Japanese writing system provides the author with a playground of possibilities, knowing the “proper” reading of a given word can become a task in and of itself.¹⁰⁰ Ruby, or *furigana*—in which the “correct” reading of a given kanji is glossed above the character—can serve as a guide to the correct reading. One of Yamada’s literary signatures is the glossing of Japanese words with black slang and vice-versa. Take for example a sentence selected (almost) at random from Yamada’s short story “What’s Going On:” “*Ikasu onna da na.*”¹⁰¹ One might translate this as “what a neat lady.” I say “might” because Yamada provides the following ruby gloss in *katakana*: “She’s bad!” (We are talking, of course, Michael Jackson bad.) Yamada utilizes ruby to signify(in) *par excellence*: Yamada suggests that within the Japanese language itself, that is, within the multiple phonemes signified by a single written Japanese glyph, the voice of blackness is present.

The cumulative impact of Yamada’s linguistic and thematic duplicity is the construction of a black authorial persona. Or, to revisit the argument made in chapter three, if signifyin(g) is the glue of the black literary tradition and itself composed of the sharing of black literary language, Yamada’s signifyin(g) (read: transracial narration) has placed her within, as Nakagami foresaw, a tradition of black Japanese literature. This placement is evinced by the Japanese literati’s inevitably colored readings of Yamada Eimi. Examples abound: Eto Jun claimed that it was only “natural” that one recall Ōe Kenzaburō’s “Shiiku”—a text that, if the argument of the first chapter is valid, has an undeniably black stream in its genealogy—upon

¹⁰⁰ As a heuristic rule, written Japanese *kanji* can signify at least two phonemes: a “Chinese” based pronunciation (or *on-yomi*) and a pronunciation based on the Japanese spoken language that preceded the introduction of kanji (or *kun-yomi*). Moreover, written Japanese also employs practices such as *ateji*, in which kanji characters are used as phonetic markers irrespective of their semantic meaning, and ideographically, in which characters are used as ideographs irrespective of their pragmatically accepted pronunciations.

¹⁰¹ Yamada Eimi, “What’s Going On,” from *Soul Music Lovers Only* p.8.

reading Yamada Eimi's *Bedtime Eyes*; Noma Hiroshi, an author whose interest in Baldwin supported the rise of the study of *kokujin bungaku* (black literature) in the 1960s, argued that *Bedtime* was best read vis-à-vis *Invisible Man*; Murakami Ryū, whose *Kagirinaku tōmei ni chikai burū* (*An Almost Transparent Blue*, 1976) and interest in jazz made him a “spokesperson” for blackness in the late 1970s, claimed that it would be impossible to discuss Yamada's *Soul Music Lovers Only* with anyone who “doesn't know the ‘O’ of Otis Redding.”¹⁰² Yamada's linguistic and thematic signifyin(g) has indeed, as Gates predicted, made her a member of a black literary tradition, has placed her works within the intertextual matrix of black artifacts such as “Shiiku,” *Invisible Man*, and “Satisfaction.”

As discussed in Part I, the reading of black literature at the crossroad of black literary value and the black values represented by the author is a by-product of the black author function. Yamada too, to borrow her articulation, “gets it from two sides” because she writes black in Japanese. Although Yamada has a diverse audience that ranges from *shōjo* (school-aged girls) to American adults reading in English translation, I would like to focus in particular on the critique and admiration presented by three substrata of readers: masculinist popular readers, Japanese feminist critics and American Japanologists.

The masculinist critique presented by the mass media, which has the least intellectual clout of the three groups presented here, is worth reviewing because it reminds us of just how thoroughly Yamada's authorial persona is read through the black author function. The connection between Yamada's black lovers and the Afrocentrism of her literary world has been scandalized by weekly journals since Yamada's debut. Yamada, in the eyes of such readers,

¹⁰² Eto and Noma's comments from the Bungei-shō (Bungei Prize) selection committee's critique of *Bedtime*, which is included as an appendix of the novel. Yamada has been called the “second-generation Murakami Ryū,” yet another testament to the construction of a lineage of “black Japanese literature.” The Murakami citation is from his commentary on *Soul Music Lovers Only*, which also serves as a postscript to the novel.

became a pronoun for the “yellow cab” phenomenon—in which Asian women roam the town looking to give any foreign man a ride—and the “*burasagaru-zoku*” (literally “the hanging-on tribe,” a term used to describe Japanese women who hang off of their foreign lovers.) The tropic connotation of the second term is more than mere coincidence; it speaks to the xenophobic fear of the black Other and (more often than not) his supposed sexual prowess.

Anne McKnight begins her highly informative study of Nakagami Kenji, *Nakagami, Japan*, by reminding us that Nakagami, given his sociopolitical and authorial identity, was forced to ask “Am I Japanese?” Yamada, whose sociopolitical and authorial identity is arguably more enmeshed in blackness than Nakagami’s, is forced to push the question further: am I “Human or Monkey?” In “Human or Monkey” Yamada recounts an encounter she had with two Japanese men while having drinks with a female colleague in a bar. The incident speaks for itself:

1: “See, that’s why I’m saying that Japanese women are the lowest of the low...”

2: “Going to foreign countries, getting involved with foreign men. What’s so fun about that?...”

1: “That kind of woman, when it comes down to it, will sleep with anything as long as its male. I bet they’d even sleep with an orangutan...”

Yamada: With that, we were no longer mere bystanders to the conversation; the men clearly harbored ill will toward us. So I asked him:

Yamada: What’s that? We’re just drinking by ourselves. What’s wrong with that?

1: “See...what you two are doing is being a yellow cab, just like Ieda said. I’m saying that you’re lower than a monkey.

For his sake, I won’t go into detail about what happened in the bar after that, but I do want to let it be known that I resorted to violence for the first time in a long time. I’ve really done quite a bit of introspection about that. (Although I’m sure you’ll call me a liar.) But, if I can be real, at that moment I was convinced that, if I had to sleep with that man, I would probably prefer to sleep with a monkey...I simply love men, their nationality or race doesn’t really make a difference to me...And about this “yellow cab” business, I work quite a bit in New York, and I’ve never once heard the word used there. But I do know some black men who like Japanese women. They have too much dignity to call their lady a “cab.”¹⁰³

The attack and vigorous (physical and rhetorical) defense relayed here is in many ways analogous to the narratives recorded by John Russell in his work on responses to anti-black

¹⁰³ Yamada Eimi, “*Osaru san ka ningen sama ka?*” (Human or Monkey?), p.89-90 Journalist Iedo Shōko wrote a bestselling expose on the “yellow cab” phenomenon.

racism in Japan. Yamada becomes the target of such attacks and employs such defensive maneuvers due to her proximity to blackness, her black authorial persona.

When the masculinist reading is juxtaposed with the mainstream response to Yamada in the American academy, we begin to see the black author ensnared between the proper representation of black values and the value of their literary works. The incident in the bar, itself a representative case of the patriarch's inability to read Yamada, is tied to Yamada's proximity to blackness; the American critique is based primarily on Yamada's inability to ethically approximate blackness.¹⁰⁴ The following three critiques recur in American reading of Yamada: 1) that Yamada's texts are stereotypical/reifying/fetishistic; 2) that her fixation on the black Other is ultimately Self-serving; and 3) Yamada's challenge of heteronormativity actually reinforces traditional gender roles.¹⁰⁵ Take for example three of the best English-language exegeses of the black Other in Yamada's oeuvre: Nina Cornyetz's "Power and Gender in the Narratives of Yamada Eimi," John Russell's "Consuming Passions: Spectacle, Self-Transformation, and the Commoditization of Blackness in Japan," and Richard Okada's "Positioning Subjects Globally: A Reading of Yamada Eimi." The first point of agreement between the three is that blackness is not portrayed dynamically, but flattened due to its representation via hypersexualized black objects of a—typically female and Japanese—narrator's affection. Whether it be Cornyetz's notion of fetish in "Fetishized Blackness: Hip Hop and Racial Desire in Contemporary Japan," Russell's claim that "in postmodern Japan, the

¹⁰⁴ Richard Okada has argued that male Japanese critics are often baffled by Yamada's "new" style and indulge in discussions of her physique in lieu of literary criticism.

¹⁰⁵ Although these three scholars are presented as representatives of the American academy's assessment of Yamada Eimi, the intersection of identity politics and literary criticism is not as neat as my categorization may imply. I am reminded both of Satō Ai, a Japanese female critic whose vigorous critique of Yamada is more aligned with the "American" reading, and of the fact that John Russell, who received his training at Harvard, has taught in Gifu for decades and has done most of his publishing in Japanese. I present this brand of admittedly simplistic categorization due to the affinity of the arguments and to provide a larger sample of Yamada Eimi interpretations.

conspicuous consumption of blackness takes place on a number of levels, the most salient of which fetishizes black male sexuality,” or Okada’s claim that “while she introduces her readers to sustained portraits of a character-type that has not been a focus of writerly attention in Japan, Yamada simultaneously manages, through romanticized stereotypes, largely to erase the particularity of her black characters,” Yamada’s black characters are seen as not-fully-black-enough sexual(ized) objects.¹⁰⁶

The reason that Yamada’s literary world can be populated with fetishized stereotypes, and this is another point of consensus in the logic of Cornyetz, Russell and Okada, is that the black Other is not a necessity in her fictional realm. The black Other is a male placeholder of sorts, a means by which the Japanese female Self is actualized. Cornyetz, working through the aforementioned presence of black language in Yamada’s Japanese, articulates the position as follows:

vocabulary lifted from its context is slipped into Japanese syntax, which gives it the appearance and atmosphere of American slang, while, in fact, it remains Japanese... While signaling the presence of the other in text... *katakana* simultaneously orders what is written within the parameters of Japanese linguistic structure and pronunciation. African-Americans likewise function to mark a difference catalogued by a reproduction of marginality.¹⁰⁷

According to Cornyetz, linguistic blackness is appropriated by Japanese and is put to work as a “marker of difference,” a foil by which the luster of Japanese skin can shine all the brighter. Moving from linguistic cohabitation to issues of representation, Russell too sees Yamada’s mobilization of the other as ultimately Self-serving:

In these [Yamada Eimi’s] semiautobiographical narratives, sex with the Black Other is depicted as a self-transforming, inspirational, essentially masturbatory experience, since it is only the Japanese woman who is portrayed as benefiting emotionally and physically from the encounter... Transgressing sexual and racial boundaries brings about self-discovery, a heightened

¹⁰⁶ Richard Okada, “Positioning Subjects Globally: A Reading of Yamada Eimi,” p.117; John Russell, “Consuming Passions: Spectacle, Self-Transformation, and the Commodification of Blackness in Japan,” p.116.

¹⁰⁷ Nina Cornyetz, “Power and Gender in the Narratives of Yamada Eimi,” p.452-453.

awareness of the body as Self that, while physically pleasurable and psychologically healing, signals communicative foreclosure, not disclosure.¹⁰⁸

For his part, Okada suggests that,

Yamada's discursive appropriations are ultimately self-serving and narcissistic... What enables Yamada's variations on the sexual acquisition of men of color is, after all, a Japan where affluence is channeled—for both men and women—into an endless quest for brand names... and new global pleasure spots... In the case of Yamada's narrators, these are all disarmingly concealed under a search for "pure" love acquired through sexual relations that are constructed as innocent, vulnerable, and somehow true to a "self" whose desire remains unquestioned.¹⁰⁹

In each of these arguments, the common thread is a critique of the primacy of the Self and its use of the black Other.

The first two moments in these arguments—the claims of stereotypical/fetishistic blackness and literary egocentrism—lead directly to the third: although Yamada's texts might challenge Japanese heteronormativity through its incorporation of the black Other, it ultimately reinforces patriarchal reading codes. Cornyetz concedes that Yamada "inverts many phallogentric paradigms dominant in modern Japanese discourses of heterosexual relationships," but also asks "yet do these inversions rewrite the heroines as somehow differently gendered subjects? Do they truly differ from the dominant performance of gender in contemporary Japan?"¹¹⁰ Cornyetz answers her own question in quick fashion: "Yamada...colludes with prevailing power organizations in her portrayals of heterosexual relationships, as characters are engendered in the classical binary structures of dominance/submission... Limited to counteracting male dominance with female, Yamada's texts reproduce women engendered according to conventional configurations of power."¹¹¹ Reading more for the racial underpinnings of heteronormativity, Russell avers: "While the boundaries between hunter and

¹⁰⁸ Russell, p.129.

¹⁰⁹ Okada, p.122.

¹¹⁰ Cornyetz, p.429.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.438.

predator are shifting (Yamada has been dubbed a “Literary Lioness” by *Tokyo Journal*), racial boundaries remain stubbornly intact;” likewise, “these narratives privilege discourse about blacks while effectively precluding any dialogue...In silencing the Black Other, the speaker reasserts the very racial boundaries she boasts of transgressing.”¹¹² Okada, although his attention is turned toward Yamada’s handling of the tacit homosociality/sexuality that underwrites heteronormativity, produces an analogous reading of *Bedtime Eyes*:

In short, rather than upset standard heterosexual assumptions, the female-female bond introduces the predictable element of jealousy...The intervention of desire for a black man disrupts the female-female bond, and Kim’s hope for achieving a potentially self-sustaining identity rests, ultimately, on a heterosexual relation...The narrator’s desire to preserve an uncomplicated stance of heterosexual innocence continually deflects the narrative form the realm of the genuinely radical.¹¹³

The valuative shift is nothing short of Copernican: if the masculinist reading claims that Yamada is too radically black, the consensus of Cornyetz, Russell, and Okada is that Yamada’s blackness is not radical enough.

Juxtaposing the critique produced by Cornyetz, Russell, and Okada with those of Japanese feminists critics highlights the possibility of placing Yamada within yet another valuative and interpretive paradigm. Indeed, poet and novelist Ikezawa Natsuki claims that reading Yamada requires us to “design a new valuative system for her (*sorenari no hyōka no shisutemu wo wareware wa kanojo no tame ni kōan shinakerebanaranai.*)”¹¹⁴ Pace Cornyetz, Russell, and Okada, the feminist readings of Yamada Eimi produced by Japanese literary critics such as Hasegawa Kei and Akasaki Moeko argue that Yamada produces “realistic” black characters, that her works are highly “ethical,” and that they contain moments of radical

¹¹² Russell, p.128, 130.

¹¹³ Okada, p.123

¹¹⁴ Ikezawa Natsuki, “Rinri to jinkō gengo (Ethics and Artificial Language),”p.226.

possibility insofar as they challenge the dominant patriarchal and heteronormative images of femininity.

We recall that the American critique saw Yamada's black characters as "stereotypical" and "fetishistic," that is, not "realistic." Hasegawa and Akasaki are, if on the same spectrum, certainly at its opposite end: Hasegawa writes that "Yamada Eimi's debut work, *Bedtime Eyes*... won the *Bungei* literary award and was extolled by Kono Taeko as "of course [well beyond] the realism of yesteryear, *Bedtime Eyes* gives precise birth to a previously untrodden reality."¹¹⁵ Akasaki contends that "the ability to see things objectively with a cool eye is an indispensable necessity for an author. In the case of Yamada Eimi, sincerity coexists with this coolness. This is proven whenever we recall the characters she portrays... Yamada maintains an attitude that stares at reality and tries to ascertain it to the fullest."¹¹⁶ Although space will not permit us to consider the use of "realism" and "sincerity" here—both terms that have a rich history in modern Japanese literature—it is important to note that the black "realism" referred to here is constructed against the backdrop of *Japanese* black literature; as previously mentioned, the *Bungei* literary prize committee refers to "Shiiku" on several occasions as an example of the "unrealistic" depictions of blackness in the yesteryears of Japanese literature. Hasegawa and Akasaki's feminist readings of Yamada contest their American counterparts by positing competing notions of both the "reality" of representing blackness and of the bounds of "black literature" itself.

Both Hasegawa and Akasaki also concur on the highly ethical nature of Yamada's prose. "Ethics" as construed by Hasegawa and Akasaki is reminiscent of Levinas' use of the term

¹¹⁵ Hasegawa Kei, "Seiai no gensetsu: Beddo taimu aizu (The Discourse of Sexual Love: *Bedtime Eyes*)," p.67.

¹¹⁶ Akasaki Moeko, "Yamada Eimi: Ningen byōsha ni miru sakka no rinri (Yamada Eimi: The Author's Ethics as Seen Through Her Depictions of Humans)," p.179.

insofar as it places our encounter with the Other at the base of ethical thinking. As such, these interpretations provide a counterpoint to the arguments of Cornyetz, Russell, and Okada which, although not in these terms, suggest an ethical paucity in Yamada's Self-serving representations of blackness. Akasaki argues that Yamada's novels "invariably relate with the Other" and that "as long as one intends to discuss the works of Yamada, African-Americans are a factor so important that they can't be overlooked."¹¹⁷ It is the inevitability of the face-to-face encounter with the black Other that evokes the Other-first ethics of Yamada's fictional realm:

Yamada's husband is a black man. Moreover, she has friends of various races. Among them, there are those who are called "minorities." They are probably victims of discrimination... This is why Yamada says that she "regularly thinks about what exactly 'equality' is." Authors who attempt to depict the true essence of humans... must maintain an extremely ethical pose.¹¹⁸

For her part, Hasegawa sees *Bedtime Eyes* as a story that progresses toward love of the opposite sex via a relationship with the Other and Spoon, Kim's black lover, as "more than [simply] an other."¹¹⁹ It is through this sexual encounter with the (black, male) Other, Hasegawa argues, that the reader encounters "an expressive world in which we can see various overtunings in value systems."¹²⁰

Both Hasegawa and Akasaki place a faith in the destabilizing potency of these "overtunings" (*tentō*) that is not seen in Cornyetz, Russell, or Okada. If the combination of stereotype and Self-service evoked pseudo-radicalism for the American critics, the "realism" of Yamada's "ethical" encounter with the Other evokes a palpable challenge to the norms of patriarchy for the Japanese literary feminists. One of the most frequently occurring words in Hasegawa's writings on Yamada Eimi is "revolutionary" (*kakumeiteki*). Hasegawa is adamant in

¹¹⁷ Akasaki, p.157.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.159.

¹¹⁹ Hasegawa, p.74.

¹²⁰ Hasegawa, p.68.

her belief that Yamada's work "symbolically implies an instantaneous revolution in the traditional feminine expression of love."¹²¹ This revolution will ultimately bring gender relations that are less phallogentric: "Yamada, while starting from a dismantling of conventional systems and value systems,...reconstructs male-female relations via sexual love or the acquisition of sexual love...rather than throwing away the things that Modernist Feminism did in order to acquire freedom, independence and intellect—i.e. the dismantling of male-female relations."¹²² "In other words," Akasaki recapitulates, "in [Yamada Eimi's] romance, the "male's role" and the "female's role" are turned about and become irrelevant." With this, Hasegawa and Akasaki have made a claim that turns about the notion of Yamada's incomplete challenge to gender norms.

What are we to do, then, with Yamada Eimi, our author who seems more and more black in her inability to narrate blackness such that all are appeased? The masculinist reading has produced a Yamada whose proximity to blackness is too close for a "proper" Japanese woman, the consensus of the American academy seems to be that Yamada's appropriating approximations of blackness are just that: appropriative. Japanese feminists tend to argue that Yamada's ethical encounter with the Other opens up the possibility of reconstructing Self-Other relations. This is the point at which we would determine the "right" reading of Yamada Eimi. Again, the issues of "authenticity" and "authority" would certainly be bandied about. Here, we will take an alternative route. Of the numerous studies of identity politics and subject positionality in Yamada Eimi, only Okada takes into account the identity politics and subject positionality of the scholar reading Yamada Eimi's identity politics. Okada writes:

I want to keep operative a self-critical or self-displacing stance, in order to ameliorate to some extent my own appropriative position as an ethnic male academic working on/with feminist issues from within the discipline of Japanese literature...In what follows, then, I read the

¹²¹ Hasegawa, p.67

¹²² Ibid., p.69

contemporary and controversial Japanese woman writer Yamada Eimi “like” a feminist and “like” a male ethnic academic, and in the process of reading I negotiate my way through the spaces of the privileges and nonprivileges those tags imply.¹²³

Although there is an argument to be made about appropriation in Yamada, Okada has provided us with the powerful insight of the possibility of appropriation in the critic of Yamada. Indeed, the masculinist reading (with its xenophobic fear of the black male’s sexuality in the face of contemporary Japan’s porous national borders, shifting gender norms, aging population, and low birth rate), the American academy’s reading (in which, more often than not, non-black scholars tell Japanese authors the “right” way to represent blackness), and the Japanese feminist reading (in which nary a negative word is said about the skeletons in Yamada’s literary closet as long as patriarchy is contested) all appropriate Yamada piecemeal in order to advance a particular sociopolitical position. Of course, I—a black male in Japan studies who both firmly believes Fanon’s claim that “the black man is not, no more than the white man” and yet is painfully aware of what can be called the nominal reality of blackness—too have my own moments of appropriation toward my own ends. Rather than backing this end with appeals to authenticity, however, I would like to conclude by showing the moments of inauthenticity in the various critical appropriations of Yamada.

The two feminist readings addressed above are riddled with internal inconsistencies. Take for example Akasaki’s explication of the pervasiveness of black males in Yamada’s love stories. Keep in mind that Akasaki claims that Yamada reverses identity roles *ad infinitum* to the end of erasing them. Nevertheless, she concludes that: “In other words, in literary works in which it is important to express emotions by way of the flesh (*nikutai*)—because we often see in black folks the *natural property* (*seishitsu*) of an ability to use their body to freely and frankly

¹²³ Okada, p.113.

express their hearts which lends itself [to Yamada's objective]—Yamada *uses them* (*karera wo tsukatte*) to depict *first love and also humanity*.¹²⁴ The double emphasis may be gratuitous, but the about face in Akasaki's logic calls for excess. Yamada, supposedly an author who deracinates the normativity of identity roles, now *uses* (*mochiiru, tsukau*) blacks because of their inbred abilities. (Should we take solace in the fact that blacks are now used to “depict” (*egaku*) humanity?) Although she seemed to make a strong counterargument to the one proposed by Russell, Akasaki seems in this moment to be a strong example of his thesis. Hasegawa too presents us with a similar dilemma. For all the claims of “changing value systems,” we end up with a value system remarkably reminiscent of the discourse that justified slavery and colonialism: “It is a reconstruction that goes through the most basic work of men and women—sexual love—who are natural organisms just like animals; *for this purpose* (*sono tame ni wa*) doesn't Yamada have to choose black males who have the luster of the wild (*yasei*, as in “wild animals”)?”¹²⁵ Again, we note the rhetoric of use: “for this purpose,” “have to choose.” Although Hasegawa briefly mentions the illusory nature (*gensō*) of black men's wild sexual nature, this does not stop her from revisiting the “natural” attributes of black men in her conclusion. Perhaps the illusion is less in the disclaimer and more in the claims of Yamadian ethics.

We see a moment of “inauthenticity” in the critique posed by the American critics reviewed above as well. Yamada is clearly being policed. Her violation is a mobilization of blackness that (at best) reifies blackness and (at worst) does so in a stereotypical or racist manner. Yamada, in short, presents black identity and identifies blackness in a reductive

¹²⁴ Akasaki, p.158.

¹²⁵ Hasegawa, p.69.

manner. Again, Okada's articulation is astute. Okada suggests that we rethink identity through the notion of subject positionality such that:

“In terms of ‘identity’ thus conceived, “‘who is speaking’ can only be answered by shifting the grounds of the question to ‘where am I speaking from?’”—although we must also remember that “the place of the subject is...ultimately, unlocalizable; were we able to fix the whereabouts of the subject in a static field of determinants, then we would be back in the realm of ego psychology” (Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*...) Positionality, then, suggests a way both of exposing the constructedness of a “self” and of mapping its intertextual contours without finalizing any particular instance as the governing one.”¹²⁶

The objective is a sophisticated one and holds within it a more viable method of discussing our selves. That Cornyetz, Russell, and Okada hold Yamada to such a standard by questioning the way she might “fix the whereabouts of the subject in a static field of determinants” is a welcome development. The problem here, however, is also clear. Can this kind of critique police Yamada's representation of the subject “without finalizing any particular instance as the governing one?” Do they themselves not fall prey to the very charge that has been brought against Yamada?

Take for example Cornyetz's identification of (supposedly) black narrators in two of Yamada Eimi's short stories. Yamada does not provide definitive evidence concerning the race of the narrators, yet Cornyetz claims that, “Although neither narrative explicitly identifies the object of passion...or the narrator...as black, it can be easily inferred. The narrator of “Taste of...” plays the harmonica and smells like barbecue sauce, and the yearned-for George in “X-Rated” has a voice described as “like a southern melody.”¹²⁷ One can't help but feel that accuracy is on her side in this reading of Yamada. What alternative reading, however, might be produced if we—in what might be a naïve thought experiment—give Yamada the benefit of the doubt? Students of “ethnic” literatures in general and readers of Toni Morrison's “Recitatif”—a

¹²⁶ Okada, p.114.

¹²⁷ Cornyetz, p. 446.

story that is a self-styled “experiment in the removal of all racial codes from a narrative about two characters of different races for whom racial identity is crucial”—in particular know that the intersection of hermeneutics and identity is no laughing matter, that narrated identity is rarely “easily inferred.”¹²⁸ Rather than seeing “X-Rated” and “Taste of...” as experiments along the lines of “Recitatif,” Cornyetz reads the harmonica, the aroma of barbecue sauce, and southern melodies as signifiers of blackness. Despite—or perhaps precisely in order to guarantee—the power of her critique, it seems that Cornyetz is relying heavily on the “stereotype” of Yamada’s works, in which a black male must be the narratorial or objective focal point. Who then is “finalizing any particular instance as the governing one:” Yamada or the critic who polices her?

Analogously, the previous excerpt from Russell encounters a similar quagmire. To reiterate, Russell argues that Yamada’s “sex with the Black Other is depicted as a self-transforming...essentially masturbatory experience...since...only the Japanese woman who is portrayed as benefiting emotionally and physically...In the end, the discourse depicts sexual encounters with black men as recreational and pro (creative) (though seldom producing bicultural offspring.”¹²⁹ This is easily one of the most persuasive recapitulations of the potential pitfall of Yamada. Yet it finalizes a particular Yamada Eimi and ignores the others that contest its claim. There is, for example, no footnote on works such as *Soul Music Lovers Only*, a collection of short stories set in the States and featuring all black casts. There is no mention of Jesse—the biracial child who plays a central role in *Trash* and *Jesse’s Backbone*. There is no expectation of Harmony and Robin, the half Italian, half African-American dual child protagonists of *Payday*. Even if *Soul Music Lovers Only*, *Trash*, *Jesse’s Backbone* and *Payday* represent anomalies in Yamada’s oeuvre, isn’t the point of Russell’s critique to advance a

¹²⁸ For more on “Recitatif,” see Morrison’s introduction to *Playing in the Dark*.

¹²⁹ Russell, p.129.

reading of Yamada that respects minority? Again, the critic has, in the process of critiquing, fixed Yamada and, in so doing, effaced the minority that is supposed to be upheld.

Okada too, whose rhetorical style often doubles back on itself in order to destabilized any moments that seem finalized, shows glimpses of finalization. Okada, masterfully cognizant of the fact that “my critique of Yamada may likewise evoke charges that I, a male academic, am trying to deny a woman her own desire, trying to erase feminine pleasure through appropriation in academic discourse,” nevertheless ripostes that he is “not interested in simple role reversals of ‘identities’ as theses have been configured in humanistic discourse.”¹³⁰ By claiming that Yamada is a part of the discourse of “simple role reversals,” it seems that Okada, even with his respect for the notion of becoming, has fixed what Yamada was and what she can become. In 1994, a year before Okada’s essay, Yamada would publish “Otona ni bunbetsu wa iranai” (Adults Don’t Need Classification), in which she argued precisely that. Pulling on the Baldwinian notion of humanity, Yamada suggests that rather than thinking of her characters as being “autobiographical” projections of *herself*, that we should think of them as having “projections of the feminine in the masculine, the masculine in the feminine.”¹³¹ Moreover, at the time that Okada was composing his treatise, Yamada was composing *Animal Logic*. *Animal Logic*, in many ways an homage to *Giovanni’s Room*, narrates the opening of a lesbian relationship as follows:

I don’t know the best way to describe Yasmine’s relationship with Susie. I get the feeling that the word the world uses—so-called “lesbians”—does not fully describe it. They weren’t necessarily in love, but that doesn’t mean that they were necessarily in it only to taste physical pleasure. When they hid themselves in the bed sheets there were times when they embraced each other, and there were times when they spent their time talking. There was none of the plundering and being plundered of saccharine sex games. Yasmine is the kind of woman that sprawls out naked on the bed sheets, but Susie certainly wasn’t. I imagine that Susie only took

¹³⁰ Okada, p.120.

¹³¹ Yamada Eimi, “Otona ni bunbetsu wa iranai (Adults Don’t Need Classification),” p.43.

her clothes off in the true sense of the word in front of Yasmine. And she wanted to be that way [truly naked]; that's why she came to Yasmine.

Yamada's narrator has much more difficulty pinpointing sex roles than Okada's claim of "simple role reversal" gives her credit for. Perhaps Yamada is in motion, in the process of becoming a more sophisticated writer of racialized gender identities. I am thinking of motion as it is described in the *Metaphysics*:

Now of these processes we should call the one type motions, and the other actualizations. Every motion is incomplete--the processes of thinning, learning, walking, building--these are motions, and incomplete at that. For it is not the same thing which at the same time is walking and has walked, or is building and has built, or is becoming and has become, or is being moved and has been moved, but two different things;... But the same thing at the same time is seeing and has seen, is thinking and has thought. The latter kind of process, then, is what I mean by actualization, and the former what I mean by motion¹³²

Although Okada certainly advocates what could be called the ethics of motion, it is only by arresting the motion of Yamada's textual realm that Yamada can be chastised for finalizing racial and gendered subjects.

