



**More than Skin Deep:
Masochism in Japanese Women's Writing
1960-2005**

by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the use of masochistic imagery and masochistic scenarios in the narratives of Kōno Taeko, Yamada Eimi and Kanehara Hitomi, and also in the visual imagery of ‘ladies’ comic’ artist, Watanabe Yayoi. The textual production of these women is examined against the background of the social, economic and cultural conditions at the time of publication. Without making claims to any kind of teleological development, I argue that there is a chronological genealogy that connects the work of the women listed above through the different eras in which they were writing. Kōno is a key writer from the late Post-war/pre-Bubble period of the 1960s to 1970s;¹ Yamada invokes the heady ‘Bubble *jidaï*’ years of the 1980s and early 1990s;² while Kanehara is a product of the so called ‘Lost Decade’ of the 1990s and the early 2000s.³ While all three also produced a considerable body of narrative and essay material outside the times identified above, it was during these periods that each author produced what are arguably their representative works. The chapter on ladies’ comics overlaps chronologically with the discussion on Yamada Eimi in that it loosely covers the period from the early 1980s, when the first manga of this genre was published, to the early 2000s.

In addition to textual analysis chapters on the works of Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and Watanabe and, occasionally, their contemporaries, the thesis examines theories of masochism as found in both Japan and the west. While avoiding a closed understanding of the term – which can alter according to the social context – I argue that masochism is not simply pleasure in pain, but pleasure in the *expectation* of pain. It is this expectation that is the key to the pleasure of the masochistic experience. I further demonstrate that, contrary to popular interpretation, in the relationship between the masochist and their chosen consort/partner/torturer, it is the masochist who very often holds the balance of power.

While providing an overview of the contribution made to understandings of masochism by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Sigmund Freud and Theodor Reik, I draw principally on Gilles Deleuze, in particular his essay “Coldness and Cruelty,” to demonstrate that masochism can be a personal choice made by women in order to resist the social expectations and restraints placed on them.

¹ Orbaugh 1996, p. 126; Bullock 2010 a, p. 6.

² McCargo 2004, p. 58.

³ Driscoll 2007 a, p. 169.

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**Masochism in Japanese Women's Writing
1960-2005**

More Than Skin Deep: Masochism in Japanese Women's Writing

1960-2005

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Introduction: More than Skin Deep

Masochism, Desire and *Phantasy*; Kōno Taeko; Yamada Eimi; Kanehara Hitomi; Ladies' Comics

‘Occasionally their lovemaking would leave a few bruises on her body.’ Kōno Taeko,
“Ari Takaru.”¹

‘Pops let me teach Chika the ropes. She didn’t know the letter S about S&M.’ Yamada
Eimi, *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*.²

‘So you’re saying the Virgin Mary was a masochist?’ Kanehara Hitomi, *Hebi ni piasu*.³

In the badly-lit back room of a tattoo parlour somewhere in Tokyo, a young Japanese woman is ordered to strip to her underwear. A tattooed man, face heavily pierced, stands behind the woman, forcing her to sit astride a white tubular steel chair. Straddling the chair, the woman gasps – perhaps in shock at the feel of cold metal against her naked flesh – and a tear rolls down her cheek. The man smiles coldly and, using the braided leather belt he has just pulled from the waistband of his jeans, binds the woman’s hands behind her back.

“Don’t you get frustrated?” he asks quietly.

“No,” replies the young woman, “I can come the normal way.”

The man looks bewildered; “What do you mean? Are you saying that I can’t?”

The backing music builds operatically, accompanying the ethereal swell of a soprano voice. The score lends a delicate, almost otherworldly feeling to the scene.

“Can you?” the young woman asks.

“No,” the man replies.

¹ “Ari takaru,” p. 38; “Ant Swarm,” p. 168.

² *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 7; “Kneel Down and Lick my Feet,” p. 189.

³ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 44; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 42.

Turning to the camera, the young woman nods and murmurs, “That’s because you’re a psycho sadist.”⁴

The man grabs the young woman by her bound arms and forces her over to a hard leather bench. She makes a noise that could be one of objection or one of excitement. The couple proceed to have violent sex; their muted gasps and the creaking sound of the bench as the couple move jar against the soprano of the backing music.

This scene comes from the 2008 film adaptation of Kanehara’s (b. 1983) Akutagawa prize winning novel, *Hebi ni piasu* (Snakes and Earrings, 2004; trans. David James Karashima 2005; directed by Ninagawa Yukio 2008). The image of a young woman bound and restrained, clad only in delicate black and pink knickers and stylish high-heeled shoes and at the mercy of a brutally dominant male, is the contemporary version of the popularly imagined masochistic scenario. I refer here to the film, which is a fairly accurate adaptation of the same scene in Kanehara’s novel, rather than the novel itself in order to take advantage of the extra-novelistic effects, such as the musical accompaniment, that feature in the film. These elements effectively embroider and foreground key elements of Kanehara’s original. In the past, masochism was imagined as a site of opulence and excess, strongly influenced by *Venus im Pelz* (1870, henceforth *Venus in Furs*). This classical masochistic narrative by nineteenth century German (Austro-Hungarian) author Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836-1895) is a pivotal text for the discussion to follow. However, as is evident in the above film excerpt directed by Ninagawa Yukio, in the present day masochistic scenario nylon knickers have replaced opulent furs while the velvet-lined salon has become the concrete walls and metal furniture found in the back room of a tattoo parlour. I therefore read Kanehara’s work as part of a genealogy of masochistic narratives created by Japanese women writers and artists that also includes the work of novelists, Kōno

⁴ Ninagawa 2008; See also *Hebi ni piasu*, pp. 37-38; *Snakes and Earrings*, pp. 35-36.

Taeko (b. 1926), Yamada Eimi (b. Yamada Futaba 1959), and *redisu komikku* or *redikomi* (lit. ladies' comics, henceforth the English will be used)⁵ artists such as Watanabe Yayoi (b. 1959).

These writers do not simply produce narratives in which women are abused or tortured.⁶ Despite assumptions by some readers and viewers to the contrary, the characters that Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and Watanabe create are far from being *yamato nadeshiko* blooms in need of protection from/by violent males.⁷ Rather they are women characters who in many cases have deliberately chosen to inhabit a masochistic landscape. I will argue here that, compared to women in more hegemonically approved sexual associations, the protagonists depicted may actually have a greater degree of control over the manner in which they express their gender and sexual identities. At the very least, few of these women are in the situations in which we find them totally against their will. The title of this thesis and the subtitle of this chapter, 'More Than Skin Deep,' profiles the fact that for many of the protagonists we will encounter, masochism is a highly complex, systematic approach to sexual activity that involves much more than, for example, the scoring or marking of the skin in some sort of 'perversely' pleasurable appreciation of the pain that results.

This thesis investigates the use of masochistic imagery and the deployment of masochistic scenarios in the work of Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and Watanabe against the background of the social, economic and cultural conditions in which these texts were produced. I propose that the late post-Pacific War literature of Kōno is a forerunner to the Bubble era work of Yamada and the twenty-first century writing of Kanehara, and also to the overtly masochistic imagery

⁵ It might be noted that, in spite of the conventional use of the word *manga* in Japanese to denote contemporary visual narrative, *redei komi*, or ladies' comics, as a specific genre of *manga* are always referred to using the loan word, *komikku* or comic.

⁶ See Orbaugh 1996, p. 127.

⁷ The *yamato nadeshiko* archetype refers to 'a Japanese woman (with all the traditional graces); an ideal Japanese woman' *Kenkyūsha's New Japanese-English Dictionary* (5th edition, 2003). A *nadeshiko* (*Dianthus superbus* or Large Pink) is a delicate pink flower that often grows in the shelter of large rocks.

expressed in some ladies' comics, which I define as pornographic or erotic *manga* (comics) written/drawn by women writers for women readers. Regardless of the era, however, it is through the medium of masochistic sexual activities that the protagonists of the work of these authors are able to become 'sexual subject[s].'⁸ It is my belief that there is a particular link between the work of Kōno, Yamada and Kanehara and the *manga* genre of ladies' comics. This is not merely because Yamada started her career as a *mangaka* (*manga* writer/illustrator) or because Kanehara's work has been produced in *manga* form by Watanabe Peko. Rather we will see a thematic thread that connects the work of these writers even as it adapts and modifies itself to the specific socio-historic characteristics of various points in the time and space of Japanese society. It should be noted that while this thesis is not a sociological discussion I do provide a brief overview of each period in which the authors who will be examined were working in order to provide a context for the production of their texts. Throughout the thesis reference will also be made to other literary works by the selected authors and *mangaka*, including essays and interviews, as well as to the works of their contemporaries and literary forebears.

The focus of this study is a close reading of six texts: "Ari takaru" (Ant Swarm, 1964, trans. Noriko Mizuta Lippit and Kyoko Iriye Seldon 1991; trans Lucy North 1996) and "Yōjigari" (Toddler Hunting 1961; trans Lucy North 1996) by Kōno; *Hizamazuite ashi no o-name* (Kneel Down and Lick My Feet, 1988; partial translation Terry Gallagher, 1991) by Yamada; *Hebi ni piasu* (Snakes and Earrings, 2003; trans. David James Karashima, 2005; *manga* adaptation Watanabe Peko, 2004 -2005; film adaptation, dir. Ninagawa Yukio, 2008) by Kanehara, and two *manga* by Watanabe Yayoi, "Ze'chō bakutōsō" (Strife Explosion) and "Hitotsuma renjō" (The Passion of a Married Woman). These *manga* are the 'headline' narratives in two volumes of ladies' comic magazine *Komikku Amour* (Comic Amour, August 2009 & 2010). While each text listed

⁸ Ito 2011 c.

was written in vastly different eras and socio-cultural situations, they can all be read as masochistic texts.

Each text will be examined in terms of the masochistic content and scenarios that they contain. While I use the same definition of masochism for each text, we will see that Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and Watanabe each take a vastly different approach to this issue. Each text, nonetheless, features a liminal setting that I will call the ‘small room’ after Honda Masuko’s work on the ‘*shōjo* space.’⁹ While particularly prominent in the work of Kōno – as is evident in the title of Chapter 2 – this element is present in the work of each of the writers presented here. I will argue that this space is one of the many and varied accoutrements of masochistic sexual activity. We will see in the following chapters that these accoutrements, which include the clothing worn by both the masochist and their chosen partner or consort in addition to the ‘tools’ that are used during each sexual encounter, are indispensable to the successful enactment of the masochistic scenario. Each of these settings and accoutrements take a different form under the hands of each writer: Kōno’s liminal settings are somewhat mundane as are the implements used in each sexual scenario, Yamada’s settings and accoutrements are heavily influenced by the excess of the 1980s and take the form of nightclubs and black lingerie teamed with high-heeled shoes, Kanehara’s text is set in the back streets of post-millennial Tokyo and her clothing is heavily influenced by the ‘*Gyaru*’ or Gal fashions of the period, while Watanabe’s ladies’ comics are set in liminal spaces such as hotel rooms and car parks which are easily recognisable to her readers. In the case of ladies’ comics, we will see that the bondage wear and sex toys used by the characters help define the *manga* as part of the S/M genre of ladies’ comics.

Without making claims to any kind of teleological development, we will see that, as implied, above there is a genealogy that connects the work of the four women through the different eras

⁹ See “The Genealogy of *Hirahira*,” Honda 2010, pp. 20, 37.

in which they were writing. Kōno is a key writer from the late post-war/pre-Bubble period of the 1960s to 1970s,¹⁰ Yamada invokes the heady years of the ‘Bubble *jidaï*’ of the 1980s and early 1990s,¹¹ while Kanehara is a product of the so-called ‘Lost Decade,’ now often extended to fifteen years, of the 1990s and the early 2000s.¹² While all three also produced a considerable body of narrative and essay material outside the times identified above, it was during these periods that each author produced what are arguably their representative works. The chapter on ladies’ comics overlaps chronologically with the discussion on Yamada and Kanehara in that it loosely covers the period from the early 1980s, when the first *manga* of this genre was published, to the early 2000s. These two chapters will include some reference to the production of *shōjo manga* and ladies’ comics since both of these genres of *manga* were in wide circulation by the time that these writers became active. There is less reference to visual media in the section on Kōno since *manga* for women or even girls was only in its embryonic stages during the decade and a half of her early career.

Leaving aside momentarily the issue of ladies’ comics, as suggested above there is a logic compelling the choice of Kōno, Yamada and Kanehara for this study rather than other prominent Japanese women writers who utilise similar themes, such as crime fiction writer Kirino Natsuo (b. Hashioka Mariko, 1951) author of *Auto* (Out, 1997; trans. Stephen Snyder, 2003; 2005).¹³ This relates to the sense of succession connecting these three authors – Kōno begat Yamada, Yamada begat Kanehara – in that each generation has drawn on the previous for inspiration in both genre and style. This is not only visible in the literary works that will be examined in this thesis, but also in their interpersonal relations. Yamada interviewed Kōno in a series of dialogues released in literary journals throughout 2001-2007 which have been published in a single collection *Bungaku mondō* (Dialogues in Literature, 2007). Both women have also

¹⁰ Orbaugh 1996, p. 126; Bullock 2010, p. 6.

¹¹ McCargo 2004, p. 58.

¹² Driscoll 2007, p. 169.

¹³ Like Yamada, Kirino started her career as a *mangaka*. Dollase 2011, p. 757.

served as judges on the Akutagawa Prize Panel which awards Japan's most prestigious prize for promising young authors named for renowned author Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927). The status obtained by these women upon being appointed to such a position – and the value accorded their texts – is evident from Edward Mack's observation that since the prize's inception in 1934, in addition to prize money, 'awardees' are the recipients of a certain amount of 'symbolic capital.'¹⁴ This capital is in turn exchanged for recognition as 'appropriate objects of serious academic attention,' increased publication and a 'place in cultural memory' as the recipients are added to 'dictionaries and anthologies of modern Japanese literature.'¹⁵ Kōno, who received the prize in 1963, was the first woman ever to sit on the selection panel and sat with Yamada on the panel that selected Kanehara's winning novel in 2004. In an interview following her reception of her Akutagawa prize, Kanehara stated that Yamada's work, in particular the novel *Hokago no kinōto* (After School Keynotes 1989; trans. Sonya L Johnson, 1992), had influenced her decision to become an author.

A further factor creating ties between the authors featured can be found in the repeated references made by each woman to Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886-1965), the great exemplar of literary masochism in Japan.¹⁶ I will return to Tanizaki several times in the chapters that follow. In addition to her literary pursuits, Kōno is recognised as a Tanizaki critic who produced one of the seminal texts on his masochistic works: *Tanizaki bungaku to kōtei no yokubō* (Tanizaki Literature and the Affirmation of Desire, 1976). Kōno's text identifies the difference between the physical masochism of Tanizaki's early works and the psychological masochism found in his later narratives.¹⁷ Kōno, Yamada and Kanehara all make comments regarding his work in their literary

¹⁴ This is particularly the case since 1955 when Ishihara Shintarō received the prize. Mack 2004, p. 293.

¹⁵ Mack 2004, p. 292.

¹⁶ See Chiba 1994.

¹⁷ Kōno's text has been widely labelled unconvincing, even laughable, in its discussion of masochism in the work of Tanizaki by critics such as Ken K. Ito and Thomas LaMarre. See Ito 1991, p. 280 note 10 and LaMarre 2005, p. 317 note 9. It is possible that part of this rejection of Kōno's text stems from each critic's individual definition and reading of masochism.

texts and in various interviews. In the collection of dialogues referred to above between Kōno and Yamada, both authors mention Tanizaki and masochism numerous times. Of particular note is the dialogue entitled “Mazohizumu no shinri to nikutai” (The Psychology and Sensuality of Masochism).¹⁸ In this section, Kōno states that her prizewinning novel *Miiratori ryokitan* (Cruel Tale of a Hunter Become Prey, 1990) is an attempt to ‘pick up where Tanizaki left off.’¹⁹ Kanehara’s *Hebi ni piasu* is seen by some scholars as a modern take on some of the themes that Tanizaki explores.²⁰ The tale of a young girl who gets a large tattoo across her back at the hands of a sadist is the central narrative of both *Hebi ni piasu* and Tanizaki’s “Shisei.”

In order to lay the groundwork to the discussions on the literary works of Kōno, Yamada and Kanehara and the chapter on ladies’ comics, the thesis will also contain a chapter on masochism and masochistic theory as found in both Japan and the west. While providing an overview of the contribution made to understandings of masochism by Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Theodor Reik (1888-1969), I will draw on Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), in particular his essay “Coldness and Cruelty,”²¹ to demonstrate that, rather than being something imposed by an outside force or being, masochism can be a personal choice made by women. I will further argue that this choice can be made in order to resist the social expectations of the hegemonically defined roles of wife and mother and the restraints that these roles place on women.

While not wishing to lock the discussion into any closed understanding of the term masochism, for the purpose of this thesis, masochism is understood not simply as pleasure in pain, but as pleasure in the *expectation* of pain. It is this expectation that is, in most instances, the key to the pleasure of the masochistic experience. Contrary to the popular understanding of masochism as

¹⁸ Kōno and Yamada 2007, pp. 85-124.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 115.

²⁰ See for example the work of Takeuchi Kiyomi and Ruben Welsh.

²¹ Deleuze 1991, pp. 9-138.

having a direct relationship to sadism – that is pleasure as a result of inflicting pain – I will treat masochism as a wholly separate entity from sadism. A sadist would not derive pleasure from hurting a willing victim. Nor could a masochist enjoy pain inflicted in a way that does not follow what they expected.²² This is not to say that a relationship where one person is a masochist and the other is a sadist is impossible. The pairing of the masochist and sadist, in fact, will be examined in Chapter 4 in relation to the work of Kanehara. However such a relationship would rarely be as successful as one between a masochist and their chosen consort or a sadist and their victim. Throughout this study we will see that the masochist is the one who often holds the balance of power in the masochistic relationship – at the very least the masochist enjoys a degree of agency that indicates her or his independent participation in any given scenario. In the chapter on Kanehara, for example, we will see that, even though she might – as in the opening scene to this chapter – be tied to a chair by a sadistic male, the young woman featured is not without a certain degree of power or agency herself.

Why Masochism?

Before proceeding, I will outline why I have chosen to structure the thesis around a topic that some readers may find morally unacceptable or that others, citing a feminist position, might argue is a set of behaviours that symbolises and perpetuates the subordinate position of women in both Japanese and western societies. In this thesis, masochism will be discussed along a spectrum that begins with the notion of active choice made by women with agency – as far as that is possible for any modern subject – and that follows a continuum to a point at which the women involved, while not necessarily rationally choosing masochism, are seeking a heightened sexual experience that transports them beyond the expected range of experiences permitted in hegemonic relationships.

²² Deleuze 1991, p. 40.