Conclusion: Yamada Under Arrest

On the issue of motion—an issue central to any discussion of color lines—we have encountered a key question: where is Yamada Eimi? We confronted this question first through the notion of the black author function, a discursive system which revealed itself to be interested in the valuation of "black literature" and not solely interested in the "biological" make-up of the author. We moved next to the structural and reconstructural theories of the blackness of black literature. These theories too have difficulty fixing blackness or Yamada in a particular place. Thinkers such as hooks, working through the notion of postmodern blackness, opened the borders of blackness considerably. It is precisely because of this opening, however, that the borders are policed with a new vigor. Our final attempt used Yamada as a case study for the first

¹³² Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 9.1048b.

two questions. It seems clear that both the Japanese and American academy read Yamada's works through a paradigm analogous to the black author function, that is, with an emphasis on the signifyin(g) in her works and its significance to black Americans. It also seems reasonable to suggest that, due to the inability to definitely claim that Yamada's works are "completely black" or "completely Japanese," policing by way of terms such as "authenticity" has become the status quo of Yamada Eimi studies. If, however, critics question the authenticity of Yamada's works and yet these critiques themselves have profound moments of inauthenticity in their attempts to locate Yamada Eimi, we return to our question: where is Yamada Eimi?

Okada proposed a similar inquiry on two occasions: once when I suggested reading Yamada transracially and once in the article reviewed above. Okada writes that if we desire to move beyond the "confines of identitarian politics," it is "becoming clear that, to the commonly accepted categories of race, class, and gender, we must now add the problematic of a borderless, transnational 'space'—which means, at the very minimum, that Fredric Jameson's famous injunction, 'Always historicize!' will now have to be reconfigured in terms of global, subjectivized positions."¹³³ Transracial narration undeniably attempts to take us beyond the confines of identitarian politics. At its base—and this seems to be a byproduct of what can be called identitarian policing—however, transracial narration seems anchored to the very notion of identity that it attempts to challenge. And thus we locate Yamada Eimi: under arrest, somewhere between the old color line regime of undeniably innate racial make-up and the new color line regime of semi-porous borders that allow for "transracial identities," but identities read through the standards of the old regime nevertheless.

¹³³ Okada, p. 112-113.

There is much talk of Yamada Eimi as a “representative” female postmodern Japanese author. For all its promises, however, Yamada’s “postmodern” handling of identity seems remarkably close to the “modern” handling that preceded it. I am reminded of an introductory essay in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, which includes discussion both of Deleuze’s take on becoming and Derrida’s take on policing. Little is made of this juxtaposition, but it seems to me to be of paramount import vis-à-vis the reading of Yamada Eimi: can becoming and policing exist in the same space (here in the sense proposed by Okada) with no tension? Again, Yamada—both becoming and policed—seems to be under arrest, between identity as formulated before postmodernism and identity as it is (supposedly) de-formulated during postmodernism or, perhaps, between identity as it is (supposedly) de-formulated during postmodernism and the politics of dis-identity that will (we must assume) follow postmodernism.

We will take this question—how are the ethics of representing racial identity negotiated in contemporary Japanese literature even as the viability of “racial identity” is challenged on various (sociopolitical, technological, narratological, neurobiological *et cetera*) fronts—up again in the following chapter and the epilogue. For the time being, we are granted only visitation rights to an arrested Yamada Eimi caught between the color lines. The narrator of *Trash* introduces us to Coco, a Japanese woman whose relationship with Rick, her black lover, has taken a turn for the worst, by blurring the lines of the narrator’s and character’s voices à la Zora Neale Hurston, that is, in the fashion that Holloway claimed was a staple of black female writing. This blurred voice reminds us that:

Even if you don’t commit a crime, you can still taste the feel of handcuffs. But what if...she thought. But what if everyone is living their entire lives handcuffed...that’s what she thought. Even if there’s a difference between handcuffs you can see and those you can’t. Visible handcuffs are for visible crimes. And intangible handcuffs are for intangible crimes. Well, did I commit a crime? These iron circles were actually eating into her wrists. Being placed in tangible

handcuffs for an intangible crime, isn't that against the rules? It's not fair, she whispered. And then she lost all hope, realizing that such cute words didn't correspond to her situation...¹³⁴

¹³⁴Yamada Eimi, *Trash*, p.9.

Chapter Five

“Copies that Make Originals:” Cultural Hermeneutics and the *Little Black Sambo* Controversies

There is no doubt that [the story] resonates differently for someone who uses Black English Vernacular and is intimately familiar with African American oral narrative traditions than it does for me...Nevertheless, the functions of [the story] are equally available to these different kinds of readers: all of us can enter the authorial audience, even if we do not all sit in the same row.

—James Phelan, “Reading across Identity Borders”

If transcultural judgments are always cross-cultural translations, then such interpretations are liminal acts opening up a space in which boundaries are transformed yet paradoxically maintained even as they are crossed. Boundaries are crossed in interpretation when one culture becomes the conversational topic or interpretive object of another; boundaries are maintained as the interpretive act...figures and persuades within the context of the interpreting culture; and boundaries are moved as interpretation changes the shape...of the culture in which the interpretation is produced and received...Another way of putting this: as we interact with other communities, traditions, cultures, we can reweave our web of belief to take account of the other, and we do this...from differing points of view within and outside our own groups. — Steven Mailloux, “Articulation and Understanding”

Introduction

In 1952, psychologist M.E. Goodman published a treatise on what she called “race awareness” in four-year-old American children. By the age of four, Goodman contends, children have the hermeneutic faculties to perceive and interpret race, assign aesthetic value to skin color and utilize these assignments in their own ongoing process of self-identity formation. Children, Goodman concluded, both tell and are told racial stories, and it is through the interpretation of such stories that they create their racial selves. No story was more instrumental to the 1950s construction of children’s race awareness than Helen Bannerman’s (1862-1946) *Little Black Sambo* (1899). As Goodman describes one “Negro boy’s” response to *Sambo*:

Paul’s race awareness is of a medium order, but his feelings are strong. He is not clear about kinds of people, though he has a notion that there is a “black” kind, and another kind which he only occasionally labels “white.” He sometimes calls the black kind “black Sambo.” Paul

probably sees himself as being actually very dark, and he clearly prefers not to do so. He always finds white figures prettier and nicer and he rejects the “black.”¹

In 1954, or two years after the publication of Goodman’s assessment of Sambo’s role in the construction of children’s race awareness, Miyahara Seiichi, a social education (*shakai kyōikugaku*) specialist and prominent member of the University of Tokyo’s Department of Education during its founding years, turned a psychoanalytical eye toward the Iwanami translation of *Little Black Sambo* and its reception among Japanese youth. Miyahara’s target demographic was analogous to Goodman’s; Miyahara claimed that children began to show interest in *Chibikuro sambo* (the Japanese translation of “Little Black Sambo,” hereafter *Chibikuro*) “around the age of three.”² Whereas Goodman’s study comments on the deleterious effects of *Sambo* on black children’s notion of race-based beauty and African-American parents’ vitriolic response to the text, Miyahara suggests that the text “exemplifies the kind of book that pleases children” (*sansaiji ga yorokobu daihyōteki na hon no hitotsu*) and that it is “only natural that the book has many fans, particularly among first and second graders (*koto ni shōgakkō no ichi, ninensei ni Chibikuro sambo no fan ga ooi koto wa tōzen da.*)”³ Moreover, in comparison to Goodman’s study, which presented Sambo as proof of “race awareness” in adolescents, Miyahara’s rendition of Japanese children’s response to Sambo is conspicuously free of any references to race or racism. According to Miyahara, juvenile readers situate themselves vis-à-vis Sambo not by seeing him as a racialized subject, but by projecting themselves onto Sambo and “becoming” (*jibun wa...Chibikuro sanbo ni naru*) the protagonist-hero of Bannerman’s tale.

Goodman claimed that the *Sambo* stigmata evokes an aesthetic rejection of blackness; Miyahara claimed that *Sambo* is so charming that he evokes a desire to become one with, and

¹ Mary Goodman, *Race Awareness in Young Children*, p.190.

² Miyahara Seiichi, “*Chibikuro Sanbo no omoshirosa*,” p.54.

³ Ibid., p.54.

ultimately become, black Sambo. Even with these brief synopses of Goodman and Miyahara's commentaries, one can't help but wonder: did Goodman and Miyahara read the same book? As one research symposium on *Little Black Sambo* concluded, "Even if [*Little Black Sambo*] is a single literary work, it produces a wide variety of books (*hitotsu no sakuhin demo, hon wa takusan no shurui ga deteiru.*)"⁴ Here, the suggestion of the multiplicity of *Sambo* is to be taken both literally (since its 1899 publication, *Sambo* has been accompanied by dozens of pirated editions, textual and illustrative adaptations, and translations) and figuratively. By figuratively, I refer to *Little Black Sambo*'s uncanny hermeneutic malleability; for every pirated version and adaptation of *Sambo*, there are, as Goodman and Miyahara differing readings insinuate, ten dissenting voices chiming in on the "proper" interpretation of the text.

Goodman and Miyahara adumbrate the series of debates on *Little Black Sambo* that occurred both within and between the United States and Japan from the early-1950s to the early 1990s. These debates provide us with a prime opportunity to hear the voices surrounding the reception history of *Little Black Sambo*, and, by proxy, the valuation of "blackness," as they sound on both sides of the Pacific. In listening to voices from both sides of the Pacific, we shift from Phelan's epigraphic suggestion—that black readers produce interpretations of black texts that are somehow more authoritative than other readings—and its imagery of segregated seating in order to place our hermeneutic faith in Mailloux's epigraphic suggestion—that when we read across identity borders we approach texts as equals and the cultural conversations that follow transform our understanding of both "our" culture and "theirs."

⁴ "Matome," from *Chibikuro sanbo no kenkyū*, p.20. I will refer to *Little Black Sambo* on some occasions and *Chibikuro sanbo* at others. My intention here, in addition to reminding us of which side of the Pacific we reside on at a given moment, is to highlight the fact that there is and has been, since the very onset, more than one *Little Black Sambo*. Many of the arguments regarding the text are engendered by attempts to see the work as a single text rather than a network of intertextually-linked texts which share a like title.

This chapter presents the publication, translation, reception, and cultural history of *Little Black Sambo* in both Japan and the United States and provides what Steven Mailloux calls rhetorical-hermeneutical analysis. Mailloux defines rhetorical-hermeneutics as “a version of cultural rhetorical studies that focuses on the tropes, arguments, and narratives constituting the interpretations of texts at specific times and places.”⁵ Mailloux defines “cultural rhetoric” as “the political effectivity of trope, argument and narrative in culture.”⁶ “This definition,” as Mailloux continues, “encourages a practical and theoretical preoccupation with making sense of the political dynamics of cultural conversations at specific historical moments,”⁷—a process that Mailloux refers to as using history to do theory. In considering the cultural hermeneutics of *Little Black Sambo* on both sides of the Pacific, we take our investigation of Japanese constructions of blackness in a new direction. Until this point, this study has focused primarily on textual analysis of “blackness” (black characters, Japanese incorporations of black literary techniques, Japanese-African American intertextuality, *et cetera*) as it is seen in works of Japanese literature. That is to say, the study has focused on the multiple modes of *writing* blackness in/into Japanese.

Here, our attention shifts to issues associated primarily with readerships: communally-shared interpretative paradigms, the politics of translation and reading in translation, and the problematics of reading and conversing across national, ethnic, and historical borders. By mobilizing Mailloux’s notion of rhetorical hermeneutics, we turn our attention toward the multiple modes of *reading* blackness in/into Japanese. The literary discourse on blackness in Japan, and the notion of black “otherhood” produced by said discourse, is based on the reciprocal

⁵Steven Mailloux, “Re-Making Slave Bodies: Rhetoric as Production and Reception,” p. 98.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

relationship between writing and reading blackness. The cultural reach of *Chibikuro sambo*—the Iwanami version alone sold some 1.2 million copies between its 1953 publication and 1988 banning—allows us to observe the dynamics of this reciprocal relationship in motion. Take, for example, Nakagami Kenji's *On the Japanese Language*. At the onset of his job, Boku “imagined...the black soldier to be...as docile as a pet or Little Black Sambo.”⁸ The immense popularity of *Chibikuro sambo* in Japan made Sambo the first point of reference vis-à-vis blackness for a generation of Japanese authors; analysis of how blackness was (and wasn't) read in Japan enriches our discussion of how it was written.

After a review of the reception of Sambo in the States, I rehearse the 1950s production and reception of *Chibikuro sambo*. During this period, Japanese critics and authors of children's literature upheld *Chibikuro* as an exemplary work of children's literature. The process of venerating *Chibikuro* effectively silenced any discussion of the text's racial ideology. The first debate on *Chibikuro* erupted in 1965 and revolved around the varying definitions of authentic translation. This debate begat a second series of debates during the late-1960s and early-1970s on *Chibikuro*'s racial/racist ideology and the ethics of interracial reading. Even as scholars debated the unethical implications of *Chibikuro*'s ideology, the story continued to grow both in popularity and pirated editions. In 1988, the popularity of *Chibikuro* in Japan sparked the merger of the Japanese and American debates on the text, which had been until this point (more or less) distinct. The transpacific debate known as the *Chibikuro sanbo ronsō* (*Little Black Sambo Controversy*) was initiated by a 1988 Washington Post article which, outraged by the popularity in Japan of a tale that America had deemed racist decades earlier, declared that “old black stereotypes find new lives in Japan.” Analysis of the *Little Black Sambo Controversy* facilitates

⁸ Nakagami Kenji, *On the Japanese Language*, p.178-179.

a revisiting of the issues considered in the previous chapter, particularly the issue of policing the borders of blackness in an increasingly global network of reading blackness. Throughout the various debates we witness the readerly playing in the shadows of blackness, that is the destabilizing and destabilized nature of blackness as a racial signifier with significance that shifts with its historical, sociopolitical, and literary contexts.

Sambo before *Sambo*: Sambo as Cultural Icon

The genesis of Sambo—that is “Sambo” as a figure in the American popular imagination which functioned as a stereotypical representative of mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth century black masculinity—occurred well in advance of the 1899 birth of “Sambo,” the eponymous protagonist of Helen Bannerman’s *Little Black Sambo*. The proximity of Bannerman’s Sambo to the Sambo of American racial lore is at the crux of both the *Chibikuro Sanbo ronsō* as well as the Sambo-related debates that erupted in England and the United States; whether or not *Little Black Sambo* is related to Sambo the racial (or perhaps racist) icon is often the hermeneutical difference between deeming *Sambo* the story of a courageous boy or a discriminatory artifact of the age of imperialism.⁹ As such, familiarity with Sambo before *Sambo* is crucial if we are to trace the rhetorical hermeneutics of the *Chibikuro sambo* debates.

Tracing the trajectory of Sambo’s odyssey from its origins to postwar Japan will require multiple stencils. Etymologically, the source of “Sambo” remains opaque. Although scholarly consensus has yet to produce a definitive source for the term “Sambo,” at least four candidates have been proposed: “Sambo” was born either in ancient Greece, the Congo, West Africa, or the

⁹ London would see its own debate on *Little Black Sambo* upon the publication of the 1972 Chatto and Windus version of the tale, a publication whose timing coincided with a significant increase in Britain’s black population. The British *Little Black Sambo* debate took place primarily via the pages of the *London Times* and the *Times Literary Supplement*. For more on this debate, see Yuill.

Himalayas. One potential etymological origin of “Sambo” is the Greek word *skambos*, which means “crooked.” We also hear remnants of the Greek *skambos* in the Spanish term “zambo.” Although “zambo” literally means “bow-legged,” it was used to denote people of mixed ancestry in Latin America during the nineteenth-century. As such, “zambo,” or the Anglicized “sambo,” would be a useful term for the slave trade economy of antebellum America, where the practice of colorism “determined” the value and character of slaves and gave or denied them access to certain social spaces. As Phyllis Yuill notes, “In racially-conscious Southern society, it [“Sambo”] later came to mean the child of a black person and a “mulatto,” denoting one-quarter white ancestry.”¹⁰ It seems unlikely, however, that the zambo-derived “Sambo” is of any relation to Bannerman’s *Little Black Sambo* or the plethora of American adaptations thereof. The same can be said for “nzambu,” the Congolese word for “monkey.”¹¹

The remaining two candidates are frequently referenced within the context of the *Chibikuro sanbo ronsō*. Although this argument seems to have relatively little credence, some have argued that Bannerman’s “Sambo” is derived from the Tibetan “Sambo,” a common male name for boys in the Himalayan region.¹² Helen Bannerman, the author of *Little Black Sambo*, lived in Madras for more than three decades with her husband William Bannerman, a Scottish doctor who was stationed in India as a physician and epidemiologist with the Indian Medical Service. It is therefore plausible that Bannerman would have come in contact with an Indian named “Sambo.” Elizabeth Hay, the author of the authoritative bibliography of Bannerman, is an exponent of this theory. Furthermore, scholars such as Dekura Jun argue that Sambo is a

¹⁰ Phyllis Yuill, *Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look*, p.21.

¹¹ Phyllis Yuill, *Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look*, p.20.

¹² Todayama Midori, *Kakusareta kyōzai to shite no “Chibikuro sanbo:” Eikoku, amerika gasshūkoku, nihon ni okeru juyō to hyōka ni tsuite*, p.89.

Tibetan name which name means “courage” and that Bannerman, therefore, wasn’t racist.¹³ We will return to the implications of the mobilization of this etymology in a subsequent section. For the time being, it is important to keep in mind that there is an etymology that would seemingly absolve *Sambo* of any racist subtext, and that this etymology is an attractive alternative to those who defend the text.

The final potential origin would place Sambo’s forbearers in Africa. In Senegalese, “Sambo” is the word for “uncle,” or a term of affection used for avuncular figures. The Senegalese “Sambo” would function in a fashion similar to that of the Japanese “ojisan,” as a term that denotes either an avuncular figure or a social relation in which the uncle-niece/nephew relationship is replicated. In Huasa, “Sambo” refers to the second-born son. This “Sambo” is analogous with the Senegalese “Sambo” in so far as a familial position is transformed into an appellation. Given the haunting number of West African slaves brought to the Americas, it is possible that the term “Sambo” survived the journey through the Middle Passage and was introduced into the English language by virtue of the fact that there was a considerable number of men named or referred to as “Sambo” in the black slave population, a fact to which those affiliated with the slave trade would not have been oblivious. Phyllis Barton argues that “prior to Bannerman’s use of the name, it was mentioned in innumerable oral accounts and hundreds of times in travel diaries and literature beginning sometime around 1564.”¹⁴

After this introduction, “Sambo” underwent a peculiar inversion. Sambo went from being a prominent name among the male slave population to an interpellation that supposedly encapsulated the very notion of the African male slave mentality. “Mars Jeems’s Nightmare,” a

¹³ See Dekura Jun, “Chibikuro sanbo no gogen wo megutte: kasetsu to dantei no aida de.”

¹⁴ Phyllis Barton, *The Pictus Orbis Sambo*, p.67.

short story by Charles Chesnutt and contemporary of *Little Black Sambo*, provides an example of “Sambo” as a sobriquet which beckons all black male slaves en masse:

Mars [Master] Johnson sez ter dis yer noo man:

“W’at’s yo’ name, Sambo?”

“My name ain’ Sambo,” ‘spon’ de noo nigger.

“Did I ax you w’at yo’ name wa’n’t?” sez Mars Johnson. “You wants ter be pa’tic’lar how you talks ter me. Now, w’at is yo’ name, en whar did you come fum?”

“I dunno my name,” sez de nigger, ‘en I doan member whar I come fum. My head is all kin’er mix’ up.”

“Yas,” sez Mars Johnson, “I reckon I’ll ha’ter gib you sump’n fer ter cl’ar yo’ head. At de same time, it’ll l’arn you some manners, en atter dis mebbe you’ll say “suh” w’en you speaks ter me.”¹⁵

This excerpt of Chesnutt is a subtle reminder of the most insidious use of “Sambo.” The black slave, a commoditized being that was literally substitutable, is identified by way of a one-size-fits-all moniker rather than a “proper” name. Note that the narrator, himself a former plantation worker, duplicates this system by referring to the new slave as “de nigger,” yet another empty pronoun-like moniker in lieu of an actual name. “Sambo,” and its near synonym—“de nigger,” is to be contrasted with the slave owner, whose status as a human being demands the title “suh.” This title both creates and verifies the slave owners’ place in the master-slave power dynamic; when Master Johnson suggests that he give the new slave “sump’n fer ter cl’ar yo’ head,” he certainly doesn’t mean acetaminophen.

“Sambo,” then, would have been a “John Doe” character, the blank yet overwritten African American everyman in the Modern American psyche. “By early in the twentieth century,” when Bannerman’s *Little Black Sambo* was creating pandemonium, “the term ‘Sambo’ came to be used as a generic name for any black male, particularly in the United States,” often

¹⁵ Charles Chesnutt, “Mars Jeems’s Nightmare,” p.36-37. In this passage, Chesnutt is being particularly coy with his use of the term “Sambo.” “Mars Jeems’s Nightmare” is one of Chesnutt’s conjure tales, which combine the uncanny reality of plantation life with the occult surreality of conjure, a form of hoodoo practiced by members of the slave community. In this tale, the titular Master Jeems, a particularly venomous slave owner, is metamorphosed into a black slave, hence the nightmare. As such, it is the master who is addressed with the generalized name of the slave.

used “in Hollywood in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as...[a] common reference to bartenders and shoe shine boys.”¹⁶ One could find “Samboes” in magazines, movies, record labels, movies and especially minstrel shows. What would “Sambo” look like at the fin-de-siècle? As Stanley Elkins succinctly summarized:

Sambo, the typical plantation slave, was docile but irresponsible, loyal but lazy, humble but chronically given to lying and stealing; his behavior was full of infantile silliness and his talk inflated with childish exaggeration. His relationship with his master was one of utter dependence and childlike attachment: it was indeed this childlike quality that was the very key to his being.¹⁷

Minstrelsy was a particularly potent medium for the reification of Sambo, “the typical plantation slave.” Minstrel shows took center stage in the history of American entertainment in the 1830’s, largely due to the popularity of Thomas Dartmouth “Daddy” Rice’s *Jump Jim Crow*. The Sambo character, typically performed by a white comedian in blackface, quickly became a fan favorite. In the derisive color scheme of the minstrel world, Sambo was “the end man in the minstrel show, the stupid one who was the butt of all the jokes,” or, “the ventriloquist’s little black, red-lipped dummy.”¹⁸ The minstrel show basis of Sambo’s popularity would last well into the twentieth-century, both in Hollywood and in the American popular imagination. In short: “by the mid-1800’s, the term was employed to refer to any black person, often with derision and contempt, and was used through the mid-twentieth century as a “nickname” to call porters, shoe-shiners, etc.”¹⁹

Intertextual Precedents

We have already established that the term “Sambo”—that is the “Sambo” that the *OED* defines as: “A nickname for a Negro. Now used only as a term of abuse...esp. with reference to

¹⁶ Nina Mikkelsen, “Little Black Sambo Revisited,” p.261.

¹⁷ Stanley Elkins, *A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, as cited in “Facing Little Black Sambo in the 1990s,” p.129.

¹⁸ Jessie Birtha, “Portrayal of the Black in Children’s Literature.”

¹⁹ Yuill, p.21.

the appearance or subservient mentality held to be typical of the black American slave”—was already in vogue when Bannerman was writing *Sambo*. This chronological fact engenders two components of transpacific discussions of *Sambo*. First, many who rally against *Sambo* argue that the term shouldn't be introduced to children because it is a token of the darker days of American race relations. Conversely, the foundation of what can be called the pro-*Sambo* intentionalist argument is that the image of *Sambo* in minstrel shows and texts such as “Mars Jeems's Nightmare” is not germane because Bannerman didn't have access to these images; because Bannerman had never seen these depictions of *Sambo*, she was not emulating them, and thus her intention was not to promulgate racist American imagery. Muraoka Kazuhiko succinctly encapsulates the intention-emulation dilemma: “The issue that becomes problematic is [determining] whether or not the stereotype that was a matter of course to Americans was also held by (*kyōtsu no imeiji*) the English or Bannerman at that time.”²⁰ In the context of the *Chibikuro sambo ronsō*, this problem is usually addressed by introducing a single authoritative “source” for the *Sambo* imagery and interpreting the text from this basis. Thus, reviewing the plurality of texts that most likely informed Bannerman's *Sambo* will allow us to critically read the selective production of a singular origin for *Sambo* in the various *ronsō*. It is important to note that, as was the case with the etymology of *Sambo*, there is no definitive answer as to who the progenitors of Bannerman's *Sambo* “are.” We can, however, begin to sketch a family portrait.

Dr. Heinrich Hoffmann's 1845 *Der Struwwelpeter (Slovenly Peter)* includes imagery that might have served as a primordial *Sambo*. Hoffmann, much like Bannerman, was not an author by trade but wrote stories for his children that were eventually published. Dr. Hoffmann's

²⁰*Chibikuro sanbo: zeppan wo kangaeru*, p.80.

collection of stories was wildly popular throughout Europe and it is highly likely that Bannerman read a copy either in the original German (Bannerman was a polyglot: she sat for several LLA examinations, including one in German, from the University of St. Andrews) or in English translation (the first English translation of *Der Struwwelpeter* was published in 1848, a half-century before the publication of *Sambo*.) Robert Bannerman, one of Bannermen's four children, claims that he recalls owning a copy of *Der Struwwelpeter* as a child.²¹

One story in *Der Struwwelpeter* is entitled "Die Geschichte von den schwarzen Buben," typically translated as "The Story of the Inky Boys." "Inky" is a translation of the word "schwarzen," which literally means "black." "The Story of the Inky Boys" begins with a single inky boy, a "wooly-headed Black-a-moor" who is ridiculed by three (we are to assume) German boys because of his blackness. Tall Agrippa, a towering parental figure, admonishes the boys and commands them to, "'leave the Black-a-moor alone! For if he tries with all his might, he cannot change from black to white.'" The boys continue to deride the Black-a-moor until Agrippa, incensed, chastises them by dipping the boys in a vat of ink. The adolescent jesters, however, remain insouciant:

See, there they are, and there they run!/ The Black-a-moor enjoys the fun./ They have been made as black as crows,/ Quite black all over, eyes and nose,/ And legs, and arms, and heads, and toes,/ And trousers, pinafores, and toys—/ The silly little inky boys!/ Because they set up such a roar,/ And teased the harmless Black-a-moor.

One can draw numerous parallels between "Die Geschichte von den schwarzen Buben" and *Little Black Sambo*. Several of Bannerman's works, particularly *Little Kettle-Head*, has a macabre tone that seems reminiscent of Hoffmann. Moreover, critics such as Yuill have commented on Bannerman's use of alternating text and illustrations, an innovation in children's

²¹ See Elizabeth Hay, *Sambo Sahib: The Story of Little Black Sambo and Helen Bannerman*, esp. p.174.

literature that might find its roots in *Der Struwwelpeter*. What is particularly striking, however, is the similarity between the illustrations of Sambo and the Black-a-moor.

As Michelle Martin contends:

Place the Black-a-moor, the protagonist in Heinrich Hoffmann's "The Story of the Inky Boys" from *Struwwelpeter* next to Helen Bannerman's protagonist in *The Story of Little Black Sambo*, and the resemblance is obvious...Both children have dark skin, curly or Afro hair, and bright red lips. Both carry green umbrellas and wear red garments. Even the body positions are similar."²²

Both Michelle Martin and Elizabeth Hay have written on the potential interconnectivity between *Sambo* and "The Story of the Inky Boys" and the significance of this connection as it relates to interpreting *Sambo*. For our purposes, it will suffice to highlight two points. First, the presence of the Black-a-moor in the overwhelmingly whitewashed world of nineteenth-century children's literature is a testament to the fact that the age of imperialism was also an age of transnational immigration and emigration. As Martin reminds us, "the term "Moor" may have come from an ancient North African language and is often used synonymously with "black."...Moors were native to Mauritania, which now corresponds to regions of Morocco and Algeria in Northern Africa."²³ This border crossing evoked a pressing need to define "whiteness" vis-à-vis a "blackness" that was now shockingly close to home. As Martin continues: "Only his blackness and nappy hair matter for the purposes of this story...Neither the Black-a-moor nor the white children change in appearance from the first to the last page, but the Black-a-moor's muteness give him even less character than his antagonizers."

²² Michelle Martin, "Hey, Who's the Kid with the Green Umbrella? Re-evaluating the Black-a-Moor and Little Black Sambo," p.147.

²³ Martin, p.152.



Bannerman's 1899 illustration of Sambo (left) is literally a mirror image of Hoffmann's 1845 "Black-a-moor."