In “Coldness and Cruelty” Deleuze suggests that ‘in principle, violence is something that does not speak [...] while sexuality is something that is little spoken about.’²³ As a sexual activity that relies on simulated violence, masochism is something that ‘does not speak’ nor is it ‘spoken about.’ By creating women protagonists who engage in masochistic sexual activities the writers who will be examined in this thesis restore a voice to the masochistic aesthetic. We will see that for these authors creating a masochistic narrative is not simply a mere perversion or anomaly in the ‘weird Japan’ market. The confronting representations of women who can only enjoy sex when they are beaten and bound by their chosen partner or consort found in these texts demand to be studied. In doing so, I aim to retrieve the muffled (we might even say ‘bound and gagged’) voices of masochistic women. By retrieving these subjugated voices I also hope to promote public scholarship about sexuality and non-hegemonic (non-hetero-normative) sexual activities that impact on every woman and man.

As Anita Phillips points out in the introduction to her *A Defence of Masochism*, ‘sometimes feminists use the term “masochism” as denigratory shorthand to mean the kind of woman who colludes with patriarchy.’²⁴ However, subservience or passivity in women is not necessarily attributable to a preference for masochistic sex. Furthermore, while I agree that women are socially subordinated, it does not follow that some women choose masochism as a result of this broader subordinate position – far from it. In fact, many women would find it unthinkable to consciously enter into sexual activity based on masochistic principles. Many of the women masochists who are featured in the texts examined here, however, actively seek out and place themselves in situations that can be viewed as belonging to the world of masochism. In Kōno’s short story “Yōjigari,” for example, the protagonist hates pretending to be the patient and

²³ Deleuze 1991, p. 16.

²⁴ Phillips 1998, p. 14.

understanding woman when her lover fails to show up for one of their dates²⁵ but loves it when he beats her with a washing line.²⁶ Similarly in Yamada's *Hiçamaçuite asbi wo o-name*, Chika and Shinobu choose to work in a Tokyo S/M club, assuming a position in the masochistic landscape as powerful dominatrices who are paid to 'abuse' slaves. Likewise the protagonist of Kanehara's *Hebi ni piasu* detests being told what to do by older males²⁷ but enjoys being bound and controlled during sex.²⁸ In Watanabe's ladies' comics we will see that her protagonists find sexual freedom in violent treatment at the hands of their partners.

Although for writers such as Julia Bullock the so-called woman masochist actually undergoes a form of abuse, we will see in the texts to be examined that there is a vast gulf between a successful masochistic scenario – i.e. one in which all partners experience sexual pleasure and fulfilment – and spousal or partner abuse. Contrary to Bullock's reading of "Ari takaru," the masochistic acts in Kōno's text do not necessarily 'highlight the way that power asymmetries between men and women produce misogynist dynamics, which then reassert themselves in relationships between women.'²⁹ This is not in any way to say that such asymmetries do not exist. Clearly they do, and clearly they impact very strongly on women's lives. Nevertheless, I argue that it is questionable to make a deterministic link between these power asymmetries and the preference that some women demonstrate for masochistic sexual activity. Phillips makes the valid point that her defence of masochism, as a woman, would seem 'odd' if it were commonly accepted that 'women sexually enjoyed male violence or male bullying, and responded to it masochistically.'³⁰ As Phillips notes, being a masochist does not equate to being a victim: 'the victim has been forced onto the receiving end against her will, while the masochist has initiated a

²⁵ "Yōjigari," p. 328; "Toddler Hunting," p. 55.

²⁶ "Yōjigari," p. 333; "Toddler Hunting," p. 63.

²⁷ See for example, *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 56; *Snake and Earrings*, p. 56.

²⁸ *Hebi ni piasu*, pp. 39-40; *Snake and Earrings*, p. 37.

²⁹ Bullock 2010, p. 42.

³⁰ Phillips 1998, p. 14.

highly controlled situation involving bondage and pseudo-domination.³¹ As noted above, the socially subordinate position inhabited by women in both Japan and the west does not *ipso facto* explain the instances of masochism in the work of Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and Watanabe.

The practice of identifying the choice of some women to practice masochistic activity as being linked to women's subordinate position in society has led to the widespread and insidiously persistent notion of 'feminine masochism.' 'Feminine masochism' arose from Sigmund Freud's theories that women exhibit naturally masochistic tendencies due to their 'natural' passivity and their willingness to endure the agonies of pregnancy and labour.³² This theory should not be confused with what some critics have named, and what I will call, 'women's masochism' – a deliberate choice by women to be involved in masochistic activity as per the protagonists of many of the texts that will be examined in the following chapters. It must be noted that at the time that Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Freud, two of the 'fathers' of masochistic theory, were initially writing, masochism was chiefly theorised as something in which only males consciously engaged. This notion is rendered meaningless by the texts examined in the chapters that follow. Rather than existing as a product of the subordination of women and the suppression of their sexuality in modern Japanese society, 'women's masochism' is a way that women (including the protagonists examined in this thesis) *contest* this position.

Let us pause to consider three male writers who are, arguably, heavyweights of masochistic literature: from the west Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, introduced above, and from Japan Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, also introduced briefly above, and Numa Shōzō (b 1926).³³ In doing so, we will shift our attention from why women, such as the protagonists of the works examined,

³¹ Ibid.

³² Reik 1949, p. 197; Freud 1959, p. 261.

³³ Numa Shōzō is a pseudonym used by the author of *Kachikujin yapū* (Domesticated Yapoo, 1945). There is debate over who Numa actually is with some theories suggesting that he was actually literary author Mishima Yukio, pornographic author Amano Tetsuo or even Tokyo High Court judge Kurata Takuji. Morishita 1982.

practice masochism to why women, including Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and Watanabe, write about masochism. Despite the fact that Sacher-Masoch's novels eventually faded into obscurity, (overshadowed by Krafft-Ebing's repurposing of the author's name) and that some academic discussions link both Tanizaki's narratives and Numa's work to a sense of inferiority to the west, no one has ever claimed that these authors produce masochistic narratives as a symptom of being relegated to a subordinate position in society. Rather, in the Japanese context, both Tanizaki and, to a lesser degree, Numa, are revered and respected for their artistic genius in creating literary masochistic scenarios. While critical commentary does make mention of a sense of inferiority on the part of both authors with respect – in different socio-historical contexts – to the west, this element is merely mentioned in passing. Much greater focus is given to the brilliance of both writers in creating sophisticated and complex masochistic narratives. That is to say that, rather than being condemned for writing from a position of seeming submission, these authors are celebrated. Why then is it almost taken for granted that women writers who construct masochistic scenarios in their texts do so as a function of the generally constrained role of women in society? While this may be the case, we will see that, in the case of writers of male and female writers, such a cause and effect relationship is never a foregone conclusion.

Tanizaki's works especially feature repeated representations of masochistic male protagonists and cruel women consorts. The women that each of Tanizaki's male characters mould into *femme fatales* are repeatedly demonised and vilified as devious and unnatural, while the masochistic protagonists themselves are viewed as heroes. It should be noted that in the usual reading of Tanizaki's narratives there are only two options for women – the idealised figure of the mother/Madonna or the reviled yet sexually alluring figure of the harlot.³⁴ However, while Tanizaki's masochistic men are celebrated by male critics for their apparent submission, women who place themselves in the same position in society are seen by critics of both genders to

³⁴ For a detailed discussion of this see McCartney 1982, pp. 235-255.

reinforce a patriarchal model of sadistic male and masochistic female.³⁵ The women in the selected works under discussion in this thesis are not putatively passive and devoid of alternative options other than to submit themselves to a sadistic male. This thesis examines a series of texts in which women actively choose masochism as an expression of their sexual identity, or in the case of Yamada's texts, are dominatrices who deliver the masochist experience to the male clients. I repeat that, contrary to appearances, the women are often in a considerable position of power within the masochistic relationship.

Throughout this thesis I want to argue that masochism is about heightening women's sexual/sensory experiences and taking the range of those experiences well beyond the limited pleasure permitted to women in hegemonic accounts of women's sexuality. The women protagonists in the work of Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and Watanabe are all engaged in the act of reclaiming their physical bodies from the commonly accepted/expected roles assigned to them by Japanese society. In her article on *Hebi ni piasu*, Rachel Di Nitto furthermore points out that Kanehara's protagonist 'offers an alternative to the alienating world of the virtual commodity.'³⁶ We will see that this is a strategy that is also adopted by the women in Kōno's and Yamada's texts. While both authors' protagonists lose themselves in fantasy, they are brought back to their bodies by the physicality of the masochistic scenarios in which they choose to place themselves. This focus on the body is in stark contrast to the consumerism of, for example, the 'My' boom (my car, my home)³⁷ that Japan experienced in the 1950s and 1960s, the Bubble period in the 1980s and the power-shopping *gyaru* (lit. girl) culture of the early 2000s. Although the protagonist of *Hebi ni piasu* identifies herself with a brand label, Louis Vuitton, rather than a family or group of friends, she simultaneously – and somewhat contradictorily – provides 'immediate experience

³⁵ See Massé 1992.

³⁶ Di Nitto 2001, p. 467.

³⁷ See Chapter 2.

of the living body that, although commodified and modified, is centred in a self that feels loss and pain.³⁸

Japanese society has a long history of eliding the sexuality of women in the home. Saeki Junko, for example, discusses the Edo period division of women into *jionna* – the women of the household – and *yūjo* – the women of play, that is, of the leisure quarters.³⁹ The former were excluded from any notion of sexual pleasure and merely constructed as the ‘borrowed wombs’ that continued the family line.⁴⁰ In *Onnazaka* (The Waiting Years, 1949-1957; trans. John Bester 1980) Enchi Fumiko (1905-1986) continued the narrative of concubinage into the Meiji era by having the husband delegate the choice of the young woman in question to the wife. In wartime Japan, a woman who lost her husband was expected to remain eternally chaste. In the post-war era, too, the behaviour of high-profile males, such as former Prime Ministers, Tanaka Kakuei (1918-1993; in office 1972-1974) and Nakasone Yasuhiro (b 1918; in office 1982-1987), demonstrates that sexual activity outside the home remained the norm for a certain body of men in positions of social influence well into the second half of the twentieth century. Sharalyn Orbaugh, writing on women authors contemporaneous with Kōno, suggests that masochism can be seen as an attempt to turn the ‘gender coding of hierarchical power roles’ on its head.⁴¹ In other words, these representations of Japanese women use masochistic sexual experiences to express a sexual identity that is suppressed by hegemonic patriarchal demands. In order to make sense of this, and to understand how we have arrived at a position in which women look to masochism to express their sexual identity, we might consider the pervasive influence of the notion of *ryōsai kenbo* (lit. good wife, wise mother).

³⁸ Di Nitto 2001, p. 467.

³⁹ See Saeki 1997, pp. 239-390.

⁴⁰ Sievers 1983, p. 111.

⁴¹ Orbaugh 1996, p. 123.

The maxim, *ryōsai kenbo* was considered the norm for feminine behaviour in Japan from the Meiji Period to the end of the Pacific War and required Japanese women to become virtuous wives who would raise sons for the empire. It promotes an archetype that, as Koyama Shizuko has noted, although relegated to the past by many, still lingered into the late twentieth century.⁴² The doctrine of *ryōsai kenbo* made a virtue of submission by women while also erasing sexual identity from the role of ‘wife.’ The role of this submissive woman was to serve and to care. In the face of the erasure of the right to pleasurable physical experiences, women had few hegemonic sexual models to which she could aspire.

It should be noted that this hegemonic erasure of women’s sexuality was not without resistance. Rural women – removed from the ‘advanced’ and ‘modern’ setting of the urban city – still engaged in active sexuality. However, despite (or rather because of) an idyllic pastoral setting, this sexuality was often presented in terms that were received as either bestial and/or pre-modern. Tome, the protagonist of Imamura Shōhei’s (1926-2006) classic filmic text on women and struggle, *Nippon konchūki* (The Insect Woman, 1963), who permits her intellectually disabled father to suckle her breast and ultimately engages in sexual competition with her daughter, is one model of this resistance. While all of the women protagonists examined in this thesis are unapologetic city dwellers, the terror that they invoke as active sexual beings is linked both to this idea of the bestial and to the supernatural ‘destructive woman’ of Japanese myth and legend such as the *yamamba* (lit. mountain witch or crone). This will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

As noted above, for the purpose of much of this thesis, the masochistic partnership is made up of, not a sadist and a masochist, but, as per the work of Gilles Deleuze, a masochist and their chosen partner or consort.⁴³ I was first introduced to Deleuze’s theories of masochism in

⁴² See, for example, Koyama 1991.

⁴³ Deleuze 1991, p. 40.

Gretchen Jones' analysis of Kōno's narratives, particularly the article entitled "Subversive Strategies" (2000). Following a decision to include reference to the masochistic imagery featured in ladies' comics in this thesis – a topic that seemed to be the natural outcome of examining the work of the three writers named – I discovered that Jones had also written two essays on the topic: "Ladies' Comics" (2002) and "Bad Girls Like to Watch" (2005). Jones is not the only scholar to investigate masochism in the work of Kōno and *manga*; we will see that this link has also been made by Kazumi Nagaike in her discussion of homosexual fantasies, female sexuality and desire in "Japanese Women Writers Watch a Boy Being Beaten by His Father" (2004).

We will see in Chapter 1 that Deleuze builds on the work of psychoanalyst Theodor Reik, a student of Sigmund Freud, to form his theories of masochism. Reik proposes that the three characteristics of masochism are fantasy (*phantasy*), suspense and demonstration – a masochist takes pleasure in imagining a certain scenario, enjoys waiting for it to come to pass and revels in the event when it finally occurs.⁴⁴ To these three characteristics Deleuze adds the ideals of the contract – which outlines any and all interactions between the masochist and their partner or consort – and education, by which means the masochist teaches the partner or consort how to behave in each masochistic scenario.⁴⁵

As noted above, Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and ladies' comic writers/artists each have a different approach to the ways in which they utilise masochistic imagery. Kōno's work is grounded heavily in the ideal of the classical masochistic contract as theorised by Reik and Deleuze, and what happens when it is broken. Her protagonists are often – although not always – unmarried women in their thirties. Yamada's women protagonists frequently work in the entertainment/sex industry. Her 1988 novel, *Hiizamazuite ashi wo o-name* (Kneel Down and Lick My Feet) follows the

⁴⁴ Reik 1949, p. 44.

⁴⁵ Deleuze 1991, p. 134.

day to day life of two women who work as dominatrices at an 'S/M' club. In doing so, this text showcases masochism from the point of view of the consort, that is, from the point of view of the person performing the role of 'torturer.' In contrast, the complicated relationships that occur in Kanehara's narratives illustrate what happens when a sadist and a masochist interact without the protection of the contract. Depictions of masochistic scenarios in ladies' comics have become inherently linked to rape fantasies. As in Kanehara's narratives, these fantasies are invariably devoid of any formal contract.

The repeated description of rape in ladies' comics is worth noting. As with issues of masochism, I do not treat rape or rape fantasy lightly. As suggested above, neither gratuitous violence nor abuse has any part in masochistic theory. A number of Japanese critics, however, theorise rape fantasy as a means by which women in a society that suppresses feminine sexuality can express a sexual identity. In Chapter 5, for example, we will see that critics such as Ito Kinko and Fujimoto Yukari argue that since rape narratives remove the notion of choice from women, such fantasy narratives are sexually enabling in that they permit readers to fantasise about masochistic sex without any feelings of guilt.⁴⁶ With the removal of the power to refuse, women – both the protagonist of the narrative and the reader – are able to maintain the illusion of being the 'good girl' who is only coerced into sex.⁴⁷ I would like draw a comparison with the fantasies created by the Japanese all-female Takarazuka Review. In the same way that the women who portray handsome young men and beautiful young ladies are 'ultimately a fantasy, a fictional creation,'⁴⁸ rape in ladies' comics is also purely fantastic. Takarazuka playwright Ogita Kōichi stated in 2000 that the reason the theatre has been able to continue for over 80 years with the '*otoko-yaku*' (lit. male player) played by a woman in the main role is because 'the *otoko-yaku* are *otoko-yaku* and are not men. The same goes for the *onna-yaku* (female-roles) – both the *otoko-yaku* and the *onna-yaku*

⁴⁶ See, Ito 2005, pp. 456-475 and Fujimoto 1992, pp. 70-90.

⁴⁷ Williams 1999, p. 209.

⁴⁸ Nakamura and Matsuo Karen 2003, p. 63.

are constructs that exist within a particular fantasy.⁴⁹ The *otoko-yaku* and the *onna-yaku* cannot exist outside of this fantasy. Similarly, in this thesis, I am not concerned with depictions of actual rape. Rather, the focus will be on rape fantasies that, as with the Takarazuka *otoko-yaku*, occur in a set fictional space.

The theories of masochism that I draw upon throughout this thesis are, for the most part, grounded in a western psychoanalytic framework. In chapter one of *Permitted and Prohibited Desires* Allison asks:

can any usage of such terminology as “fantasy,” “desire,” “imagination,” or “identification” – developed as it has been within western theorising as particularly if not exclusively psychoanalytic – be applicable to a cultural setting other than that for which it was originally conceived?⁵⁰

Allison concludes that while these ideas are ultimately applicable to ‘a [non-western] milieu such as contemporary Japan,’ the application is ‘tricky.’⁵¹ Allison offers Zhang Yingjin’s observations that the ‘issue here is not that western theory cannot be applied, but that it should not be applied so as to dominate other cultures.’⁵² Rather than perpetuate an Orientalist ideal of ‘Japanese uniqueness,’⁵³ it is my aim to examine the work of Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara, ladies’ comic *mangaka* and their contemporaries as part of a genealogy of masochistic imagery in Japan. This genealogy – which for the purpose of this thesis only covers the 1960s to the early 2000s – is part of a much broader, global spectrum of masochistic literature that is informed by *phantasy*/fantasy and desire, and that includes, in addition to the work of Sacher-Masoch, Tanizaki and Numa already noted, sources as varied as the Christian martyrs such as St

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Allison 2000, p. 18.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 27.

⁵² Zhang 1994, p. 53; Allison 2000, p. 179 note 18.

⁵³ Zohar 2009, p. xxxviii.

Sebastian,⁵⁴ John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (better known as *Fanny Hill*, c. 1784), American author Anne Rice who started writing vampire horror and erotica in the 1970s and 1980s,⁵⁵ and the performance art of Bob Flanagan (1952-1996), the so-called 'supermasochist'.⁵⁶ However, while the study sits in this broader, global masochism, my particular focus is of course Japan. In order to further explain my aims, I will provide an explanation of the chapter content that follows.

Chapter 1: Masochism, *Phantasy*/Fantasy and Desire

Chapter 1 commences with a brief history and over-view of the terms 'masochism' and '*mazohizumu*' in both the Japanese and the English languages. 'Masochism' has only been in common use in both languages for about the last sixty or seventy years. The term itself is less than 150 years old and is derived from the German *masochismus* which was coined in 1886 by Richard von Krafft-Ebing – who borrowed from Sacher-Masoch's name – in his work *Psychopathia Sexualis*. In the same volume, Krafft-Ebing also coined the term 'sadism.' Freud would later combine these two terms – masochism and sadism – to form the misnomic portmanteau 'sado-masochism' which he used to refer to both the occurrence of sadistic and masochistic tendencies in the one person, and the interaction between sadists and masochists.⁵⁷ Throughout this thesis the term 'sado-masochism' is avoided as sadism and masochism in the one person are, from a Deleuzian stand point, largely untenable. It should be noted that while a

⁵⁴ St Sebastian is often portrayed in art as a naked youth whose body is pierced with arrows. According to legend he was tied to a tree and shot with arrows by the order of Roman emperor Diocletian and left for dead; however the arrows did not kill him. Mishima Yukio continually returned to the theme of St Sebastian. See Mills 2002, pp. 1-37.