Second, the process of defining whiteness vis-à-vis blackness, particularly a mute blackness that cannot define itself, inevitably includes acts of valuation. In the nineteenth century, it was unfathomable to suggest that blackness was in the same valuative stratosphere as whiteness.²⁴ This conjecture stands even in regards to a story such as “Die Geschichte von den schwarzen Buben,” which is ostensibly laudatory insofar as the ideological underpinnings of the text revolve around the folly of ridiculing those who are beneath us. It is precisely the fact that blackness would make the nameless Black-a-moor “beneath us,” however, that exposes the differing value between the Black-a-moor and the German boys; as Agrippa reminds us, “For if he [the Black-a-moor] tries with all his might, He cannot change from black to white.” Reminiscent of George Schuyler’s *Black No More*, Agrippa implies that the Black-a-moor *would* change if given the opportunity. As Charles Frey and John Griffith recapitulate, “The basic, unspoken logic of the situation is that of course anyone would rather be white than a woolly-headed black, and it is not nice for the privileged ones to tease the unfortunate about his unhappy condition.”²⁵

We also know that Bannerman came across variations of Sambo through her readings in English and American literature. Sambo makes several cameos in *Vanity Fair* (first serialized between 1847-1848) as a servant at the Pinkerton academy. Hay has verified that Bannerman referenced Thackeray’s magnum opus in a letter to her daughter. The following passage, which the narrator’s daydream of what the vain narratee would like to hear, exemplifies Sambo’s place in the text:

The argument stands thus—Osborne, in love with Amelia, has asked an old friend to dinner and to Vauxhall...Will he marry her? That is the great subject now in hand.

²⁴ For more on this topic, Emmanuel Eze’s *Race and the Enlightenment* is particularly revelatory.

²⁵ Charles H. Frey and John Griffith, “Heinrich Hoffmann,” from *The Literary Heritage of Childhood: An Appraisal of Children’s Classics in the Western Tradition*, as cited in Martin.

We might have treated this subject in the genteel, or in the romantic, or in the facetious manner. Suppose...we had resorted to the entirely low, and described what was going on in Mr. Sedley's kitchen—how black Sambo was in love with the cook (as indeed he was), and how he fought a battle with the coachman on her behalf;...such incidents might be made to provoke much delightful laughter, and be supposed to represent scenes of "life." Or if, on the contrary, we had taken a fancy for the terrible, and made the lover of the new femme de chambre a professional burglar, who bursts into the house with his band, slaughters black Sambo at the feet of his master, and carries off Amelia in her night-dress, not to be let loose again till the third volume, we should easily have constructed a tale of thrilling interest, through the fiery chapters of which the reader should hurry, panting. But my readers must hope for no such romance, only a homely story...And yet it is a chapter, and a very important one too. Are not there little chapters in everybody's life, that seem to be nothing, and yet affect all the rest of the history?²⁶

Given that *Vanity Fair* is primarily concerned with the vicissitudes of the English aristocracy and those who wish to join their ranks, the prominence of Sambo, a black servant, throughout the first thirty-eight chapters of *Vanity Fair* reminds us of Morrison contention: that the Africanist presence is a “dark and abiding presence, there for the literary imagination as both a visible and invisible mediating force...even, and especially when texts are not ‘about’ Africanist presences.”²⁷ The narrator’s imagining of alternative story worlds exemplifies the duality of Sambo as both a necessity for the construction of and an obstruction to the attainment of Anglo-European identity and sexuality. Recall that Thackeray’s use of satire was done in part to highlight the realism of his literary world vis-à-vis the romance; the initial title for *Vanity Fair* was *Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society*. In an attempt to enhance the claim to realistic depiction in this story, the narrator reminds us that there are other, more “romantic” and “facetious,” modes of narration. In these modes, “black Sambo” meets quite a different fate. If we were to resort to the “entirely low,” then we could describe the amorous endeavors of Sambo. With this, we have simultaneously unraveled why the omniscient narrator averts his gaze from Sambo and returned to the complicit valuation we saw in Hoffmann’s tale. The use of the parenthetical, yet another aversion of the narratorial gaze, is particularly revelatory. Sambo’s

²⁶ *Vanity Fair*, p.60-61.

²⁷ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, p. 46-47.

reality—namely, his love for the cook—is present in this phantasmagorical narration but not in the narrative proper because the encroachment of Sambo’s reality is seen as a challenge to the *Vanity Fair* cosmology. And yet, it would be to “take a fancy for the terrible” if we were to “[slaughter] black Sambo at the feet of his master.” In the “terrible” version of *Vanity Fair*, black Sambo is no more than an expendable impediment between the villain and the damsel in distress. Although “terrible,” the Sambo slaughtered at the feet of his master, not to mention the abducted Miss Pinkerton, would make for “a tale of thrilling interest.” “The readers,” however, “must hope for no such romance.” Sambo remains in narratological limbo, his story in the parenthetical reality between the ribald and the terrible.

Bannerman encountered another Sambo before she pinned her own in “a book that gave Bannerman the inspiration for not only Sambo, but Mumbo and Jumbo...a book that bound together Bannerman’s native home of Scotland and Africa:” *The Travels of Mungo Park*.²⁸ Mungo Park was a Scottish explorer known primarily for his expeditions to the Niger River between the years 1795-1805 as a member of the African Association. Park, often considered the first European to reach the Niger, published a diary of his travels which was wildly popular both in Scotland and beyond. The December 21, 1795 entry of Park’s Diary had a profound impact on Bannerman’s imagining of blackness. The December 21 entry describes Park’s audience with an African king, in which Park presented the king with, among other gifts, a red overcoat and umbrella. It can be argued that this entry from *The Travels of Mungo Park* served as the inspiration for the umbrella-toting Sambo of Bannerman’s text.

²⁸Yuasa Fumie, *Sayonara sanbo: Chibikuro sanbo no monogatari to heren banaman*, p.109. “Mumbo and Jumbo” are Sambo’s parents.



Color illustration of Little Black Sambo in 1899 original.

If Bannerman indeed took Park's *Travels* as an "inspiration" for the characters in her tale, it is worth reminding ourselves of the cultural work performed by travelogues in the 19th-century.

As Said remarks:

Every European traveler or resident in the Orient has had to protect himself from its unsettling influences... Ultimately [the traveler] rescheduled and resituated the Orient when he came to write about it. The eccentricities of Oriental life, with its odd calendars, its exotic spatial configurations, its hopelessly strange languages, its seemingly perverse morality, were reduced considerably when they appeared as a series of detailed items presented in a normative European prose style.²⁹

Although Park's destination is not a part of the Orient proper, Said's meditations resonate in regard to "Africanism" as well. The travelogue becomes a central component in making the Orient, or Africa, normative. "Making" is the key term here and the "making" is twofold. The African is made normative both for the sake of the European audience back home that consumes the travelogue, and for the sake of the "uncivilized" African; remember that the term colonize comes from the Latin *colere*, "to care for or till." If Bannerman's image of Sambo was informed by Park's *Travels*, her Sambo is genealogically related to a Sambo that, if not "blatantly racist," was a part of the discursive machinery that facilitated the project of colonialism.

We have encountered several of Sambo's visages. It is likely that Bannerman herself confronted many of these faces as she constructed her own Sambo. These encounters should remind us of two points that will return to as we read the arguments of the *ronsō*. First, the multiplicity of Sambo has become a recurring theme. As was the case with its etymology and will be the case in its publication history, there has never been a single Sambo. As such, any argument premised on a single reading or a single precursor for Bannerman's Sambo is (if we state things tersely) inaccurate or (if we are willing to be a bit more descriptive) an opportunity to investigate the political agenda behind the effacement of the other Samboes which inevitably

²⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.166-167.

accompanies the construction of a single origin. As such, identifying a single source of the Sambo image will not bear fruit. Likewise, any appeal to a singular “intention” seems misguided. Bannerman’s intention very may well not have been to write a racist children’s book. We do not, however, have access to Bannerman’s intentions. What we can engage with is the discourse within which Bannerman’s text was situated. Bannerman’s story was clearly written and published at the apex of the age of colonialism. As such, Bannerman’s text is at the very least a part of the matrix of colonial discourse. As Bhabha reminds us, the key facet of colonial discourse is its ambivalence. Hoffmann’s Black-a-moor who is worthy both of protection and ridicule, Thackeray’s central yet peripheral Sambo, Park’s subjection to an ignorant king—every Sambo Bannerman encountered was marked by a certain ambivalence. It is precisely this ambivalence—ambivalence both towards the figure of Sambo in particular and the notion of race in general at the time of Bannerman’s composition—that opens the text to a wide variety of interpretations. As Mikkelsen summarizes:

Bannerman's story has musical language and cadence; it has a simplicity that has never quite been matched in revisionist versions, and it has delicious images for children to savor. On the other hand, it is so deeply embedded in its own time that the original words—and certainly the original pictures and their imitations—become impossible in our own time. To identify a child repeatedly as "little" is condescending, and to identify him and his parents specifically—and repeatedly—as "black" reveals white supremacist beliefs. As Toni Morrison explains, a white character "is white, and we know he is because nobody says so" (72). To say so is to colonize, to label, and thus decide what a particular color means, and white writers have no need or desire to colonize themselves.³⁰

Sambo’s Odyssey: Bannerman, The Production of *Sambo*, and Its American Reception

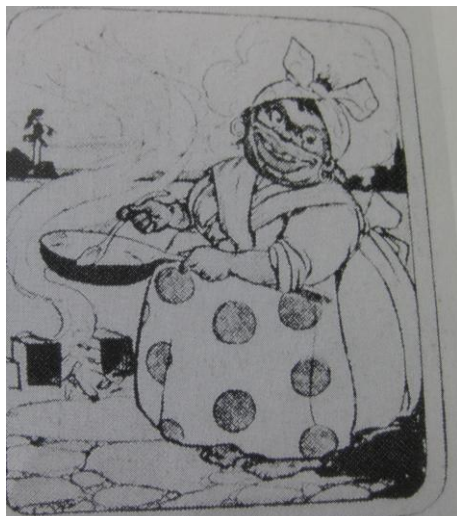
The Story of Little Black Sambo was published by Grant Richards in 1899. “It [*Sambo*] enjoyed instant success, was reprinted in November 1899 and again in September 1900...Claiming over 21,000 copies in print, the publisher produced yet another printing in

³⁰ Mikkelsen, p.265.

October 1900, with subsequent reissues in the following years.”³¹ Following its immediate success in London, Richards sold the rights to the story to Frederick A. Stokes, who published the story in the United States. (We should keep in mind—and this is a point that will be made repeatedly throughout the *Chibikuro sambo ronsō*—that Bannerman sold the rights to the text, and therefore received no compensation for its sales in the U.S. nor had any authority in matters of production or distribution.) The American version was just as successful as its British counterpart. As a testament to the popularity of the tale, at least twenty-seven unofficial versions of the text were published between 1905 and 1953.³² It is at this juncture that Bannerman’s Sambo, which was informed by Samboes such as those seen in Thackeray and Park, amalgamated with the Sambo of American popular iconography. The synergy between Bannerman’s Sambo, the multitude of pirated editions, and the Sambo of American lore altered the trajectory of the image of Sambo toward the American “ideal,” each illustrator adding his or her Samboesque touch to *Sambo*. By 1908, America was already producing Samboes reminiscent of the American icon. In the Reilly and Britton excerpt here, we have a sinister Little Black Sambo and a Black Mumbo replete with the attributes of Aunt Jemima: do-rag, polka dot apron, skillet and pancakes, and 100 pounds of excess weight. In the 1917 Cupples and Leon rendition of Sambo, we notice a marked change in the stylistics of the illustration. Little Black Sambo and Black Mumbo are presented in blackface à la a minstrel show. The 1921 Stoll and Edwards’ version brings us a Sambo from a simpler. Sambo appears docile and content, his tea kettle, candle (we must wonder whether or not the home has electricity), and

³¹ Yuill, p.3. For more on the publication history of Sambo in Britain, cf Justin Schiller’s “The Story of Little Black Sambo,” published in the 1974 *The Book Collector*.

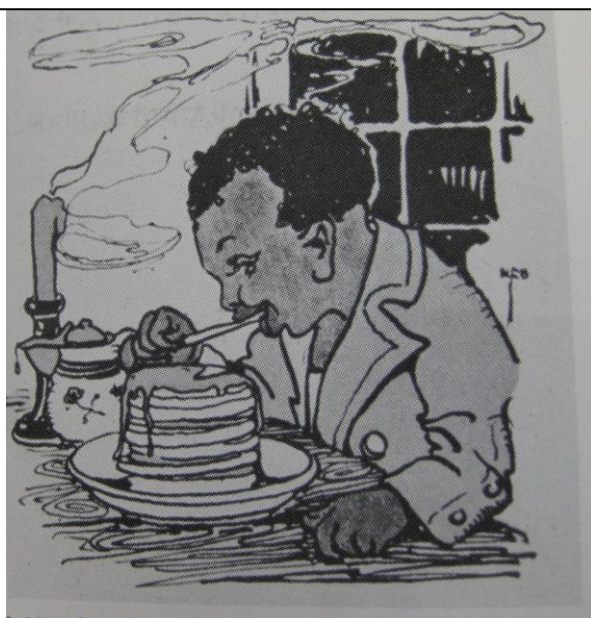
³² Ibid.



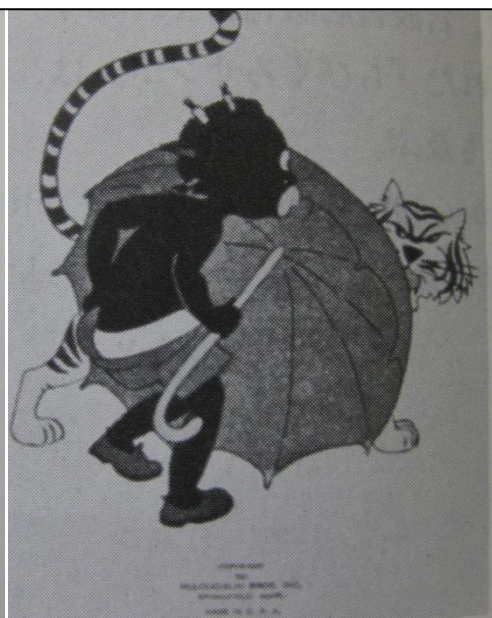
1908 Reilly and Britton



1917 Cupples and Leon



1921 Stoll and Edwards



1931 McLoughlin

starry night seem to signify nostalgia for a “simpler time.” In 1931, The McLoughlin version of *Sambo* returns to the blackface paradigm but gives it an Africanized twist. The rapid American transformations of Sambo from an “Indian” boy to a black face minstrel remind us, in the words of Ochiai, that:

The majority of the pirated versions of *Little Black Sambo* published in the United States used pictures that were based on the Sambo stereotype as illustrations (*sanbo sutereotaipu ni motozuita gekiga wo sashie to shite mochiita*). Moreover, irrespective of the fact that tigers don’t exist in Africa, there are more than a few illustrations that are reminiscent of an African jungle. This kind of adaptation was largely influenced by the reverberations of the protagonist’s name, “Sambo” (*shujinkō no namae “Sanbo” ga ookiku hibiki shite iru*). Regarding the content of the narration...it was not the case that the story was completely devoid of a side that fit into the Sambo stereotype (*sanbo sutereotaipu ni atehamaru sokumen ga mattaku nai wake de wa nakkata*). In other words, to see Sambo, a young boy living in the “uncivilized” jungle with his parents, have his clothing and umbrella taken away from him by the tigers, as “foolish” (*manuke*) or “passive” (*ukemi*), or interpret Sambo’s gluttonous, extraordinary (*hitonami hazureta*, literally beyond human lineage) appetite for pancakes as “savage” (*yaban*)—these interpretations are not impossible. Taken in this way, Sambo—the protagonist of the picture book—was close to the Sambo stereotype that was already a fixture of American culture (*ehon no shujinkō sanbo wa amerika bunka ni sude ni teichaku shite ita sanbo sutereotaipu ni chikai*).³³

The reaction to this amalgamated Sambo was a complex one. The popularity of the text was undeniable. *Little Black Sambo* was often included in anthologies of children’s literature and bibliographies of recommended reading for children composed by librarians and scholars of children’s literature. In 1909, Gertrude Arnold’s *Mother’s List of Books for Children* asserted that: “written and illustrated by an Englishwoman in India for her two small daughters, Little Black Sambo, with its absurd story, and funny crude pictures in color, will delight young children of all lands.”³⁴ The American Library Association recommended the text between the years 1912 and 1936, lauding “this nonsense story about a little black boy...told with few and simple words and many bright pictures.”³⁵ In 1940 the U.S. Department of Interior’s book list,

³³ Ochiai Akiko, “Nihon ni okeru “Chibikuro sanbo” ronsō no tenkai,” p.39-40.

³⁴ Gertrude Arnold, *A Mother’s List of Books for Children*, p.23.

³⁵ American Library Association, Catalog Chicago, 1926, cf. Yuill.

500 Books for Children, endorsed Sambo, calling him “the beloved heir of the jungle.”³⁶ In 1953, the year that Iwanami published *Chibikuro* in Japan, *Children’s Books Too Good to Miss* claimed that *Sambo* was just that:

This is often the child’s first hero tale, and what a satisfying hero Sambo is! His parents give him wonderful clothes to wear; he loses them to ferocious tigers, but he isn’t downed. He uses his wits, rescues the clothes, and turns the silly tigers to good use. No wonder small children love Sambo. He is just the kind of conquering hero they dream of becoming.³⁷

The popularity of *Sambo* and voices of approval mentioned thus far have come from a “white readership.” The response to *Sambo* from the “black readership,” as we will recall from the introductory remarks, differed in tenor from the responses reviewed thus far. Initially, the response to *Sambo* among the black intelligentsia was affirmative. The reason that turn-of-the-century black readers lauded *Sambo*—although they would turn their backs on *Sambo* some three decades later—was twofold. First, pre-*Sambo* American’s children’s literature was a fairly whitewashed affair. Hay writes that *Sambo* “was one of the very few books then available which even acknowledged the existences of black people. For generations it gave black Americans an image of themselves, and white Americans an image of black Americans.”³⁸ Moreover, the image of blackness as presented in *Sambo* was relatively encouraging vis-à-vis the prominent representations of African-Americans at its time of publication. “At first,” Yuill writes, “*The Story of Little Black Sambo* was considered to be an exemplary model of a fresh, *positive*, image for black children.”³⁹ Augusta Baker, who was responsible for the collection of materials for the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection, wrote in 1943 that, “It is the purpose of this collection to bring together books for children that give an unbiased, accurate, well-rounded

³⁶ Nora Buest, *500 Books for Children*.

³⁷ May Arbuthnot et al., *Children’s Books Too Good to Miss*, p.14.

³⁸ Hay, p.159. We must assume that Hay’s “books” refer to children’s literature; slave narratives, abolitionist fiction, fiction and poetry by African American writers, and plantation stories such as the popular *Uncle Remus* series certain constitute representation and self-representation of blackness.

³⁹ Yuill, p.11, original emphasis.

picture of Negro life...[The *Sambo* series was selected for the collection because they are] books about the adventures that befall *engaging little black children*...There is no caricature in the story.”⁴⁰

From the late-1930's onward, however, many African Americans—Baker included—reneged on their endorsement of *Sambo*.⁴¹ This shift away from *Sambo* came at the meridian of the Harlem Renaissance, a period in which children's literature was viewed as a galvanizing site at which to inculcate children with the black subjectivity of the New Negro. In 1922, Alice Dunbar-Nelson wrote in “Negro Literature for Negro Pupils” that:

The ancient Greeks, wishing to impress upon their children the greatness of Hellas, made the schoolboys memorize Homer...The Romans saturated their youth with Roman literature...The Chinese child learns volumes of Confucius...The French child recites La Fontaine, even before he can read...All this is by way of reminding ourselves that for two generations we have given brown and black children a blonde ideal of beauty to worship, a milk-white literature to assimilate, and a pearly Paradise to anticipate, in which their dark faces would be hopelessly out of place...There is a manifest remedy to this condition...We will give the children the poems and stories and folklore and songs *of their own people*.⁴²

It is against this ideological backdrop that criticism of *Sambo* begins to mount in the black community. African American critics began to question whether or not *Sambo* answered the call for children's literature that was both “of their own people” and portrayed a black and brown ideal of beauty; even if *Sambo* challenged the “milky whiteness” of children's literature, how potent was this challenge if it reinforced the supposed inferiority of blackness? In the words of Elizabeth Bacon, “You may say that this exaggeration [the hyperbolic representation of blackness in *Sambo*] is just the sort of thing to delight and amuse a child. But is this particular

⁴⁰ Augusta Baker, “Reading for Democracy,” my emphasis.

⁴¹ Yuill claims that, “Baker indicated in a recent interview that she [Baker] had had reservations about the Bannerman books early in her career, but she had felt pressured by her superiors in the New York Public Library system...to make them part of the Collection.” Baker's “superiours” included Anne Carroll Moore and Frances Clarke Sayers. See Yuill, p.12

⁴² Alice Dunbar-Nelson, *Negro Literature for Negro Pupils*, p.59-60, as cited in *The Harlem Renaissance 1920-1940: The Emergence of the Harlem Renaissance*, p.17-18, my emphasis.

E MARTIN LEWIS
Minister
371 W. 117th St.
New York 26, N.Y.
Cathedral 8-3092

Bethany Presbyterian Church
Palisade Ave. and William Street
ENGLEWOOD, N.J.

November 14, 1945

SAMUEL A. LLEWELLYN
Sessional Representative
1 W. Hamilton Ave.
Englewood, N.J.
Day ENglewood 3-2396
Night " 3-8218

Mr. Walter White
Secretary, N.A.A.C.P.
69 Fifth Avenue, N. Y. C.

29494 NOV 16 '45

Dear Sir:

My attention has been called to the picture on the enclosed back page of The Daily Mirror. It shows a six-year old white boy regaling his classmates and their parents with the story of "Little Black Sambo".

The argument is advanced that children of that age should not, in our schools, be exposed to literature which creates a background of racial prejudice. If this is the subtle intention, I agree that the policy should be banned from the school system.

It is possible, nevertheless, that the teacher may, without bias, present the narrative merely for its human interest, or for its story value; and the pupils may enjoy it simply as they do The Three Bears, Little Red Riding Hood, or any other juvenile story, and with no unfavorable reaction. In that case it might be entirely unwise to challenge the procedure.

However, I submit the matter without recommendation for your own unbiased judgment.

Very sincerely yours,

E. Martin Lewis

This 1945 correspondence between E. Martin Lewis, a Presbyterian minister, and the NAACP, which had by 1945 turned its attention to the representation of African-Americans in textbooks and children's literature, encapsulates the divided African American public opinion on *Sambo*.

exaggeration an accident? Doesn't it actually reinforce the white chauvinists' false contentions that Negroes are people of inordinate appetites?"⁴³

By 1953, the year that Iwanami published its Japanese translation of *Sambo*, two tenors of *Sambo* critique had developed. Rather than summarize these tenors, I quote from two responses to the text circa 1953. The first, from May Arbuthnot's *Children's Books Too Good to Miss* is laudatory; the second, which recounts a response to *Sambo* from 1946-47, is damnatory. Both responses would have flooded journal articles, newspaper reviews, and symposia on *Sambo* when the text made its Iwanami-backed debut in Japan.

This is often the child's first hero tale, and what a satisfying hero Sambo is! His parents give him wonderful clothes to wear; he loses them to ferocious tigers, but he isn't downed. He uses his wits, rescues his clothes, and turns the silly tigers to good use. No wonder small children love Sambo. He is just the kind of conquering hero they dream of becoming.⁴⁴

[I] recall for the first time in years the very painful experience of hearing the story read by a teacher in my school. I was the only Black child in the school system at the time [1946-1947]...I remember how some of my classmates would refer to me as Black Sambo after hearing the story (they were too sophisticated to say nigger) and how for the first time I didn't want to go to school ever! To this day I hate that teacher and the principal who told my mother it was harmless. The only good thing it did was put me on guard for my remaining years in public school. No, the book can only be used as an example of how to destroy a child.⁴⁵

Sambo's Odyssey Continued: The Production and Reception of Sambo in Japan, 1953-1965

The Production of *Chibikuro sambo*

In 1953, Iwanami published a Japanese translation of a text that both featured "just the kind of conquering hero" children "dream of becoming" and was "an example of how to destroy a child." Originally founded in 1913, Iwanami was known primarily for its *Iwanami bunko* series (the Iwanami Library) and the publication of works of scholarly, literary, and cultural merit; the 1914 publication of *Kokoro* was representative of the caliber of publications backed by

⁴³ Elizabeth Baker, as cited in Yuill, p.24.

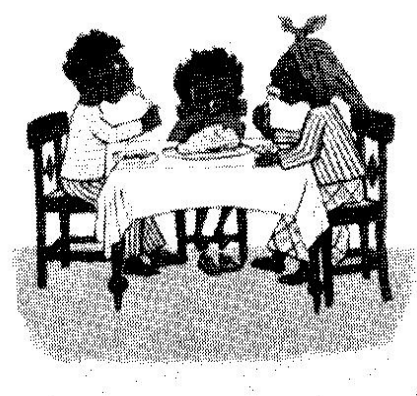
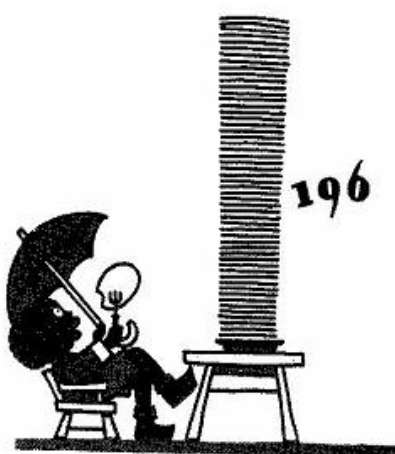
⁴⁴ Arbuthnot, p.14.

⁴⁵ Yuill, p.22.

the publishing house. In 1953, however, Iwanami turned its attention toward children's literature in general and picture books (*ehon*) in particular. Mitsuyoshi Natsuya (1904-1988) and Ishii Momoko (1907-2008) were charged with the task of selecting books for the *Iwanami no kodomo no hon* (Iwanami's Books for Children) series. Both Mitsuyoshi and Ishii were highly qualified for the undertaking: Mitsuyoshi studied children's literature and photography at Keio and had composed several Japanese translations of various works of children's literature and Ishii, herself a graduate of Japan Women's University (then known as *Nihon joshi daigakkō*, Japan Women's College), was only six years removed from the publication of the bestseller *Non-chan kumo ni noru* (*Non-chan Rides a Cloud*, 1947). The inaugural line of picture books for *Iwanami no kodomo no hon* was to include six selections: three texts aimed at first and second graders and three for third and fourth graders. Little Black Sambo was not only selected as one of the six, but was the first published and thereby became Iwanami's first venture into the realm of picture books.

In a 1973 article entitled "Iwanami's Books for Children: Children at the Time of Its Publication" (*Iwanami no kodomo no hon—sono hakkan no koro no kodomo*), Mitsuyoshi himself explains the rationale behind having Sambo be the front-runner: until that point, variants of *Sambo* had been published in children's magazines (*Akai tori* being one of the more prominent venues of *Sambo* publication) and in texts geared toward language learning, but never as a stand-alone picture book. Mitsuyoshi owned a copy of the 1927 *The Black Sambo*, an American, Dobias-illustrated, Macmillan version of *Little Black Sambo*, which he presented to the general manager of Iwanami. Mitsuyoshi's presentation would be fortuitous on two fronts.

First, a translation of the "original"—and by "original," scholars refer to the 1899 Bannerman/Richards version—*Sambo* was never published in Japan. When Japanese readers



1953 Iwanami

1927 Macmillan

Bannerman original

Even with Iwanami's dyscalculia, it is clear that the Iwanami translation is based on the Macmillan edition.

refer to the “original,” or *gensaku*, of *Chibikuro Sambo*, they refer to the Macmillan edition. Frank Dobias’, the illustrator for the Macmillan *Sambo*, illustrations are in tune with the blackface encoding of Sambo that was prominent in late-1920s. As such, a byproduct of the affinity between the Iwanami and Macmillan versions is the contamination of *Chibikuro sambo* by the American iconography of Sambo and all that such a contamination would imply.

Second, it was Iwanami that would bestow the moniker “*Chibikuro sambo*” upon Little Black Sambo. “Chibi” is a diminutive term that signifies childlike smallness with either an endearing (i.e. *uchi no chibi*, our little girl/boy) or patronizing (i.e., *chibi no kuse ni*, for a pipsqueak) nuance; “kuro” is the nominal form of the adjective *kuroi*, black. As Sugio Toshiaki and Tanahashi Miyoko remind us, pre-1953 Japanese translations of “little black Sambo” included: *Sanbo no tegara* (*The Great Feat of Sambo*), *Kuronbo no Santa-kun to tora no o-hanashi* (*The Story of Santa the Blackie and the Tigers*), and *Kuronbo monogatari* (*The Tale of Blackie*).⁴⁶ The inspiration for “*Chibikuro sambo*,” a title that clearly deviated significantly from the precedential translations of “Little Black Sambo,” was “its associative [proximity] to the term ‘*norakuro*’.”⁴⁷ “Norakuro” was the name of Suihō Tagawa’s (1899-1989) 1931 manga about a dog, the eponymous Norakuro, and his exploits as a soldier of the *mokenrentai* (FDR—Fierce Dog’s Regiment). Norakuro was a popular figure among children in the 1950s; any association between “Norakuro” and “Chibikuro” would certainly have been a welcomed development for the fledgling children’s literature efforts of Iwanami.

⁴⁶ For more on the pre-1953 history of Sambo in Japan, see Sugio and Tanahashi, p. 269-288.

⁴⁷ Nadamoto Masahisa, “Nihon-ban sanbo sutorii (The Japanese Version of Sambo’s Story),” p.34.

Silenced Blackness and the Child's Mind, 1954-1966

Miyahara Seiichi was one of the first scholars to take up *Chibikuro*. As previously mentioned, Miyahara's observations led him to believe that Japanese children took interest (*omoshirogaru*) in *Chibikuro* around the age of three. That this was the "proper" age to introduce the text was verified by the American readership: "Among American child psychologists as well, *Chibikuro sambo* is considered to be exemplary of the kind of book that pleases children."⁴⁸ Note that Miyahara appeals to child psychologists (*jidō shinrigakusha*) to determine the appropriate age of the *Sambo* readership. This appeal highlights Miyahara's focus on the psychology of the child and the role this psychology plays vis-à-vis the child as reader. His concern with child psychology—the child's heart/mind (*kodomo no kokoro*), the child's psyche (*kodomo no shinri*), *et cetera*—was a motif of children's literature studies in Japan at that time.