⁵⁵ Including both her *Chronicles of the Vampires* (starting with *Interview with the Vampire*, 1976) and the *Sleeping Beauty* series written under the pseudonym A. N. Roquelaure.

⁵⁶ For more on the work of Bob Flanagan see Kauffman 1998, pp. 19-49. See also Vale and Juno 1989, pp. 109-113.

⁵⁷ Freud 1983, p. 159.

masochist might choose a sadist for their consort, the endeavour is largely doomed to failure with neither party finding complete satisfaction, as we will see in Chapter 4.

Having established a definition – or, at least, a general understanding – of masochism, the chapter will proceed with a discussion of the principal theorists to be referenced during the thesis. Sacher-Masoch's novel *Venus in Furs*, will be presented as the archetypal (textual) masochist narrative, while Krafft-Ebing's work will be referenced in order to provide a foundation to the discussion on the current usage of the term. Freud's theories of 'sadomasochism' will be addressed despite my position that they are untenable in the context of this study. Reference will also be made to his work on the death drive/instinct. The work of Reik, whose views on masochism differed from those of his mentor, Freud, will be referred to numerous times, in particular his definition of the characteristics of masochism. I will use the term 'classic masochism' to indicate the theory of contractual masochism as defined by Deleuze in "Coldness and Cruelty." The ideals of the contract and education introduced briefly above will be explored in more depth in Chapter 1, as will the notion of the maternal masochistic partner or consort. As noted above, in the chapters to follow, different approaches to contractual masochism will be explored ranging from the 'classic masochism' found in Kōno's work, to the absence of the contract found in Kanehara's.

In order to engage with the current popular use of the term 'masochism' in the Japanese and English languages particular attention has been paid to the Japanese and English language versions of Wikipedia, both of which have detailed entries on masochistic theory and masochistic practice. Wikipedia, of course, is not a scholarly text and it is not appropriate to use material retrieved from this site as source academic material. However, as a reader based, online encyclopaedia, Wikipedia offers a valuable insight into current opinions and attitudes regarding the entries presented.

In contrast to the largely western source material discussed so far, reference is also made to Japan's own particular variety of masochism which is visible in part in the reaction to the defeat during the post-Pacific War period,⁵⁸ particularly in the work of the *buraiha* (decadent school) and *nikutai* (carnal or flesh) writers such as Tamura Tajirō (1911-1983). Even the oldest of the authors profiled here, Kōno Taeko, was not published until a decade after the war while Yamada, Watanabe and Kanehara are far too young to be considered in the context of the immediate post war period. However, I consider them here as successors to the *buraiha* and the so-called *nikutai* literature that was written during the immediate post war period as a response to the departure from the wartime discipline of *kokutai* (lit. 'the body of the nation'). This section includes a discussion of the work of Numa Shōzō, whose masochistic opus, *Kachikujin yapū* (Domesticated Yapoo, 1956), redefines masochism, and in particular Sacher-Masoch's seminal masochistic text *Venus in Furs*, for a 1950s Japan that was still reeling from the aftermath of WWII.

Chapter 1 also provides a brief overview of fantasy and desire in the context of masochistic theory and imagery. Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and ladies' comic *mangaka* repeatedly utilise extended fantasy sequences and daydreams within their narratives. In addition to referencing Reik's theories on the masochistic fantasy, this chapter also draws on Jacques Lacan's theories of desire-as-lack and Julia Kristeva's theories of abjection. In addition, Deleuze's theories of desire, which were formulated with Felix Guattari, will be briefly considered.

⁵⁸ See Dower 1999, pp. 121-167.

Chapter 2: Kōno Taeko – Inside the Sound-Proof Room: Masochism in Late Post-Pacific War Japan

Chapter 2 investigates the masochistic short stories written by Kōno Taeko during the early 1960s with a specific focus on two: “Yōjigari” (Toddler Hunting, 1965; trans. Lucy North, 1996) and “Ari takaru” (Ant Swarm, 1964; trans. Noriko Mizuta Lippit and Kyoko Iriye Seldon, 1991; trans. Lucy North, 1996). In this chapter, masochism is explored in the context of the classic masochistic contract as defined by Deleuze. The chapter begins with an overview of the late post war period and the triumph of the rapid economic growth that saw Japan claim a leading space on the world economic stage. In stark contrast to the immediate post war period in which *nikutai* literature was produced, the late post war period saw the very best of ‘modern’ Japan on display in events such as the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games and the 1970 Osaka World Expo.

Kōno’s work is renowned for its portrayals of women who kidnap young boys, and wife swapping, in addition to her utilisation of masochistic motifs that were considered shocking at the time of original publication and which continue to have impact on the reader to the present day. Kōno, like many of her contemporaries, draws on themes in her writing that can be viewed as deviant. Some of these themes make reference to activities such as cannibalism, incest, murder, dismemberment and disfiguration. Kōno’s early works have chiefly been examined in terms of the use of ‘sodomasochistic’ imagery and the aggressive denial of mothering and motherhood.⁵⁹ Both of the protagonists in the two short stories to be examined in Chapter 2 are women in their thirties who do not have (or want) children. These women share an irrational hatred of young girls and a penchant for engaging in fantasy about the bodies of young boys. The two protagonists also regularly initiate and engage in sex that is both masochistic and violent with their respective partners. While there are theorists who claim – perhaps with some justification –

⁵⁹ See for example Van C. Gessel, Nina Langton, Uema Chizuko, Orie Muta and Maryellen T. Mori.

that Kōno's texts provide commentaries on the position of women in Japanese society through the rejection of motherhood, I will argue that these readings do not fully explain the nature of Kōno's work.

It is possible to conclude that the masochistic violence presented in Kōno's material is due to the writer's war time experiences. This, however, seems too simplistic given the depth of both tales discussed here. My particular interest is in the way in which violence in Kōno's material is used as a strategy by means of which women can *contest* the suffocating ideologies of womanhood current at the time of the production of her texts. The 'perverse' masochistic imagery deployed in Kōno's texts will be juxtaposed against the repeated tropes of the everyday – such as menstruation, illness and small liminal settings – that are also featured. As noted previously the concept of the liminal setting, in particular small enclosed rooms or spaces, will also be explored throughout the thesis in regards to the masochistic narratives produced by Yamada, Kanehara and Watanabe.

Chapter 3: Yamada Eimi – Reclaiming the Role of Consort/Partner/Torturer: Sexual Excess in Bubble Japan

This chapter builds on the concept of the masochistic contract developed in Chapter 2 in the context of Yamada's 1988 novel, *Hiizamazuite ashi wo o-name* (Kneel Down and Lick My Feet, 1988; partial trans, Terry Gallagher 1991). In contrast to Kōno's protagonists who are women masochists, Yamada's two main characters fulfil the role of the consort or partner in the masochistic relationship. More specifically, the pair work as dominatrices at a particular S/M club in Tokyo. The short stories that Kōno produced during the 1960s and early 1970s were written during a period when Japan was still recovering from the lingering effects of the Pacific War years. In contrast, Yamada began her career in the late 1980s as Japan was entering the

period of unprecedented economic excess known as the ‘Bubble period.’⁶⁰ This period of excess is reflected in Yamada’s narratives through her repeated use of characters who work in the *mizu shōbai* or entertainment industry.⁶¹ Her protagonists are often cabaret singers, hostesses, strippers and dominatrices. While Yamada’s work is best known for her depictions of sexually explicit relationships between Japanese women and non-Japanese, typically African American, men, I will focus more clearly on the manner in which masochistic motifs are present in her work.

Whereas Kōno’s use of masochistic imagery is largely restricted to internal spaces in each of her protagonists’ houses, Yamada sets her stories in an array of back rooms in clubs and bars in addition to the character’s own cramped living spaces. Unlike the masochistic women in Kōno’s narratives who assume a position of sexual submission while nonetheless maintaining one of power in their relationships, the two protagonists in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* assume a position of dominance for the duration of their engagements with their paying clients. As a part of their employment, the clothes that the two main characters wear, especially their high-heeled shoes, are an important part of the masochistic fetish/fantasy that these characters provide to their clients at the S/M club. The typical Yamada text features women who wear their sexuality as armour, masturbating at windows, having sex in clubs and dating outside of socially acceptable mores in order, very often, to aggressively attract the male gaze. The novel *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, however, is unlike many of Yamada’s short stories, not only in its length, but also in the fact that the male lovers that drift in and out of the two main character’s lives are so insignificant as to remain largely nameless.

⁶⁰ McCargo 2004, p. 58.

⁶¹ ‘Literally “the water business,” *mizu shōbai* connotes fluidity – an occupation that one can float into and out of without the rigidity required by other forms of employment, and a service that one can enjoy while being freed from duties and responsibilities that matter elsewhere.’ Allison 1994b, p. 33. *Mizu shōbai* covers everything from outright prostitution through massage parlours, soaplands, to hostess bars and ‘other forms of sexualised entertainment.’ Mackie 2003, p. 138.

Chapter 4: Kanehara Hitomi – ‘Pricking Pain Surrounds Us.’ Masochism in the 21st Century

Kanehara exploded onto the Japanese literary scene in spring 2004 when she became one of the youngest recipients of the Akutagawa prize. It has been suggested that Kanehara and Wataya Risa (b. 1983), along with the other young women recipients of the prize who followed soon after, Aoyama Nanae (b. 1983) and Kawakami Mieko (b. 1977), received their prizes purely as an attempt to boost faltering literary sales. Before moving to the textual analysis of Kanehara’s work I will therefore investigate the media furore surrounding her debut. Chapters 2 and 3 examine masochism within the context of the contract between a masochist and their consort or partner. In Chapter 4, I will investigate Kanehara’s *Hebi ni piasu* (Snakes and Earrings, 2004; trans. David James Karashima 2005) in terms of what occurs between a masochist and a sadist outside of the boundary of the masochistic contract. The collapse of the classic masochistic relationship that is visible in the work of Kanehara can be seen to mirror the collapse of the Japanese economy.

The economic downturn that accompanied this collapse saw a sharp rise in the level of unemployment which in turn has seen the emergence of the *furitā* (part time workers henceforth the anglicized ‘freeter’ will be used).⁶² The works of Kanehara and her contemporaries often feature *freeter* protagonists. Her works have been examined by scholars such as Mark Driscoll and Rachel Di Nitto,⁶³ in terms of the *freeter* and the social problems that young Japanese face. In this respect, Kanehara’s narratives often feature young women struggling to find their place in the world. In an attempt to gain a sense of control over their lives, her protagonists often experiment with body modification, including tattooing, wrist-cutting, waist-training and food refusal. In

⁶² Genda 2006, p. 30. The term ‘freeter’ is a portmanteau of the English ‘free’ and the German ‘*arbeiter*,’ meaning worker (from which the Japanese language takes *arubaito*, meaning part-time work) denoting those who refuse, or are unable to find, continuous and sustainable employment opting instead for short-term placements. Genda 2006, p. 29.

⁶³ Driscoll 2007; Di Nitto 2001.

Hebi ni piasu, the main form of body modifications that are explored are tattooing and piercing. As a result of the large tattoo that the protagonist has inked into her upper back, the protagonist of *Hebi ni piasu* joins the ranks of tattooed Japanese *femme fatales* such as Meiji murderess, Takahashi Oden⁶⁴ and, as noted, the apprentice geisha in Tanizaki's short story "Shisei" (The Tattooer, 1910, trans Howard Hibbett, 1963).

The protagonist of *Hebi ni piasu* freely states that she is a masochist – something to which none of the characters in the texts of Kōno and Yamada admit. The sadistic tattoo artist introduced in the opening paragraph of this introduction is reminiscent of the violent tattoo artist in Tanizaki's story. There is something masochistic about the image of a body laid out and repeatedly pierced with ink-covered needles. However, unlike Kōno's protagonists, for whom masochism is an imperative in their sexual relationships, the *Hebi ni piasu* protagonist is able satisfy herself with normal sex and sex with sadists. Throughout *Hebi ni piasu* the protagonist allows herself to be torn between the sadism of the tattoo artist and the very pedestrian love-making of her punk boyfriend. Whereas Kōno and Yamada use masochistic imagery as a means for their characters to gain power and control, Kanehara's heroine is adrift. Indeed, the final scene in the novel has the protagonist declaring that a raging river has formed in her body.⁶⁵

Chapter 5: Ladies' Comics – *Phantasy* For Everyday Women: Masochism in the Visual Realm

In spite of their explicit content ladies' comics in fact emerged in the 1980s out of the more sedate *shōjo manga* (lit. girls' comics) of the previous decades. Chapter 5 therefore begins with a

⁶⁴ See, for example, "Takahashi Oden" in Hirabayashi Taiko, *Hirabayashi Taiko dokufu shōsetsushū* (A Collection of Poison Woman Short Stories) 2006, pp.7-43; Silver 2003, pp. 5-67.

⁶⁵ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 113; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 118.

brief overview of *shōjo manga* and seeks to highlight the stylistic conventions that were developed as a part of *shōjo manga* that have since been adopted and adapted by ladies' comics.

The primary focus of the chapter, however, is the S/M sub-genre of ladies' comics. In particular, attention is paid to the work of the so-called 'Queen of ladies' comics,' Watanabe Yayoi.

Whereas the masochistic scenarios that occur in the work of Kōno, Yamada and Kanehara occur within the context of larger narratives, those that are depicted in ladies' comics make up the entirety of each *manga*. Ladies' comics are generally published in magazines that contain several 'stand alone' narratives. It is no accident that sexually explicit *manga* emerged during a period of economic growth in which women were experiencing new found financial and sexual freedoms - when the Bubble burst in the early 1990s, sales in ladies' comics also fell.

Each stand-alone ladies' comic forms a single, stand-alone fantasy. So important is fantasy to the masochistic aesthetic that Reik claimed that those who were unable to indulge in fantasy were not likely to show masochistic tendencies.⁶⁶ In the case of S/M ladies' comics, the masochistic fantasy is almost inevitably linked to rape. We have noted that many critics, including Fujimoto Yukari and Linda Williams, suggest that this use of rape fantasy allows women readers of ladies' comics to explore their sexuality in a way that is generally suppressed by normative expectations of sexual passivity in women. I propose that by allowing themselves to be coerced into sex, the woman protagonist of a particular ladies' comic (and by extension, the reader) is able to surrender themselves in a sexual situation without the need to experience guilt for their actions.

It is important to remember that the masochistic scenarios in ladies' comics, and indeed in all of the works presented, are fictional narratives that occur solely within the pages of a given text. In studying masochism in the work of women writers I am by no means condoning real life acts of

⁶⁶ Reik 1949, p. 44.

torture, spousal abuse or rape. Rather I am interested in the ways in which masochistic imagery has been employed by Japanese women writers and *mangaka* at different times during the past fifty years to, as Ito Kinko points out, permit readers to access sensory experiences denied to them by narrative definitions of femininity.⁶⁷

Conclusion

In conclusion, a number of technical matters in regards to the presentation of the thesis must be addressed. Japanese names will be given surname first, except where the author has adopted the western order of surname last or the work is published in English. Romaji will be given using the Hepburn system. There are two notable exceptions to this. Firstly, the name of the protagonist of Kanehara's novel *Hebi ni piasu* will be given as 'Lui' instead of 'Rui.' We will see that this is due to the character's self identification with the brand lable 'Louis Vuitton' (*Lui/Rui buitton* in romaji). Secondly in the cases where Japanese authors have adopted spellings of their names that do not conform to standard Romanization the author's habitual spelling has been used. In the chapters that follow, the Japanese language versions of Kōno, Yamada and Kanehara's works will be referred to. However, in the cases where these works are available in English translation, both the English and Japanese page numbers will be cited for ease of reference and consistency.

The following chapter establishes the definitions and theoretical framework that will support the textual analysis of the selected works of Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara, and Watanabe presented in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5.

⁶⁷ Ito 2005a, pp. 456-475

Chapter 1: Masochism, *Phantasy* and Desire

A Brief History of Masochism; Thoroughly Modern *Emmu*; Consort, Lover, Mistress, Mother; Masochism in the Post Pacific War Period; *Phantasy*/Fantasy; Desire

As noted in the introduction, this thesis will investigate the use of masochistic imagery in print and visual media by Japanese writers and artists with an emphasis on the works of Kōno Taeko, Yamada Eimi, Kanehara Hitomi, and ladies' comic *mangaka*, Watanabe Yayoi. Attention will also be given to a number of writers producing material contemporaneously with these artists and to other forms of media dealing with similar themes. In examining what for many is a controversial or even abhorrent subject I aim to retrieve the subjugated voices of women masochists. We will see that masochism in Japanese women's writing is more than a simple 'perversion' or anomaly. Before proceeding with a close reading of the work of the authors noted above it is necessary to investigate what is meant by the term 'masochism' in order to be familiar with the aesthetics, constructs and strict rules by which this principle is governed. In the discussion that follows, regular reference will also be made to theories of desire and *phantasy*/fantasy, two ideas that are heavily intertwined with theories of masochism. These theories will be explored through the application of psychoanalytic theory and literary theory from both Japan and the west before briefly engaging with the concepts of masochistic desire and *phantasy*/fantasy in the context of the texts under consideration.

In order to discuss masochism it is necessary to first provide a definition of this term – as far as is possible with a notion that shifts and metamorphoses in terms of the texts to be discussed. In doing so, I will present the origins of the word 'masochism' in medical and quasi-medical discourses – including that of psychoanalysis – of terms such as 'masochistic,' 'masochist,' '*mazobisuto*,' 'M' and '*emmu*' and also discuss the current common usage of these expressions in both Japanese and English language contexts. Since the protagonists of the texts to be examined

are predominately women, I will also explore the implications of women engaging in masochism given that masochistic theories developed with reference only to men.¹

A Brief History of Masochism

This section will provide a brief outline of the ways in which theories and definitions of masochism have changed over time. In popular discourse the term masochism is often used interchangeably with, and therefore confused or mistaken for, sadism and/or sadomasochism. Using the work of Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995),² I will demonstrate that the conventions of sadism and masochism, especially as manifest in the one person, are essentially incompatible.³ While a relationship between a person with masochistic tendencies and one with sadistic tendencies is never wholly ruled out in Deleuze's theories, we will see, especially in Chapter 4 in relation to Kanehara's text, these encounters are never completely successful for all those involved. While I have attempted to introduce those theories that are most relevant to the discussion that follows, it would be impossible to cover every aspect of masochism that has ever been proposed. To trace not only past theories of masochism but also new theories of this form of activity, which continually emerge in accordance with global and local changes, would require a work of many volumes.

The term, 'masochism' (German *masochismus*), was first coined by Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902) in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886) after the work of author Leopold von Sacher-Masoch

¹ Noyes 1997, p. 9. The issue of 'feminine masochism' – the theory that women are natural masochists due to their passivity – will be explored later in this chapter.

² In particular "Le Froid et le Cruel" (1967) which will be referred to as "Coldness and Cruelty" throughout this thesis, as per McNeil's 1987 English language translation. See Deleuze 1991, pp. 9-138.

³ The implications of the usage of the terms 'sadism' and 'masochism' in the context of 'S/M play' within the BDSM (Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism) community are discussed below.

(1836-1895), particularly *Venus in Furs*.⁴ *Venus in Furs* tells the story of the archetypal masochistic hero, Severin, and his devotion to and education of Wanda, who becomes his chosen masochistic consort. Sacher-Masoch not only created masochistic characters such as Severin and Wanda, the principle characters of *Venus in Furs*, but also lived a masochistic lifestyle. Of particular note are Sacher-Masoch's relationships with both Fanny Pistor, on whom the figure of Wanda is based, and his wife Aurora von Rümelin, who changed her name to Wanda after marrying Sacher-Masoch. Wanda von Sacher-Masoch later published details of the couple's masochistic interactions and contracts, 'ruthlessly' exploiting her husband's reputation to further her own literary career after his death.⁵

Venus in Furs opens with a dream sequence in which a primary narrator has a conversation with Venus, the Roman goddess of love, beauty and sex.⁶ This narrator then visits Mr Severin, an aged eccentric. Upon hearing of the dream, Severin gives the narrator a manuscript to read. This manuscript, in which Severin looks back at an affair during his youth with a woman called Wanda, forms the bulk of the *Venus in Furs* narrative. Severin describes how he was able to persuade Wanda to take on the role of mistress, lover and torturer. As the story progresses and Wanda grows more comfortable in her role as Severin's cruel, fur-clad goddess – we have already noted that the style and panache associated with costume are integral elements of the masochistic experience – the relationship between the two shifts subtly. By the close of the narrative Severin finds that Wanda has become the perfect woman he had always longed for – regal, aloof and powerful. However, once she becomes his feminine ideal, Wanda loses all interest in Severin and eventually leaves him for another man. Embittered and broken by his

⁴ Sacher-Masoch 1991, pp. 143-271.

⁵ Phillips 1998, p. 19. For an example of one Sacher-Masoch's extant contracts see "Appendix II: "Two contracts of von Sacher-Masoch" in *Masochism*, pp. 277-279.

⁶ More sinisterly, Venus (Greek Aphrodite) is referred to as the 'The Goddess of Death-in-Life' and given titles that can be translated as 'man-slayer' and 'of the tombs.' See Graves 1955, pp. 67-72. Each of these titles hint at the tyrannical nature of love, reinforcing Sacher-Masoch's selection of the goddess of love as a pivotal figure in his masochistic narrative.

experience, Severin renounces masochism forever. He spends his days alone, remembering what might have been.

Based on the exploits described in Sacher-Masoch's narratives and extant masochistic contracts between the author and Fanny, and the author and Wanda,⁷ Krafft-Ebing defines masochism as:

[a] peculiar perversion of the psychical *vita sexualis* in which the individual affected, in sexual feeling and thought, is controlled by the idea of being completely and unconditionally subject to the will of a person of the opposite sex; of being treated by this person as by a master, humiliated and abused. This idea is coloured by lustful feeling; the masochist lives in fantasies, in which he creates situations of this kind and often attempts to realise them. By this perversion his sexual instinct is often made more or less insensible to the normal charms of the opposite sex.⁸

In other words, the masochist is defined by Krafft-Ebing as a person who finds sexual pleasure in being dominated, controlled and/or hurt by a person of the opposite sex to the degree that she or he can no longer experience sexual satisfaction and/or fulfilment by any other means. For the masochist it matters not if these sexual pleasures are realised physically or remain solely in the realm of fantasy – we have already seen, in fact, that fantasy plays an integral role in any and all masochistic scenarios. A masochist's pleasure in the idea of being dominated can be so complete that it becomes the sole criterion for mate selection, excluding concerns such as age, physical appearance, social status and personal wealth. Krafft-Ebing's classifications of masochism as perversion, paraphilia, or as sexual deviation, places – in that writer's mind at least – a social judgement on masochistic acts and practices. It is important to note that the focus of my project is masochism as this appears in the fictional world of the texts to be examined rather than in the context of Japanese society as a whole. Nevertheless, given that the text is the

⁷ 'I feel justified in calling this sexual anomaly "Masochism" because the author Sacher-Masoch frequently made this perversion [...] the substratum of his writings.' Krafft-Ebing 1886, p. 132.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

product of a socio-economic context, some reference will be made in the discussion that follows to masochism as a social phenomenon. Unlike Krafft-Ebbing, however, I make no judgment on this form of sexual activity.

In constructing a working definition – or understanding – of masochism upon which to base the discussion that follows, there are a number of points that need to be profiled relating to Krafft-Ebing's comment cited above. Firstly, this is a very heteronormative statement which gives no space to anything other than a conventional male/female coupling. Secondly, Krafft-Ebing accords the right to the masochistic experience to males only. Women, it would appear, lack the capacity or the entitlement to choose the masochistic experience, an assumption which, like heteronormativity, was undoubtedly typical of attitudes of the time. Finally, we might note the writer's reference to 'the normal charms of the opposite sex.' When we consider the other claims made about women in *Psychopathia Sexualis*, such as Krafft-Ebing's 'observation' that the 'physically and mentally normal, and properly educated' woman has 'but little sensual desire,' or his assertion that women who actively seek men are 'sheer anomalies,' it becomes clear these charms are those of the non-threatening and non-controlling woman whose only desire is to submit to the 'superior' will of the male.⁹ This confirms the exclusion of women, as well as same-sex masochistic couples, from that group of subjects who direct their own masochistic fantasies. At this point, for Krafft-Ebing, masochism-as-perversion referred only to male masochism. In the imperialist, paternalistic social environment of the late 1800s, the feminised, submissive male was an aberration that was contrary to the perceived nature of male sexuality.¹⁰ Equally as perverse was the dominating, masculine, woman who was necessary to fulfil the male's

⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁰ This is a view shared by Ivan Bloch (1872-1922) and Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935) in their work on the science of sexology. For more see Bloch 1974; Hirschfeld 1956.

masochistic desires.¹¹ Since the woman was expected to adopt a submissive role the ‘masochistic’ woman was viewed not as a perversion but as the expected (accepted) social norm.

In addition to coining the term ‘masochism’ in *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Krafft-Ebing also created the term ‘sadism’, thus setting the precedent of associating masochism with sadism. Whereas the masochistic male exhibits a feminine passivity the sadistic male is ‘universally active.’¹² As with ‘masochism,’ Krafft-Ebing named ‘sadism’ for the literary works of a particular author, in this case the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814), whose texts exhibited the specific qualities Krafft-Ebing sought to catalogue in his collection of case studies. Sade’s narratives are renowned for the often repeated depiction of cruel, sexual revels such as those found in *Justine* (1791), *Juliette* (1797) and *The 120 Days of Sodom* (published posthumously in 1905).¹³ Krafft-Ebing states that ‘masochism is the counterpart of sadism in so far as it derives the acme of pleasure from reckless acts of violence at the hands of a consort.’¹⁴

Western psychopathologic terms, such as masochism and sadism, were introduced to Japan in the early twentieth-century in the work of authors such as novelist and Imperial Army Surgeon-General, Mori Ōgai (1862-1922). Of particular note is his “Seiyoku zatsuwa” (Miscellaneous Conversation on Desire, 1902-03), which, in spite of the fact that Ōgai did not always agree with Judeo-Christian ideas on sexuality,¹⁵ introduced the term ‘*seiyoku*,’ or sexual desire, with reference to nineteenth-century western discourses of sexology.¹⁶ Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* was first translated into Japanese in 1884 by the Nihon Haigakkai (Japan Forensics Association) as

¹¹ Krafft-Ebing 1886, p. 241; Noyes 1997, p. 65.

¹² Krafft-Ebing 1886, p. 196; Noyes 1997, p. 65.

¹³ *Juliette* was translated into Japanese in 1959, sparking an obscenity trial that became known as the ‘Sade trial’ and involved notable authors Ōe Kenzaburō, Endō Shūsaku, and Ōka Shōhei among others, who defended Shibusawa’s work. See for example Iwaya Kunio, 1990 and Buruma 2001.

¹⁴ Krafft-Ebing 1886, p. 53.

¹⁵ Driscoll 2005, pp. 197-207. Here, Driscoll discusses Ōgai’s rejection of the obsessive western denunciation of masturbation.

¹⁶ Marran 2007, pp. 115-16.

Shikijō-kyō hen (Book on Erotics). However, sales of this text were prohibited and so Krafft-Ebing remained in relative obscurity. In 1913 the Dai Nihon Bunmei Kyōkai (Great Japan Cultural Association) released a second, much more successful, translation of Krafft-Ebing's work as *Hentai seiyoku shinri* (The Psychology of Perverted Sexual Desire). This new translation was released a year after the 1912 introduction to Japan of the translated works of both Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Carl Jung (1875-1961).¹⁷ This being said, many Japanese academics and thinkers of the time, with backgrounds as diverse as military man, Ōgai, and feminist members of the 'Seitōsha' (Bluestocking Society), would most likely have read these works in the original German.¹⁸ In 1909 Ōgai published a semi-autobiographical 'erotic' novel the title of which, *Vita Sexualis*, can be seen as referencing Krafft-Ebing's work introduced above. However, as Jay Rubin and Stephen Snyder both conclude, no part of Ōgai's text is pornographic and, given the obsessive censorship regime of the time, its banning was probably merely due to its title.¹⁹

In his early essays on masochism Sigmund Freud continued Krafft-Ebing's practice of allying masochism with sadism, defining masochism in terms of what sadism is not. It was Freud who coined the term 'somasochism,' combining masochism and sadism into a single concept, after concluding that both conditions often occurred in the same individual: 'a sadist is always at the same time a masochist.'²⁰ This term also came to be popularly used to describe both masochistic and sadistic acts. Over the span of his career, Freud was to reinterpret and re-write his theories of masochism multiple times in successive works such as *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), "A Child is Being Beaten" (1919) and "The Economic Problem of Masochism" (1924). Despite extensive revision, certain key elements remain present throughout Freud's theorising,

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ By 1869 the Japanese government had adopted the German system of medical education, making German language proficiency an integral part of medical training. Adachi 2008, p. 16. Key members of the Seitōsha movement include Hiratsuka Raichō (1886-1971), Itō Noe (1895-1923), Yosano Akiko (1878-1942) and Yoshiya Nobuko (1896-1973). This society produced *Seitō* (Bluestocking) magazine from 1911-1916.

¹⁹ Rubin 1983, p. 134; Snyder 2000, p. 158 note 33.

²⁰ Freud 1983, p. 159.

including the notion of masochism as the flip side of sadism. Significantly, Freud also theorised the notion of masochism as an expression of the death instinct, an interpretation that will become particularly important in the chapter discussing Kanehara's texts.

Another enduring element of Freud's masochistic theory as implied above is that of 'feminine masochism.' This theory takes it as given that all women are passive, and hence masochistic. This was the logical conclusion of assumptions that regarded masochism as an 'exaggerated form of a normal feminine quality.'²¹ Freud's 'feminine masochism' should not be confused with theories of masochism concerning women who are actively masochistic such as the protagonists of Kōno's short stories to be examined in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Kōno's protagonists, and women like them, will be referred to as 'women masochists' in order to differentiate them from the 'feminine masochists' posited by Freud and like-minded theorists.

Many of Freud's students and followers would later further the practice of defining both masochistic and sadistic acts in terms of 'sodomasochism.' These students include Helene Deutsch (1884-1982), Karen Horney (1895-1952) and Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), as well as Theodor Reik whose work was referenced in the introduction of this thesis. Despite its title, Reik's *Masochism in Modern Man*, to be examined in detail later in this chapter, contributed to the popular perception of masochism and sadism as being inherently linked. It was not until 1967 that masochism and sadism were untangled by Gilles Deleuze in his essay "Coldness and Cruelty" (written prior to his work with Felix Guattari). Here, Deleuze re-theorised masochism and sadism as two separate entities and, in the process, sought to redefine masochism by returning to the literary works of Sacher-Masoch.²²

²¹ Hirschfeld 1956, p. 255.

²² Deleuze 1991, pp. 9-138.

In his discussion of Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*, Deleuze argues that 'to correctly define masochism [...] as an aesthetic, its formal patterns must be recognised as indicative of a unique underlying psychoanalytic structure.'²³ According to this analysis, masochism is 'above all formal and dramatic; [...] its peculiar pleasure-pain complex is determined by a peculiar kind of formalism and its experience of guilt by a specific story.'²⁴ In other words, each masochistic action is governed by a specific set of rules that stem from a complex balance of pleasure and pain that is tempered by feelings of guilt. Rather than buying into masochism as an expression of guilt, however, I will argue that the masochistic relationship can be seen as a resistance against social restrictions. Although, as stated above, I do not necessarily accept all aspects of Julia Bullock's argument, I do strongly support her notion that the strongest restriction of Japanese women in the post-war era was the ideology of *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife/wise mother).²⁵ However, while Bullock sees masochism as evidence of the oppressive nature of this ideology, I regard it as a subversion. I will expand upon this point later in the discussion.

A key element in Deleuze's interpretation of masochism is the fact that activities of this nature cannot be defined purely as 'erotogenic and sensuous,' that is, in terms of a pleasure/pain balance, nor, as just noted, as 'moral and sentimental,' i.e. guilt/punishment.²⁶ Rather than being characterised by pleasure in discomfort as is widely believed, masochism is more accurately pleasure in the *expectation* of discomfort which the masochist often desires to be delivered in a particular manner.²⁷ Indeed, Freud himself argues that of the three types of masochism outlined in "The Economic Problem of Masochism," the erotogenic, the feminine and the moral, erotogenic masochism, or the 'lust for pain,' is the 'lowest.'²⁸

²³ Ibid., p. 65; Studlar 1988, p. 14.

²⁴ Deleuze 1991, p. 65; Studlar 1988, p. 14.

²⁵ Bullock 2006, p. 663; for more see Koyama 1991.

²⁶ Deleuze 1991, p. 109.

²⁷ Reik 1949, p. 67.

²⁸ Freud 1959, p. 257.

In addition to re-reading Sacher-Masoch's texts, Deleuze draws on the work of Reik to further his theories on the masochistic aesthetic. In *Masochism in Modern Man*, Reik outlines what he refers to as the three main characteristics of masochism namely: 'the *special significance of phantasy*, the *suspense factor* (that is the necessity of a certain course of excitement), and the *demonstrative feature*.'²⁹ These three characteristics reinforce the idea that masochism is pleasure in the expectation of discomfort: a masochist finds enjoyment equally in creating fantasies of sexual scenarios of torture and in acting out these scenarios. In some cases, this expectation of discomfort is extremely prolonged and can result in the perfect, eternal coldness – a withholding of affection until a certain unspecified moment in the future – characterised in many of Sacher-Masoch's novels and emphasised in Reik's, and then again in Deleuze's, theory on masochism. This coldness relates not only to the aloofness of the perfect Sacher-Masochian torturer but also to the cooling and controlling of the masochist's ardour. Pleasure in the expectation of pain is illustrated in Kōno's "Ari takaru:" about to make love with her husband early one morning, the protagonist becomes even more aroused when she hears him open the cupboard door. By the time she hears him remove their long bamboo fishing rod (a note in the text reveals that neither of the couple fish)³⁰ she does not care that she might be late to work or that their neighbours might hear the couple having sex, so great is her pleasurable anticipation at the events that are to follow.

In addition to confirming the Reikian elements of fantasy, suspense and demonstration, Deleuze further posits that masochism is contractual and educational.³¹ It is in these two concepts that the greatest difference between sadism and masochism are visible: sadism is quantitative and

²⁹ Reik 1949, p. 44.

³⁰ "Ari takaru," p. 49 ; "Ant Swarm," p. 181.

³¹ Deleuze 1991, p. 134. Japanese author, Numa Shōzō, is reputed to have made the link between the contract and masochism almost a decade before Deleuze. For more on Numa's work see the section entitled "Masochism in the Post Pacific War Period" in this chapter.

demonstrative whereas masochism is qualitative and persuasive.³² The first relies on the ‘endless repetition of acts of domination and cruelty’ while the second is the search for a particular quality obtained through ‘enticing, exhorting, and educating a partner.’³³ In short, Deleuze differentiates between sadism and masochism by stating that ‘a sadist instructs; a masochist educates’ and that ‘masochism is contractual whilst sadism is institutional.’³⁴ In other words, whereas the masochist negotiates with her or his partner so as to attain set goals, the sadist dictates the actions of those around him.

As is evident in a number of the key texts to be examined in the early part of this thesis, it is by means of the contract and education that the masochist is able to transform a partner into the perfect masochistic consort or torturer. Before investigating this further, I want to pause to look briefly at the terminology used for the masochist’s partner. Both Freud and Reik seem to prefer the term ‘consort,’ while Deleuze opts for ‘torturer.’ I am unhappy with both terms as I feel they are unable to capture the multidimensional nature of the role as depicted in the works of the Japanese writers under discussion. Nor do I feel comfortable using terms commonly found in the BDSM (Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism) community such as ‘dom’ (dominant) and ‘sub’ (submissive), or ‘top’ and ‘bottom.’³⁵ Given that the focus of this thesis is masochistic imagery found in a Japanese cultural context, terms such as *seme* (from *semeru* to penetrate) and *uke* (from *ukeru* to receive), the Japanese language equivalent of ‘dom’ and ‘sub,’ may be considered. However, as these terms describe personality types/character tropes in homoerotic *manga*, I do not feel that they are wholly applicable in the heterosexual encounters described in the works of the four Japanese writers under discussion in this thesis. For the purpose of this thesis, therefore, I have selected to use the (unfortunately unwieldy) form of ‘consort/partner/torturer.’

³² Deleuze 1991, p. 134.

³³ Jones 2000, p. 88.

³⁴ Deleuze 1991, p. 134.

³⁵ Stomblor 2004, p. 286.

While less apparent in the works of authors featured later in this thesis, the operation of contractual masochism is particularly visible in the work of Kōno Taeko. In “Ari takaru” and “Yōjigari” Kōno’s protagonists hold their lovers to a strict set of non-negotiable conditions related to sexual activity. Discomfort and a loss of self results when these contracts are broken, as occurs at key points in both narratives. In “Yōjigari” the protagonist is angered when her lover acts like a child ‘crawling around on his hands and knees’ when he should instead be manly and dominant,³⁶ while in “Ari takaru” the protagonist is unable to derive enjoyment when her lover demands sexual relations on his own terms as opposed to following the letter of their contract.

In Yamada Eimi’s material, however, we will see the flip-side of contractual masochism. The protagonists of *Hizumazuite ashi wo o-name* work as dominatrices in an S/M club where administering pain to masochists is part of their day to day job. These engagements are governed by a strict code of practice – one that is couched in terms of a business contract as well as the masochistic contract. They are modern day Wandas, clad not in furs, but black lingerie and patent leather high-heeled stiletto shoes. Furthermore, we will see that throughout her body of work Yamada’s protagonists often extort sexual pleasure and power from their varied lovers, using their bodies and their position in society to get what they desire.