Miyahara was convinced that Bannerman had a thorough grasp of the child's psyche; it is this mastery that makes her text alluring to children. He argues that Bannerman is spectacular (*migoto*) in her ability to "capture the psyche of children with her authorial intuition" (*sakkateki na chokkan de kodomo no shinri wo toraeta*).⁴⁹ Miyahara's emphasis on Bannerman's phenomenal "authorial intuition" for children's literature would leave a lasting mark on Japanese scholarship on *Sambo*. For Miyahara, Bannerman's stunning success—as well as Japanese children extolling Bannerman's work—verified the fact that Japan was *not* producing "literature of the child's mind" or literature with the child in mind. As Miyahara argued:

In our country, the things that up until now have been called the child's mind (*dōshin*) and children's stories (*dōwa*) are different in substance from [*Chibikuro sambo*]. The thing that has

⁴⁸ Miyahara Seiichi, "*Chibikuro sambo no omoshirosa* (The Appeal of *Little Black Sambo*)," p.54.

⁴⁹ Miyahara Seiichi, "*Chibikuro sambo no omoshirosa* (The Appeal of *Little Black Sambo*)," p.54.

been deemed the child's mind in our country is, more often than not, not the child's mind but *adult's nostalgia for the child's mind* (*dōshin he no otona no kyōshu de aru*). The things that have been called imaginative children's tales, more often than not, are the inscriptions of adult's nostalgia vis-à-vis the child's mind. It is a matter of course that these tales are not interesting to children.⁵⁰

With this, Miyahara has connected his concern with the child's mind with the notion of interestingness (*omoshirosa*). The author's, to borrow Miyahara's term, "intuitive" ability to connect with children makes itself manifest by way of the child's interest in the text. *Chibikuro sambo* has made this connection in a way that the "children's literature" of "our country"—Japan—had not. We should also take note of the gendered tenor of Miyahara's critique; it is Bannerman the mother (rather than a formally-trained author of children's literature) who has an "intuitive" ability to connect with children.

Miyahara's conjectures are both indicative of a major paradigm of the discourse on children's literature between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s and serve as a bellwether for this decade of Japanese criticism of *Chibikuro*. The 1950s would see several salvos fired under the banner of "criticism of traditional children's literature" (*dōwa dentō hihan*). In 1953, "Shōnen bungaku no hata no moto ni" (Beneath the Banner of Juvenile Literature) was published in *Shōnen Bungaku* (Juvenile Literature), the journal of Waseda University's Sōdai dōwa kai (Waseda Children's Fiction Association). "Beneath the Banner," an article that scholars of children's literature have dubbed "The Juvenile Literature Manifesto" (*Shonen bungaku sengen*), was a declaration of artistic warfare against "traditional" children's literature. In the words of the manifesto, "Juvenile literature envisions the ascendance of traditional children's literature to

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.56, my emphasis.

the heights of true modern literature and as such it means a never-ending battle with all antiquated, with all irrational, unmodern literature.”⁵¹

With its feverish prose, the Manifesto ignited a debate on the “essence” (*honshitsu*) of children’s literature. One school of thought—and we will give a name and texts to this school momentarily—responded with the suggestion that Japanese children’s literature had, to borrow the summation of Torigoe Shin, “forgotten children, forgotten its readers (*kodomo wasure, dokusha wasure*).”⁵² Reminiscent of Miyahara, remembering the child reader would entail emulation of international precedents in children’s literature, i.e. writing stories that were free of ideological baggage, comprehensible, and, most importantly, interesting to children.

In yet another reminiscence of Miyahara, critics and authors throughout the mid-1950s and into the 1960s would suggest that *Chibikuro* was the international precedent to emulate. Ishii Momoko, who we will recall was responsible in part for the selection of *Chibikuro* in the Iwanami series, wrote that:

...Children, who cannot tell us in words, try to teach adults the secrets of their minds...We need to study this book [*Sambo*] a hundred thousand times. The reason I find this story so interesting is, to be sure, because I have read the story with children over the last several years. To me, this story [*Chibikuro*] is almost a flawless work. I am shocked that a single person produced such a work ...The job of adults is to turn our ears toward children’s “voiceless voices”...and see what’s in the story that pleases children.⁵³

There is an undeniable affinity between Ishii’s conjecture and Miyahara’s. Ishii, à la Miyahara: claims that she knows from personal experience that children find the story interesting, places a noticeable emphasis on the “genius” of the author, and suggests that adults listen to children’s “voiceless voices” to determine what children find pleasing. Ishii’s final point is almost a direct derivative of Miyahara’s claim that adult nostalgia is the impetus for children’s literature;

⁵¹ As quoted in *Nihon jidō bungaku* (Children’s Literature in Japan), p.136.

⁵² Torigoe Shin, *Nihon jidō bungaku*, p.139.

⁵³ Ishii Momoko, *Kodomo no toshokan* (Children’s Library), p.149.

Miyahara's admonishment was that adults listen to their *own*, memorialized voices concerning the desire for childhood rather than to children's voices. In 1966, Seda Teiji published an article entitled "The Things that Classic Picture Books Teach—*Little Black Sambo*." We see here as well praise for *Chibikuro* (albeit praise peppered with reservation), an affinity with Miyahara's critique, and repetition of the 1950s party line of accessible, juvenile-centered children's literature:

It seems that we have, for the first time as it were, been given an answer to the inquiry of how literature for children ought to be...If we look at it [*Chibikuro*] today, we get the impression of a kind of grotesque antiquation common to the latter half of the 19th century and we also feel the faltering lack of polish that is peculiar to the neophyte, but what does an adult's vision of the 19th century or of amateurishness have to do with the little children who immerse themselves in the story? The original edition has a simple, clear narrative and extremely fitting simple, clear illustrations; it is not a coincidence that what gave us this easy to understand, deeply impressive story was the amateurish brushwork of a mother, Helen Bannerman.⁵⁴

If the Japanese literati were to mimic the success of *Chibikuro*, however, they would need to understand what made it so engaging. In 1960, psychologist Murase Takao set out to do exactly that. We recall that, for Miyahara, writing high-caliber children's literature was a job that—although firmly within the jurisdiction of the author—required the insights of a psychologist. Murase conducted several experiments and conducted empirical criticism to the end of furnishing those insights.

If Ishii would ask us to hear the "voiceless voices" of children, Murase would answer the call by making them the object of systematic study. Murase's empirical study of *Chibikuro sambo* was structured as a round robin-style tournament, in which Murase paired texts from the *Iwanami's Books for Children* series and asked both child and adult readers to vote for their favorite book. Murase paired this popularity contest, which *Chibikuro sambo* won handily, with

⁵⁴Seda Teiji, "Koten ehon no oshieru mono *Chibikuro sambo* (The Things that Classic Picture Books Teach—*Little Black Sambo*)," as cited in *Chibikuro sambo, zeppan o kangaeru*.

textual analysis. Murase argued that texts that interest children have a certain alchemy that balances the features of good children's literature, e.g. nonsense, rhythmic language, humor, *et cetera*. Texts that achieve the ideal balance speak to children, or, to use Murase's term, "commune" with them:

Communion and communication can be clearly differentiated. When communing [*kokoro no kayoi*, with the French *communion* given as a parenthetical translation], the other is not already simply the object of knowledge or investigation... What the children's literature of our country lacks...is free "dialogue" between children and the literati...*Chibikuro* appeals to children from any country at any epoch because the text was born from the communion of Mrs. Bannerman and her children.⁵⁵

The conclusion of "Children and the Appeal of *Little Black Sambo*" clearly exemplifies the mid-1950s-1960s discourse on children's literature in Japan. The task of the (adult) author of children's is to hear the "voiceless voice" of children through mystical intuition; Murase uses the terms "communion" (*kokoro no kayoi*) and "divine revelation" (*keiji*) to denote the nonverbal nature of the ideal relationship between the adult author and the child reader. Yet again, Mrs. Bannerman—one can't help but notice the gendered nature of this critique—and *Sambo* serve as exemplars of how this child-centered approach should translate into literature.

I promised to put a name and actors to the school of thought that focused on international precedents, accessibility, interestingness, anti-didacticism and lauded the virtues of *Chibikuro*. Although these tenets had been a recurring theme throughout the *dōwa dentō hihan* 1950s, it was not until 1960—a few months after the publication of the results of Murase's experiment—that the revolutionary *Kodomo to bungaku* (Children and Literature) would be published. The essays of *Children and Literature* were written and edited by six individuals who were at the forefront of discussions of children's literature. Spearheaded by Ishii Momoko and Seda Teiji, the collection included the meditations of Inui Tomiko (1924 – 2002), Suzuki Shinichi (1919-),

⁵⁵ Murase Takao, "Chibikuro Sanbo no miryoku to kodomo (Children and the Charm of *Little Black Sambo*)," p.38.

Matsui Tadashi (1926 -), and Watanabe Shigeo (1928 - 2006). Typically referred to by the acronym ISWMI, this group was a significant cultural force in the movement to write children's literature with children in mind. *Children and Literature*, a collection that, in the words of Miyakawa Takeo, "was at the pinnacle of keeping children in mind,"⁵⁶ began with the following assertion:

Among the children's literature of the world, Japan's children's literature is a completely peculiar, atypical entity. The standard for children's literature around the world—children's literature that is interesting, clear, and easy to understand—has no currency in our country...How is Japan's so-called modern children's literature...received by the children of today; moreover is it suitable for the education of children...⁵⁷

The work both critiqued authors that embodied the antithesis of the world standard (Ogawa Mimei, 1882 - 1961, took the brunt of this criticism) and lauded those who captured the spirit of children's literature (Miyazawa Kenji, 1896 – 1933, was the primary beneficiary in this regard.) On the same echelon of no less than Miyazawa Kenji, *Chibikuro* too was upheld as an example of how children's literature ought to be:

Even after six years [from its original publication], *Sambo*'s popularity has not declined in the least; just as the characters of Shakespeare are immortal in the world of adult literature, *Sambo* has been an eminent figure no less in stature than the Three Billy Goats Gruff, Cinderella, or Tom Thumb in the world of fairy tales for children of those countries.⁵⁸

Resisting the urge to comment on *Sambo*'s eminent stature being compared to that of Tom Thumb, we can say that Miyahara, Ishii, Murase, and Seda exemplify the fact that *Chibikuro*'s early critical acclaim had to do with the fact that it fit the burgeoning paradigm of "good" children's literature. It was from abroad—which activated the affirmative discourse surrounding foreign children's literature—(supposedly) free of ideological concerns and, most importantly, engaging to children. This discovery of "interesting" children's literature was

⁵⁶ Miyakawa Takeo, "Sengo no jidō bungaku (Postwar Children's Literature)," p.316.

⁵⁷ Ishii et. al., *Kodomo to bungaku* (Children and Literature), p.4-5.

⁵⁸ Ishii et. al., *Kodomo to bungaku* (Children and Literature), p.165-166.

predicated on the assumption that children don't have the eloquence to directly communicate that which they find interesting. As such, it becomes the job of the authors and theorists of children's literature to speak for silent children. It is important to note that during this phase of *Chibikuro sambo*'s reception in Japan, the text's racial and ideological undercurrents too are silenced by the search for meritorious literature. This silence would begin to break, however, during the counterfeit texts debates of 1965.

The Counterfeit Texts Debates, 1965

From the translation of its publication in 1953 until the mid-1960s, *Chibikuro Sambo* realized Mitsuyoshi's premonition. The stellar sales, the number of pirated editions (there were at least seven Japanese versions on record by 1965), and critical accolades were all part of an unblemished record of success for Sambo in Japan. This success of Sambo's integration became even more lucid in 1964. As a chorus of critics called for "interesting" children's literature and upheld *Chibikuro* as an example of such a text, the Monbushō harmonized with the contemporary consensus by adopting *Chibikuro* as a text for second grade language arts textbook. The synergy of the variety of pirated editions and *Sambo*'s selection as a state-certified pedagogical tool, however, would lead to the first blemishes in *Chibikuro*'s reception history. Torigoe Shin, Shingū Teruo, and Nasuda Minoru published an article entitled "Kodomo no tame no ryōsho no jyōken—saiwa honan shōyaku no mondai ten" (The Terms of Good Children's Books—The Problems of Retellings, Adaptations, and Abridged Translations) in the May 1, 1965 edition of *Tosho shimbun*.



Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology-sanctioned textbook edition of *Chibikuro sambo*, 1968.



One of the first postwar variant editions of *Chibikuro*, Kōbunsha's 1956 *Chibikuro sambo no bōken* (The Adventures of Little Black Sambo).

As the title of the treatise suggests, Torigoe—whom we will recall as the auteur of the juvenile literature manifesto—argued that the quality of *Chibikuro* fluctuated depending on the hand of the translator. Of the seven versions, the Iwanami version was deemed the most “authentic” when compared to Bannerman’s original. In the words of Torigoe and his colleagues, the Iwanami version did “a splendid job of capturing the rhythm of the original; of all the editions one can find in Japan today, it [the Iwanami edition] is one of the best.”⁵⁹

The “splendor” of the Iwanami version was to be compared with the subpar translations of the other six permutations. The Froebel edition received the brunt of Torigoe’s critique. After citing the openings of both the Iwanami and Froebel editions, Torigoe proffered the following no holds barred critique: “In comparison to this [Iwanami], how does the Froebel version fare? As one gathers even from just the section cited here, drastic alterations to the content and inconsiderate adaptations have made a *Chibikuro sambo* of a completely different mold.”⁶⁰ The article went on to frame the *shingan ronsō* (The Authenticity Debate, or literally, the “real or fake” debate—another moniker for the *gansaku ronsō*) within the context of motherly concern with the deleterious impact of “poor” adaptations on the pedagogical and literary value of *Chibikuro*. As Torigoe articulated the dilemma:

One mother who read the Froebel edition first and believed without a doubt that it was the original version says that she was shocked anew by the brilliance of the original when she read the Iwanami version. Ultimately, this shock became doubt in regard to the nature of the introduction of foreign children’s literature in Japan and, moreover, anger in regard to the rampant production of false works. Thus, she erupted.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Torigoe Shin *et al.*, “Kodomo no tame no ryōsho no jyōken—saiwa honan shōyaku no mondai ten” (The Terms of Good Children’s Books—The Problems of Retellings, Adaptations, and Abridged Translations), p.8.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Torigoe Shin *et al.*, p.8.

According to Torigoe, such doubt exemplified Japanese “...readers’ criticism in regard to the condition of contemporary books for children;” the Froebel translation served as the exemplar of the poor condition of Japanese children’s literature.⁶²

Froebel was not pleased with this assessment. Iizawa Tadasu (1909-1994), a playwright and translator of the Froebel version of *Chibikuro sanbo*, was mentioned by name in Torigoe’s critique. Apparently irked by the characterization of his translation, Iizawa expressed his ire in a May 15th, 1965 *Tosho shimbun* article entitled “Ii kagen na kyōdō kenkyū—ganbutsu hantei ni kōgi suru” (*Half-Baked Collaborative Research—Protesting the Counterfeit Judgment*). For our purposes, two planks of Iizawa’s argument are revelatory. First, Iizawa argued that Torigoe’s privileged fidelity to the original *Sambo* above anything else (*gensaku daiichi shugi*), so much so that Torigoe was myopic to the flaws of the original. Iizawa posited the names of the characters as an example. What was, Iizawa asked, the original author’s intent when she played with the rhythmically rolling names of Sambo, Mumbo, and Jumbo? The answer lies in the “colonial expansion of the British empire during the Victorian age that is at the roots of this tale.”⁶³ Iizawa read white superiority (*kōetsukan*) in the gaze of Bannerman toward her colored subjects. Bannerman’s supremacist viewpoint was evinced by the name “Jumbo,” which Iizawa claimed was Swahili for “good day” and had been “generalized” (*ippanka*) into a man’s name.⁶⁴ That the specificity of a proper name for Bannerman’s black father figure was reduced to the generality of a salutation was linguistic proof of the colonization of the mind. Moreover, Mumbo and Jumbo

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Iizawa Tadasu, “Ii kagen na kyōdō kenkyū—ganbutsu hantei ni kōgi suru” (*Half-Baked Collaborative Research—Protesting the Counterfeit Judgment*), p.6.

⁶⁴ Iizawa also claimed that an elephant that had been given as a gift from an English zoo to an American zoo had also gone by the moniker “Sambo.” That Bannerman’s black father figure shared a name with an animal was, for Iizawa, further proof of her imperial, colonial mindset.

in tandem is no less degrading, Iizawa quipped, than naming two Chinese characters “Dump” and “Ling.”

Second, Iizawa claimed that the Iwanami version was irresponsible insofar as it didn’t rectify the zoologically impossible conflation of African and India that occurred in the original. Recall that the illustrations and orthography of the Iwanami version was based on the McMillian edition, which was set in an imagined deep South. Iizawa read the South as Africa. As such, he was flabbergasted by what he saw as Iwanami’s conflation of “Africa” and “India.”

I have already touched on the mixing of India and Africa, but the Iwanami illustrations that researchers seem to shed such tears of joy over has many faults. If one were to point out [one of Sambo’s many flaws], Sambo has clearly been illustrated with a countenance of African descent; that he coexists with the tigers—who play a very active part in the tale—is scientifically impossible. Why: because there are absolutely no tigers in Africa!⁶⁵

The emphatic exclamation mark is a direct translation of the original. After being criticized with such gusto (Iizawa concludes his treatise by comparing Torigoe’s research methods to medieval theologians flocking to the Bible even as they see the discoveries of the Enlightenment approaching), Torigoe would argue his case against the Froebel version in minute detail. Torigoe responded to Iizawa’s critique in the May 29th, 1965 *Tosho shimbun*. Speaking as a “representative” (*daihyō*) of the original three authors, Torigoe’s rebuttal mirrored the structure of Iizawa’s article and answered each challenged posed therein. The first section of Torigoe’s response, entitled “Perilous Racial Discrimination?” (*Kiken na jinshu sabetsu?*) riposted the claim of racial insensitivity in startling fashion:

I read Mr. Iizawa Tadazu’s letter of protest. First of all, Mr. Iizawa says that the composition of this work was done against the backdrop of the colonialism of the English empire. That is a fact (*jujitsu de atte*) and has been frequently mentioned in the past as well. Anyone who is a scholar of children’s literature (*jidō bungakusha nara dare demo shitteiru.*) knows that repeated

⁶⁵ Iizawa, p.6.

arguments have surrounded the treatment of this text—particularly in America, where the black problem (*kokujin mondai*) is clamorously discussed.⁶⁶

We should take note of the introduction of the “colonialist” historical milieu of the composition of *Sambo*, as well as the gesture towards the text’s place in American discourse of the “black problem,” as “facts” with which any scholar of children’s literature would be conversant. This “commonplace fact” is not commonly mentioned in critical discussions until this point. As such, Torigoe’s comments mark a dramatic shift in the hermeneutics of *Chibikuro* in Japan; pace the 1950s discussion and its emphasis on Japanese children’s identification with Sambo, Sambo has now become a sign in the discourse of race and colonialism.

After the introduction of these facts, Torigoe would articulate what he saw as the proper paradigm for evaluating the text and the target of valuation:

The problem, however, is whether or not this work runs the risk of implanting feelings of contempt for black people in the children of Japan (*Nihon no kodomotachi ni taishite kokujin beshi no kanjō wo uetsukeru kikensei ga aru ka nai ka.*) The majority of scholars of children’s literature (my colleagues and myself included), place a much higher value on the superb points this work has as a story for children rather than on that risk (*sono kikensei yori wa mushiro kono sakuhin no motsu yōji dōwa toshite no sugureta ten wo haruka ni takaku hyōka shiteiru*). But if, supposing that the risk is stronger, it is not a problem that can be resolved simply by removing the names of the mother and the father.⁶⁷

For Torigoe, determining whether or not a text with questionable ideological intimations should be given to a child was a matter of placing the text on a kind of scale of justice, with the literary merits of the text on one side and the possibility of questionable ethics on the other. (This paradigm, with its emphasis on valuation resonates with our previous discussion of Yamada Eimi). The rhetoric of Torigoe’s argument suggests that a text can have both literary merit and questionable ethics, and that one can win out over the other; the phrase “supposing that the risk is

⁶⁶ Torigoe Shin, “Chibikuro sambo shingaron ni tsuite, Iizawa Tadazu-shi ni kotaeru” (On the *Little Black Sambo* Counterfeit Texts Debate—A Response to Mr. Iizawa Tadazu), p.7.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

stronger,” in conjunction with what Torigoe called the “fact” of *Sambo*’s colonialist origins and his support of the text in the face of this fact, is a case in point.

With this paradigm in place, Torigoe tackled every point presented by Iizawa, effectively tipping the scales in the favor of the texts literary merit. That is, of course, when the translation is properly executed, as is the case in the Iwanami version and, much to Iizawa’s chagrin, not the case in the Froebel retelling. Torigoe first took up the notion of scientific validity. Iizawa accused Torigoe of being a purist, of placing fidelity to the original text above all else. Torigoe returned the favor by accusing Iizawa of “scientism” (*kagakushugi*), placing fidelity to “scientific fact” above all else. In the words of Torigoe, “In a nonsense story such as this, brandishing naïve scientism is...literal nonsense.”⁶⁸ Moreover, Torigoe claimed that Iizawa’s solution, resetting the entire tale in India, seemed to take a misstep insofar as the parents looked more European than Indian. As such, Torigoe intimates that Iizawa’s Europeanized retelling itself, which was motivated by what Iizawa read as Bannerman’s contempt for colored, colonial subjects, contained contempt for colored, colonial subjects

The Aftermath of the Counterfeit Text Debate and the Transition to Ideology-Racial Discrimination Debates, 1965-1974

The vitriol of the counterfeit texts debate introduced two new skeins that would have lasting reverberations as the *Chibikuro* debates entered the 1970s. The first revolved around the issues of authenticity, authorial intent, and the ethical translation thereof—issues that have haunted *Sambo* since its publication. Following the publication of the articles that constituted the *gansaku ronsō*, there was an uptick in popular interest in the vacillating quality of the several *Chibikuro* editions. The popularization of the *gansaku ronsō* was best evinced by the 1972

⁶⁸ Torigoe Shin, “Chibikuro sambo shingaron ni tsuite, Iizawa Tadazu-shi ni kotaeru” (On the *Little Black Sambo* Counterfeit Texts Debate—A Response to Mr. Iizawa Tadazu), p.7.

publication of *Chibikuro sanbo no kenkyū* (Studies of Little Black Sambo). True to its title, this special edition of *Chisa na toshokan* (*Little Library*) amalgamated several studies on *Chibikuro*. This collection is noteworthy both because of its composers and because of their purported research objective. The General Education Reading Club of the Tanashi Kodai Elementary School PTA, an organization made up primarily of housewives, conducted the research by, in their words, “stealing the moments of free time between their domestic duties” (*shufu toshite no shigoto no aima wo nusunde yaru*).⁶⁹

The research was prompted by the following constellation of concerns: the “explosive popularity” (*bakuhatsuteki na ninki*) of *Chibikuro* among children, the rampancy of pirated versions (the count was now at twelve), and the fact that more and more Monbushō-sponsored language arts textbooks were including some version of *Chibikuro*. The “some” of “some version” was particularly problematic. The Reading Club addressed this problem by compiling information on the varying editions and conducting comparative analysis of the multiple variants. The results of their study pointed in two directions. First, it was the Poplar version, and not the Iwanami edition, that was the “truest to the original edition.”⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the Iwanami version had, “up until now, deemed the authoritative version of the *Little Black Samboes* in Japan.”⁷¹ In addition to what the Reading Circle saw as the improper canonization of the Iwanami *Chibikuro*, the Circle also broached the issue of the ideological impetus of the text.

⁶⁹ *Chibikuro sanbo no kenkyū* (Little Black Sambo Studies), p.1.

⁷⁰ *Little Black Sambo Studies*, p.8.

⁷¹ *Little Black Sambo Studies*, p.14.



The 1968 Poplar. The Poplar translator, Ooishi Makoto, was an award-winning author of children's literature. He took some creative liberties in making the dialogue of *Chibikuro* read like 1960s colloquial Japanese; this in part explains the popularity of his version with the Circle.

For example, the Circle noted that one textbook edition of *Chibikuro* described Sambo as from a “country of the south” (*minami no kuni*). This addition comes in spite of the fact that Bannerman doesn’t use the word “south” in the original text. One potential explanation for this enigmatic addition, the Circle proffered, was pedagogical: the phrase “*minami no kuni*” was included to introduce children to the kanji “minami” and “kuni.” There was, however, a bleak alternative to this explanation: a textbook sponsored by a governmental institution was trying to cultivate racist sentiment in children via language arts textbooks. If the text enabled dark pedagogy such as this, the Circle asked, what exactly was the ideology of *Chibikuro*, a text that had made its way into the hands and minds of so many children?

This inquiry—what was the ideology, or *shisō*—of *Chibikuro* was the central focus of the second skein. Building on the inertia of the counterfeit text debate, the relationship between said ideology (or lack thereof) and the literary merit (or lack thereof) of the text was deemed an equally pressing concern. In 1971, Konishi Masayasu published “*Chibikuro sambo shōron* (A Brief Treatise on *Little Black Sambo*),” an article that served as a catalyst to the transition from authenticity-based critiques to ideological-based critiques. Konishi argued that *Chibikuro* was a lacking literary artifact, indeed not worthy of the moniker “literature,” because it didn’t have the staying power of a classic. In a Copernican shift from *Children and Literature’s* claim that *Chibikuro* was a classic of *Shakespearean* proportions, Konishi read *Chibikuro* “as nonsense for the sake of nonsense.”⁷² Konishi conceded that *Chibikuro* was adored by children, but maintained that the admiration of children did not make a work a classic. In the words of Konishi, “You have to tilt your head [and wonder] what Mrs. Helen Bannerman the mother wanted to tell her own children. One could even call this [*Chibikuro*], as it were, the paragon of

⁷² Konishi Masayasu, “*Chibikuro sambo shōron* (A Brief Treatise on *Little Black Sambo*),” p.187.

an ideology-less children's tales (*mushisō dōwa no tenkei*), and I think that this is where the transience (*ikkasei*) of this story lies.”⁷³

Teramura Terao, author-scholar of children's literature and husband of one of the members of the General Education Reading Club of the Tanashi Kodai Elementary School PTA, responded to Konishi's charge of *Chibikuro* as ideology-less in an article published as an addendum to the Reading Club's research on *Chibikuro*. In “*Chibikuro sambo no ryōmen* (The Two Faces of *Little Black Sambo*),” Teramura presented two Samboes—the one seen by the juvenile reader and the one excavated by the discerning adult reader. Although “adults may see these as base pleasures,” *Chibikuro* was undeniably interesting and gave the child a sense of satisfaction (*manzokukan*).⁷⁴ Interestingness in and of itself, however, was insufficient: “Interestingness is an indispensable condition of children's tales, but when valuating [works] as literature, we frequently run into the question: isn't this *just* interesting? *Sambo* is no exception.”⁷⁵ Teramura argued that a book is meaningless (*muimi*) if we can't glean, “the author's position and ideology vis-à-vis life” (*sakka no jinsei ni taisuru shisei, shisō*).⁷⁶

Pace Konishi, Teramura adamantly argued that *Chibikuro* did indeed have an ideological agenda. In Teramura's summation:

There are many who claim that *Chibikuro* is ideology-less literature, but this is an egregious misunderstanding; the ideology here is “racial discrimination” (*jinshu sabetsu*). Most books use the word “*kuronbō*” (blackie/nigger) as an equivalent term [for “little black”]. At this point in time, Japanese people are too ignorant concerning just how many people in Asia, Africa, and America have been humiliated beneath the connotation of the word nigger. If one were to present overstatement as consensus, we could say that this story is Bannerman's—an Englishwoman who

⁷³ Konishi Masayasu, p.187.