In contrast, Kanehara’s *Hebi ni piasu* showcases the near disastrous interactions of a sadist and a masochist without the protection of the formal masochistic contract. During the course of this narrative, Kanehara’s protagonist, Lui, surrenders herself to the whims of a sadistic tattooist, willing him to take an active part in her search for self-destruction. However, Lui is not a woman who merely lies back and passively endures what the sadistic tattoo artist inflicts upon her.

³⁶ “Yōjigari,” p. 333; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 62.

Rather, she has it within her power to stop the violent sexual encounters at any time. Rather than passive, we might label Kanehara's protagonists as apathetic. We will see that for the most part, they simply cannot be bothered to exert themselves to change their social circumstances of their sexual positions. This assessment is not delivered judgmentally. Rather, the mindset of these young women is, I would argue, a product of their being marginalised by Japan's troubled twenty-first century social conditions which leave many young people with few productive or personally rewarding options.

In the same way that the masochistic contract is almost discarded entirely in the work of Kanehara, so too it is seemingly absent in ladies' comics. Rather than depicting characters who negotiate the details of a contract, ladies' comics generally cut straight to the action, often starting with the protagonists already engaging in sexual intercourse. While it must be noted that not all ladies' comics depict imagery that can be viewed as masochistic, my focus will be on material that does profile activities of this nature. Furthermore, in Chapter 5, I suggest that rather than a masochistic contract between characters, there exists a contract between the *mangaka* and the ladies' comic reader.

The contract, nevertheless, is crucial to the classic masochistic process as it is the means by which the masochist manipulates and maintains control. In terms of the writers discussed here, it is Kōno Taeko whose texts most clearly foreground contractual masochistic relationships. However, while not all the texts discussed here comply with this classic configuration, an understanding of this process will provide a framework against which we can assess the nature of the less contractual forms of masochism to be investigated in the later chapters of this thesis. In the classic scenario for the masochist to attain sexual pleasure from any given scenario – be it a beating or an act of domination or humiliation – the consort/partner/torturer must act in accordance with the masochist's fantasies. The masochist aims to educate the

consort/partner/torturer so that the latter is able to administer (or withhold) pain in a way that results in pleasure for all concerned. This education forms the basis for the contract which ensures that, even though the masochist surrenders certain rights, she or he does so voluntarily in a way that guarantees that her or his desires and needs, sexual or otherwise, will be met.³⁷

While for the classic Deleuzian masochist a successful programme of education results in the masochist's chosen consort becoming skilled in delivering pain in a specific manner that is customised to the needs of the individual masochist, I have noted that not all the cases examined in the chapters that follow conform to this requirement. The need for the education was also disregarded by Freud in his 1924 essay, "The Economic Problem of Masochism," when he wrote that, for the masochist, pleasure can be derived from any and all pain: 'the suffering itself is what matters; whether it is decreed by someone who is loved or by someone who is indifferent is of no importance.'³⁸ For Kanehara's protagonists we will see that indifference certainly appears to be a viable element in the mix. However, the protagonists in the work of Kōno, Yamada and Watanabe deliberately seek out the masochistic encounter and the various accoutrements that accompany the event. As John K. Noyes points out, Sacher-Masoch's hero, Severin, would have been horrified at the thought of his Venus dealing him pain dressed in anything but her furs.³⁹ It is the furs which signal the anticipation of pleasure in the pain of Severin's relationship with the cruel women he has constructed. A similar situation applies to the use of specific implements for Kōno's protagonists in both "Yōjigari" and "Ari takaru." While perhaps not as sophisticated as Wanda's furs, these women recoil at the idea of sex with their lovers without the aid of their chosen instruments of torture – a clothing line with clinking metal hooks and a bamboo fishing rod that has never been used for fishing, respectively. The use of these implements is a

³⁷ Deleuze 1991, pp. 71-72.

³⁸ Freud 1959, p. 262.

³⁹ Noyes 1997, p. 140.

manifestation of what the consort/partner/torturer has learnt under the tutelage of their particular masochist.

Each of the theories and definitions of masochism briefly introduced here is heavily influenced by the context in which it was originally developed. Initially this context involved a study of the depths of the human psyche. Krafft-Ebing's project, for example, was to trace the perversions present in society following man's moves from animal barbarism towards civilisation.⁴⁰ In the introduction to *Psychopathia Sexualis* Krafft-Ebing states that:

Man puts himself at once on a level with the beast if he seeks to gratify lust alone, but he elevates his superior position when by curbing the animal desire he combines with the sexual functions ideas of morality, of the sublime, and the beautiful.⁴¹

Krafft-Ebing's work is an ambitious catalogue of perversions' ranging from 'anthropophagy [human cannibalism] and necrophilia to sadism directed against animals, fetishism, androgyny, homosexuality and, of course, sadism and masochism.'⁴² For Freud and his students, including Reik, theories of masochism were also developed as psychoanalytic studies of the human psyche and were presented alongside and as interpretations of numerous patient case studies. Krafft-Ebing also draws on case studies derived from both his own work and that of colleagues and friends⁴³ but literary sources, particularly the narratives of Sacher-Masoch, also play a role in Krafft-Ebing's definition. Deleuze, however, is the commentator who brings the literary to the fore. At the beginning of "Coldness and Cruelty" he states that it is his intention to work as a 'diagnostician' identifying each symptom of masochism as it is visible in the literary works of Sacher-Masoch.⁴⁴ Deleuze's exploration of the masochistic aesthetic through 'diagnostic'

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 57-61.

⁴¹ Krafft-Ebing 1886, p. 1.

⁴² Noyes 1997, p. 55.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Deleuze 1991, pp. 13-16.

interpretation of a literary text makes his approach highly appropriate to the analysis of masochistic imagery in the works of Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and their contemporaries.

Although it is outside the specific scope of this thesis, given its origins in medical and psychoanalytic discourse, brief reference should be made to the continuing tendency in some areas of mental health practice, within both western and Japanese societies, to diagnose masochism as a mental disorder or paraphilia. While, as stated above, I have no interest in assessing masochism in this way, it is useful to give a brief overview of developments in this respect. Furthermore, these developments are of interest when we consider that they both draw on and inform popular attitudes to masochism. For those interested in definitions of masochism as a clinical disorder, the most current edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) should be consulted.⁴⁵ In the DSM, the American Psychiatric Association attempts to outline ‘all conditions of the mind’ which fall ‘outside the bounds of the normal.’⁴⁶ In the first edition of DSM, published in 1953, masochism and sadism are both defined as ‘sexual deviations.’ Since this initial volume, the DSM has undergone numerous revisions (DSM-II in 1968, DSM-III in 1980, DSM-III-R in 1987, DSM-IV in 1994 and DSM-IV-TR in 2000) and each new volume contains new definitions of masochism and sexual masochism. In DSM-III, sexual masochism could be diagnosed in a patient if either of the following held true:

- (1) a preferred or exclusive mode of producing sexual excitement is to be humiliated, bound, beaten, or otherwise made to suffer;
- (2) the individual has intentionally participated in an activity in which he or she was physically harmed or his or her life was threatened, in order to produce sexual excitement.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ At the date of submission, the most current revision is DSM 5 (due for publication in 2013) a draft of which is available at: <http://www.dsm5.org/ProposedRevisions/Pages/SexualandGenderIdentityDisorders.aspx> (Accessed April 2012).

⁴⁶ Noyes 1997, p. 15.

⁴⁷ DSM III p. 274; Noyes 1997, p. 16.

The term ‘sexual deviation,’ used in DSM-I and DSM-II, has since been replaced by the term ‘paraphilia’ in later editions. DSM defines this term as ‘recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviours’ which may involve any or all of the following: ‘non-human objects,’ ‘the suffering or humiliation of oneself or one's partner,’ ‘children,’ or ‘non-consenting persons.’⁴⁸ It is of some concern that a practice such as masochism is linked with sexual activity relating to children or non-consenting persons. The abhorrence of such practices is unquestionable and has no relation to the masochistic activities discussed in this thesis. For example, although Kōno repeatedly depicts savage mistreatment of children, these depictions are always only of the fantasies of the women in her texts. They are never enacted in reality by the women.

Thoroughly Modern *Emmu*

In the century or so since the terms ‘masochist’ and ‘sadist’ were coined, the usage of both words has shifted from purely clinical or paraphiliac discourses – although, as noted above, they continue to be used in this context – to enter into the modern lexicon of both the Japanese and English languages. For example, describing someone as an ‘M’ (*emmu*) or ‘S’ (*essu*) in terms of her or his behaviour has become common amongst young Japanese.⁴⁹ This can refer to anything from enduring menial tasks at a place of work to choosing to stay in a difficult relationship. As an extension of this, it has become commonplace for Japanese women to describe their romantic relationships in terms of either ‘M’ or ‘S.’ A strong-willed young Japanese might say something along the lines of: ‘I could never date an S. I need someone who is an M.’ In this instance, the speaker is stating that she is a strong and demanding woman, in other words, that she is an ‘S’ and therefore that she needs someone who will be able to accommodate this, someone who is an

⁴⁸ DSM IV. TR.

⁴⁹ “Mazohizumu.” Wikipedia.

‘M.’⁵⁰ On the other hand, several Japanese ‘*tarento*’⁵¹ including B list actresses, such as Koike Eiko (b 1980), Natsukawa Jun (b 1983) and Yasuda Misako (b 1982), have casually confessed to being ‘M.’ It is unclear, however, whether or not these young women are referring to a predilection for sexual masochism or merely confessing to being workaholics.⁵²

The use of ‘M’ and ‘S’ to describe a person and those around them is said to have been started by Hamada Masatoshi of the popular Japanese *owarai konbi* (comedic duo) ‘Down Town.’⁵³ Hamada claims to be the ‘M’ of the duo while his partner, Matsumoto Hitoshi, is the ‘S.’⁵⁴ The practice soon spread to other comedic duos and thence into popular usage. In this instance, ‘S’ and ‘M’ are used in a similar way to the BDSM fetish community usage of ‘top’ and ‘bottom’ or ‘dom’ and ‘sub’ to assign power roles in relationships.

While we have referred to formal theories of masochism, none of the writers under discussion in this thesis – and certainly none of their protagonists – are necessarily *au fait* with these ideas. In order to familiarise ourselves with popular attitudes to activities of this nature, either sexual or more colloquial, it is useful to examine Wikipedia, especially the Japanese language versions – but also the English entries – related to masochism. Wikipedia is an audience generated encyclopaedia known as the ‘free encyclopaedia.’ The articles and definitions that it hosts are open to change and critique by any internet user. Notwithstanding its unreliability as a scholarly source, the fact that it is easily altered and contributed to by readers is an indication that Wikipedia provides a useful source of continually updated commonly held public opinion and

⁵⁰ Various private conversations with female university students and office workers, Tokyo and Nagoya, 2009-2010.

⁵¹ Although derived from the English word ‘talent,’ *tarento* can refer to pop-stars, actors, writers and those famous for being famous, such as Paris Hilton. The slang portmanteau ‘glitterati’ might come close. The three actresses referred to in the Wikipedia article are B grade actresses and soft-porn models, yet they are still well known due to their frequent television appearances and large fan base. It should also be noted that all three actresses are of a similar age to Kanehara Hitomi.

⁵² “Mazohizumu.” Wikipedia.

⁵³ “Mazohizumu;” “SM.” Wikipedia.

⁵⁴ “Down Town no bangumi no kansō: S ka M.”

beliefs. While I will refer mainly to the Japanese Wikipedia entry entitled “Mazohizumu,” I will sometimes note differences or similarities within the English equivalent. During the course of my research the content of the English language Wikipedia entry on masochism, titled “Sadomasochism,” has changed dramatically. In June 2009, when I began investigating this subject, the article presented a broad spectrum of ‘sadomasochism’ in the contexts of psychoanalytic theory, literature, paraphiliac diagnoses and the BDSM fetish community. As of September 2011, the English language Wikipedia entry on masochism refers only to ‘sadomasochism’ in the context of the BDSM fetish community. I have decided to concentrate on the fuller 2009 version of the Wikipedia article in the body of this chapter while supplying the 2011 revisions in the footnotes. The Japanese article, “Mazohizumu,” remains unchanged from the June 2009 version and the September 2011 version.⁵⁵

The initial definition of ‘masochism’ found in the Japanese article opens with the following:

[masochism] is a type of sexual preference in which experiencing shameful or humiliating situations, or imagining oneself in that sort of condition, results in heightened sexual pleasure.⁵⁶

In contrast to the Japanese language Wikipedia, article which makes no mention of sadism or sadomasochism until later in the document, the June 2009 English language version references both of these points in the initial definition of masochism:

Sadism refers to sexual or non-sexual gratification in the infliction of pain or humiliation upon another person. Masochism refers to sexual or non-sexual gratification from receiving

⁵⁵ The Japanese language Wikipedia has separate entries for *mazohizumu*, *sadeizumu* and *sadomazohizumu* whereas both the 2009 and the 2011 variants of the English language Wikipedia consists of a single entry entitled “Sadomasochism.” There is another English language Wikipedia article entitled “Masochism” which (at June 2012) looks at masochism as a medical condition. The Japanese article provides a brief description of both the English and German terms; however there is no ‘native’ Japanese alternative word provided. This is not to say that there was no concept of masochism prior to the introduction of the term into the Japanese language. English language alternatives that pre-date the coining of the term ‘masochism’ include Sacher-Masoch’s ‘supersensuality’ and an early clinical term ‘algolagnia,’ meaning ‘the desire for pain.’ Phillips 1998, p. 6. In a Japanese context, the work of Tanizaki Jun’ichirō is renowned for its masochistic content, most of which was written prior to the Pacific War.

⁵⁶ “Mazohizumu” Wikipedia.

the infliction of pain or humiliation. Often interrelated, the practices are collectively known as sadomasochism as well as S&M or S/M. These terms usually refer to consensual practices within the BDSM community.⁵⁷

The definitions found in the English language Wikipedia are of interest given their stipulation that masochism and sadism refer to ‘sexual or *non-sexual* gratification.’ In the body of the Japanese language version a similar distinction is made between sexual (*seiteki*) and non-sexual masochism. These distinctions follow those made in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* introduced above.

The Japanese Wikipedia article further proposes that feelings of self-renunciation, adversity and pain are the basis for sexual masochism.⁵⁸ If we take these Wikipedia definitions as representing the common usages of the term ‘masochism,’ it is evident that there is a marked deviation from the initial definitions found in *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Krafft-Ebing states that masochistic practices are engaged in ‘as preparatory and concomitant means to experience the voluptuous sensation of coitus.’⁵⁹ This means that many so-called ‘masochistic’ acts are only masochistic if they are performed either in preparation or as a part of sexual excitement. Despite common colloquial use of M and S in the Japanese language and a similar usage of masochistic in the English language, Anita Philips reminds us that completing a thankless task, running a marathon, deliberately injuring oneself, dealing with unpleasant situations, or even undertaking a PhD are *not* masochistic acts *unless* they result in a frisson of sexual excitement or satisfaction.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ “Sadomasochism (2009)” Wikipedia. As of September 2011 the opening definition reads: ‘Sadomasochism broadly refers to the receiving of pleasure—often sexual—from acts involving the infliction or receiving of pain or humiliation. The name originates from two authors on the subject, Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. A subset of BDSM, practitioners of sadomasochism usually seek out sexual gratification from these acts, but often seek out other forms of pleasure as well. While the terms sadist and masochist specifically refer to one who either enjoys giving pain (sadist), or one who enjoys receiving pain (masochist), many practitioners of sadomasochism describe themselves as at least somewhat of a switch, or someone who can receive pleasure from either inflicting or receiving pain.’ “Sadomasochism (2011)” Wikipedia.

⁵⁸ “Mazohizumu” Wikipedia.

⁵⁹ Krafft-Ebing 1886, p. 63.

⁶⁰ Phillips 1998, pp. 1-4.

There are several similarities between the opening statements of the Japanese language article, “Mazohizumu” and the English language Wikipedia article, “Sadomasochism.” The opening definition in the English language version claims that masochism and sadism are ‘often interrelated’ as in the form of ‘sadomasochism’ – both the word itself and the practices that it signifies.⁶¹ However, I emphasise once more that for Deleuze masochism and sadism occupy ‘essentially different worlds.’⁶² They cannot interact with each other or exist in the same person as suggested by a term such as ‘sadomasochism’ or popular sayings such as ‘masochism and sadism are different sides of the same coin.’⁶³ Each is possessed of their own language, aesthetic and purpose. This is not to say that masochism and sadism automatically form a pair of binary opposites. Rather than being thought of as polar extremes, the two practices are better regarded as running parallel to each other along the same course but seldom intersecting or overlapping. The sadist gains pleasure from inflicting pain on others – with or without permission and with little thought to the well-being or pleasure of those upon whom pain is inflicted. For the classic masochist, pleasure can only be achieved when pain is inflicted on their bodies in a prescribed manner under set conditions according to her or his fantasies. As noted previously, while Kōno’s work lends itself to a classical reading, texts of later authors are much more diverse in this respect.

Yamada’s *Hizamaquite ashi no o-name* investigates consensual client masochism, a relationship that is in some ways similar to the consensual practices within the BDSM community.⁶⁴ As part of the English language Wikipedia’s definition of BDSM, links are provided to America’s two longest running online support groups for BDSM practitioners – the Society of Janus and the

⁶¹ “Sadomasochism (2009)” Wikipedia; the 2011 revision supports this statement.

⁶² Jones 2000, p. 88.

⁶³ “Mazohizumu” Wikipedia.

⁶⁴ “Sadomasochism (2009)” Wikipedia; the 2011 revision is largely concerned with masochism within the BDSM community and thus supports this statement.

Eulenspiegel Society.⁶⁵ On both sites, there is an emphasis on ‘safe, sane and consensual’ interaction between all parties underpinned by a pre-agreed upon contract. This BDSM contract stipulates that acts of bondage, discipline and/or dominance must be performed in a manner that satisfies all parties concerned. We will see that a similar negotiation occurs at the S/M club in Yamada’s text.⁶⁶ Like those involved in a BDSM scenario, her characters agree to a prescribed course of action prior to acting out the scene.

While the ‘S’ in BDSM stands for ‘sadism,’ this term is, in fact, misleading. With its emphasis on ‘safe, sane and *consensual*’ practices there is no room for a true sadist within the BDSM community. ‘True’ sadism is seldom safe and is rarely, if ever, consensual: Deleuze states that if a willing subject had approached the Libertine (the classic de Sade sadist) and asked to be punished, the subject would have been turned away:

The [...] torturer of masochism cannot be sadistic precisely because she is *in* the masochistic situation [...] The same is true of sadism. The victim cannot be masochistic, not merely because the libertine would be irked if [she or he] were to experience pleasure, but because the victim of sadism belongs entirely in the world of sadism.⁶⁷

The sadist’s pain/pleasure interactions are selfish and one-sided. No true sadist would ever intentionally inflict pleasure on his or her victim.

The Japanese language Wikipedia article, “Mazohizumu,” also treats sadism and masochism in a similar manner to that defined by the BDSM community. In the section entitled “SM ni tsuite” (Concerning S/M), two points are discussed that are neglected by the English language version.

⁶⁵ The addresses for these websites are <http://www.soj.org> and <http://www.tes.org> respectively.

⁶⁶ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 186.

⁶⁷ Deleuze 1991, p. 41.

The first of these is the interaction between sadists and masochists during S/M practices.⁶⁸

According to the article, S/M occurs in partnerships in which the masochistic or sadistic preferences of a couple need to be compromised in order for both parties to obtain satisfaction.⁶⁹ The article proposes that the partnership in which one person has masochistic tendencies and the other sadistic is ‘the perfect couple.’⁷⁰ However, how can a partnership in which both participants are forced to compromise be the ideal masochistic relationship? This seems contradictory, especially as the article also states that it is not always necessary for a masochist to ‘choose a sadistic partner.’⁷¹

While the partnership of a masochist and a sadist is never ruled out entirely in Deleuzian theories of masochism or in the narratives of Sacher-Masoch, it is suggested that such a coupling would never be particularly successful or prolonged. Certainly, this would never be the ‘perfect couple’ that the Japanese language Wikipedia page suggests. Deleuze infers that the ‘masochist’s sadism’ is not the same as that of De Sade or a ‘true’ sadist. Likewise, the ‘sadist’s masochism’ is not that of Sacher-Masoch or a masochist.⁷² According to Deleuze, while a sadist might enjoy being hurt she or he does not necessarily enjoy pain to the extent that a masochist does. Similarly, a ‘masochist’s pleasure,’ if any, ‘in inflicting pain is not necessarily the same as the sadist’s.’⁷³ The (unsuccessful) partnership of the masochist and the sadist is explored in Chapter 4 of the thesis in more detail in regards to Kanehara’s *Hebi ni piasu*.

The masochistic consort, partner or torturer, although colloquially said to be a ‘sadist’ as in the Wikipedia entries, belongs solely to the masochistic landscape. The consort/partner/torturer is

⁶⁸ “Sadomasochism (2009)” Wikipedia; the September 2011 revision also neglects these two points.

⁶⁹ “Mazohizumu” Wikipedia.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Deleuze 1991, p. 40.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 46.

an integral part of the realization of the masochist's fantasy and could never be a sadist.⁷⁴ The education that the consort/partner/torturer receives ensures that every action they take will contribute to the masochist's pleasure – whether this is an immediate release or a drawn out enterprise of many months as per the experiences of Sacher-Masoch's hero in *Venus in Furs*. It is the consort's role to ensure that the masochist will gain pleasure from a scenario, no matter how physically or emotionally painful – or indeed, violent – that such a scenario might be, by conforming to the masochist's fantasy.⁷⁵ As the narrator of *Bushūkō hime* (The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi, 1935, trans. Anthony H Chambers 1982) by Tanizaki Jun'ichirō explains: 'a masochist does not become a woman's slave; he enjoys appearing to be one. He would be annoyed if she made him a real slave.'⁷⁶ Tanizaki is renowned for his interest in, above all, 'narratives of masochism,' and in 'the bizarre, the deviant, [and the] obscene.'⁷⁷ In many of his works, Tanizaki's male masochists achieve their goal, attaining pleasure at the hands of a harsh but beautiful woman, by employing a system of 'dominance through submission.'⁷⁸ As with Severin in *Venus in Furs*, many of Tanizaki's protagonists – Seikichi in "Irezumi" ("The Tattooer," trans. 1914; 1963) and, most famously, Jōji in *Chijin no ai* (lit. a fool's love, 1924; translated as *Naomi* trans. Anthony H Chambers 1985) – create their 'temptresses before surrendering to them.'⁷⁹

Of value for this discussion is the fact that the Japanese Wikipedia article "Mazohizumu" raises a second point that is not mentioned in the English language article regarding the relationship between S/M and prostitution:

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 41.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 41-46.

⁷⁶ Tanizaki 1982, p. 63.

⁷⁷ Chambers 1994, p. 24.

⁷⁸ Ito 1991, p. 95.

⁷⁹ Ibid. For more on masochism in the work of Tanizaki see Hashimoto 1974, Chiba 1994 and Mizuta Lippit 1977.

In cases of prostitution et cetera where the consort is one who is selling masochistic (or alternately, sadistic) services and scenarios, she or he satisfies ‘favourable conditions’ in exchange for cash. This is another form of sadomasochism.⁸⁰

This is of particular interest given the themes in two of the novels to be examined in the chapters that follow. Yamada’s *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* focuses on two young women, Shinobu and Chika, who work as dominatrices – they are referred to as Queens throughout the text – at a certain S/M club in Tokyo. The first chapter illustrates graphically the world in which these young women interact with their clients. In *Hebi ni piasu*, Kanehara does not give much detail regarding the past of her protagonist, Lui. However, based on Lui’s frank admission of her various sexual encounters and work as a ‘companion,’ it can be inferred that she would be familiar with the type of work that features in Yamada’s novel.⁸¹ Furthermore, at one point in *Hebi ni piasu*, Lui states that if a person was faced with the choice between selling her body for sex or starving, a ‘healthy person’ would choose the former as the more sensible thing to do.⁸²

As the Japanese language Wikipedia article suggests, prostitution can be seen as offering the perfect short-term answer for a masochist who is yet to find her/his perfect partner. Essentially, the act of hiring a prostitute is a negotiated contract that states exactly which services are purchased and how many times during a specific period for a set amount of money.⁸³ We might see this as an arrangement that is not too dissimilar from the masochistic contract. However, without the trust and knowledge that results from the masochist’s education of the consort, liaisons with prostitutes cannot be wholly fulfilling or successful for the masochist. This can be seen in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* when a new client at the S/M club complains that most

⁸⁰“Mazohizumu” Wikipedia.

⁸¹ *Hebi ni piasu*, pp. 39-40, 52-58; *Snakes and Earrings*, pp. 37, 52-58.

⁸² *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 78; *Snakes and Earrings*, pp. 81-82.

⁸³ Angell 2008, pp. 6-7.

dominatrices are afraid to fulfil his requests and will not do ‘what he wants,’⁸⁴ negating both the negotiated business contract and the unsuccessful masochistic one.

Consort, Lover, Mistress, Mother

In most masochistic narratives and theories, the consort/partner/torturer is consistently constructed as a woman. Freud, for example, unequivocally states that ‘the persons who administer chastisements are always women,’⁸⁵ while Deleuze theorises the ideal torturer as ‘cold, aloof and maternal.’⁸⁶ In most of the narratives that are examined in this thesis, however, it is women characters who initiate masochistic relationships while those who ‘administer chastisement’ are men. In these circumstances – that is, when considering narratives that involve (heterosexual) masochistic women – how should we modify the theories presented above? How do these theories change if the narratives examined revolve around masochistic women as in the texts this thesis will examine? What in fact does it mean to be a woman masochist? We have noted that Freud followed Krafft-Ebing to also theorise that women are ‘natural masochists’ due to their passivity, their ‘phantasies of [...] being sexually overpowered,’ and of ‘becoming impregnated.’⁸⁷ How then, do these ideas apply to our active women masochists as opposed to the passive and submissive women theorised by Krafft-Ebing and Freud? This needs consideration, especially given the fact that these are women who rarely, if ever, express the desire to become pregnant.

We have noted that Freud’s theory that all women are naturally passive, and therefore masochistic, has come to be known as ‘feminine masochism.’ I must stress again that the concept of feminine masochism should not be confused with women who wilfully choose to

⁸⁴ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 22; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” p. 203.

⁸⁵ Freud 2006, p. 299.

⁸⁶ Deleuze 1991, p. 51.

⁸⁷ Reik 1949, p. 197; Freud 1959, p. 261.

enter into masochistic scenarios. And although feminine masochism has been largely rejected by theorists such as Alexandra Symonds and Natalie Shainess,⁸⁸ there is still a body of scholarship that links masochism in women to their marginalised position in society. While I acknowledge the socially subsidiary position of women, I nonetheless have concerns about generalisations which insist that a preference by women for masochism is a response to the difficulties women encounter in gaining social equity. Michelle A Massé and Andrea Dworkin,⁸⁹ for example, argue that masochism in the female is always the ‘end result of a long and varying successful cultural training’ in which women find their ‘virtue in renunciation’ and ‘[teach] other women to do so as well.’⁹⁰ I would argue that the very binary claims of these critics deny women the opportunity to choose masochism actively either as a means of enhancing sexual pleasure or of imposing their own desires in a relationship. On the contrary, rather than finding ‘virtue in renunciation,’ throughout this thesis there are examples of women masochists who assert themselves by acting as instructor not instructed and who thereby maintain an active role in their interactions with their partners.

While drawing on the works of theorists who construct women as submissive, the discussion that follows is based on the strong assumption that masochism, or indeed sadism, is not pre-determined by sex or gender. As suggested by the Japanese language version of Wikipedia, the notion of ‘sadistic males’ and ‘masochistic females’ should be disregarded.⁹¹ Far more valuable is Sharalyn Orbaugh’s suggestion that masochism is a strategy adopted by women who seek to ‘reverse the gender coding of hierarchical power roles.’⁹² As Orbaugh points out in her discussion of women’s bodies in Japanese women’s fiction, a woman in this position is now able

⁸⁸ See Symonds, 1979, pp. 161-73 and Shainess 1979, pp. 174-89.

⁸⁹ ‘Female masochism is real and it must be destroyed. The cultural institutions which embody and enforce those interlocked aberrations—for instance, law, art, religion, nation-states, the family, tribe, or commune based on father-right—these institutions are real and they must be destroyed. If they are not, we will be consigned as women to perpetual inferiority and subjugation.’ Dworkin 1976.

⁹⁰ Massé 1992, p. 3.

⁹¹ “Mazohizumu” Wikipedia.

⁹² Orbaugh 1996, p. 123.

to speak instead of being silent, to gaze instead of being the object of the gaze, and to dominate instead of being dominated.⁹³

Gaylin Studlar suggests that the work of Daniel Lagache might help to clarify the application of Deleuze's theories of masochism regarding 'gender and difference' and the 'dynamics of the masochistic fantasy' (which are principally concerned with male masochism) to narratives that are concerned with women's masochism.⁹⁴ Studlar notes that for Lagache, masochism is above all a 'search for submission' in which the masochist takes on the role of the child in 'an alliance modelled directly on a parent/child relationship' in what he terms the 'narcissistic-masochistic position.'⁹⁵ When masochism is modelled on the parent and child relationship, the gender problem of the woman consort/partner/torturer and male masochist is removed: the fact of the partner who administers pain to the masochist being either maternal or paternal is negated by the fact that they are above all, in this interpretation, parental.

While Lagache's notion of the 'parental' might to some extent solve gender issues related to masochism, it does raise other problems. In entering into a contract with the masochist, the consort/partner/torturer agrees to provide for the masochist's needs and desires. In the Lagache interpretation, the masochist thereby surrenders certain rights in return for care similar to that given to children by their parents from their partner, consort or torturer. This may last only for the duration of the re-enactment of one of the masochist's fantasies or it may result in the consort/partner/torturer governing large swathes of the masochist's day-to-day activities.

However, we need to be aware that the 'care' given to the masochist by the consort might be well outside what is regarded as acceptable parenting. This latter is well illustrated – as is the

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Studlar 1988, p. 15. Jones also refers to Studlar's work in "Subversive Strategies." See Jones 2000a, p.86.

⁹⁵ Daniel Lagache, "Situation de l'aressivité," *Bulletin Psychology* vol. 14, pp. 99-112 cited in Studlar 1988, p. 15. On-going attempts to locate the original in English translation have been unsuccessful. See also the entry on "Narcissistic-masochistic position" in Akhtar 2009, p. 181.

notion of all-consuming obsession – by the contract which Severin draws up and offers to Wanda in *Venus in Furs*. When Wanda finally agrees to take on the role of Severin's torturer she sends him a note that reads:

My Beloved,

I do not wish to see you today or tomorrow, only the evening of the day after, and then as my slave.

Your mistress,

Wanda.⁹⁶

Severin surrenders everything in order to become the perfect slave of his lover Wanda, who in turn is transformed through the medium of the contract and education into the perfect masochistic consort/partner/torturer. Whether she is the perfect 'parent' is another question.

This problem of whether masochism is maternal, paternal or parental recalls the scholarship debates that have been generated by the work of Kōno Taeko. We will see that the masochism of Kōno's heroines is often interpreted as both a trenchant critique and rejection of, motherhood.⁹⁷ Critical commentary of this kind is based on the assumption that her depictions of 'oppressed,' masochistic heroines are a form of textual resistance to the crushing and all consuming nature of motherhood.⁹⁸ These women are seen to reject motherhood in favour of pursuing their own lives.

Throughout his masochistic literature, Sacher-Masoch also draws on the image of the mother, citing three archetypal images of woman which 'correspond to three fundamental mother images:' the primitive 'uterine mother;' the 'oedipal mother' who is linked to the sadistic father as

⁹⁶ Sacher-Masoch 1991, p. 184.

⁹⁷ This is especially evident in the criticism of Kōno's work by Van C. Gessel, Nina Langton, Uema Chizuko, Orii Muta, Maryellen T. Mori and others.

⁹⁸ Jones 2000, p. 83.

either accomplice or victim; and the ‘oral mother’ who both ‘nurtures and brings death.’⁹⁹

Sacher-Masoch celebrates the last as the perfect torturer, placing her in between the two extremes of the primitive woman and the (sadistic) oedipal mother. She is untouchable and distant in her role of *femme fatale*, nurturing in her role of mother and care-giver, and severe in her role of consort/partner/torturer.¹⁰⁰ There are certainly resonances here with the theories of Deleuze – and, indeed, we have seen how Deleuze returned to the texts of Sacher-Masoch in developing his own ideas. The mother is a very strong presence in Deleuze’s definition of the ideal torturer, partner or consort who is represented as ‘cold – maternal – severe.’¹⁰¹ She is nurturing in her cruelty, tender in her coldness and gentle in her tortures.¹⁰²

Both Deleuze and Sacher-Masoch, of course, write as males, and it not surprising that we find the classic representation of their ideas in Japanese literature in the works of a male writer – Tanizaki Jun’ichirō. The narratives of Tanizaki are filled with women famously presented as cold and beautiful mothers. This representation applies to some extent even to Tanizaki’s account of his own mother in *Yōshō jidai* (Childhood Years, 1955-56; trans. Paul McCarthy, 1988). In his recollections of his mother, Tanizaki (or rather, Tanizaki-as-narrator) presents what Ken Ito states are ‘two sharply differing images:’ the first is that of an ‘irresponsible spoiled merchant’s daughter’ who delegates child rearing to a nursemaid, while the second is ‘far more symbolic’ in which she becomes a ‘personification of beauty.’¹⁰³ When Tanizaki writes of his mother’s beauty he is articulating not a man’s ‘natural affection’ for a pretty mother, argues Ito, but a beauty that is ‘distilled and essential.’¹⁰⁴ When praising the delicate whiteness of his mother’s fine-grained skin, Tanizaki notes that it is ‘was not the same as that of the women of today.’¹⁰⁵ He muses that

⁹⁹ Deleuze 1991, p. 55.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 50-51.

¹⁰³ Ito 1991, pp. 16-17.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁰⁵ Tanizaki 1988, p. 11; Ito 1991, p. 17.

this must be due to the fact that women of his mother's generation 'wrapped the greater part of their bodies in clothing,'¹⁰⁶ an image that has haunting similarities with Sacher-Masoch's perfect woman wrapped tightly in her furs.

As an aside, we might note that this view of Tanizaki's mother is one that is most frequently identified and championed by male critics such as Ito himself. Perhaps an even more poignant image of Tanizaki's mother, however – and one that male critics rarely consider – is the one in which she is presented as the nurturing mother, grieving for the loss of her children. The narrator describes that after he and his younger brother were born, three siblings were fostered out: 'In later years [my mother] told me how, when the foster parent came from Nakayama, put the baby in the rickshaw, and began to drive off, she ran after them for many blocks, crying in her pain at the parting.'¹⁰⁷

One of the difficulties we face when reading the work of either Tanizaki or Kōno is that Tanizaki is expected to write like a man and readers therefore look for sexualised images of the parent/child relationship within his work, while Kōno is expected to write like a woman who should – unless she is 'depraved' – want to nurture the child. These assumptions, I would argue, are so deeply embedded in the consciousness of many readers that it becomes difficult to decode or decipher any deviation from the expectations created.

A specific element of Kōno's work that troubles many critics is her devastating representations of mother-daughter relationships. However, when we consider how this relationship is suppressed by hegemonic authorities in the east as much as the west, these representations are perhaps not surprising. Furthermore, I point out once more that these representations are in the

¹⁰⁶ Tanizaki 1988, p. 11; Ito 1991, p. 17. Tanizaki revisits this image of the kimono-clad mother in, for example, *Fūten rōjin nikki* (Diary of a Mad Old Man, 1960; trans. Howard Hibbett, 1968).

¹⁰⁷ Tanizaki 1988, p. 60.

fantasies only of her protagonists, not enacted against representations of living children. Luce Irigaray highlights the troubled nature of the mother-daughter bond, arguing that due to a sufficient lack of representation of harmonic relations between mothers and daughters in the social imaginary, young women are locked in a state of conflict with their mothers.¹⁰⁸ Is it any wonder that both of Kōno's masochistic protagonists in "Yōjigari" and "Ari takaru," have an irrational hatred for little girls and detest the idea of having daughters?¹⁰⁹ This aspect of Kōno's work will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

In the work of Deleuze, daughters are for the father, not the mother. This pairing, which is sadistic in nature, focuses on the relationship between the father and the daughter and negates and rejects the mother's existence.¹¹⁰ Using Deleuze's theories it is possible to say that in sadism, the preference for youth and beauty results in the rejection of the mother who has served her purpose.¹¹¹ Sadism aims to 'destroy the mother and give preferment to the daughter.'¹¹² Eventually, the mother is cast aside in favour of the (younger) daughter who usurps her position of power.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ See Whitford 1991, pp. 75-98.

¹⁰⁹ 'Hayashi Akiko couldn't abide little girls.' "Yōjigari," p. 321; "Toddler Hunting," p. 45; 'The very thought of giving birth and having to raise a baby repelled her.' "Ari takaru," p. 41; "Ant Swarm," p. 171.

¹¹⁰ Deleuze 1991, pp 62-63.

¹¹¹ Interestingly, while the mother has been traditionally lauded in Japan, once she is seen to have served her purpose (as mother and nurturer) she is discarded. In December 2001 Governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintarō, stated that 'old women [are] the worst evil and malignant being[s] [...] that civilisation has produced.' He continued saying that old women who live after they have lost their 'reproductive function are useless and committing a sin' in contrast to males who, with the help of modern medicine, are still reproductive in their 80s and 90s. It should be remembered that Japan was one of the first nations to legalise Viagra.

"Discriminatory remarks made by public officials."

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid. This reminds us of, for example, Kanai Mieko's sadistic revel, *Usagi* (Rabbits, 1973; trans. Phyllis Birnbaum, 1982).