⁷⁴ Teramura Teruo, “*Chibikuro sambo no ryōmen* (The Two Faces of *Little Black Sambo*),” p.18 Citing the results of Murase's study that had been conducted some fifteen years earlier, Teramura also contended that *Chibikuro*, in addition to being interesting, had structural rhythm, a plot with unexpected developments, a high level of and allowed children to identify with *Chibikuro*.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

came to colonial India—interesting representation of niggers with a low standard of living who were interesting precisely because they were niggers with a low standard of living.⁷⁷

Teramura would also preemptively counter the claim that *Chibikuro*, as a nonsensical tale, couldn't make enough sense to construct racial ideology. In Teramura's view, even nonsense could have racist sentiment:

One can't end the discussion by saying that, because it is a nonsense story, it only captures the child's interest and has no relation with discriminatory ideology (*sabetsu shisō*). By nature, nonsense is a form of literature expressed as if it is meaningless or without ideology (*muimi, mushiso no yo ni hyogen sareta bungaku no keishiki*), but the author's interiority (*sakka no naigawa*) is completely different.⁷⁸

Teramura's argument marks a dramatic shift from previous critiques of *Sambo*. First, contrary to critiques that deemed *Chibikuro* a classic in the Shakespearian vein or an exemplar of what children's literature should be, Teramura claimed that *Chibikuro* couldn't be called literature. (This is in spite of the fact that, as we have seen in the nonsense argument, he would refer to it as "literature" throughout the article.) The rationale behind the text's demotion was its appalling ideological stance; we see here the inverse of Torigoe's argument, which posited that *Chibikuro*'s literary greatness outweighed any potential ideological shortcomings. Teramura's articulation of the dangers of the text, moreover, was one of the first examples of reading Japan's racial problems through the text. Teramura's treatise "marks a turning point" in the *Sambo*

⁷⁷ Teramura, p.19.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Although their respective understandings of the author and interiority are decidedly different, Teramura's argument for the impossibility of an ideology-less nonsensical narrative resonates with John Stephens' conjecture. In *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction*, Stephens suggests that, "Ideology is implicit in the way the story an audience derives from a text exists as an isomorph of events in the actual world: even if the story's events are wholly or partly impossible in actuality, narrative sequences and characters interrelationships will be shaped according to recognizable forms, and that shaping can in itself express ideology in so far as it implies assumptions about the forms of human existence. This is obvious, for example, in anthropomorphic picture books or folk tales in which animals are depicted performing social actions and functions particular to human beings...Stereotypical sexual, racial and class attitudes, with concomitant social practices, have long been implicitly inscribed in this way." (p.2)

debates insofar as it “pointed out *Chibikuro*’s racial discrimination as a problem between the Japanese and the colored races.”⁷⁹

As his argument on the ideology of nonsense suggests, Teramura saw the author’s interiority, “the author’s position and ideology vis-à-vis life,” as something that was accessible through the mediating text. The next component of the ideology debate was supplied by Kogouchi Yoshiko (1908-), an author of children’s literature who challenged the transparency of Teramura’s text. Kogouchi argument centered on the premise that one cannot commune with what Wayne Booth would call the flesh-and-blood author. In lieu of transparent texts, Kogouchi constructed an image of the author based on biographical information and inferred from this image the authorial intent. The image that Kogouchi constructed—and here we return to what I have called the gendered critique of Bannerman elsewhere—was of a loving, lonely, mother:

There is no way for us to know now whether or not there was (we’ll just say unconscious) discriminatory ideology in the heart of a dead author. But this is what I think about this work. The author [Bannerman] made the figure of Sambo stand in for (*daburu*) the figure of her children, who were so far away; wasn’t her wish (*negai*) for her children to employ wisdom and courage like Sambo and rise to the occasion, whatever the occasion may be? So she put her love into Sambo, and I get the impression that she [Bannerman] is adamantly saying that children, as well as the affection between a child and a parent, doesn’t change [based] on if a person is black or white.⁸⁰

Although the *mushisō* debates began as a series of interrogations of the relationship between ideology and literariness/literary merit, the focus of the debates had clearly shifted to a consideration of whether or not *Chibikuro* is discriminatory and its influence on children’s racial valuations by the time of the 1972 publication of Kogouchi’s article. Teramura concluded his article with the following dictum: “We must watch over and protect children from the perils of cultivating a discriminatory mindset. Once the age of *Chibikuro* fever has passed, we

⁷⁹ Kogouchi Yoshiko, “Toshokan no kodomotachi o minagara (Looking at the Children in the Library),” as cited in Nadamoto, p.42.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

must...frankly check this work for racial problems.”⁸¹ Kogouchi’s response: “We shouldn’t check it after the age of fever ends as Mr. Teramura says; what is important is that we, parents and teachers, [prevent] discrimination from entering children’s hearts by way of showing a non-discriminatory attitude.”⁸² Exchanges such as this denote the transition to criticism of *Chibikuro*’s racial (in)sensitivity.

As the *Chibikuro* landscape began to include more discussions on the racial ideology of the text, Watanabe Shigeo became a central figure in providing the 1970s Japanese audience with information on the American reception of *Sambo*. Watanabe, whom we will recall as a contributor to *Children and Literature*, based his *Chibikuro* study on his experiential encounter with the text; Watanabe worked as a children’s librarian for the New York Public Library between 1955 and 1957 and toured American and European libraries in 1972. Watanabe had vivid memories of both black and white children enjoying *Little Black Sambo* in the mid-1950s. His 1972 travels challenged the memories he had accrued; the text that, in his mind, black people had found so endearing was now taboo.

Watanabe chronicled his explanation of this Copernican shift with the 1973 serial publication of “From the World of Common Knowledge: An Assessment of *Little Black Sambo*.” As the title implied, the trilogy of articles published in *Kodomo no kan* was meant to situate the *Sambo* argument in its American and British sociopolitical context (i.e. an uptick in the disappearance of *Sambo* from library shelves, according to Watanabe, coincided with the rise of busing policies of the 1970s)—a context that was, to anyone familiar with *Sambo* in the States, “common knowledge.”

⁸¹ Teramura, p. 19.

⁸² Kogouchi Yoshiko, “Toshokan no kodomotachi o minagara (Looking at the Children in the Library),” as cited in Nadamoto, p.42.

The content of Watanabe's articles was in some ways similar to the "Sambo before Sambo" section of this chapter; Watanabe documented the shifting reception of Sambo in America from the 1930s to the mid-1960s. Watanabe's critique fell somewhere between appreciation and admiration of Bannerman's narrative (the illustrations were "grotesque), respect for the struggle for racial equality that he had witnessed with his own eyes, and a reticence to forfeit the freedom of libraries and presses. The following example, in which Watanabe responds to a call to have Sambo removed from the libraries of predominately black schools, is a case in point of the vacillation between racial sensitivity and freedom of libraries/expression seen throughout Watanabe:

Although I can sympathize (*kyōkan*) with opinions of this kind...it reminds me of the book banning and the censorship of library collections in Japan during the war years or of the red witch hunt maelstroms of the House Un-American Activities Committee of 1950s America...In the world of children's literature...it is frightening when conditions arise such that propaganda-as-literature overwhelms other [literature] and struts imposingly...It is frightening because children lose the freedom to enter the *Wonderland* that is on the other side of the door that says "Do Not Enter!"⁸³

Although Watanabe's argument, which preempted several talking points of the 1988 debate, is relevant in its own right, Watanabe's handling of race is particularly revelatory. Recall that the ideology debates culminated in discussions of race and discrimination that questioned the ethics of reading *Chibikuro* for "colored" Japanese readers, what Nadamoto called "Chibikuro's racial discrimination as a problem between the Japanese and the colored races." Watanabe's "Common Knowledge" catalyzed this transition. As we read Watanabe's musings, keep in mind Miyahara's treatise, the first critique of *Chibikuro* presented in this study. When juxtaposed with Watanabe, Miyahara's text is conspicuous in its silence vis-à-vis race. This juxtaposition is not meant to condemn Miyahara or extol Watanabe, but to highlight how thoroughly the focus of the *Chibikuro* conversation has migrated towards race matters. I cite

⁸³ Watanabe Shigeo, *Nijū-seiki no ehon* (Twentieth-century Picture Books), p.189-190.

Watanabe at different locales of his argument to highlight the iteration of the tension between Japaneseness and blackness.

In actuality, the discrimination of mixed-race societies can probably only be comprehended in Japan as the on goings of some make-believe world (*monogatari no sekai*). In Japan, where it seems that the reality of Koreans, Chinese, Vietnamese...or blacks, whites, and Native Americans living with us in our cities, towns, residential areas and housing complexes won't come for some time, racial discrimination is probably just something we read about or hear. But if this reality comes, there probably isn't a race that holds a discriminatory mentality (*sabetsu ishiki*) as violently as the Japanese. The reason for this is that, in a homogenous race (*onaji shuzoku*), there is already a latent, impenetrable discriminatory mentality (*nukisashinaranu sabetsu ishiki ga senzai*).⁸⁴

...As a single Japanese person, I don't have true license to debate this *problem* (*kono mondai wo ronzzuru honto no shikaku ga nai*). Even if I can imagine or make an effort to feel, I don't belong to either side of the problem of which this picture book is the focal point of debate. Therefore, if we were to put it extremely irresponsibly, in this black and white debate (actually, we can't fully describe it as such: it is not always the case that black people reproach *Sambo* and white people acknowledge its merits) there are parts of both sides that I can agree with and parts of both with which I disagree.⁸⁵

[Upon reading Chibikuro], I truly feel the warmth of a mother innocently (*mushin*) telling stories to a child. To me, it wouldn't feel the least bit unnatural (*fushizen*) even if Mrs. Bannerman and her children were black. If that were the case, what would the black critique of this picture book have been? That's a hypothesis that I find interesting. But, this too is a carefree hypothesis that I can construct precisely because I am not black or white; in actuality, in countries where races of different skin color co-exist—regardless of Mrs. Bannerman's innocence...—the fact that the protagonist is black and the author is white, if seen from the point of view of black people, is the reason why this picture book has been showered with violent criticism as a *problematic* picture book.⁸⁶

I...know less than *Bannerman* about the desires of Black Power. If I can sympathize with aspects of this opinion [the call for Black Power] more than Mrs. Bannerman, it is probably to the extent that I am yellow.⁸⁷

“Black people think that only people who are born black can comprehend what it is to be black.” One can apply the blacks' way of thinking exactly as it is to our thought process concerning foreigners' prospective of the Japanese. “Japanese people think that only people who are born Japanese can comprehend what it is to be Japanese”—narrow-mindedness that refuses the sympathy of others...is within anyone, anywhere. However, in a world where different races intermingle, this kind of narrow-mindedness bares itself and common sense is perplexed by it.⁸⁸

“The slogans that are now known throughout the world—“Black Power,” “Black Pride,” “Black is Beautiful”—are things for which humans have the utmost universal interest, things that aim for

⁸⁴ Watanabe, p.170

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.170-171

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.173

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.189, emphasis in original

⁸⁸ Watanabe, p.195-196

the confirmation of self-existence...The richness of individuality in black culture is not inferior to the richness of individuality of the cultures of other races. When books that give the experience of encountering rich individuality—the varying personalities of each and every black person—are written, then the possibility of raising the harmony between the races exists for the first time. To black children, good books are books that make them feel proud of being black people.” For Japanese children: writing many works that make them feel proud for being Japanese and making an effort to have those books read to the children of the world! I feel that I have been taught by these young black instructors.⁸⁹

Again, much of the content of Watanabe will become crucial focal points of the *Chibikuro* discussion to come. It also reintroduces many of the issues that we have discussed throughout this dissertation from the prospective of the Japanese reader. The first excerpt suggests that the Japanese encounter with the black Other is a literary phenomenon. It is through this narrative that the Japanese, Watanabe grimly portends, rehearse the exclusion of the other from their communities—imagined, interpretative, or otherwise. The second citation refers to issues of race and authority, namely who has the authority to read black texts. The third and fifth citations present musings on the relationship between the blackness of the lived experience and the blackness of interpreted signs—(an author’s fictional world, the “real” world, *et cetera*.) Reminiscent of the second and third chapters, the fourth and sixth excerpts show Watanabe’s encounter with the rhetoric of the Civil Rights and Black Arts Movement and the way in which this encounter prompts a rethinking of the purposes and possibilities of Japanese literature itself.

Again, Watanabe’s articles represent a tectonic shift in the Japanese *Chibikuro* discussion. Torigoe’s scale, which placed literary merit above ideological concerns, has been balanced by Watanabe. Watanabe both praises the meritorious components of the text, but counterbalances this praise with the weight of the “race problem:” “If we apply this measure to *Little Black Sambo*...the relevancy (*kanrensei*) [of the text] differs for the children of the black,

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.202.

white, and yellow race.”⁹⁰ Moreover, Watanabe, pace the 1950s and the bulk of 1960s critiques, has elucidated the balancer as a racialized subject. Although Watanabe’s reader is racialized, Watanabe remains convinced that the race of the balancer’s hand does not skew the measurement; even a “Japanese person who doesn’t belong to either side of the problem,” can empathize and learn from an Archimedean point, albeit a point of little authority against a heavily reified notion of race.

The Reevaluation and Reconstruction of *Chibikuro*, 1974-1987

In the years following Watanabe’s trilogy, the interpretative and valuative scale would tip such that the “racist” facets of *Chibikuro*—and all that such condemnation would imply when coming from Japanese readers—would outweigh the literary merits of the text. Recall that, by 1974, the following critique of *Sambo* was growing in inertia in America: “The usefulness of *Little Black Sambo* is dead. The acceptability of *Little Black Sambo* is dead...I am not saying that I advocate destroying all of the existing copies of such books...However, I feel that at this time, their existence should be relegated to the historical collection in the children’s library.”⁹¹ As a, to borrow Watanabe’s formulation, “yellow,” colored race, Japanese critics would begin to adopt portions of this argument. Clearly cognizant of the ideology and rhetoric of the Civil Rights Movement, those who adopted this argument had an eye turned both toward their own racialized identity and toward identification with black Americans.

Nowhere was this dual gaze more acutely accentuated than in a 1974 special edition of *Ehon* magazine entitled *How Should We See Little Black Sambo?* The ten articles that composed the special edition were preceded by a collection of photographs by Yoshida Ruiko (1938-).

⁹⁰ Watanabe, p.174.

⁹¹ Jessie J. Birta, “Portrayal of the Black in Children’s Literature,” p.190.



From Yoshida Ruiko's 1979 *Haaremu no atsui hibi*—*Black is Beautiful* (Hot Harlem Days—Black is Beautiful).

Yoshida, a Fulbright recipient and award-winning photographer, spent ten years in Harlem. Upon her return to Japan, Yoshida displayed her photography of Harlem at an exhibit entitled “Harlem—Black Is Beautiful.” Yoshida was known in particular for her pictures of the children of Harlem. Yoshida shot the children, whom she affectionately dubbed “Haaremu-ko” (Harlem babies),⁹² from an angle and proximity that gives the viewer the impression that the children of Harlem are literally and figuratively looking up to her.

These photographs, which lock the viewers’ gaze with that of the children of Harlem, flanked the articles of the *Ehon* special editions. Of the ten articles, nine ostensibly affirmed the beauty of blackness and condemned *Chibikuro*, a text that did not accurately represent said beauty. The following excerpts should provide a sense of the anti-*Chibikuro* critique that dominated the special edition:

Was what this picture book told us truly “BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL?” No, didn’t this copy of black people (*kokujin no kopii*) produce the feelings of superiority, contempt, and discrimination that accompany the making of an image of an original race (*originaru minzoku-zō*)...By no means do I deny the interestingness (*omoshirosa*) that *Chibikuro sambo* holds. However, interestingness that comes with the pain of a given race or ethnic group is by no means genuinely interesting.

—Shinmura Tooru, “Kopii to originaru” (*Copies and Originals*), p.15

That overflowing vigor of Harlem, the rows of burned down streets that remain after the riots of ‘64, the extraordinary clamor of the black city in the dead of the night—the reality that I brushed against during that short trip; at the very least something like an encounter with black society was branded on my mind and flowed about. Thus, at that time the tattered *Chibikuro sambo* left with me an incredibly hollow, lifeless impression. I felt, sure enough, that I could see unsalvageable antiquation and prejudice in its stereotypical depiction of humanity and the names of the characters.

—Shima Noriko, *Tooi kuni no otogibanashi dewa nai* (Not the Fairy Tale of a Far-away Land), p.17

⁹² The suffix –ko (child), when attached to a place name, denotes one who was “born and bred,” and therefore representative of, a given place. It is often attached to places that hold cultural gravitas, i.e. *Edokko*, a “Child of Edo/Tokyoite,” or “*Hama-ko*” (“Beach baby”, one born and raised in the Yokohama area). As such, “Harlem-ko” is a kind of linguistic inclusion of Harlem in a Japanese practice of identification.

Although we can't go so far as to call them monstrous apparitions, [Bannerman's illustrations] are exact replications of hideousness...even though [other non-black authors] write based on the idea that Black is Beautiful...When she decided to make the protagonist of her tale a black person, her awareness of a "race" whose living conditions differed from hers and from those like her, as well as the "baseness" of their life style, were at work even if she herself was not aware of it. In other words, just as we [the Japanese] held a prejudice before the war toward "unenlightened niggers" (*muchi moumai na kuronbo*) that we got from Shimada Keizo's *Bōken Dankichi*...Old Lady Bannerman...thought of blacks as nothing more than the "suitable materials or target" of "interesting stories." Isn't this brought together and bound in the "hideous" illustrations that I touched on earlier?

—Ueno Ryō, *Bannaaman obasan no hon* (Old Lady Bannerman's Book), p.20

Nonsense that makes sense. That [kind of nonsense] is written with a grasp on reality and is a masterpiece of nonsense. Nonsense nonsense is no more than whimsy thoughts. This judgment probably comes from the fact that I'm *just* an "adult." I don't know how I would have felt if I would have known this book when I was a "child" who hadn't become aware of my "self" (*jiga ni mezamenakatta kodomo*). I do not, however, adhere to the standard that this book is a masterpiece because little kids find it interesting...As a work of nonsense, *Chibikuro sambo* is a trash; as a work of children's literature, it is mediocre.

—Okuda Tsuguo "Dasaku, bonsaku, 'kessaku': Iwanamiban *Chibikuro sambo*" (Pieces of Trash, Mediocre Pieces, and "Masterpieces": The Iwanami Version of *Little Black Sambo*) p.23-24

Can we really sit idly by and say things like the problem of racial discrimination is [like] "worrying about someone else's ailment,"...or that "we don't belong to either side?" Moreover, can we, like Watanabe, say that "we don't have the license [to discuss] the problem even though we know that Buraku discrimination already exists in Japan;...can we sit by and wash ourselves clean and say with a careless face that it is like this in America and like that in England? And what about the title [of Watanabe's treatise]: "From the World of Common Knowledge." The world of common knowledge is the world of racial discrimination; the world that acknowledges Buraku discrimination....My intent here is not to blame...Watanabe...However, I want people to know the reality of the masses of Japanese people like us who suffer at the hands of groundless discrimination, and that this is a problem that connects with the foundation of Japan's democracy...I truly hope that by discussing *Chibikuro sambo* our inner circle broadens.

—Takuma Hideo, "*Chibikuro sambo de kangaeru koto*" (Thinking through *Little Black Sambo*), p.27

It is a matter of course that *Little Black Sambo* was erased from the picture book bookshelves of many public libraries and schools as the Civil Rights Movement heightened and the strength of Black Power increased...

Little Black Sambo does not straightforwardly make a fool of colored people like the Westerns I saw in the past, but if there is even a single child who is mocked as a "Sambo" and has his feelings hurt, I then this book is one that we can do without...

Only those who are regularly humiliated truly know the pain of being discriminated against. If we don't think about the *Chibikuro sambo* problem while putting ourselves in the place of those who have been discriminated against, we lose sight of what's important.

—Tajima Seizō, "Hitori no shonen wo kizutsukeru to shitara" (Let's Say It Only Hurts a Single Child), pp.33, 35-37.

But have you stood in the position of the Indian protagonist and looked at the picture book? How would you feel if the title was *Little Yellow Sankichi* (emphasis in original), a book with a slanty-eyed Japanese youth as the protagonist...and children the world over rejoiced because of it? How would we Japanese feel if the *customs* of the Japanese circa Meiji were *vibrantly illustrated* by a group of Western artists and, because it was interesting and made them happy, had and continued to be read lovingly by people all over the world? (emphasis in original.)

It starts with the gentle attitude of “I don’t insist on *Chibikuro sambo*,” and that becomes “I don’t need *Chibikuro sanbo*,” and, as this spreads, this picture book will slowly disappear, and I’m waiting for the day when we truly raise children that say “I don’t know anything about a *Little Black Sambo*.”

—Imae Yoshitomo “Chibikuro sambo nante shiiranai” (“I Don’t Insist, Need, Know, or Care About *Little Black Sambo*”), pp. 43, 46

Even from this terse survey of the arguments of the special edition, we can glean that the articles shared undercurrents of: 1) anti-Sambo (due to its racist connotations and amateurish illustrations) and anti-Bannerman (due to her status as a jewel of the empire) sentiment, 2) familiarity with and mobilization of the *mots d’ordre* of the Civil Rights Movement, 3) positing of the article’s author’s as Japanese—that is “colored”—readers, 4) privileging of lived experience and “actual contact” with black culture and black people, 5) Criticism of the effacement of the possibility of ideology in nonsensical texts, 6) construction and emphasis of the discriminated/discriminator or colonizer/colonized dichotomy, 7) shift from child-oriented criticism to adult-oriented criticism, and 8) criticism of Watanabe’s “neutral” stance vis-à-vis discrimination and the ethics of reading.

The critical undercurrent of these nine articles was juxtaposed with the tenth entry of the special edition, an interview with Ann Herring. Herring, an Oregon native who received her academic training at the University of Washington and Stanford, is a children’s literature specialist who both lived in Japan and taught at Japanese universities. Herring’s interview was a kind of apologia that responded to the other essays’ criticism of Bannerman’s text. Herring argued that the problem was not in the text itself but in the Japanese translation and attempted to offset the “racist” facets of the text by situating the work within its “proper” intertextual matrix:

Indian folklore. Moreover, Herring effectively inverted the argument of the special edition by arguing that the proliferation of “black is beautiful” should mitigate the problems associated with a “little black” protagonist.

Herring’s contribution takes on a peculiar shape when viewed in the context of the special edition. In a collection of essays that critique *Sambo* to the point of Hitler references, Herring’s is: the only interview, the only work accompanied by photographs of the author, and the only pro-*Sambo* treatise. In the preceding chapter, we discussed Stephen Henderson’s notion of intuitive blackness; blackness is either understood intuitively (by black people) or not understood at all. It doesn’t seem too speculative to suggest that Herring—a simulacrum of Bannerman whose whiteness was literally shown to the reader, but shown between (or interviewed) the critique of white superiority that took place throughout the collection—was presented as a paragon of the lack of such intuition: (white) Herring can’t intuit the racism of the text, but we (colored Japanese) can.

The special edition of *Ehon* was both a bellwether and accelerant of the shifting reception of *Chibikuro* in 1970s Japan. Pace the “raceless” affirmation of the text’s literary value that occurred in the 1950s and 60s, the post-*Ehon* critique of *Chibikuro* showed affinity with the (predominately) African-American critique of the text. Mobilizing the logic and rhetoric of the Black Power and Black Arts Movements, Japanese critics began to question the colonial context of the production of the text and the relationship between modes of literary representation and racism/power. (The second question was of particular import to Japanese, “colored,” critics.) This set of inquiries is seen in commentary such as:

There is something that feels bizarrely cruel (*ryōkiteki na zannin*) about the abnormality of Sambo eating 169 pancakes. It can’t be fully described as “strange” (*kimyō*) or humor (*yūumoa*); it is a “cruel” (*zankoku*), “grotesque” (*kaiki*) inhuman (*hiningenteki*) story, and there is a second

layer of cruelty (*nijyū no zanninsa*) in the fact that we laugh and read it to others...What is depicted here is no more than the truly incoherent image of a native son who has been forced to wear Western clothes and has an odd confrontation with tigers. There is in the heart of an author who depicts in this manner the posture of a white person gazing on the Indian masses from on high and drawing them with delight.⁹³

In 1978—five years after the *Ehon* articles and the year following the preceding commentary—Iwanami released the twenty-eight printing of *Chibikuro Sanbo*. This printing of *Sambo* underwent some thirty-seven edits. The majority of these edits were geared toward enhancing the rhythm and readability of the text and increasing the fidelity of the Iwanami translation to Bannerman's original. Two of the edits, however, seem to constitute Iwanami's response to the growing maelstrom of anti-*Chibikuro* sentiment. Since its 1953 debut and through 26 reprintings, the narrator of the Iwanami version had introduced *Chibikuro* as follows: "In some land, there was a cute nigger boy" (*aru tokoro ni kawaii kuronbō no otoko no ko ga imashita.*)⁹⁴ In the twenty-eight reprinting, however, *Sambo* received a new epithet: "In some land, there was a cute, black boy" (*aru tokoro ni kawaii kuroi otoko no ko ga imashita.*)⁹⁵ In addition to this substitution of the racial epithet for the (ethnically neutral?) color "black," the twenty-eighth reprinting also included Bannerman's parenthetical translation of *ghi*. The sanitization of "nigger" and insertion of India can be seen as Iwanami's attempt to distance itself from the claim of racial discrimination that plagued *Little Black Sambo*; "although we don't know exactly the intention of these edits, there was, as we have already seen in *Ehon*, criticism vis-à-vis the word "nigger" (*kuronbo*); it doesn't seem too speculative to say that they [the edits] were done in awareness of the racial problem."⁹⁶

⁹³ Kuwabara Ritsu, "Ehon ni okeru geijutsusei to ningensei: *Chibikuro sambo* wo megutte ("The Artistic and the Humane in Picture Books: On *Little Black Sambo*), p.3-4.

⁹⁴ *Little Black Sambo*, p.3.

⁹⁵ *Little Black Sambo*, p.1.5

⁹⁶ Nadamoto, p.54-55.

By the 1980's, "among those who had any connection whatsoever with children's literature or children's books, the existence of the critique of *Little Black Sambo* as a discriminatory text and the countercritiques of this argument had become impossible to ignore."⁹⁷ Moreover, the onus was now on *Chibikuro* advocates; *Chibikuro* was guilty of racism until proven innocent. Proponents of the text had to argue its merits or commit *tenkō*. As Todayama continues:

Therefore, whenever this text was referenced, there was an increase in treatises that first introduced the existence of criticism and went on to argue the merits of the text as a narrative or explain its historical importance. However, if we were to suppose [which side was more prominent], we can probably say...that there were more instances of [the text] being removed from lists of recommended books.⁹⁸

Arguing for—rather than against—*Chibikuro* had become anathema. Watanabe would become a case in point. In 1980, Watanabe published *Yonen bungaku no sekai* (*The World of Juvenile Literature*), a compilation of the essays he had written on children's literature over the years. Watanabe concluded *The World* by recounting his 1977 exchange with the American Library Association. Watanabe was invited to be the guest speaker at an ALA convention. Upon reviewing a draft of his speech—which had numerous references to how much black people enjoyed *Little Black Sambo* during the 1950s—the ALA informed Watanabe both of his “right” to leave the speech as it was and of the changing popular sentiment vis-à-vis Sambo. 1970s Americans, the ALA continued, were more cognizant of inequalities that were ignored in the past; to laud *Sambo* as Watanabe did would certainly evoke censure. Watanabe removed the sections in question from his lecture. Despite this acquiescence, Watanabe would face a similar critique in Japan. Miyake Okiko, one of the contributors to the *Ehon* collection, argued that Watanabe's commentary on *Chibikuro* “didn't give the reader much to chew on,” (*hagire no*

⁹⁷ Todayama, p.78.

⁹⁸ Todayama, p.79.

warui.)⁹⁹ When charged with the task of determining which books would be placed on the shelves of the children's library and which wouldn't, Miyake argued, Watanabe's Archimedian cry of "not belonging to either side" is an impossibility (*fukanō*). For Miyake, the act of selection holds within it socio-political responsibility. The selection of *Chibikuro*, as Miyake argued in her *Ehon* article, was "naïve" and signified apathy vis-à-vis discrimination.

By 1987, *Chibikuro sambo* had undergone both reevaluation and reconstruction. Originally extolled as a paragon of children's literature, Sambo was gradually erased from recommended reading lists. Those who approved of the text did so with a kind of sociopolitical and ethical burden of proof. The year before the *Little Black Sambo* Debates erupted, Watanabe, who had seen the embracing of Sambo with his own eyes, wrote that:

This book, due to its as-it-is candidness and lucidity and the simplicity of the composition, can be understood by young children...However, this simple lucidity was ruinous—there are cases in which the portrayal represented in some of the illustrations stimulated in adults worries of discrimination and bias, and this caused the unfortunate impression of a kind of seal on the entire picture book.¹⁰⁰

Watanabe's eulogistic tone implies a sealing off of *Chibikuro*. It seemed that the reevaluation echoed the sentiments of Birtha: "The usefulness of *Little Black Sambo* is dead. The acceptability of *Little Black Sambo* is dead."

The Transpacific Little Black Sambo Debate, 1988

Little Black Sambo's popularity in Japan survived long after scholars rang its death knell. The numbers are stellar: twenty-two publishing houses combined to produce forty-nine versions of *Chibikuro* between the years 1953 (when publishing giant Iwanami published the story as a part of the inaugural line of its children's book series) and 1988 (when the outbreak of

⁹⁹ Miyake Okiko, *Toshoshinbun no hitsuyōsei ni settokuryoku: Hagire no warui Chibikuro sambo ron*.