Masochism in the Post Pacific War Period

Scaffolding the masochistic imagery in the work of Japanese women writers such as Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and the creators of ladies' comics, all of whom as a group write from the late post-Pacific War period onwards, is the *nikutai* literature (lit. 'body' or 'flesh' literature) of the immediate post Pacific War period.¹¹⁴ The textual production of the authors being examined in this thesis occurred well after the post-war valorisation of the so-called 'literature of the flesh.' However, as Julia Bullock points out, *nikutai bungaku* is 'one obvious genealogical source for the literature produced by women writers of the 1960s.'¹¹⁵ Given the direct genealogical links between Kōno, Yamada and Kanehara established at the onset, it can be argued that all three authors, as well as ladies' comic *mangaka*, are also linked to the *nikutai bungaku* tradition. It will therefore be useful to digress slightly to examine this tradition.

In *The Body in Post-war Japanese Fiction*, Douglas Slaymaker refers to authors such as Tamura Tajirō (1911-1983), Nōma Hiroshi (1915-1991) and Sakaguchi Ango (1906-1955). Tamura's works, including his celebrated *Nikutai no mon* (Gate of the Flesh, 1946), a perennial favourite of the 'pink' and *roman poruno* (romantic pornography) film industry, 'critique pre-war and wartime morality.'¹¹⁶ Throughout his literature, Tamura expresses disdain for the 'prevailing stifling moralities' to which people continued to cling 'even in the post-war years.'¹¹⁷ For Sakaguchi, *nikutai* and *buraiha* (decadent 'school') literature was the product of a 'new "morality" that would be based in the logic of the flesh.'¹¹⁸ Slaymaker proposes that *nikutai bungaku* arose as a response to the 'wartime censorship that had made it extremely difficult to write of the erotic, of the

¹¹⁴ Slaymaker 2004, p. 11.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Marran 2007, p. 142.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 143.

political and of wartime deprivations.¹¹⁹ This censorship was a part of the ‘total spiritual and moral devotion to the national project of imperialism,’ known as *kokutai*, which had been required of Japanese citizens during the war.¹²⁰ In effect, the shift from *kokutai* to *nikutai* was a literal shift in focus from the ‘body of the nation’ (*kokutai* lit. national body) to the ‘body of the flesh’ (*nikutai* lit. flesh body). *Nikutai* literature sought release from ‘ideological bondage’ through ‘physical and carnal experience.’¹²¹

Kokutai and *nikutai* are terms whose meanings have shifted over the years in response to the way each has been employed during different socio-political moments. The difficulty encountered in translating these terms compounds the instability of each. ‘Nationalism’ or ‘national polity’ can be used as a translation for *kokutai* although neither term is able to encompass the full range of meaning. Essentially the *kokutai* system became a state religion underpinning the pre-Pacific War social structure with the Emperor-as-deity at its centre,¹²² with any contradictory ideas systematically eradicated.¹²³ As with *kokutai*, *nikutai* is imbued with a range of meanings beyond a straight translation of ‘body’ or ‘flesh’ for which *karada* or *shintai* would be more appropriate. The key distinction lies in the overtones of sexual desire, baseness and carnality that *nikutai* incorporates.¹²⁴ Rather than mere flesh itself, *nikutai* literature is above all grounded in the sensuality/sexuality of the ‘flesh.’ Slaymaker proposes that the ‘emphasis on the physical body in the years following the war represents [...] a frustration with the wartime sacrifices demanded by the government.’¹²⁵ In contrast to a time when *kokutai* discourses dictated that the ‘way of the subject’ was to observe ‘one’s proper place’ in the social hierarchies of sex and gender, the rise of *nikutai* culture allowed for ‘an immense variety of pleasures and activities’ that had previously

¹¹⁹ Slaymaker 2004, p. 11.

¹²⁰ Bullock 2010, p. 34.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Doak 1997, pp. 287-288.

¹²³ Tanaka 1935, p. 1.

¹²⁴ Slaymaker 2004, p. 11.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

been unthinkable.¹²⁶ In other words *nikutai* is a resistance to the war-time denial of the body.

Since I will argue that masochism for women is, as much as anything else, a right to express to the full the sensuality of the flesh, we might see *nikutai* literature and the works of these women as being particularly closely linked.

With an occupying army administering an economy in chaos – agricultural and industrial production was at a standstill, few trains were running, there was limited road transport, and a severe lack of food – ‘male subjectivity’ experienced a ‘profound crisis’¹²⁷ that extended beyond the years of the presence of the Supreme Command of the Allied Powers (1945-52).¹²⁸ The bleak realities of the time were a catalyst for many to reject the nation’s calls for ‘selfless sacrifice’ and to focus instead on individual goals and desires.¹²⁹ It was as if a ‘new space’ suddenly came into being – one in which people ‘behaved differently, thought differently’ and ‘encountered circumstances that differed from any they had previously experienced.’¹³⁰

The narratives produced by male authors of this time tried to ‘rhetorically reassert a dominant masculine subjectivity by rendering women as corporeal objects that facilitated the recuperation and transcendence of their embattled and emasculated protagonists.’¹³¹ In Slaymaker’s evaluation, the three *nikutai* authors introduced above use the body of the woman as the symbol through which the male (author) becomes liberated and constructed narratives in which the main women characters are all either prostitutes or sex workers. In an attempt to explore the ‘perspectives [brought] to men’s fiction,’¹³² Slaymaker includes at the end of his book a chapter on women writers of *nikutai* literature. Like their male counterparts, Slaymaker states that these women,

¹²⁶ Dower 1999, p. 122.

¹²⁷ Hane 1996, pp. 9-11.

¹²⁸ Bullock 2010, p. 34.

¹²⁹ Slaymaker 2004, p. 22.

¹³⁰ Dower 1999, p. 121.

¹³¹ Bullock 2010, p. 34.

¹³² Slaymaker 2004, p. 185.

including Sono Ayako (b. 1931) and Nakamoto Takako (1903-1991), too, depict females in the roles of sex workers.¹³³

For Slaymaker's *nikutai* writers then, both women and men, the sexually active woman must, of necessity, be a sex worker. This is not, however, the case with the protagonists created by the women writers considered in this thesis. While the occasional sex worker certainly appears among these protagonists, there are also mothers, housewives, single working women, and young *freeters* (part-time workers) or 'drop-outs' from society, for whom the body (their own) is a vehicle for personal liberation and self-assertion. This is in opposition to the body of the woman as a conduit to rehabilitate the psyche of the nation's humiliated males as posited by Slaymaker. And while these women are sometimes confined to traditional spaces, they do not act in traditional ways. Amongst their number are mothers who feel little affection towards their children, housewives who enjoy sex with their husbands and single women who have no intention of marrying. The works by women writers that engage with women's sexuality are rarely interested in the salvation of the male, but completely devoted to the gratification of the woman.

One male Japanese author writing on masochistic themes in the post-Pacific War period was Numa Shōzō. However, unlike the male *nikutai* literature writers who wrote with a strong masculine persona, Numa positioned himself as a masochist first, and as a Japanese male a distant second.¹³⁴ Numa's work is interesting in the context of this thesis as his *Kachikujin yapū* (Domesticated Yapoo, 1956; also translated as 'Yapoo, the Human Cattle')¹³⁵ reinterprets Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* for a 1950s Japanese audience by 'focusing attention on the politics of

¹³³ In the notes to the chapter "When Women Write Post War Japan," Slaymaker acknowledges that including such a chapter at the end of his study could appear as an afterthought. Slaymaker 2004, p. 185.

¹³⁴ Herlands 2009, p. 67 note 8.

¹³⁵ *Kachikujin yapū* has been adapted into two separate *manga* versions, one drawn by Ishinomori Shōtarō in 1970 and one by Egawa Tatsuya in 2003.

recently occupied Japan.¹³⁶ In terms of the theoretical elements of masochism, in an addendum to his 1976 essay collection, Numa claims to have published on the importance of the contract in masochism in his regular column in *Kitan kurabu* magazine (Bizarre Tales Club) almost a decade prior to the release of Deleuze's essay, "Coldness and Cruelty," which, as we have seen throughout this chapter, also draws heavily from *Venus in Furs*.¹³⁷

Numa's *Kachikujin yapū* was first serialized in 1956, and later published in book form in 1970. The narrative revolves around a futuristic, time travelling empire, the Empire of Hundred Suns (EHS). The EHS was founded during the aftermath of World War III when a mass exodus from planet Earth occurred. The action is set concurrently in 1950s/1960s Germany and in the fortieth-century EHS. The EHS is a matriarchal Aryan society ruled over by blonde goddesses and served by 'blacks' and 'yellows.' The EHS is governed by a strict racial hierarchy in which 'blacks' are 'content with their status as slaves and game.'¹³⁸ The Japanese, who are the only surviving 'yellows',¹³⁹ have been genetically modified into multifunctional human cattle, known as *yapū*, who serve as everything from furniture and floor coverings to sex aids and food. The use of *yapū* as furniture reflects representations in *hentai* (lit. perverse) culture during the pre-war period.¹⁴⁰ The whole system is held in place by a delicate network of food, religion and pleasure. The EHS elite eat specially bred prime *yapū* livestock. The 'blacks' drink the 'whites' urine as wine, while the lowly *yapū* are fed a mixture of the 'blacks' urine and the 'whites' faeces. The most intelligent *yapū* serve as the toilets for the EHS elite and receive 'nectar and ambrosia' as their reward.¹⁴¹ Over the centuries the *yapū* have been selectively bred, fed on a diet of Aryan supremacist religion and certain drugs resulting in the fortieth century *yapū* being conditioned to

¹³⁶ Herlands 2009, p. 53.

¹³⁷ Numa Shōzō, "Mazoho no dorei keiyaku" [1976 addendum] *Aru musōka no techō kara* (From The Notebook by a Day Dreamer) vol.3 p. 19 cited in Herlands 2009, p. 67 note 5. Numa had a regular column in *Kitan kurabu* magazine between June 1953 and June 1961. Ibid., p. 67 note 3.

¹³⁸ Tatsumi 2006, p. 54.

¹³⁹ Aoyama 2008, p. 125.

¹⁴⁰ For a discussion on 'perverse' sexuality in pre-war Japan see McLelland 2004a, pp. 28-31.

¹⁴¹ Aoyama 2008, p. 126.

experience extreme pleasure each time they service their EHS goddesses. It is this pleasure and the high the *yapū* feel during their servitude which keeps the system in place.

The narrative begins when a time traveller from EHS, Pauline, makes a forced landing on twentieth century earth. Here she encounters a Japanese PhD student on exchange, named Sebe Rin'ichirō after *Venus in Furs*' Severin, and his German fiancé, Clara. On seeing the couple, Pauline assumes that Rin'ichirō is blonde-haired, blue-eyed Clara's *yapū* servant. Pauline escorts the pair to the future and initiates them to the ways of the EHS. There Clara soon adapts to the life of an EHS goddess where she becomes addicted to a drink called '*soma*' that tastes like coca-cola. At the same time Rin'ichirō undergoes a period of re-education, a process which is aided by various drugs, eventually becoming the *yapū* lapdog, Rin.¹⁴²

Among other things, the *Kachikujin yapū* narrative is a stellar inter-textual performance. The text not only draws on and parodies *Venus in Furs* but also Jonathon Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (Part IV: A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms, 1762). When Gulliver arrives in the Country of the Houyhnhnms in his final voyage he discovers a land ruled over by the horse-like Houyhnhnms who are served by the primitive, human/ape-like Yahoos. Both *Gulliver's Travels* and *Kachikujin yapū* are heavily parodied in Kurahashi Yumiko's "Ōguru kokuto kōki" (An Account of a Journey to the Country of the Ogres).¹⁴³ Jason Herlands points out that, in addition to Nazi ideology, *Kachikujin yapū* references and pastiches Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* (1859), the *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*) and the *Nibongi* (*Chronicles of Japan*).¹⁴⁴ It is Numa's parody of these texts which forms the basis of the novel's attempt to re-write Japanese

¹⁴² The loss of a name (or part of a name) resulting in a loss of self is also a central theme in Miyazaki Hayao's *Sen to Chihiro no kakiyashiki* (*Spirited Away*, 2001). Both main characters have had a part of their name stolen and must work to recover their full names and escape servitude in a bathhouse.

¹⁴³ Kurahashi 1985, pp. 89-98. Kurahashi returns to this theme in *Sumiyakisuto Q no Bōken* (*The Adventure of Sumiyakist Q*, 1969; trans. Dennis Keene, 1979).

¹⁴⁴ Herlands 2009, pp. 51, 59.

mythology, history and culture as nothing more than a multi-faceted *yapū* breeding programme facilitated by EHS time travellers.

The emasculation at the hands of the Occupation forces felt by the *nikutai* authors introduced above is clearly mirrored in Rin'ichirō's transformation from elite Japanese PhD student on exchange to Europe to the *yapū* dog Rin.¹⁴⁵ In the afterword to the 1991 edition, Numa writes that the idea of EHS was inspired by his own experiences during a relationship with a British woman in the immediate post-war period. Tomoko Aoyama proposes that Numa's 'persistent attempt' to 'decompose Japanese mythology, culture and the Emperor system, clearly originated in the author's private disgrace during occupation.'¹⁴⁶ This view is further supported by Rin's immediate and 'unconditional surrender' to his goddess once entering the EHS.

The masochistic world that Numa creates in *Kachikujin yapū* is not too dissimilar to the world of the S/M club in Yamada's *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*. In an article of 2001/2002, which will be revisited in Chapter 3, Wada Hirofumi compares the 'S/M' content in both novels, noting an association between the futuristic EHS with modern day Japan.¹⁴⁷ Wada concludes that, while the EHS does not exist in Japan in the latter half of 20th century, there are establishments where 'S/M maniacs' and 'fetishists' can go to enjoy the life of a *yapū*, much like the S/M club in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*.¹⁴⁸ The Queens who work at the club in Yamada's narrative fulfil the same role as the EHS goddesses, torturing their humble slaves as if they were *yapū*. The patrons of the S/M club beg to be allowed to perform the function of being the 'Queen's chair' or the 'Queen's toilet.' There is a clear connection between the enslaved *yapū* 'toilets' who are fed on ambrosia and the (paying) slaves who call the Queen's 'piss' holy water.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Aoyama 2008, p. 127.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Wada 2001/02, pp. 200-202.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 202.

¹⁴⁹ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 14; "Kneel Down and Lick My Feet," p. 194.

Phantasy/Fantasy

This section will briefly examine the importance of *phantasy*/fantasy in masochism before investigating the links between desire, fantasy and masochism. Referencing the French writer Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle, 1783-1842), Numa's *Kachikujin yapū* is dedicated 'to the happy few'¹⁵⁰ who will recognise the world of EHS not as a matriarchal-white-supremacist paradise (dystopia) but as a 'masochistic utopia' for the *yapū*; a 'masochist Bildungsroman.'¹⁵¹ It is these happy few who are able to enjoy that masochistic fantasy world to its fullest and who, like Rin'ichirō and Severin before him, desire to place themselves at the feet of their mistress (consort/partner/torturer) as a loyal and well (res)trained dog. It is Rin's ability to abandon himself to the fantasy element of the EHS that allows him to pursue this desire. Reik states that of the three characteristics of masochism '*phantasy* is the most important.'¹⁵²

Without psychological appreciation of these *phantasies* masochism is not to be explained. *Phantasy* is its source, and at the beginning there is nothing but masochistic *phantasy*.¹⁵³

Like Numa's 'happy few,' the protagonists of Kōno's and Kanehara's narratives and the patrons of Yamada's S/M club are all also able to enjoy masochistic fantasies due to their strong imaginations. Reik claims that the importance of *phantasy*/fantasy is 'proved by the fact that individuals with weakly developed imaginations show no inclination to become masochists.'¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Stendhal, whose works include *Le Rouge et le Noir* (*The Red and the Black*, 1830) and *La Chartreuse de Parme* (*The Charterhouse of Parma*, 1839), dedicated his fiction to 'the happy few.'

¹⁵¹ Aoyama 2008, p. 126.

¹⁵² Reik 1949, p. 44.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Fantasy and the ability to fantasise reiterate the masochist's position as active, successfully contesting Freud's persistent assumption of masochist-as-passive.¹⁵⁵ To borrow Noyes' re-working of Freud, if the sadist is the one who says 'I torment,' then 'the masochist is not the one who says "I am tormented," but the one who says "I direct my own torment."'¹⁵⁶ The masochistic fantasy highlights the delicate balance of power in the masochistic partnership. To repeat, the masochist is not controlled by a dominant, active partner. On the contrary, the classic masochist controls her/his consort/partner/torturer through a calculated system of dominance masquerading as submission which is made possible by the masochistic contract.

As we will see in Chapter 2, Kōno's narratives, especially the early short stories featured in the chapter, contain prolonged and detailed fantasy sequences. In "Yōjigari" the protagonist experiences several masochistic fantasies, including one centred on a strand of pearls that she attempts to act out with her lover, and a lavish beating sequence involving a small boy and his father. There is another beating fantasy in "Ari takaru" in which a mother castigates her daughter for failing to buy butter. (We might note that it is these fantasies that most trouble Kōno critics). The two protagonists of Yamada's *Hiçamaçuite asbi wo o-name* featured in Chapter 3 rely on the fantasies of their clients at the S/M club for their livelihood. Throughout the novel both protagonists also speak at length of their own sexual experiences, desires and fantasies. In Chapter 4 the protagonist of Kanehara's *Hebi ni piasu* spends her waking life as if in a dream – something that is emphasised in the film adaptation of the novel through the use of lighting and music. She fantasises about what would happen if the two unstable young men in her life were to sleep together. At the end of the novel the protagonist describes a fantasy/dream in which she feels that her body is full of water. The masochistic ladies' comics and *shōjo manga* that are examined in Chapter 5 treat fantasy in a different manner by virtue of the fact that they are visual

¹⁵⁵ This notion will be explored throughout; however, it is especially relevant to the readers of ladies' comics examined in Chapter 5.

¹⁵⁶ Noyes 1997, p. 157.

erotica used to stimulate the reader's own fantasies. The masochistic scenarios depicted in ladies' comics provide a 'powerful means for the female character [and, by extension, the reader who identifies with her] to access her own sexual desire.'¹⁵⁷ Ladies' comics also provide their readers with a place to share their personal fantasies. Drawing on a long tradition of reader contribution to girls' comics and women's magazines and journals, each volume of ladies' comics inevitably publishes a readers' column which contains detailed descriptions of the readers' fantasies. These include the "Amour ura-johō: Kare ni wa naisho!" (Amour Reverse Announcements: Don't Let Him Know!), pages featured in each edition of *Komikku Amour*.¹⁵⁸

Noyes points out 'the masochistic fantasy is sustained by the narrating subject's voice.'¹⁵⁹ This is the same regardless of whether the narrator is the first person protagonist of a work of masochistic literature, the central character in a film, the frame narrative in a *manga* or a masochist instructing their consort/partner/torturer how to act out her or his latest fantasy. Reik maintains that 'masochistic practices are but acting out of preceding phantasies;' they are 'daydreams that are transformed into reality. ... In the beginning there is no action, as far as masochism is concerned, but the *phantasy*.'¹⁶⁰ Unlike Freud, who continually assigns the masochist a passive role, Reik acknowledges that, through fantasy, the role of the masochist is a highly active one.