¹⁰⁰ Watanabe Shigeo, *20 seiki no ehon (Picture Books of the Twentieth-Century)*, p.155.

the *Chibikuro sanbo ronsō* erupted). The Iwanami version alone sold more than 1.2 million copies of the text in the aforementioned time period.¹⁰¹

More impressive than the quantitative aspect of the proliferation of Sambo, however, is its remarkable cultural reach. From Emperor Showa's childhood fascination with the tale (he would play "Little Black Sambo" with his English tutor) to bewildered librarians' accounts of the book being so popular that it was literally torn to shreds, from literary scholars arguing that *Sambo* is the paragon of children's literature to the Japanese Ministry of Education and Technology sanctioning the text's use for literature textbooks, from children reading *Sambo* and founding organizations to stop racism against African-Americans to parents forming concerned citizens committees, by 1988, *Chibikuro* had, to borrow the words of Ochitani Akiko, "permeated Japanese society," it was "the long seller of the world of children's literature."¹⁰²

Despite, or perhaps precisely due to its immense popularity in Japan, the 1960s, 70s, and 80s saw intense debates among the Japanese intelligentsia concerning the appropriateness of *Chibikuro*'s representation of blackness. These debates would come to a crescendo in July of 1988. On July 22, 1988 *The Washington Post* ran an article entitled "Old Black Stereotypes Find New Lives in Japan; Marketers Defend Sambo Toys." Margaret Shapiro, an editor and foreign correspondent for the *Post* stationed in Tokyo, vehemently argued that: "Little Black Sambo, the racist caricature that most Americans thought had died a well-deserved death years ago, has been resurrected across the Pacific as the mascot of a hot-selling line of Japanese toys and beachwear." The toys and beachwear in question were manufactured by Sanrio and featured Sambo—drawn in the minstrel mode—making color(ed) commentary such as: "When I'm

¹⁰¹ Ochitani Akiko, p. 35.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Hungry there's no stoppin' me. I'll be up a palm pickin' coconuts before you can count to three. (An' I can count way past three, too!).” For Shapiro, the “black dialect” of Sambo (signified by the bevy of apostrophes), in concert with the implication of simply savagery (hence the “up a palm pickin' coconuts” and need to parenthetically ensure the viewer that Sambo “can count way past three”), was both “an attempt at internationalization gone gravely awry” and evinced the fact that “the Japanese remain a strongly insular people, with little understanding of or empathy for foreign cultures.”¹⁰³ Shapiro contacted Ide Kenichirō, spokesperson for Sanrio, and Nakajima Kauhirō, an official of Yamato Mannequin Co.—the manufacturer responsible for the production of some 600 mannequins similar to those pictured above. Both Ide and Nakajima denied culpability: Sanrio contended that “nobody in Japan regards this as racist;” Yamato Mannequin saw their product as having “strong personality, energy and charm,” and, upon being notified of the charge of racism, stated that “our conclusion is [that] it wasn't [racist].”¹⁰⁴

Two points of clarification must be made. First, the popularity of *Chibikuro sambo* the literary work, as was the case in America, would spawn *Chibikuro sambo* as cultural phenomenon. Writing on what he calls the diminutization of the black Other in Japanese cultural discourse, John Russell suggests that the childlike appeal of *Chibikuro* was not “limited to literary narratives...[but] also finds expression in consumer goods, such as...the recent line of Sambo products marketed [in Japan.]”¹⁰⁵ This popularity evoked cultural artifacts—dolls, figurines, towels, backpacks, puzzles, T.V. shows, plays, operas, *et cetera*—that featured, to borrow Russell's nomenclature, “Sambo imagery” made in the “Sambo-mode.” This mode of production is controversial insofar as, as Russell's argument continues, it “blur[s] the boundary

¹⁰³ Margaret Shapiro, “Old Black Stereotypes Find New Lives in Japan,” p. A18.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ John Russell, “Race and Reflexivity,” p.9.

between human—or perhaps more accurately homunculoid—and animal.”¹⁰⁶ Indeed, insofar as the highly influential Iwanami version of *Chibikuro sambo* was based on the Dobias version, the Sambo as cultural icon in Japan did share with its American counterpart a link to the minstrel show.

The second point of clarification—one that is intimately related to the first—concerns the schism between the response to Sambo among Japanese academics and the response represented in Shapiro’s article. It was only a year before Shapiro’s article that scholar of children’s literature and library science Watanabe Shigeo eulogized the death of a Sambo that had been “impressed with the seal” of racial discrimination.¹⁰⁷ Sanrio and Yamato Mannequins, however, argued that “nobody in Japan regards this as racist,” or that “their conclusion was that it wasn’t [racist].” This contrast is a testament to the difference between the popular and scholarly assessments of *Chibikuro*. The crucial difference between the popular and scholarly audiences is their respective levels of familiarity with the reception history of *Little Black Sambo* in America. Take for example two 1988 articles on Sambo, both published after the *Washington Post* controversy. The first article, entitled “*Chibikuro sambo wa kokujin ka*” (*Little Black Sambo Is Black?*), is from *Shokun! (Ladies and Gentlemen!)*—a monthly opinion magazine published by *Bungei shunju*. The second, “Sambo to modanizumu” (“Sambo and Modernism”) is from a special edition on race (*jinshu*) of *Gendai shisō (Contemporary Philosophy)*.

It just so happens that this author has accumulated some data on the picture book *Little Black Sambo*. This uproar [the post-*Post* fallout] occurred as I was preparing a contribution for *Misses* magazine. Thus...I decided to furnish and submit for reference in regard to the debate information that I thought would be of use to the readers of *Shokun*. Because it would be problematic if [the reader were to] jump to a hasty conclusion, I put forth this disclaimer: my intention is not a counter-critique to the criticism of Sambo goods. This is an attempt at a clear

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Watanabe Shigeo, *20-seiki no ehon*, p.155

interpretation (*kaishakumei*) of *Little Black Sambo*, which has been left in a state of ambiguity up until this point.¹⁰⁸

Historically, Sambo—whose jokes, singing and dancing were superb—reflected various sentiments and values of American society. [Sambo] has come to change powerfully and incessantly. Sambo is, to be sure, a stereotype. There were an infinite amount of racially discriminatory social systems that legitimated Sambo as a symbol and such systems still exist today. The Japanese “black” boom is probably a variation of such systems. However, ironically, Sambo is also, for the black people of America, the essence of black folk culture (*kokujin no minzoku bunka no essensu*) and an image that has come to carry the attempt at Modernization. Sambo carries the history of black folk who have, while receiving the Sambo stereotype given to them by white people, made their own Modern culture in a shape that overcomes [the stereotype.] The history of Sambo is also the history of black Modernism.¹⁰⁹

It is clear even from the titles of the two articles that the expectations placed on the reader—and, by proxy, the author’s summation of the reader’s familiarity with Sambo—is markedly different. The popular essay is introductory and attempts to clarify any ambiguities for the partially-informed reader, most likely a reader trying to determine if *Chibikuro sambo* is suitable reading material for a child. The second article, written for the academic, assumes a working knowledge of the cultural history of Sambo, the institutional and social legitimization of racist iconography, the vexed relationship between the white gaze and the black performer, and the complications associated with the “black” attempt (an attempt that was inevitably marked by difference) to engage with Modernism (a movement that was, by definition, “universal.”) Although some popular readers were familiar with the complicated history of Sambo, the majority certainly were not.

The *Little Black Sambo* debate that was to follow would turn on the differing understandings of the history of Sambo: for many Japanese readers, Sambo was no more than a “brave” (*yūuki no aru*), “smart” (*kashikoi*), “cute” (*kawaii*) boy from a literary jungle; the American critique of Japan’s *Chibikuro* centered on Japanese “ignorance” and “insensitivity” vis-à-vis the racial discrimination embodied by Sambo as cultural icon, an icon that was a

¹⁰⁸ Wada Eita, “Chibikuro sanbo wa kokujin ka,” p.161.

¹⁰⁹ Okude Naohito, “Sambo to modanizumu,” p.191.

byproduct of the “infinite amount of racially discriminatory social systems that legitimated Sambo as a symbol” that “still exist today.” The contemporary existence of such systems in Japan seemed to be verified literally overnight. On July 23, 1988, Watanabe Michio, then the chief strategist of the Liberal Democratic Party’s policy bureau, claimed that African Americans were responsible for the economic woes of America. “In the U.S.,” Watanabe pontificated at a LDP seminar, “where credit cards are much in use, a lot of blacks and so on, think, ‘We’re bankrupt. We don’t have to pay anything starting tomorrow.’”¹¹⁰ Watanabe’s comments were reminiscent of the comments made by then Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro some two years earlier, in which Nakasone suggested that the intelligence and literacy rates of America were hampered by the inclusion of the scores of African and Hispanic Americans.

Synergized and politicized by the LDP’s commentary, American complaints of anti-Sambo sentiment inundated the Japanese embassy in Washington. Facing pressure both from the Japanese Foreign Ministry and the American press, Yamato Mannequins and Sanrio decided to halt production of their Sambo-related products; on July 29, Shapiro and the *Washington Post* triumphantly declare that “Little Black Sambo toys and beachwear and black department store mannequins with exaggerated racial features have been withdrawn from circulation here [Tokyo] after they drew a storm of protest in the United States.”¹¹¹ This “triumph,” however did relatively little to quell the storm. On August 1, 1988, the Congressional Black Caucus wrote a letter of protest to then Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru imploring him to facilitate a moratorium on consumer products that portrayed blackness negatively. As Representative Charles Rangel (NY) described the intent behind the political onslaught, “We’re talking about a

¹¹⁰ John Greenwald, “Japan Prejudice and Black Sambo.”

¹¹¹ Margaret Shapiro, “Japanese Companies Recall Little Black Sambo Products.”

general racist attitude. They are now world leaders. They are going to have to learn that the whole world is not Japanese.”¹¹²

Lost in the fervent, dichotomous rhetoric of us-versus-them (we are talking about a general racist attitude; *they* are going to have to learn) was the fact that there were Japanese organizations that were against the proliferation of “racist” representations of African-Americans. The *Kokujin sabetsu wo nakusu kai* (Association to Stop Racism Against Blacks, ASRAB) was particularly influential. Founded on August 11, 1988 by then-nine year old Arita Hajime upon hearing his parents discuss the *Washington Post* article, the Osaka-based ASRAB quickly transformed into a one-family crusade against the racially suspect consumer goods that permeated the Japanese market in the 1980s. The ASRAB movement began with the family’s attempt to locate consumer goods that drew the ire of the American media. In a matter of days the family found some one hundred artifacts, which the ASRAB “commodities of black discrimination” (*kokujin sabetsu shōhin*).¹¹³ These commodities represented, the ASRAB contended, the “‘bias’ and ‘discrimination’ that is around us [but we are] oblivious to and unable to perceive (*mi no mawari ni aru “henken” to “sabetsu” ni kizukazu, minuku koto ga dekinakatta.*)”¹¹⁴

It was the ASRAB, not the American media, that would censure the ubiquity of *Chibikuro sambo* (the picture book) in Japan. The ASRAB argued that *Chibikuro sambo* played a prominent role in the Japanese imagining of blackness and that it was no coincidence that the blackness of Japan’s “commodities of black discrimination” resembled the blackness of Sambo.

¹¹² Greenwald, “Japan Prejudice and Black Sambo.”

¹¹³ The collection continues to grow. In subsequent articles, the Organization claimed to have as many as 600 items that met their definition of discriminatory in their possession.

¹¹⁴ Arita Toshiji, “Kokujin sabetsu shōhin to ehon chibikuro sanbo zeppan no torikumi, Kokujin sabetsu wo nakusukai no chiisana kokoromi,” p.92.

Thus, the ASRAB's letter-writing campaign was extended to the eleven publishers (Iwanami, Shōgakukan, Gakushū kenkyūsha, Poplar, Kaiseisha, Ondorisha, Kin no hoshi-sha, Nagaoka shōten, Kodansha, Obunsha, and Sanrio) that were producing copies of *Chibikuro* at that time. The response was uncanny. Although the ASRAB's called for reform of *Chibikuro*, Gakushū kenkyūsha—a publisher that specializes in education materials—decided to cease publication of *Chibikuro* in late November of 1988. This was followed Shōgakukan and Kodansha's decision to cease publication. Gakushū kenkyūsha, Shōgakukan and Kodansha, which were three of the most immanent publishers of *Chibikuro* in terms of market share and brand recognition, publically announced their decision in the December 12, 1988 *Asahi shinbun*. On the 13th of December 1988, Midorikawa Tooru, then president of Iwanami, sent an apologia to the ASRAB. Midorikawa claimed that Iwanami was not cognizant of the “derision of black people” (*kokujin ni taisuru besshi*) implied by the word “Sambo” and in the etymology of “mumbo jumbo” until he was notified by the ASRAB. Expressing “deep pain” (*tsūshin*) for his “ignorance” (*fumei*), Midorikawa announced Iwanami's decision and rational behind pulling *Chibikuro* from the presses:

Although, Iwanami—and me myself as well—on a daily basis devote all of our energy to eliminating discrimination and creating an equalitarian society (*sabetsu wo nakushi, byōdō na shakai wo tsukuridasu koto*), we humbly express our heartfelt regret to those who have experienced discrimination due to the fact that the measures taken with this text [the decision to halt production of *Chibikuro*] have been delayed and prolonged until this day.¹¹⁵

Midorikawa's apology was published in the December 14, 1988 *Asahi shimbun*. Long seen as the standard-bearer for *Chibikuro*, Iwanami's announcement seemingly signaled the demise of Sambo; by January of 1989, all eleven companies halted publication of Sambo.

¹¹⁵ As cited in Arita, p.98-99.

The mass media, which swarmed onto the Little Black Sambo controversy, coined two prominent monikers for the debate that erupted after the removal of *Chibikuro* from the presses: the “*Chibikuro sambo ronsō/mondai*” and “*Sanbo issei zeppan mondai*,” which translates along the lines of “the controversy over the instantaneous termination of *Sambo* publication.” The second, which is oddly reminiscent of spontaneous combustion, crystallizes the sentiment of a significant stratum of the reading public. Recall that many readers (as well as the members of the public being read to) were unfamiliar with the controversy that had beleaguered *Sambo* since the 1920s. To these individuals, the disappearance of *Chibikuro* was unfathomable; the claim of “racial discrimination” was perplexing. “Many people were left with lingering bewilderment due to the fact that the publishing companies responded by collectively ceasing publication without giving a worthwhile response.”¹¹⁶

The general malaise surrounding the spontaneous expunging of *Chibikuro* was exacerbated by the events of Nagano in the winter of 1990. The city of Nagano intended to put on a *Chibikuro sambo* puppet show as a part of a cultural fair for an anime film festival. The Nagano branch of the Buraku Liberation Alliance, however, informed the city of the “*Little Black Sambo* problem” and urged the city to eliminate racial discrimination. With one eye turned toward constructing a cosmopolitan image in order to bolster its bid for the Winter Olympics, the City of Nagano’s Board of Education’s response was swift and severe. The Board sent correspondences to public libraries, schools, and nurseries asking these institutions to remove *Chibikuro sambo* from their bookshelves.

For some, Nagano’s bid for the Winter Olympics brought the town’s temperature dangerously close to *Fahrenheit 451*. Libraries’ responses to the Board of Education’s request

¹¹⁶ Ochiai, p.50.

included: disposing of the text completely, removing the text's information from library catalogues (thereby making it impossible to locate), moving *Chibikuro* from the juvenile to the adult section, and appending reference materials to the text to ensure parental consent before reading. These measures—which extended beyond the city limits of Nagano—clearly challenged the mandates of the Statement on Intellectual Freedom in Libraries (*Toshokan no jiyu ni kansuru sengen*). The preamble to the declaration stipulates, “Libraries shall not be impeded by [sic] power of governing authorities or social pressure, and shall guarantee full access to library collections and their physical facilities to the people, by clearly recognizing their responsibility and by actively performing all they can provide including library cooperation.”¹¹⁷ If the Japanese public's initial response to the Sambo controversy was discombobulation, there certainly was no antipyretic for (what seemed to be) the government's infringement on the freedom of libraries and (what seemed to be) the disappearance of an innocuous picture book that had been beloved since the 1950s.

The Cultural and Inter-Cultural Hermeneutics of *The Little Black Sambo Debate*

Steven Mailloux characterizes cultural hermeneutics as a focus on “the tropes, arguments, and narratives constituting the interpretations of texts at specific times and places” which thereby “encourages a practical and theoretical preoccupation with making sense of the political dynamics of cultural conversations at specific historical moments.” As we have seen thus far, the *Chibikuro sanbo ronsō* was a cultural and inter-cultural conversation on the ethics of reading, interpreting and commercializing blackness. We now turn our attention to the “tropes, arguments, and narratives” which constituted the interpretation of *Chibikuro sambo* during the 1988 controversy.

¹¹⁷ Statement on Intellectual Freedom in Libraries, p.20. Translated by the Japan Library Association (*Nihon toshokan kyōkai*).

The breadth of the *Chibikuro sambo* debate was formidable; Ito Takashi reports that the *Asahi Shinbun* alone produced fifty articles on *Little Black Sambo* between 1988 and 1992.¹¹⁸ This testament to the ubiquity of Sambo excludes the numerous monographs, symposia, taidan (interviews), popular magazine articles, televised discussions and debates, epistolary correspondences, and interpersonal exchanges. Given the scope of the argument, it is impossible to summarize the various arguments vis-à-vis the text without some margin of error. Ochiai, however, has produced a succinct enumeration of the types of argumentation used both for and against *Chibikuro* during the 1988 debates. Although considering examples of each of these types would be fruitful, one argument in particular is informative in regard to our discussion of the intersection of blackness and Japaneseness: the “*Nihon no dokujisei*” argument. This argument posits the notion of “Japanese originality/personality/individuality” (*Nihon no dokujisei*) vis-à-vis blackness and discrimination in general and *Chibikuro sambo* in particular. The premise of this argument is an assumption that Japan is completely disconnected (*muen*) from blackness and discrimination against blacks. Even with this, or perhaps precisely due to this premise, however, the originality-personality-individuality arguments goes on to posit a relationship with blackness that is unique to Japan and, typically, discrimination-free. Although Japanese readers are encountering the “same” blackness—that is, the “same” *Chibikuro sambo*—the reading of blackness produced thereby is original, is deeply personal, has individuality, is identical only to Japan itself. The counterargument suggests that the notion of Japanese “originality” or identity is a myth. The illusion of originality, as this argument goes, is due to the misrecognition of ignorance (*muishiki*) as complete severance (*muen*)—complete severance being an impossibility—from blackness. The following statements exemplify both of these arguments in turn:

¹¹⁸ Itō Takashi, “Genron no jiyu no mondai to shite no chibikuro sambo no zeppan,” p.142.

There is a competitive sport called “Sambo” in the Soviet Union, but that’s fine in the Soviet Union. In America, “Calpis” has been changed to “Calpico” because “Calpis” has the ring of “cow piss”—and there’s nothing wrong with that. Conversely, there is no need to change the name to “Calpico” in Japan because it has been changed in America. Insofar as we accept that America is understood as American culture, America will accept that Japan will debate what should be done in Japan. Isn’t that true internationalization (*ma no koku saika*)?¹¹⁹

When I spoke with some Japanese mothers who reside in America about *Chibikuro sambo*, their opinion was overwhelming: “I wonder what’s wrong with a story that’s as cute and interesting as *Chibikuro*.” Even people who have lived in multiethnic America and should have somewhat experienced what the racial problem is respond this way. Isn’t there an unexpectedly large number of Japanese people who don’t know why *Chibikuro sambo* is racially biased and what’s unacceptable about it. The fact that we don’t know what’s wrong with it is vividly portrays the meagerness of Japanese people’s international sensibility (*kokusai kankaku*) in regard to the race problem.¹²⁰

This problem (whether international-ness results in a Japanese blackness that is singular, that is a different “blackness” from the “blackness” of black Americana, or if Japanese “originality” and “individuality” are illusions held by those who don’t grasp the actual and ethical interconnectivity of modern life) seems to be an issue that runs parallel to the discussion of Yamada Eimi’s blackness in the previous chapter. The first avenue presented above—the notion of *Nihon no dokuji* vis-à-vis blackness—is striking in that it demands that we see the Japanese interpretation of blackness on its own terms, as a blackness that belongs to Japan, and, in so doing suggests the possibility of transnational African-Americanness. Reminiscent of Yamada’s self-styled black Japanese literature, this gesture, which presupposes that Japan can define and interpret blackness, incorporates the postmodern tendency of challenging essentialist authority by contesting the definitive authority of Western/African-American interpretative paradigms. This particular manifestation of *Nihon no dokuji*, however, can be accused of mobilizing cultural relativism in order to shirk the responsibility of the interpreter, hence the counterargument presented in the second excerpt. The gravitas of the second avenue is considerable: it demands that Japan adhere to the ethics of interpretative paradigms set by the

¹¹⁹ Tanahashi Miyoko, “Chibikuro sambo mondai, sakuhin hyōka wo chūshin ni, p.90.

¹²⁰ Shirakami Michiko, “Chibikuro sambo wa naze warui ka,” p.58.

international community—and this should remind us of the policing of Yamada. Adherence, however, while cosmopolitan, seems to imply an effacement of the self in the face of an American world order: notice the prominence of America in the logical flow of the second quotation. A refusal to kowtow to the American interpretative paradigm was precisely the central concern of the first avenue. The question becomes, then, can Japan produce an “original” interpretation of *Chibikuro*, or is any such attempt destined to reproduce the dark history that follows the text?

Conclusion

Sambo’s odyssey to Japan began well before the 1899 publication of the text. By the time Bannerman published her story, Sambo had already undergone several etymological evolutions and appeared at a variety of cultural venues. These venues included Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*, Chesnutt’s conjure tales, and minstrel shows. The minstrel show was particularly germane in the making of the Sambo of American cultural lore. This Sambo was naïve and intellectually limited, but limitless in his ability to please and entertain.

This Sambo was already a fixity in the cultural landscape when *Little Black Sambo* was imported to America. As such, it was only a matter of time—and a matter of intellectual property rights—before American illustrators and adapters would limn Sambo in a manner that was more palatable to their audience. MacMillan’s 1926 *Little Black Sambo*, the text that was to become the basis for the 1953 Iwanami translation, was one such example. The African American readership greeted the popularity of *Sambo* bittersweetly. The emergence of a black protagonist in what was considered a classic of children’s literature was certainly something to

celebrate. Movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, however, evoked a reevaluation of the function and utility of both black children's literature and texts such as *Little Black Sambo*.

Little Black Sambo made its debut as *Chibikuro sambo* as the reception currents shifted on the other side of the Pacific. *Chibikuro* was greeted with popularity, critical acclaim, and a growing number of "charlatan" (the Iwanami version itself was not based on Bannerman's story) texts. Critics and the literati saw Sambo as a shining example of what children's literature should be. The uniform praise of *Chibikuro* would continue until the mid-1960s, when the plethora of pirated versions, in concert with *Chibikuro*'s inclusion in elementary school curricula, evoked a debate on the text's authenticity. This debate had the side-effect of introducing American anti-Sambo criticism to Japanese intellectuals, and Japanese intellectuals themselves would begin to critic Sambo during the ideology-based debates of the 60s and 70s. Thanks in part to Iwanami's decision to edit rather than annotate Sambo, the Japanese public was not introduced to the darker side of Sambo until the *Washington Post* intervened in the winter of 1988. Spanning from book burning to international symposia, the 1988 *Chibikuro sambo ronsō* expressed the extremities of international, intercultural dialogue and is a case study in the reading of blackness into being. The majority of the Japanese readership, however, remained convinced that their interpretative appropriation of blackness was "original" and thereby sanitized of the discrimination that haunted the text, hence the lingering popularity of *Sambo*, which was republished in Japan in 2005.

We left Yamada Eimi at a crossroad. Yamada's black literature chips away at the authority that binds identity borders. In becoming a self-styled black author, Yamada becomes one who has an authoritative voice with which to write "original" black stories. In so doing, Yamada combats both the reification of blackness and the arbitrary demarcations utilized to

establish identity. This breaking down of authority, however, leaves us with unpoliced borders, and unpoliced borders often give way to (in the case of Yamada, consumerist) appropriations; even if Yamada's authorial persona itself challenges reification, her writing can be charged with the very kind of reification her persona resists. Indeed, Di Stefano's inquiry—"Why is it, just at the moment in Western history when previously silenced populations have begun to speak for themselves and on behalf of their subjectivities, that the concept of the subject and the possibility of discovering/creating a liberating 'truth' become suspect?"—should give us pause.¹²¹ Are we to forcibly silence Yamada or an offended Yamada readership, and don't we violate the same principle no matter which side we silence?

We leave *Chibikuro* at a similar crossroad. *Chibikuro* was banned after the 1988 controversy. Its recrudescence, however, seems inevitable. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the publication of *Littoru Burraku Sanbo*, a translation of a rendition of *Little Black Sambo* editing and illustrated by two black authors, and *Chibikuro sanpo*, a "non discriminatory" version of the text that substituted Sambo for a black dog.¹²² In 2005, Zuiunsha republished the Iwanami version of *Chibikuro sambo*. According to a personal interview with Inoue, the president of Zuiunsha, the text sold some 120,000 copies in its first year of publication.

I had the opportunity to interview Inoue in the summer of 2006, a year after his company republished *Sambo*. Throughout our conversation, he used the following phrase multiple times: "if you read it like this (*soiu fū ni yomu to.*)" The implication of this phrase—that literature that crosses racial, ethnic and national borders inevitably engenders new, localized readings, readings that are right in their own right—is an important one, particularly in light of events such as

¹²¹ Christine Di Stefano, "Dilemmas of Difference: Femininity, Modernity and Postmodernism," p.17.

¹²² The Japanese transliteration of "Sambo," "sanbo," is phonetically similar to the word for walk, "sanpo." Hence we have "*Chibikuro sanpo*," the story of a little black dog who goes out for a walk. Because Sambo has been replaced by the dog, the author argues, the text is absolved of the sticky web of racialized readings.

Rushdie's persecution and the *New Yorker* Obama controversy. Analysis of the cross-cultural dialogues that occur during moments such as the *Little Black Sambo* controversy remind us that the only way to help Sambo move on from the crossroads, that is, the only way to strike an interpretative agreement among international reading communities in an age when words proliferate miles beyond the borders of their point of origin, is to, in the words of Rey Chow, "insist on the careful analyses of texts, on responsibly engaged rather than facilely dismissive judgments, and on deconstructing the ideological assumptions in discourses of "opposition" and "resistance" as well as in discourse of mainstream power."¹²³

¹²³ Rey Chow, "Theory, Area Studies, Cultural Studies: Issues of Pedagogy in Multiculturalism," p.115

Conclusion

Single vision produces worse illusions than double vision or many-headed monsters.

—Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*

Conclusion:

In the introduction to this study, I suggested that the project is interested primarily in the telling of two stories. The first of those stories is itself a series of stories, vignettes-cum-case-studies that urge us to see Japanese writings of blackness as *sui generis*, rather than “representative” or “stereotypic,” entities. The second story is one that, while respecting the singularity of those singular case studies, looks for moments of confluence between the cases as it writes a kind of scatterplot history of the literature engendered by Japanese authors’ encounters with black people, literature and culture. In concert, these two stories are telling in regard to what I have called the double consciousness of postwar Japanese literary blackness. Postwar Japanese authors provide us with double visions of what it means to have “blackness” in Japanese literature.

The first vision is one that is concerned primarily with the problem of how to represent black bodies in Japanese literature and what the implications of such representations might be for both the selfhood of Japanese bodies as well as the body of postwar Japanese literature—that is, writing in what I have called the Japanese black literary mode. Ishikawa Jun and Kojima Nobuo provide us with an entrée into the first mode. The Occupation-period fiction of Ishikawa Jun and Kojima Nobuo suggests that the method of representation—descriptions of silent, typically male, black bodies focalized by the gaze of garrulous, typically male, Japanese protagonists with little (Kojima) to no (Ishikawa) dialogue *between* black and Japanese characters—belies the implication of such representation—that the thinking and writing of the Self during the

Occupation was an inherently dialogic endeavor. The Occupation, moreover, coupled an acute awareness of the “racial difference” between Japanese authors and their American censor-occupiers with an influx of African Americans and African American culture, somatic and discursive bodies almost synonymous with racial difference. As such, “blackness” becomes the interlocutory counterpoint in Ishikawa’s and Kojima’s dialogic writing of “Japaneseness.”

The second vision is one that shifts our focus from the content of the dialogue between blackness and Japaneseness to its form, a prepositional shift from Japanese authors speaking *about* black bodies to speaking *with, like and as* black authors. In an attempt to underscore the parallel between this mode and works of African American literature—both stem primarily from readings of black texts and the incorporation of such readings into writings—I have referred to this second mode as black Japanese literature. To reiterate, I want to be perfectly clear in stating that this project is not an attempt to create a taxonomy based on a binary separation of black Japanese works and Japanese black ones. By “double consciousness of postwar Japanese literature” I refer to what I see as the vexed co-existence and tension between the two modes in a given sociohistorical moment, author’s oeuvre, or even a single text. Ōe Kenzaburō is a particularly revelatory case insofar as both his body of works penned between the years of 1957-1968, particularly works such as *Outcries*, negotiate such a bimodal writing of blackness. Ōe’s mobilization of “negritude” and the black arts as a panacea for the existential woes of the postwar, post-Occupation Japanese provides us with a glimpse of the political stakes of negotiating the simultaneous presence of the representation of black bodies with a dialogue with black folks and black arts. If postwar era literary writings of blackness were composed primarily of works that foreground the Japanese black mode, Ōe’s case also alludes to the historical events that facilitated the black Japanese mode’s move to the fore in the 1960s: *i.e.* the African-Asian

Writers Conference, an increase in Japanese translations of black literature, Japanese media coverage of current events in black America, the recrudescence of Japanese authors' interest in travelling to the US and genesis of interest in travel to black cultural hubs such as Harlem and Atlanta, *et cetera*.

If Ōe marked a moment of transition, Nakagami would leave an indelible mark on the writing of blackness in Japanese literature. Nakagami was the first author to fully privilege the writing of black Japanese literature over the writing of Japanese black literature and wrestle with the implications of such transracial writing. In his search for a method of writing *burakuness* under erasure, Nakagami turned to blackness, namely the tropes, rhythm and time of black literature and jazz, as a model for the syntax of a new language that might allow for such writing. This turn, thanks in part to the aforementioned increase in accessibility to black literature in Japan, is highlighted in both the fictional and non-fictional writings of Nakagami by way of the intertextual network he weaves between his own *buraku* literature and black literature and music; every reference to Ellison, Baldwin, Monk and Coltrane in Nakagami literally names the debt his writing of *burakuness* owes to blackness. Nakagami also introduces us to a theory of the tradition of writing blackness in Japan, triangulating his position as one connected with both black artists and writers and the antecedent and descendant Japanese artists and writers who are similarly connected to blackness. Moreover, such a tradition is possible for Nakagami precisely because he sees the writing of identity—*burakuness*, blackness, Japaneseness, or otherwise—as a project without closure; the space on the blank page is open to descendants because no writing of identity is final. As such, each writing of identity, even those that elevate the black Japanese literary mode, is a kind of misidentification, an inscription that aspires to finitude where there is none to be found.

In taking the baton from Ōe, Nakagami converts Ōe's writing of black-Japanese humanist solidarity into a kind of anti-humanist liquidity, a more fluid model of the affinity (rather than identity) politics between blackness and Japanese literature. Yamada, one of the inheritors of the legacies of Ōe and Nakagami, amalgamates Ōe's solidity and Nakagami's liquidity into an amorphous morass. Reminiscent of Ōe, Yamada's early works juxtapose representations of spectacular black bodies with a positing of analogy between African Americans (primarily males) and Japanese (primarily females) as Others. With the exception of a stray reference to Baldwin in *Bedtime Eyes*, however, Yamada's early works diverge from Ōe insofar as she divorces the image of the black body from its literary and sociohistorical context and inserts it into the Japanese market to be consumed as an abstracted symbol of racial difference by her readers. Reminiscent of Nakagami, Yamada's later works experimentally bend the Japanese language in an attempt reproduce black voices. Pace Nakagami, however, Yamada views ethnic identity as something that can be represented in its totality. Yamada's curious writing of blackness leaves us with a discombobulated, "postracial" blackness and all of the problems that such a term harbors. If Ōe marks what I called a prepositional shift from writing about black bodies to dialogue with black authors and Nakagami in turn marks a shift from dialogue with black authors to experiments in writing like or as black authors, Yamada pushes Nakagami's shift to its (il)logical conclusion: writing as and for black authors who have no voice in the Japanese literary market.

In concert, the first four chapters provide us with a literary history of the writing of blackness in postwar and contemporary Japanese literature. This history is the story of the inversion of the preferred modality of writing blackness in Japanese literature. The Occupation-period works of Ishikawa, Kojima and Ōe are written primarily in the Japanese black mode with

only intermittent glimpses—one thinks, for example, of the understated place of the Negro spiritual in works such as “Shiiku” and “Kuroi kawa, omoi kai”—of the black Japanese mode. Nakagami and the later works of Ōe facilitate the naturalization of a black-Japanese dialogue. This naturalization is so successful that, by the time Yamada begins her career, the black Japanese mode is a more viable mode of writing blackness than the Japanese black mode. As such, we have authors such as Yamada, who claims not to represent black characters, but black voices, and Mobu Norio (1970 -), who writes a semi-autobiographical work on the burden of Japan’s aging society on its youth (read: a problem that is unrelated to racial difference) in the language of black hip-hop; we have, then, an inversion such that Japanese authors now write blackness in the black Japanese mode with only intermittent glimpses, if we are to take the author’s at face value, of the Japanese black mode. I have tried to capture the flow of this series of literary developments—which begins with a fixation on represented blackness *sans* self-awareness of the ethical implications of such representation, transitions into an exploration of the possibility of black-Japanese analogy during the 1960s and 70s, and culminates in contemporary Japanese writings of blackness done under the assumption that Japanese authors have just as much authority to write as/for black authors as black authors themselves—by way of a delineation of the reading of blackness in Japan from 1954 – 2005 via the reception history and cultural hermeneutics of *Little Black Sambo* in Japan.

I have referred twice, once at the end of chapter four and once at the end of chapter five, of leaving Yamada Eimi at a crossroad and suggested that this crossroad might be indicative of the current situation of blackness in contemporary Japanese literature. In closing, I’d like to provide a sketch of this crossroad by way of a reading of the styling of black masculinity in

Yamada Eimi's 2003 *Payday!!!*, the coming of age story of biracial twins Robin and Harmony told against the backdrop of their (Italian-American) mother's death on 9/11.

In *Payday!!!*, Yamada attempts to transition from her old stylistic approach to writing black masculinity—in which the biologically-bound essence of black masculinity exists *a priori* and is subsequently identified by its Others (typically a Japanese female) through the sensual—to a new, “postracial” idiom, in which black masculinity is socially and linguistically performed and subsequently identified as a performance. The possibility of transiting from the old idiom to the new one plays out thematically in *Payday!!!* by way of the juxtaposition of three generations of black males. There is, however, an unresolved contradiction yet to be addressed in this new, “postracial” idiom: Yamada's lingering subscription to the notion of race as a biologically-determined category. Depicting a postracial world inhabited by people of various (biological) races, Yamada's new idiom for the styling of black masculinity falls into many of the tropic pitfalls of her old idiom.

The contradiction of Yamada's styling of black masculinity in her early works is well-documented. Although Yamada's infusion of black men into her early works was designed to enhance the realism of the texts (“of course [well beyond] the realism of yesteryear, *Bedtime Eyes* gives...birth to a previously untrodden reality”) and destabilize essentialized and essentializing gender roles (“In [Yamada Eimi's] romances, the ‘male's role’ and the ‘female's role’ are turned about and become irrelevant,”) her “realism” arguably reverts to stereotypical (at best) and racist (at worst) representations of black males that reify and reinforce the binaries she seeks to overthrow (“While the boundaries between hunter and predator are shifting...racial

boundaries remain stubbornly intact...these narratives...reassert the very racial boundaries she [Yamada] boasts of transgressing.”¹

In *Payday!!!*, Yamada attempts to address the contradiction of her early style in two ways: by ceding the narrative’s focalization to black biracial twins and by framing black masculinity as a linguistically-performed social construct.² First, pace earlier criticism that Yamada’s narratives “privilege discourse about blacks while effectively precluding any dialogue [with “blacks”]...[thereby] silencing the Black Other,” *Payday!!!* has no Japanese female character—the narratorial goddesses of Yamada’s early semibiographical works whose gaze at black bodies typically focalized her tales.³ Rather, the novel is focalized by Harmony, a black and Italian-American biracial teenage boy, and Robin, his twin sister. Moreover, *Payday!!!* is divided into five chapters: chapters one and three, entitled “Robin,” are both focalized by Robin and present her as the central character, chapters two and four by Harmony, and the dual narratives converge in chapter five, “Robin, and Harmony.”⁴ The narrative’s vacillation between Robin and Harmony’s respective stories works in conjunction with Yamada’s liberal use of free indirect discourse, in which the distance between the narrator and the text’s black characters thins and creates the illusion of black characters “directly” expressing themselves without the mediation of a narrator.

¹ Kono Taeko, as quoted in Hasegawa Kei, “Seiai no gensetsu: Beddo taimu aizu (The Discourse of Sexual Love: *Bedtime Eyes*),” p.67; Hasegawa, p.69. John Russell, “Consuming Passions: Spectacle, Self-Transformation, and the Commodification of Blackness in Japan,” p.128, 130.

² This technique is adumbrated in one of Yamada’s earlier styles lately; her 1996 *Animal Logic* is narrated from the perspective of an organism that lives inside Jasmine, a black female.

³ Russell, p.128, 130.

⁴ All chapter titles, as well as the title of the novel itself, are written in English. This, in conjunction with the bevy of parenthetical notes explaining references to Americana, gives the reader the impression that *Payday!!!* is a “black” story presented in Japanese translation. In Yamada’s style lately, black characters “speak for themselves”—Yamada simply translates the tale into Japanese.

In tandem, these two stylistic choices—converging dual narratives focalized by biracial twins and a (we are to assume) Japanese narrator that converges with but never occults black characters—exemplify Yamada’s attempt to transition: 1) from a style reminiscent of Japanese black literature insofar as it generates stories by gazing at black male bodies to a style reminiscent of the black Japanese literary mode insofar as it tells the story of black characters and, 2) from simple inversions of male/female, black/Japanese binaries through “essentially masturbatory” sexual encounters that ultimately “reproduce...conventional configurations of power” to more radical hybridizations of black masculinity and the Others which form its constitutive borders, to hybridizations that belie the rigidity of the borders of “conventional” representations of race and gender.⁵ This second transition culminates in “Robin, and Harmony,” both stylistically, as free indirect discourse jars the reader into losing track of which twin is focalizing the narrative, and thematically, as Robin hides from Harmony’s ex-lover whom she has never met because: “If she [the ex-lover] knows what Harmony looks like, then she knows what I look like.”⁶

Second, in *Payday!!!*, “black masculinity” is portrayed as a social and linguistic performance. As such, the identification of black males is done through the reading of linguistic and social signs. Readers familiar with Yamada Eimi’s earlier works know that her identification of black masculinity began as a sensual affair. “Sensual” both in the first sense offered by the *OED*, “perceptible by the senses,” and the fourth, “excessively inclined to the gratification of the senses, voluptuous; often *spec.* with reference to sexual passion.” In her earlier works, the biologically-determined essence of black masculinity exists “in the world” and is identifiable and identified by the visual, olfactory, gustatory and tactile (usually in that order)

⁵ Russell, p.129; Nina Cornyetz, “Power and Gender in the Narratives of Yamada Eimi,” p.438.

⁶ Yamada Eimi, *Payday!!!*, p.292.

signs that it emits for the receptive Japanese females who gaze upon it. Thus we have monologic Yamada-penned narratives, as Nina Cornyetz aptly notes, in which black masculinity can be sensed even without a single word of black self-expression; the blackness of even inarticulate black men is “easily inferred” because they “smell like barbecue sauce” or have voices “like a southern melody.”⁷

Yamada’s style lately presents black masculinity not as some essence that exists *a priori*, but as a kind of performance—the “style” of black parlance—that takes place through shared language and a network of socially agreed upon signs. Take, for example, Robin’s discovery of Harmony’s black masculinity. After their parents’ divorce, Robin decides to stay with her mother in Manhattan and Harmony moves with his father to South Carolina. The twins are reunited after a year apart when Robin comes to visit Harmony. During this summer reunion, Harmony tells Robin that he “wishes he didn’t have any Italian blood” and that he “doesn’t love that woman [his mother], can’t love that woman.”⁸ Robin:

surveyed her brother’s room as she searched for a retort in her discombobulated head—I have to say something. Hip hop and old school CDs and LPs were piled haphazardly next to turntables and CD players. She picked one up and pretended to examine it as she fought back the tears that blurred her vision. Busta Rhymes, Timbaland, Lucy Pearl, Ann Peebles—a little old, a little new, all a mess. Jay-Z, Nelly—and who’s Charlie Patton? And these really old records, is this what you call the Blues? Then she picked up the magazines and books that were scattered about on the floor. *XXL*, that’s a hardcore rap magazine. *Vibe* and James Earl Hardy’s *The Day Eazy-E Died*, Maya Angelou and Nikki Giovanni...She felt like somebody was watching her, so she spun around. There was a poster on the wall from the recently released *The Hurricane*, and Denzel Washington was scowling in her direction with frightening eyes. This...Robin said to herself. This is the room of a black (*Afurika-kei*) boy.⁹

Here, the first component of Yamada Eimi styling of black characters—aligning the narrator’s gaze with that of a black character—works in concert with the second component, the framing of black masculinity as a stylistic performance. Although the twins are dizygotic, we have already

⁷ Cornyetz, p.446.

⁸ *Payday!!!*, p.15.

⁹ *Payday!!!*, 16.

discussed how *Payday!!!* plays on their “identicalness.” In spite of the fact that the twins are “identical,” even Robin was unaware of the “nature” of her twin brother’s black masculinity—the reason being, of course, that (now) the acquisition of black masculinity supposedly isn’t natural. The epiphanic time that lapses during the second set of ellipses and the pair of questions in the middle of Robin’s survey—“who’s Charlie Patton?” and “is this what you call the Blues?”—signal her “discovery” of Harmony’s black masculinity, a performance Harmony has fine-tuned during the twins’ time apart.¹⁰ Rather than sensual knowledge of blackness—a knowledge now taboo given Yamada’s focus on the black family—Robin gains knowledge of her brother’s black masculinity by entering the space where Harmony stylistically performs his black masculinity through shared language (note the emphasis on art forms that rely heavily on verbal communication, *i.e.* rap, the blues, the novel, poetry and film) and social conventions vis-à-vis the “proper” performance of black masculinity.

Payday!!! presents black masculinity as a kind of performance. I read in *Payday!!!* a dilution of Judith Butler. Butler reminds us that “performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it be simply equated with performance...I would suggest that performativity cannot be understood outside a process of iterability...and this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject.”¹¹ Pace Butler, Yamada equates the performance of black masculinity with the *performativity* of black masculinity. This equivocation occurs, moreover, against the backdrop of a burgeoning “postracial” paradigm of

¹⁰ That Robin discovers Harmony’s black masculinity through Charlie Patton is a testament to the transition from sensual blackness to performed, “postracial” blackness that Yamada attempts to style lately. Indeed, “looking at Charlie Patton for the first time, one could only wonder at the ethnic mixture he represented. His complexion was as light (“bright,” in black parlance) as a white person’s.” (*Cf.* Calt and Wardlow’s *King of the Delta Blues: The Life and Music of Charlie Patton*). It is not through the sensual, but through performance that we come to know Patton. As Calt and Wardlow continue, “Survive Patton did, but not as a historical figure with a tangible past, and much of the factual data about his life remains nebulous...one today approaches his life with no frame of reference other than his surviving recordings or the first-hand recollections of one-time associates.”

¹¹ Butler, p.95, emphasis in original.

identity construction.¹² Take, for example, Harmony, a budding blues musician, and his rationale for singing the blues in the age of hip-hop: “I’m half white...that’s what my friends say when they tease me. But man, I don’t even care about that. You can’t explain people’s taste. I just want to get away from the oppression of having to like X kind of music because I’m race Y. As long as you pay respect to your roots, isn’t it all good?”¹³ We should take note of the phrase *raku ni naritai*, which I have translated as “want to get away from.” To revisit the argument made in chapter four, the *kanji* for *raku* resonates in the term for music, *ongaku*. Harmony sees performance, here musical performance, as a venue at which he can literally play and perform his identity with ease.

But race matters never play out quite so easily. In her equivocation between performance, (read: “free play” and “theatrical self-presentation) and performativity, with its “ritualized production...reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production but not...determining it fully in advance,” Yamada attempts to transition to styling postracial performances of black masculinity, in which the “fact of blackness” would not serve as an absolute determinate of how one performs one’s singular black masculinity, without

¹² The term “postracial” has received the most critical attention in the field of Political Studies, where it signals the changing of the guard from the black leadership of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements to a new generation of black leadership in which black leaders may or may not see themselves as “race men and women.” With this new generation of black leadership comes electorates that deem the race of political leaders a non-factor; we have moved beyond (hence the “post” in post-racial) race. Although the rise of Barack Obama has catalyzed discussion of whether or not we now live in a postracial age, I would argue that by 2003, the year in which Yamada published *Payday!!!* discussion of a budding “postracial” era was already underway. As early as 2001, we see works such as *Achieving Our Humanity: The Idea of the Postracial Future*. Moreover, by 2003, our (to borrow Toni Morrison’s phrase) “first black president” had already announced the completion of the first survey of the human genome. This map of the human genome revealed, among other things, that race has no genetic or biological foundation, that the genetic variation *within* “races” is greater than the variation *between* them. It can be argued that Yamada’s *Payday!!!* partakes in the budding discourse of the postracial; her representation of 9/11 as an event that brings Americans of all colors together is a case in point. I do argue, however, that the “postracial” as it proposed in *Payday!!!* contains an “unresolved contradiction” vis-à-vis race.

¹³ *Payday!!!*, p.275.

first addressing the requirement of “one identification at the expense of another” that “inevitably produces a violent rift, a dissension that will come to tear apart the identity wrought through the violence of exclusion” that accompanies the inscription of racial identities.¹⁴ That is to say, the unresolved contradiction of *Payday!!!* is that it attempts to style postracial racialized (perhaps the unresolved contradiction of the postracial era itself) masculinity without first addressing the “violent rift” and contradiction inherent to the creation of racial identities themselves.

The discourse of race mobilized throughout *Payday!!!* intimates this contradiction—we have, for example, the juxtaposition of the “oppression of having to like X kind of music because I’m race Y” with “ethnicities” (*i.e. afurika-kei*, the term that *Payday!!!* uses to denote black characters”) whose personalities are determined by their “blood” (*chi*, *i.e.* Michelle, a Chinese-American girl whose acerbity is due to the fact that “she has *kanji* in her DNA.”)¹⁵ It is in the romantic relationships of black males, however, that this contradiction is made manifests most vividly. *Payday!!!* portrays the love lives of three generations of black men: Harmony, a representative of the postracial era, his grandfather, a spectral remnant of the age of intraracial romance, and Harmony’s father, Ray, and Uncle William—two figures of the generation of “interracial” relationships. Although the representation of three generations of black men is engineered to signal the progression from the intraracial to the postracial, all three generations are remarkably similar in their failed attempts to build sustainable relationships. (The only “successful” relationship is Robin’s; it seems that Yamada Eimi’s black men, to borrow an expression from black slang, “can’t get some love” in the postracial era.) Moreover, each failure is framed in terms of absence and addiction—the selfsame framing of failed black masculinity seen in Yamada’s early style.

¹⁴ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex,”* p. 95; Butler, p.118.

¹⁵ *Payday!!!*, p.221.

Harmony lives with his grandmother, and it is primarily through her memories of her late husband that the reader learns of Harmony's grandfather's failed marriage. Harmony's grandfather was "lazy and good for nothing, drank all day, and got in and out of women like he was changing clothes."¹⁶ That is to say, he was a composite of several stereotypes of black masculinity. His fast life, moreover, led him to an early grave. The absence of Harmony's grandfather, whose death occurs well in advance of *Payday!!!*'s story, signals both the death of the intraracial age and the death of Yamada's writing of Japanese black literature. The grandfather's memory is kept alive and unwell, however, in Uncle William, a doppelganger whose alcoholism is "inherited from his father. And he looks just like his daddy too—he was a handsome man, loose with his booze and his women."¹⁷ If the absence of the grandfather signals both the death of the intraracial age and the death of Yamada's Japanese black literature, Uncle William signals their lingering specter, an unsurprising recrudescence given the lingering adherence to the "biology" of race and bloodlines. Uncle William, for example, "hates Chinese people, because I married one and that was something terrible."¹⁸ We need not worry about the fact that his ex-wife was Japanese, because "it's all the same—they're both Asians."¹⁹ In Uncle William we see the tension and unresolved contradiction between Yamada's move from the Japanese black literary mode to the black Japanese literary mode. The signature Japanese love interest is now present only in absence and Uncle William, spurred on by his new black lover who happens to work at a bar, does indeed add a new facet to the addicted/alcoholic black man stereotype—an interest in recovery, but it does seem that the more things change, the more they remain the same.

¹⁶ *Payday!!!*, p.221.

¹⁷ *Payday!!!*, p.26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.89.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.90.

Ray, Harmony's father and the other representative of the age of experimental "interracial" romances, too engages in a failed interracial relationship framed in terms of lack and addiction. Ray loses Harmony's mother, Sophia, twice: once when the two divorce and once again on 9/11. After this second loss, to quote Sophia's father, Ray becomes "just some African American."²⁰ Although the loss of the (white) mother serves as the impetus for the reunion of the black family, it also reignites Ray's addiction: "jungle fever." Ray begins a second relationship with Kate, a white woman who was once married to a black man and is thus "good at handling black men (*afurika-kei no otoko*)."²¹ Ray's relationship with Kate is narrated in terms of lack; Kate has no voice and is referred to as "ano hito" until the latter portion of the final chapter, when Kate and Ray's clandestine relationship is revealed. The absence of the voiceless, nameless Kate is a testament to the fact that she is a substitute for Sophia, whose body is never found after 9/11. In the words of Kate: "Ray and I are just alike—we've both lost someone whom we can't replace. We've come this far, aimless really, clutching the pillow next to us that no longer has an owner. Don't you think it's about time we end that lonely game?"²² As such, both Ray and Kate become not two singular postracial individuals in a relationship, but the next item in a collection of lovers spurred on by, to borrow the phrase used in *Payday!!!*, "jungle fever;" indeed, the reader, much like Harmony, can't help but "think, perhaps a little mean-spiritedly, 'I see: you and dad have a taste for the same [stereo?]type.'"²³

Harmony's grandfather, Uncle William and Ray all exemplify the "violent rift," the lack and subsequent addiction, born of intra- and interracial relationships between racialized individuals who subscribe to a biological paradigm of race and its requirement of "one

²⁰ *Payday!!!*, p.94.

²¹ *Payday!!!*, p.274.

²² *Ibid.*, p.273.

²³ *Ibid.*, .274.

identification at the expense of another.” Because Yamada has yet to absolve her writing of this paradigm, Harmony’s postracial performance of black masculinity, although it attempts to progress beyond the boundaries set by the performances of his forefathers, is ultimately trapped somewhere within the contradictory space of black masculinity as it is performed by his grandfather and father.

Harmony is initially defined by his attempt to distance himself from the whiteness of his mother—both literally when he moves to South Carolina and figuratively as he renames himself (his real name is Robert) a blues musician and eschews his mother’s desire for him to become a pianist. As the narrative progresses, Harmony gradually closes this distance and comes to terms with his biracial identity. The void left by the death of his (white) mother, however, is filled, as is the case with Ray, by attempts to replace her with (white) women of her generation. The rapport Harmony builds with Kate is a case in point. The primary substitute for his mother, however, is his lover Veronica, an older, married black woman who “consoled him, stroked his hair for a long time. [She made] the tragic spectacle of New York go away. She made him cry and feel all better.”²⁴ There is clearly something maternal about Veronica, and their relationship ends when Veronica can no longer play the role of (white) mother; the two separate when Veronica refuses to see Harmony on his birthday, which happens to coincide with her husband’s birthday. Moreover, Harmony, addicted to Veronica, refuses to pursue a relationship with the aforementioned Michelle, a Chinese-American girl who is both attracted to Harmony and, unlike Veronica, of his “postracial” generation.

In Harmony, we have both a failed intraracial relationship and an inability to begin a postracial one; Harmony is the representative *par excellence* of the unresolved contradiction of

²⁴ *Payday!!!*, p.108.

the crossroad where Yamada and contemporary Japanese writings of blackness reside. Indeed, Yamada and her cohort are figures not unlike Harmony, trapped in between two contradictory readings of blackness: “Because I write novels in Japan that deal with black folks,” Yamada bemoans, “I get it from two sides. There are those who think ‘you’re one of those broads that likes black people’ and those who think that I deal with black people stereotypically, that I’m really a racist.”²⁵ Yamada’s vision of herself from two sides is, I have argued, the gift and the curse of her double consciousness, a racial diplopia that provides us with a clearer vision of the writing of blackness in Japanese literature.

²⁵ Yamada Eimi and Yoshida Ruiko, *Burakku no rizumu ni deau toki* (When We Meet the Black Rhythm), p.60.

Bibliography

Introduction

Appiah, Anthony. Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Chow, Rey. "The Interruption of Referentiality: Poststructuralism and the Conundrum of Critical Multiculturalism." The South Atlantic Quarterly 101 (2002): 171-186.

Damasio, Antonio. The Self Comes to Mind. New York: Pantheon Books, 2010.

Dower, John. Black Ships and Samurai. 2008. 12 March 2012
<http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/black_ships_and_samurai/pdf/bss_essay.pdf>.

Goossen, Theodore. "Tasha no sekai ni hairu toki (Entering the World of the Other)." Nihon bungaku ni okeru "tasha" (The "Other" in Japanese Literature). Ed. Tsuruta Kinya. Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1994.

Molasky, Michael. The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory. London; New York: Routledge, 1999.

Morrison, Toni. Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Mostow, Joshua, ed. Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literature. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Murphy-Shigematsu, Stephen and David Willis, Transcultural Japan: At the Borderlands of Race, Gender, and Identity. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Nielsen, Aldon. Writing between the Lines: Race and Intertextuality. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994.

Nihon bungakushi (A History of Japanese Literature). Vol. XII. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995-1997.

Perry, Matthew. Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan Performed in the Years 1852, 1853 and 1854 under the Command of Commodore M.C. Perry, United States Navy. Washington: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1856.

Robun, Kanagaki. Kanagaki Robun. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2002.

Russell, John. "Consuming Passions: Spectacle, Self-Transformation and the Commodification of Blackness in Japan." Positions (1998).

—. "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture." Cultural Anthropology 6 (1991).

Sterling, Marvin. "Searching for Self in the Global South: Japanese Literary Representations of Afro-Jamaican Blackness." Journal of Japanese Studies (2011).

Tanizaki, Jun'ichirō. In Praise of Shadows. London: Jonathan Cape, 1991.

Chapter One

Andō, Hajime. *Ishikawa Jun ron*. Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1987.

Bakhtin, M.M. "Discourse in the Novel." In *The Dialogic Imagination*, translated by Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Bolles, Marilyn. "Recovery from the Ruins: The Body and Intellectual Struggle in Ishikawa Jun's Occupation Period Fiction." *Japanese Language and Literature* 40 (2006): 177-195.

Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.

Cho, Jung-Min. "Kojima Nobuo 'Amerikan sukūru' ron" (On Kojima Nobuo's "American School")." *Comparatio*, 2001: 156-162.

Danow, David. *Models of Narrative: Theory and Practice*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Enstad, Nan. "Fashioning Political Identities: Cultural Studies and the Historical Construction of Political Subjects." *American Quarterly* 50 (1998): 745-782.

Fukumoto, Seiji. "Ishikawa jun "Ōgon densetsu:" Nyonin no henbō ni tsuite,." *Gakudai kokubun*, 1997: 73-92.

Garon, Sheldon. *Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Gessel, Van C. *The Sting of Life: Four Contemporary Japanese Novelists*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

Gordon, Andrew. *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Greenblatt, Stephen. "Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century." In *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Hirose, Masahiro. "Neitibu supīkā no inai eikaiwa: Senji sengo no renzoku to "Amerikan sukūru" (English Conversations without Native Speakers: The Continuity of the Wartime and the Postwar and "American School")." *Kokugo kokubungaku*, 2001: 1-14.

Holloway, Karla. "Revision and (Re)membrance: A Theory of Literary Structures in Literature by African-American Women Writers." In *African American Literary Theory: A Reader*, edited by Winston Napier. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

Hwang, Ik-Koo. "'Senryō' to no sōgū: Ishikawa Jun 'Ōgun Densetsu' ni okeru sengo shuyō ." *Bungaku kenkyū ronshū*, 2008: 125-142.

Ishikawa, Jun. *Ishikawa Jun zenshū*. Vol. II. Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1989-1991.

—. *The Legend of Gold and Other Stories*. Translated by William J. Tyler. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998.

Kojima, Nobuo. *Amerikan sukūru (American School)* . 1954.

—. *Hōyō kazoku (Embracing Family)*. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1988.

Kumagai, Nobuko. "Kojima Nobuo 'Amerikan sukūru' imejarī ni miru 'shishōsetsu' (The "I-Novel" Seen in the Imagery of Kojima Nobuo's "American School")." *Geijutsushijōshugi bungei*, 2001: 112-117.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969.

Macherey, Pierre. *A Theory of Literary Production*. Translated by Geoffrey Wall. London: Routledge, 1978.

Makibayashi, Koji. "Kojima Nobuo no Hōhō: 'Americkan sukūru' no bunseki wo tooshite (Kojima Nobuo's Method as Seen through an Analysis of 'American School')." *Saga-Dai Kokubun*, 1973.

Mayo, Marlene. "Literary Reorientation in Occupied Japan: Incidents of Civil Censorship." In *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan*. Washington, D.C.; Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

Miyoshi, Masao. *Accomplices of Silence: The Modern Japanese Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

Molasky, Michael. *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory*. London; New York: Routledge, 1999.

Moore, Aaron William. "The Chimera of Privacy: Reading Self-Discipline in Japanese Diaries from the Second World War (1937-1945)." *Journal of Asian Studies* 68 (2009): 165-198.

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Morrison, Toni. "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature." In *A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.

Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten. Tokyo: Kōdansha , 1984.

Nishikawa, Nagao. *Nihon no sengo shōsetsu*. Tokyo: Iwanami, 1988.

Okuno, Takeo. "Ishikawa Jun no shōsetsu no gainen (Ishikawa Jun's Concept of the Shōsetsu) ." *Bungakukai*, March-April 1966: 151-159.

Orbaugh, Sharalyn. *Japanese Fiction of the Allied Occupation: Vision, Embodiment, Identity*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007.

Perpich, Diane. *The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.

Rizawa, Yukio. "Kojima Nobuo ni okeru fūshi to chūshō (Farce and Abstraction in Kojima Nobuo)." *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kanshō*, 1972: 10-16.

Russell, John. "Consuming Passions: Spectacle, Self-Transformation and the Commodification of Blackness in Japan." *Positions*, 1998.

Slaymaker, Douglas. *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*. London; New York: Routledge , 2004.

Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Takano, Yoshitomo. "Ishikawa Jun sengo no shuppatsu: "Ōgon densetsu" ni okeru zetsubō ni tsuite." *Geijutsushijōshugi bungei*, 1988: 61-72.

Takano, Yoshitomo. "Ōgon densetsu ron: Zetsubō kara no saisei ni tsuite." In *Ishikawa Jun kenkyū*, 122-134. Tokyo: Miyai shoten, 1991.

Theodore, Goossen. "Tasha no sekai ni hairu toki (When Entering the World of the Other)." In *Nihon bungaku ni okeru "tasha" (The "Other" in Japanese Literature)*, edited by Tsuruta Kinya. Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1994.

Tsubouchi, Yūzou. *Wakareru riyū ga ki ni natte (Thinking about the Reason for Parting)*. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2005.

Yamaguchi, Toshio. *Ishikawa Jun sakuhin kenkyū : "Kajin" kara "Yakeato no Iesu" made (A Study of the Works of Ishikawa Jun: From "A Beautiful Lady" to "Jesus of the Ashes")*. Tokyo: Sōbunsha Shuppan, 2005.

Yamamoto, Yukimasa. "Hisenryōki-ka ni okeru kotoba no fūkei--Kojima Nobuo 'Amerikan sukūru' wo megutte (The Landscape of Language during the Occupation, On Kojima Nobuo's "American School")." *Kokubungaku kenkyū*, 2006.

Yokote, Kazuhiko. "Ōgon densetsu wa ni do to tsukurareta." *Kindai bungaku ronshū*, 1997: 13-25.

Chapter Two

Baldwin, James. "Here Be Dragons." The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1948-1985. New York: St. Martin's/Marek, 1985.

Claremont, Yasuko. The Novels of Ōe Kenzaburō. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari Felix. Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Ellison, Ralph. Invisible Man. New York: Random House, 1952.

Fishkin, Shelley. Lighting Out for the Territory: Reflections on Mark Twain and American Culture. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Freud, Sigmund. The Freud Reader. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989.

Furukawa, Hiromi and Tetsushi Furukawa. Nihonjin to Afurika-kei Amerikajin: Nichi-Bei kankeishi ni okeru sono shosō (The Japanese and African Americans: Various Aspects of Afro-Japanese Interaction in the History of Japanese-American Relations). Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2004.

Gordon, Brandon. "Physical Sympathy: Hip and Sentimentalism in James Baldwin's Another Country." MFS Modern Fiction Studies (2011).

Himes, Chester. If He Hollers Let Him Go. New York: Doubleday, 1945.

Ichijō, Takao. "Ōe Kenzaburō to roku jyū nendai no "amerika": Rarufu erison no iwayuru "tayōsei" wo megutte (Ōe Kenzaburō and 1960s "America": The "Diversity" of Ralph Ellison)." Tezukayama gakuin daigaku kenkyū ronshū: Bungakubu 43 (2008): 1-14.

- Johnson, Barbara. "Teaching Deconstructively." Reading and Writing Differently: Deconstruction and the Teaching of Composition and Literature. Ed. G. Douglas Atkins and Michael Johnson. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1985.
- Judaken, Jonathan, ed. Race After Sartre. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.
- Mailer, Norman. Advertisements for Myself. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- . "Norman Mailer vs. Nine Authors." Esquire July 1963.
- Molasky, Michael. The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory. London; New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Morrison, Toni. "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature." Criticism and the Color Line: Desegregating American Literary Studies. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996. 16-29.
- Ōe, Kenzaburō. "Ajia Afurika ningen no kaigi (Asia-Africa Meeting of Humans)." Genshuku na tsunawatari (Grave Tightrope Walking). Tokyo: Bungei shunju, 1974.
- . "Amerika no yume (American Dream)." Shinchō (1965): 184-185.
- Ōe, Kenzaburō. "Amerikaron (On America)." Kakujidai no sōzōryoku (Imagination in the Nuclear Age). Tokyo: Shinchō, 2007.
- Ōe, Kenzaburō. "Dosutoefuskī—Hakuchi to Bōrudouin (Dostoevsky—The Idiot and Baldwin)." Genshuku na tsunawatari (Grave Tightrope Walking). Tokyo: Bungei shunju, 1974.
- Ōe, Kenzaburō. "Fukashi ningen to tayōsei (Invisible Men and Diversity)." Sekai (1967): 137-145.
- Ōe, Kenzaburō. "Gendai bungaku to sei (Sex and Contemporary Literature)." Genshuku na tsunawatari (Grave Tightrope Walking). Tokyo: Bungei shunju, 1974.
- Ōe, Kenzaburō. "Hakkuruberī Fin to hīrō no mondai (Huckleberry Finn and the Problem of the Hero)." Ōe Kenzaburō zensakuhin 2. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1966.
- Ōe, Kenzaburō. "Hiroshima, Amerika, Yōroppa (Hiroshima, America, Europe)." Kakujidai no sōzōryoku (Imagination in the Nuclear Age). Tokyo: Shinchō, 2007.
- Ōe, Kenzaburō. Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself: The Nobel Prize Speech and Other Lectures. Tokyo; New York: Kodansha International, 1995.
- . "Jigoku ni yuku Hakkuruberī Fin (Huckleberry Finn Goes to Hell)." Sekai (1966): 229-240.

—. "Kokujuin no suijaku to katsuryoku: Āto Bureikī to sono gakudan (The Enervation and Energy of Black People: Art Blakey and his Band)." Asahi jānaru 22 January 1961.

—. "Konnan no kankaku ni tsuite—Wa ga sōsaku taiken (On the Sense of Difficulty: My Experience of Literary Creation)." Bungaku 31 (1963).

—. "Kyōdai na amerika-zō no kuzureta ato ni (After the Collapse of the Image of 'Mighty America'...)." Shūkan Asahi 20 April 1968: 28-31.

—. "Kyōken ni kakushitsu wo kamosu kokorozashi (Intent to Stir Up Discord in State Power)." Sekai (1961).

Ōe, Kenzaburō. "Modan jazu to boku jishin (Modern Jazz and Me Myself)." Genshuku na tsunawatari (Grave Tightrope Walking). Tokyo: Bungei shunju, 1974.

—. "Ryūkeisha no dokusho (The Readings of an Exile)." Tosho (1961).

Ōe, Kenzaburō. Sakebigoe (Outcries). Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1990.

—. Sakebigoe (Outcries). Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1990.

Ōe, Kenzaburō. "Sengo sedai no imēji (Images from the Postwar Generation)." Ōe Kenzaburō dōjidai ronshū 1 (Ōe Kenzaburō: Collected Contemporary Essays 1). Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1980. 8-37.

Ōe, Kenzaburō. "Toni Morison to Hakkuruberī Fin no bōken (Toni Morrison and the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn)." Asahi shimbun 11 March 1997, Evening ed.

Russell, John. "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture." Cultural Anthropology 6 (1991).

Sartre, Jean-Paul. Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology. Trans. Hazel Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press, 1992.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. "Black Orpheus." Jean-Paul, Sartre. "What is Literature?" and Other Essays. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

—. Notebooks for an Ethics. Trans. David Pellauer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Tooms, Charles. "Black-Gay-Man Chaos in Another Country." Re-Viewing James Baldwin. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000.

Treat, John. Writing Ground Zero: . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

—. Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Twain, Mark. Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Ueda, Atsuko. "The Production of Literature and the Effaced Realm of the Political." Journal of Japanese Studies (2005): 61-88.

Wilson, Michiko. The Marginal World of Ōe, Kenzaburō : A Study in Themes and Techniques. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1986.

Zamberlin, Mary. Rhizosphere: Gilles Deleuze and the "Minor" American Writings of William James, W.E.B. DuBois, Gertrude Stein, Jean Toomer, and William Faulkner. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Chapter Three

Adell, Sandra. "The Crisis in Black American Literary Criticism and the Postmodern Cures of Houston A. Baker, Jr., and Henry Louis Gates, Jr." African American Literary Theory: A Reader. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

Amos, Timothy. Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011.

Baldwin, James. Another Country. New York: Dial Press, 1962.

—. Notes of a Native Son. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955.

Buraku kaihō Kyoto-fu i'inka. "Wareware wa shisei to ika ni tatakau ka: Ōru romansu sabetsu kyūdan yōkō (How Are We to Fight the Municipal Government: The Central Tenets of the All Romance Discrimination Denunciation." Kyoto no burakushi. Kyoto: Kyoto Burakushi Kenkyūjo, 1997.

Butler, Judith. Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex". New York: Routledge, 1993.

Cramer, Jennifer. "'Do We Really Want to Be Like Them?': Indexing Europeanness through Pronominal Use." Discourse Society (2010): 619-637.

Derrida, Jacques. "Des Tours de Babel." Difference in Translation. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Fuss, Diana. Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Gates, Henry. Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Gates, Henry Louis. "Talkin' That Talk." "Race," Writing, and Difference. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Gates, Henry. The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Karatani, Kojin. Origins of Modern Japanese Literature. Trans. Brett de Bary. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

McKnight, Anne. Nakagami, Japan: Buraku and the Writing of Ethnicity. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

Murakami, Ryū and Kenji Nakagami. Jazu to bakudan (Jazz and Bombs). Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1982.

Nakagami, Kenji. "'Toshi shōsetsu no minamoto wo tsuku anyu toshite no sogai ya sabetsu: Toni Morison-cho 'Aoi me ga hoshi' shohyō (Discrimination and Alienation as Originary Metaphors in the Urban Novel: A Review of Toni Morrison's 'The Bluest Eye')." Nakagami Kenji zenshū (The Complete Works of Nakagami Kenji). Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1995-1996.

—. Baffarō Sorujā (Buffalo Soldier). Tokyo: Fukutake Shoten, 1988.

Nakagami, Kenji. "Hakai seyo, to Airā wa itta (Ayler Said Destroy It)." Nakagami Kenji zenshū (The Complete Works of Nakagami Kenji). Vol. XV. Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1995-1996.

Nakagami, Kenji. "Nihongo ni tsuite (On the Japanese Language)." Nakagami Kenji zenshū (The Complete Works of Nakagami Kenji). Vol. I. Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1995-1996.

Nakagami, Kenji. "Ore, Juhassai (Me, at Eighteen)." Nakagami, Kenji. Nakagami Kenji zenshū (The Complete Works of Nakagami Kenji). Vol. I. Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1995-1996.

Nakagami, Kenji. "Shimin ni hisomu sabetsu shinri (The Latent Discriminatory Mindset of Ordinary Folk)." Sabetsu, sono kongen o tou (Interrogating the Roots of Sabetsu). Tokyo: Asahi sensho, 1984.

Nakagami, Kenji. "Shoki no Ōe Kenzaburō—'Shiiku' wo chūshin ni (Ōe Kenzaburō, the Early Years: On 'Shiiku')." Nakagami Kenji hatsugen shūsei (The Collected Sayings of Nakagami Kenji). Vol. VI. Tokyo: Daisan bunmeisha, 1999.

Nakagami, Kenji. "Toki wa nagareru (Time Goes By)." Nakagami, Kenji. Nakagami Kenji zenshū (The Complete Works of Nakagami Kenji). Vol. XIV. Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1995-1996.

Nakagami, Kenji. "Watashi wa 'Nihon'-jin na no ka (Am I from 'Japan?')." Nakagami Kenji hatsugen shūsei (The Collected Sayings of Nakagami Kenji). Tokyo: Daisan bunmeisha, 1999.

Ōe, Kenzaburō. "Amerikaron (On America)." Kakujidai no sōzōryoku (Imagination in the Nuclear Age). Tokyo: Shinchō, 2007.

Sakai, Naoki. "Theory and Asian Humanity: On the Question of Humanitas and Anthropos." Postcolonial Studies (2010): 441-464.

Shibata, Shōji. Nakagami Kenji to Murakami Haruki: "Datsu-roku jyū nendai" teki sekai no yukue (Nakagami Kenji and Murakami Haruki: Farewell to the 1960s). Fuchu: Tokyo gaikokugo daigaku shuppankai, 2009.

Sugahara, Maiko. "Nakagami Kenji 'Jūkyūsai no jeikobo:' jazu hyōshō wo megutte (Jazz as Symbolism in Nakagami Kenji's Nineteen Year Old Jacob)." Ningen bunka sōsei kagaku ronsō (2009): 6.1-6.9.

Sugiyama, Seiichi. "Tokushu Buraku." Kyoto no burakushi. Vol. IX. Kyoto: Kyoto Burakushi Kenkyūjo, 1997.

Tansman, Alan. "History, Repetition, and Freedom in the Narratives of Nakagami Kenji." Journal of Japanese Studies (1998): 257-288.

Todorov, Tzvetan. "'Race,' Writing, and Culture." "Race," Writing, and Difference. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Ueda, Atsuko. "'Nihongo' de kataru koto, 'Nihongo' wo kataru koto: Nakagami Kenji Nihongo ni tsuite wo megutte (Narrating in the 'Japanese Language,' Narrating the 'Japanese Language': Nakagami Kenji's On the Japanese Language)." Bungaku no yami/Kindai no "chinmoku" (The Darkness of Literature/The "Silence" of the Modern Age). Yokohama: Seori Shobō, 2003.

Watanabe, Naomi. Nihon kindai bungaku to "sabetsu" (Modern Japanese Literature and "Discrimination"). Tokyo: Ota Shuppan, 1994.

Yamaguchi, Masao. Dōke no minzokugaku (The Folkloristics of Buffoonery). Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1977.

Yomota, Inuhiko. Kishu to tensei: Nakagami Kenji (Noble Births and Transmigrations: Nakagami Kenji). Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1996.

Zimmerman, Eve. Out of the Alleyway: Nakagami Kenji and the Poetics of Outcaste Fiction. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Chapter Four

Adams, Stephen. "Giovanni's Room: The Homosexual as Hero." James Baldwin. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986.

Adell, Sandra. Double Consciousness/Double Bind: Theoretical Issues in Twentieth-Century Black Literature. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994.

Akazaki, Moeko. "Yamada Eimi: Ningen byōsha ni miru sakka no rinri (Yamada Eimi: The Author's Ethics as Seen Through Her Depictions of Humans)." Fukuoka daigaku nihongo nihon bungaku (2006): 152-181.

Aoki, Sumio. Nihonjin no afurika "hakken" (The Japanese "Discovery" of Africa). Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2000.

Aristotle. Metaphysics. Trans. Hugh Tredennick. London: Heidemann, 1947.

Atkins, E. Taylor. Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

Baker, Houston A. Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Bakhtin, M.M. "Discourse in the Novel." The Dialogic Imagination. Trans. Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Baldwin, James. "Everybody's Protest Novel." Baldwin: Collected Essays. New York: Library of America, 1998.

Baldwin, James. "Here Be Dragons." The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1948-1985. New York: St. Martin's/Marek, 1985.

—. Nobody Knows My Name; More Notes of a Native Son. New York: Dial Press, 1961.

Bannerman, Helen. The Story of Little Black Sambo. London: Grant Richards, 1899.

Burke, Sean. The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992.

Butler, Judith. Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex". New York: Routledge, 1993.

Butler, Robert and Yoshinobu Hakutani, The Critical Response in Japan to African American Writers. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003.

Chow, Rey. "Theory, Area Studies, Cultural Studies: Issues of Pedagogy in Multiculturalism ." Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

Cornyetz, Nina. "Power and Gender in the Narratives of Yamada Eimi." The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing. Ed. Gordon Schalow and Janet Walker. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Davis, Charles. "The Mixed Heritage of the Modern Black Novel." Ralph Ellison: Modern Critical Views. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1986.

Derrida, Jacques. Monolingualism of the other, or, The Prosthesis of Origin. Trans. Patrick Mensah. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Douglass, Frederick. "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself." The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997.

Du Bois, W.E.B. "Criteria of Negro Art." The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997.

Du Bois, W.E.B. "The Souls of Black Folks." The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997.

Equiano, Olaudah. "The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself." The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997.

Ervin, Hazel Arnett, ed. African American Literary Criticism: 1773-2000. New York: Twayne, 1999.

Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" The Foucault Reader. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

Fuller, Hoyt. "Towards a Black Aesthetic." The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997.

Furukawa, Hirom, Tetsushi and Furukawa. Nihonjin to Afurika-kei Amerikajin: Nichi-Bei kankeishi ni okeru sono shosō (The Japanese and African Americans: Various Aspects of Afro-Japanese Interaction in the History of Japanese-American Relations). Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2004.

Gallicchio, Marc. The African American Encounter with Japan and China. The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Gates, Henry. Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

—. The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Gayle, Addison. "The Black Aesthetic." The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997.

Henderson, Stephen. "Saturation: Progress Report on a Theory of Black Poetry." African American Literary Theory: A Reader. Ed. Winston Napier. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

—. Understanding the New Black Poetry: Black Speech and Black Music as Poetic References. New York: Morrow, 1973.

Holloway, Karla. "Revision and (Re)membrance: A Theory of Literary Structures in Literature by African-American Women Writers." African American Literary Theory: A Reader. Ed. Winston Napier. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

hooks, bell. "Postmodern Blackness." A Postmodern Reader. Ed. Linda Hutcheon and Joseph Natoli. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

Ichijō, Takao. "Ōe Kenzaburō to roku jyū nendai no "amerika": Rarufu erison no iwayuru "tayōsei" wo megutte (Ōe Kenzaburō and 1960's "America": The Putative "Diversity" of Ralph Ellison)." Nihon gendai bungaku (2008): 108-122.

Ikezawa, Natsuki. "Rinri to jinkō gengo (Ethics and Artificial Language)." Bungakukai (1992): 220-226.

Ishihara, Chiaki. "Kakidashi no bigaku: Yamada Eimi Beddo taimu aizu (The Aesthetics of Beginnings: Yamada Eimi's Bedtime Eyes)." Hon ga suki 33 (2009).

Ishikawa, Jun. Ōgon densetsu (The Legend of Gold). 1946.

Jefferson, Thomas. The Writings of Thomas Jefferson. Ed. Albert Bergh. Vol. II. Washington D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903.

Kawash, Samira. Dislocating the Color Line: Identity, Hybridity, and Singularity in African-American Narrative. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Kearney, Reginald. African American Views of the Japanese: Solidarity of Sedition? State University of New York Press, 1998.

Kei, Hasegawa. "Seiai no gensetsu: Beddo taimu aizu (The Discourse of Sexual Love: Bedtime Eyes)." Gendaa de yomu ai, sei, kazoku (Reading Love, Sex, and Family through Gender). Ed. Kei Hasegawa and Hiroko Iwabuchi. Tokyo: Tokyodō shuppan, 2006.

Kinya, Tsuruta. Nihon bungaku ni okeru "tasha" (The "Other" in Japanese Literature). Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1994.

Kojima, Nobuo. Amerikan sukūru (American School). 1954.

Koshiro, Yukiko. "Beyond an Alliance of Color: The African American Impact on Modern Japan." Positions: East Asian Cultures Critique 11 (2003): 183-215.

Matson, R. Lynn. "'Phillis Wheatley--Soul Sister?'" Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture (1972): 222-230.

Matsuda, Ryōichi. Yamada Eimi: Ai no sekai (Yamada Eimi: The World of Love). Tokyo: Tokyo shoseki, 1999.

Morikawa, Suzuko. "The Significance of Afrocentricity for Non-Africans: Examination of the Relationship between African Americans and the Japanese." Journal of Black Studies (2001): 423-436.

Morrison, Toni. Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Murphy-Shigematsu, Stephen and David Willis, Transcultural Japan: At the Borderlands of Race, Gender, and Identity. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Nakagami, Kenji. Nihongo nitsuite (On Japanese). 1968.

Nero, Charles. "Toward a Black Gay Aesthetic." African American Literary Theory: A Reader. Ed. Winston Napier. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

Noguchi, Michihiko. "Diasupora to shite no Nakagami Kenji: Kyokō no "roji" to genjitsu no hisabetsuburaku (Nakagami Kenji as Diaspora: The Fictional "Alley" and the Actual Buraku." Jinken mondai kenkyū (2001): 39-54.

Ochiai, Akiko. "Nihon ni okeru "Chibikuro sanbo" ronsō no tenkai: Bei-ei to no hikaku kara saguru jinshu mondai to nihonjin (The Development of the "Little Black Sambo" Debate in Japan: Investigating the Race Problem in Japan through Comparison with England and America)." Jinbun ronshū (2004): 117-148.

Ōe, Kenzaburo. Shiiku (Prize Stock). 1958.

Okada, Richard. "Positioning Subjects Globally: A Reading of Yamada Eimi." U.S.-Japan Women's Journal (1995): 111-126.

Orbaugh, Sharalyn. Japanese Fiction of the Allied Occupation: Vision, Embodiment, Identity. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007.

Phelan, James. "Reading across Identity Borders: A Rhetorical Analysis of John Edgar Wideman's "Doc's Story"." Reading Sites. Ed. Elizabeth Flynn and Patrocino Schweikart. New York: MLA Publications, 2004. 39-59.

Russell, John. "Consuming Passions: Spectacle, Self-Transformation and the Commodification of Blackness in Japan." Positions (1998).

—. Nihonjin no kokujinkan: mondai wa "Chibi Kuro Sanbo" dake de wa nai (The Japanese View of Blacks: The Problem Goes Beyond "Little Black Sambo"). Tokyo: Shinhyōron, 1991.

—. "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture." Cultural Anthropology 6 (1991).

Sato, Hiroko. "Nihonjin no jinshukan to kokujin mondai--Taishoki wo chūshin to shite (The Japanese Perception of Race and the Black Problem in the Taisho Period)." Tokyo Joshi Daigaku Fuzoku Hikaku Bunka Kenkyū-jo Kiyo 34 (n.d.).

Smith, Valerie. Self-Discovery and Authority in Afro-American Narrative. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Sugio, Toshiaki. Yakareta "Chibikuro Sanbo": Jinshu sabetsu to hyōgen, kyōiku no jiyū (Burnt "Little Black Sambo": Racial Discrimination and Free Expression/Education). Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1992.

Sundquist, Eric. To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993.

Voltaire. Oeuvres Completes. Ed. Louis Moland. Vol. XLVIII. Paris: Garnier, 1882-1885.

Warren, Kenneth. What Was African American Literature. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Washington, Michael. "Sambo: The Black Image in Contemporary Japan." The Mid-Atlantic Almanack (2000): 23-36.

Weiner, Michael. "Introduction." Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity. London: Routledge, 1997.

Wheatley, Phillis. The Collected Works of Phillis Wheatley. Ed. Henry Gates. n.d.

Yamada, Eimi and Yoshida Ruiko. "Burakku no rizumu ni deau (Encountering the Black Rhythm)." Gendai shisō (1991): 46-62.

Yamada, Eimi. Animaru rojikku (Animal Logic). Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1996.

—. Beddo taimu aizū (Bedtime Eyes). 1985.

—. "Otona ni bunbetsu wa iranai (Adults Don't Need Classification)." Voice (1994): 40-49.

—. Payday!!! Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2003.

—. Sōru mujikku rabazu onri (Soul Music Lovers Only). Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1987.

—. Torasshu (Trash). Tokyo: Bunshun bunko, 1994.

—. "Watashi ga bungaku to kokujin wo ai suru wake (The Reason I Love Literature and Black Folks)." Fujin kōron (1986): 292-297.

Yamamoto, Mikio. "Tenbo: Nihonjin to kokujin mondai to no setten (Perspectives: Convergence of Japanese and Black Problems)." Kokujin kenkyu (Black Studies) (1964).

Chapter Five

Arbuthnot, May, et al. Children's Books Too Good to Miss. Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1948, 1953.

Arita, Toshiji. "Kokujin sabetsu shōhin to ehon chibikuro sanbo zeppan no torikumi, Kokujin sabetsu wo nakusukai no chiisana kokoromi (Wrestling with Discriminatory Black Commodities and Ceasing the Publication of "Little Black Sambo:" The Slight Efforts of the ASRAB)." Buraku Kaihō (1989).

Arnold, Gertrude, ed. A Mother's List of Books for Children. 3rd Edition. Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1912.

Association, Japan Library. Toshokan no jiyū ni kansuru sengen (Statement on Intellectual Freedom in Libraries). Japan Library Association, 2006.

Baker, Augusta. Reading For Democracy. Wilson Library Bulletin, 1943.

Bannerman, Helen. The Story of Little Black Sambo. London: Grant Richards, 1899.

Barton, Phyllis. The Pictus Orbis Sambo. Sun City: Pictus Orbis Press, 1998.

Birtha, Jessie. "Portrayal of the Black in Children's Literature." Pennsylvania Library Association Bulliten XXIV (1969).

Buest, Nora. 500 Books for Children. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939.

Chesnutt, Charles. "Mars Jeems's Nightmare." Chesnutt: Stories, Novels, and Essays. New York: Penguin Putnam, 2001. 30-45.

Chow, Rey. "Theory, Area Studies, Cultural Studies: Issues of Pedagogy in Multiculturalism ." Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

Dekura, Jun. "Chibikuro sanbo no gogen wo megutte: Kasetsu to dantei no aida de (On the Etymological Source of "Little Black Sambo:" Between a Hypothesis and a Conclusion." Shūkan Nyūsu (1991).

Di Stefano, Christine. "Dilemmas of Difference: Femininity, Modernity and Postmodernism." Women and Politics (1988).

Dunbar, Alice. "Negro Literature for Negro Pupils." The Harlem Renaissance 1920-1940: The Emergence of the Harlem Renaissance. New York: Garland Publishers, 1996.

Goodman, Mary. Race Awareness in Young Children. 2nd Edition. New York: Collier Books, 1952.

Greenwald, John. "Japan Prejudice and Black Sambo." Time 24 June 2001.

Hay, Elizabeth. Sambo Sahib: The Story of Little Black Sambo and Helen Bannerman. Totowa: Barnes and Nobel, 1981.

Iizawa, Tadasu. "Ii kagen na kyōdō kenkyū—ganbutsu hantei ni kōgi suru (Half-Baked Collaborative Research—Protesting the Counterfeit Judgment)." Tosho shinbun (1965).

Ishii, Momoko. Kodomo no toshokan (The Children's Library). Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1965.

Itō, Takashi. "Genron no jiyū no mondai to shite no chibikuro sanbo no zeppan." Masukomyunikeeshon kenkyū (1994).

Komichi Shobō. "Chibi-kuro Sambo" zeppan wo kangaeru (Considering "Little Black Sambo" Going Out of Print). Tokyo: Komichi Shobō, 1991.

Lanes, Selma. Down the Rabbit Hole. New York: Atheneum, 1971.

Mailloux, Steven. Reception Histories: Rhetoric, Pragmatism, and American Cultural Politics. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

—. "Re-Making Slave Bodies: Rhetoric as Production and Reception." Philosophy and Rhetoric 35 (2002): 96-119.

"Matome, Chibikuro sanbo no kenkyū (Conclusion: Research on Little Black Sambo)." Chisana toshokan (1972).

Mikkelsen, Nina. "Little Black Sambo Revisited." Children's Literature (2001): 260-266.

Miyahara, Seiichi. ""Chibikuro Sanbo" no omoshirosa (The Appeal of "Little Black Sambo")." Bungaku (1954): 1270-1272.

Miyakawa, Takeo. "Sengo no jidō bungaku (Postwar Children's Literature)." Hajimete manabu Nihon jidō bungaku (Introduction to the Children's Literature of Japan). Kyoto: Mineruva Shobō, 2001.

Morrison, Toni. Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Murase, Takao. "'Chibikuro Sanbo' no miryoku to kodomo." Bungaku (1960).

Ochiai, Akiko. "Nihon ni okeru 'Chibikuro sanbo' ronsō no tenkai: Bei-ei to no hikaku kara saguru jinshu mondai to nihonjin (The Development of the 'Little Black Sambo' Debate in Japan: Investigating the Race Problem in Japan through Comparison with England and America)." Jinbun ronshū (2004): 117-148.

Okude, Naohito. "Sanbo to modanizumu (Sambo and Modernism)." Gendai shisō (1988).

Phelan, James. "Reading across Identity Borders: A Rhetorical Analysis of John Edgar Wideman's 'Doc's Story'." Reading Sites. Ed. Elizabeth Flynn and Patrocino Schweikart. New York: MLA Publications, 2004. 39-59.

Russell, John. "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture." Cultural Anthropology 6 (1991).

Said, Edward. Orientalism. New York: Random House, 1978.

Shapiro, Margaret. "Japanese Companies Recall Little Black Sambo Products." The Washington Post 28 July 1988.

—. "Old Black Stereotypes Find New Lives in Japan." The Washington Post 1988 July 1988.

Shirakami, Michiko. "Chibikuro sanbo wa naze warui ka (What's Wrong with Little Black Sambo)." Gakkō toshokan (1991).

Tanahashi, Miyoko. "'Chibikuro sanbo mondai': Sakuhin hyōka wo chūshin ni (The 'Little Black Sambo' Problem: A Textual Valuation)." Kyōiku (1990).

Thackeray, William. Vanity Fair. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Todayama, Midori. Kakusareta Kyōzai to shite no 'Chibikuro sanbo': Eikoku, Amerika gasshūkoku, nihon ni okeru juyō to hyōka ni tsuite ('Little Black Sambo' as a Hidden Teaching Material: The Reception and Valuation of 'Little Black Sambo' in England, America, and Japan). Nagoya: Nagoya University, 2005.

Torigoe, Shin. "Chibikuro sambo shingaron ni tsuite, Iizawa Tadazu-shi ni kotaeru (On the Little Black Sambo Counterfeit Texts Debate—A Response to Mr. Iizawa Tadazu)." Tosho shinbun (1965).

Torigoe, Shin et al. "Kodomo no tame no ryōsho no jyōken—saiwa honan shōyaku no mondai ten (The Terms of Good Children's Books—The Problems of Retellings, Adaptations, and Abridged Translations)." Tosho shinbun (1965).

Torigoe, Shin. Nihon jidō bungaku (Children's Literature in Japan). Tokyo: Kenpakusha, 1995.

Wada, Eita. "Chibikuro sanbo wa kokujin ka (Little Black Sambo is Black?)." Shokun (1988).

Washington, Michael. "Sambo: The Black Image in Contemporary Japan." The Mid-Atlantic Almanack (2000): 23-36.

Watanabe, Shigeo. Nijū-seiki no ehon (Twentieth-century Picture Books). Tokyo: Chūkyō Shuppan, 1987.

Yuasa, Fumie. Sayonara Sanbo: Chibikuro sanbo no monogatari to heren banaman (Goodbye Sambo: The Story of Little Black Sambo and Helen Bannerman). Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1993.

Yuill, Phyllis. Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look: A History of Helen Bannerman's The Story of Little Black Sambo and its Popularity/Controversy in the United States. New York: Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, 1983.