The masochistic fantasies that are present in the texts examined are informed by the experiences of each of the subjects. Whether they be sexual, social or economic, each takes their cues from 'social relations of power.'¹⁶¹ Reik uses the example of a masochistic man walking down the street when he is suddenly slapped on the face by a strange woman. Reik argues that since the

¹⁵⁷ Fujimoto 1992, pp. 70-90; Shamooin 2004, p. 97.

¹⁵⁸ Jones 2005, p. 99. See, for example, "Amour ura-johō: Kare ni wa naisho!" (Amour Reverse Announcements: Don't Let Him Know!) in *Komikku Amour* 248 (August 2010), pp. 686-697.

¹⁵⁹ Noyes 1997, p. 160.

¹⁶⁰ Reik 1949, p. 49.

¹⁶¹ Noyes 1997, p. 183.

necessary fantasy which both prepares and eroticises the scenario has not occurred the man would derive no pleasure from the exchange.¹⁶² In his discussion of Pauline Réage's notorious narrative of a woman who willingly submits to the sexual law of the male, *Histoire d'O* (Story of O, 1954, trans. Sabine d'Estrée 1965), Leo Bersani (b 1931) notes that the masochistic novel is 'essentially theatrical.'¹⁶³

Each of the sexual [acts] of [Réage's] work is like an act or a scene in a play: It has been carefully prepared by a 'director's' imagination and the major episodes of O [...] take place, as it were, in front of an audience.¹⁶⁴

Bersani concludes that 'sexual fantasy is primarily scenic.'¹⁶⁵ If the exact same scenario introduced by Reik – a woman walking up to a man and slapping him across the face, was to take place in controlled environment – say a club such as the S/M club in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, following the directions of the masochist, then it is almost certain that the masochist would experience intense pleasure. For Reik:

the actual scene corresponds thus to the staging of a drama and is related to the phantasies as is the performance to the dramatist's conception. They are exposed to the same accidents, incidents and necessary adaptations to the means at hand and are just as dependent on the mood and the cooperation of the actors.¹⁶⁶

Reik concludes that in this particular case the masochist is not unlike a 'stage manager,' and the rules that they ask their consort to abide by are the equivalent of stage directions.¹⁶⁷

This point is further illustrated by one of the masochistic scenarios in the first chapter of *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*. A new client of the S/M club begs Yamada's protagonists to stick old,

¹⁶² Reik 1949, p. 49.

¹⁶³ Bersani 1984, p. 292.

¹⁶⁴ Bersani 1984, p. 292.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Reik 1949, p. 49.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

rusty sewing needles into his penis in a recreation of the treatment that he received at the hands of his foster mother.¹⁶⁸ The client explains that rather than do it to himself, he ‘thought it would be better’ if a beautiful woman inserted the hundreds of needles for him.¹⁶⁹ This fantasy is obviously one that he has had prior to going to the club. Furthermore, the re-enactment of the treatment he received from a mother figure reiterates the classic association of the mother with masochism. When the scenario is finally acted out the client loses himself completely to the fantasy, admitting to having been a bad boy and crying out for his lost mother: ‘In a burst the man ejaculated. He screamed out: “Mother!...Mother!...Oh, Mother!”’¹⁷⁰ We are left to wonder if he is crying for his biological mother, his step-mother, the S/M club’s Mama-san or a universal mother figure. We are also compelled to recall Tanizaki’s maternal torturer.

The articulation of the maternal in masochism has been discussed briefly in the “Consort, Mother, Lover, Mistress” section of this chapter. However I wish to return to the idea of the mother in relation to fantasy – both the mother who is the object of male fantasy as mentioned in the last paragraph and mothers who fantasize. In *Permitted and Prohibited Desires* Anne Allison examines the incestuous mother-son relationship through the lens of desire and fantasy as informed by Freud and Lacan.¹⁷¹ While I am not suggesting that the maternal aspect of masochism is incestuous, or that real-life instances of mother/son incest are rife in Japan,¹⁷² Allison’s observations of the mother in relation to fantasy are worth considering. In her work, Allison states that ‘fantasy is constituted in relationship to the specific milieus in which people live and to which they refer even when constructing imaginary worlds.’¹⁷³ As in the masochistic fantasy described above in Reik’s *Masochism in Modern Man* and Yamada’s *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-*

¹⁶⁸ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 20-22; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” pp. 200-203.

¹⁶⁹ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 21; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” p. 201.

¹⁷⁰ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 19; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” p. 202.

¹⁷¹ Allison 2000, p. 124.

¹⁷² Something that Allison does not seem to succeed in conveying.

¹⁷³ Allison 2000, p. 125.

name, the reference to ‘lived experience is obvious in the incest stories,’ as used by Allison where the imagined scenarios can be ‘strikingly realistic.’¹⁷⁴

The underlying factor in the incest narratives that Allison investigates is the nurturing mother’s desire to provide for her son. Allison reports the most common fantasies of incest that these women were rumoured to initiate high-school student sons who were busy studying for school or university entrance exams. So as to ensure that he can study free from all distractions, including those of a hormonal nature, the nurturing mother – so it was claimed – offers herself as a sexual companion in order to ward off the threat of her son’s examination failure.¹⁷⁵ In this case, the mother can be seen as the equivalent of the masochistic consort. In a study of ladies’ comics, Kinko Ito states that the mother/son pair occurs more frequently in incest narratives in Japan than the father/daughter pair as is common in, for example, American narratives of incest.¹⁷⁶ Allison notes that outside of these incest fantasies the ‘sexual woman’ is rarely ‘portrayed as mother.’¹⁷⁷ In the ladies’ comic to be examined in Chapter 5, however, we will see that the sexual mother is quickly disposed of, either through her own death or the death of her children. As in the work of Kōno, the notion of a mother who may have an active – or even aggressive – sexual identity becomes highly problematic.

Desire

Masochistic fantasy and masochistic desire are linked in an endless circle. Masochistic fantasy gives birth to masochistic desire: the desire to act out certain fantasies; the desire to experience the most perfect moment of pleasure/pain; the desire to find and educate the ideal

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. Another ‘common’ incest fantasy, according to Allison, involves the son raping the mother. Rape fantasy will be looked at in the context of ladies’ comics in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

¹⁷⁶ Ito 2002, p. 80.

¹⁷⁷ Allison 2000, p. 128.

consort/partner/torturer. These two forces, desire and fantasy, drive the masochist to the very brink of their existence forcing them to fly in the very face of death: at all times ‘the masochistic fantasy requires the subject’s encounter with death.’¹⁷⁸ While the subject may be objectively aware of the risk factor involved in pursuing these life-threatening heights of pleasure, she or he is unable to resist the game of brink(wo)manship involved. In this way, the staging of the masochistic fantasy becomes an enactment of ‘sexuality’s destructiveness.’¹⁷⁹ It is this very quality that Freud identified in his work on the ‘death drive’ or ‘desire for death’ in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and that reverberates throughout Kanehara’s early texts to be discussed in Chapter 4. While this was a theory to which, like masochism, Freud would return throughout his career, the death drive was first introduced in opposition to the life drive or sexual urge.¹⁸⁰ Reik theorises the struggle between these two drives in the following manner: ‘the death urge wants to guide everything that lives back into eternal rest, into not-being. The erotic urges, however, want to create new life and to unite all living beings to bigger units.’¹⁸¹ The death drive manifests as part of masochistic desire which, as we will see, is ‘well suited to literary representation’ as it is ‘given to the elaborate narrative depiction of fantasy, the rendering of ideal relationships in place of mundane reality.’¹⁸²

Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) has famously proposed desire as unattainable lack or want. Kristeva’s theory of abjection informs us that this lack can be read as the ‘want on which [...] desire is founded.’¹⁸³ If we adopt this position then the fantasy, the thing that is desired, becomes something that can never be achieved. However, this does not mean that the masochist will stop pursuing their desired fantasy. The masochist chases after their perfect fantasy, never quite able to realise it until, like Severin in *Venus in Furs*, their hopes and desires are completely destroyed.

¹⁷⁸ Noyes 1997, p. 161.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 162.

¹⁸⁰ Freud 1920-22, p. 44.

¹⁸¹ Reik 1949, p. 31.

¹⁸² Herlands 2009, p. 52.

¹⁸³ Kristeva 1982, p. 5.

Nina Cornyetz, an influential Yamada scholar, considers the Lacanian notion of the ‘tension [between] desire and the impossibility of its fulfilment.’¹⁸⁴ This impossibility of fulfilment mirrors the eternal coldness of the perfect consort/partner/torturer while the tension of desire can be seen as an extension of Reik’s suspense factor. Cornyetz states that:

Desire must be articulated but is also inarticulable, and must indeed register in language negatively or metonymically.¹⁸⁵

She further argues that:

To say that desire must be taken literally is to say simultaneously that desire must be articulated, [...] and that desire is inarticulable. For if it is desire rather than words that we are to take literally, this must mean that desire may register itself negatively in speech [...]. As Lacan puts it, a dream of punishment may express a desire for what that punishment represses.¹⁸⁶

This interesting dichotomy can be seen in the difference between the fantasy sequences that, for example, Kōno’s protagonists experience as opposed to the masochistic scenarios that they act out with their lovers. This difference, which is crucial to a reading of Kōno’s texts, is one that I would argue is inadequately addressed in most Kōno critics. This is in spite of the fact that the extended beating fantasies in both “Yōjigari” and “Ari takaru” hold little resemblance to the masochistic scenarios that are depicted as actually occurring in the texts. In other words, even though the “Yōjigari” text concludes with the protagonist watching a little boy eating watermelon it does not necessarily follow – and this point cannot be overstated – that she would feel the same pleasure by acting out in real life her daydream of watching a boy being whipped until his stomach splits. However, she may/will enjoy fantasising about this. There is a marked

¹⁸⁴ Cornyetz 2007, p. 115.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 130.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 115-116.

difference between the reality and the fantasy. We do a great disservice to these textual women if we condemn them for fantasies, rather than actions, of this nature.

Lacan's *petit objet a* refers to objects or substitutes that are used to fill in for that which is desired and imagined (fantasised about) but realistically impossible.¹⁸⁷ The characters in Yamada's narratives are creatures of desire. They are in the interesting position of being both desiring subject – they are insatiable in their desires for clothes, shoes, expensive alcohol and the attention of their boyfriends and lovers – and desired object – as attractive, young women. These characters move from lover to lover in search of the perfect man, the perfect lover and the perfect penis. Likewise, the young characters in Kanehara's *Hebi ni piasu* lurch from one desire to the next. The protagonist works when she needs money for food, drinks when there is alcohol available and sleeps with the men who want her until her desires drive her to the very brink of destruction.

An alternative to the notion of desire as lack can be found in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*.¹⁸⁸ For Deleuze and Guattari, the conception of desire as lack/void is the fundamental problem with psychoanalysis.¹⁸⁹ Instead, Deleuze and Guattari propose a model in which the notion of desire as 'an idealistic (dialectical, nihilistic) conception' is rejected.¹⁹⁰ This notion is then replaced with one 'in which desire is a primary force rather than a secondary function of preliminary needs of goals (including pleasure).'¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ See Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, trans. J. Rose and J. Mitchell, 1982.

¹⁸⁸ Deleuze and Guattari completed *Anti-Oedipus* in 1972, five years after "Coldness and Cruelty."

¹⁸⁹ Bogue 1989, p. 89.

¹⁹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p. 25.

¹⁹¹ Bogue 1989, p. 89.

Cornyetz proposes that Deleuze and Guattari seek a concept of desire that is ‘fiercely anti-Freudian’ but much closer to that articulated by Lacan as explained above.¹⁹² For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is production, or rather, ‘desiring-production.’¹⁹³ This notion compliments Reik’s theories of masochistic *phantasy* in so much as there is a cyclical production of the end product of both the desire and the *phantasy*/fantasy. At the beginning of the cycle, the masochist has a fantasy that she or he desires to experience in full. In order to do so, the masochist must find the perfect consort/partner/torturer who is able to fulfil, or can be educated to fulfil, the needs of the particular fantasy. However, with the introduction of another person the masochist’s initial fantasy must change to accommodate the needs of the consort, which gives rise to a new fantasy and the cycle repeats itself. In his work on Sacher-Masoch, Deleuze links this repetition of the act of desire with Freud’s death drive. In Chapter X of “Coldness and Cruelty,” entitled “The Death Instinct”¹⁹⁴ Deleuze states that:

Beneath the sound and fury of sadism and masochism the terrible force of repetition is at work. [...] Pleasure is now a form of behaviour related to repetition, accompanying and following repetition, which has itself become an awesome, independent force.¹⁹⁵

Although desire as posited by Deleuze and Guattari is no more attainable than that of Lacan, as desire becomes productive, it ceases to be a passive acceptance of lack. We have already seen that masochism is not a passive stance, but an active stance. The protagonists in the texts by Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and ladies’ comic *mangaka* to be examined are active producers of desire. With each new experience or completed fantasy they desire something more.

The (self)destructive desiring woman is a fearful and reoccurring theme throughout Japanese mythology. Her earliest appearance is in the Izanagi and Izanami mythos of the *Kojiki* and the

¹⁹² Cornyetz 2007, pp. 130-131.

¹⁹³ Deleuze and Guattari 1983, pp. 1-9.

¹⁹⁴ Deleuze 1991, pp. 111-121.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 120.

Nibongi which Numa seeks to undermine in *Kachikujin yapū*. Izanami and Izanagi are the primordial deities who form Japan from chaos and parent the first generation of Japanese deities including the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, and her trickster brother, Susa-no-wo.¹⁹⁶ One early tale that showcases the danger of the desiring woman occurs soon after the two deities have created the Japanese archipelago. The pair travel from heaven to earth and decide they want to live as husband and wife:

They circle around the pillar of heaven, each heading in a different direction, and when they meet, Izanami, the female, exclaims: 'How delightful! I have met a lovely youth.' Izanagi is displeased that Izanami has spoken first, so he has them undertake the process again. This time when they meet on the opposite side of the pillar, he exclaims, an echo of the female's earlier statement, 'How delightful! I have met a lovely maiden.'¹⁹⁷

After this the couple give birth to a number of children and islands, some of whom are deformed and others who are allowed to live in the heavens. Izanami and Izanagi are informed that some of their children are deformed because Izanami spoke first.¹⁹⁸ In this act Izanami not only usurps the rightful place of the male to speak first, she also expresses her (sexual) desire for him.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a brief history of masochism, noting the origins of the word in the writings of Richard von Kraft-Ebbing, Sigmund Freud, Theodore Reik and Gilles Deleuze. An attempt was also made to establish a general understanding of the term masochism, although it

¹⁹⁶ In Numa's narrative, Izanami and Izanagi are two *yapū* of pure stock who are taken back in time to the 120th century BX as part of a breeding program by two EHS queens – Anna Terras and her sister Susan.

¹⁹⁷ Copeland 2005, p. 18. Copeland's translation has been quoted here rather than the 'thee' and 'thou' heavy English translations published in Chamberlain 1981, pp. 22-24 and Ashton 1972, pp. 12-21.

¹⁹⁸ It should be noted that while Izanami and Izanagi are the primary creators of Japan and a large number of Shinto deities, they are not the only gods in existence.

was emphasised that the meaning of this term shifted according to both the socio-historic circumstances at any given time or place and, in the context of this thesis, to the approach of the writer being discussed. Nevertheless the notion of masochism as expectation of pleasure in pain more than the experience of actual physical pain was noted as a key element of the discussion that will follow.

The chapter also outlined the English term ‘masochism’ and the Japanese terms ‘M’ and ‘*emmu*’ in terms of both their psychoanalytic use and their modern usages in both languages. I noted how, in the popular imagination, masochistic imagery is often misconstrued to indicate that the person being tortured is under the power of an omnipotent, sadistic entity. Throughout this chapter I have demonstrated that masochism and sadism are non-complimentary positions and that the masochist, in spite of appearances, is actually the one who holds the balance of power. It is the masochists who must educate their consort/partner/torturer so as to be able derive pleasure from their (the consort’s) actions. In classic masochism, particularly, the masochist is the one who sets the terms of the contract that must be upheld by both parties, and thus it is the masochist who dictates each (masochistic) sexual experience. Through their decisions to (generally) remain single and pursue employment and, most importantly, their sexual desires, the protagonists in the texts featured in this thesis do not comply with hegemonic norms. As a result they are placed outside the boundaries of conventional society. Significantly, in this position these women protagonists are free to undermine mainstream power relationships, turning them on their head as opposed to representing the passive and downtrodden female trapped in a ‘misogynistic Japan.’

For the purpose of this thesis, masochism will be defined based on current popular uses informed by classic, contractual Deleuzian masochistic theory. Using this definition, this thesis will follow the trajectory of masochistic imagery, as well as *phantasy*/fantasy and desire, present in

the work of Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara, and Watanabe from the late post-war era of the sixties and seventies, through the Bubble era of the eighties to the lost decade of the 1990s and its aftermath in the early 2000s. We will see that the woman masochist is no more and no less passive than a male masochist. If the masochist is a woman then, even if she appears bound, oppressed and restrained, it is her desire and her fantasy that her ‘torturer’ re-creates *purely for the pleasure of the masochist*. If the woman takes on the role of the ‘torturer’ then she fulfils the role of the ‘loving inflictor of punishment,’ simultaneously both ‘love object and controlling agent.’¹⁹⁹ While I do not wish to deny the subsidiary position of women or the frequent occurrence of violence against women couched in the terms of ‘she was asking for it,’²⁰⁰ we will see that, rather than being passive recipients, the masochistic women in the texts of Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and their contemporaries are the ones who hold the balance of power in their relationships.

In the following chapters the masochistic theories introduced in this chapter will be applied to the texts by Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and ladies’ comic *mangaka* such as Watanabe Yayoi. In the case of the Kōno texts, “Yōjigari” and “Ari takaru,” masochism will be discussed predominantly in terms of the masochistic contract between an established masochist (consort/partner/torturer) pair. We will see that through the means of the contract and a program of education Kōno’s masochistic heroines are able to act out their fantasies and desires. This will be elaborated upon in the chapter that follows.

¹⁹⁹ Studlar 1988, p. 14; Deleuze 1991, p. 15.

²⁰⁰ For more on spousal abuse as opposed to masochism see Chapter 2 of this thesis. For more on rape, especially, rape fantasy, see Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Chapter 2: Kōno Taeko – Inside the Soundproof Room: Masochism in Late Post-Pacific War Japan

Kōno Taeko and her Contemporaries in the 1960s and 1970s; Kōno's Soundproof Room; In the Realm of the Senses; Filthy Blood and Illness

Kōno Taeko's work is renowned for its portrayals of unconventional protagonists who refuse to conform to societal demands to be good wives and wise mothers. Instead, her protagonists fixate on or kidnap young boys, or engage in wife swapping and other 'deviant' expressions of sexuality. A key feature of her work is the use of masochistic motifs that were considered shocking at the time of original publication and which remain confronting to this day.¹ A particularly unsettling aspect of the writer's material derives from the fact that these elements are juxtaposed against descriptions of small, incongruous details of the mundane in everyday life, a further hallmark of Kōno's fiction.² This chapter will provide a detailed examination of two short stories: "Ari takaru" (Ant Swarm, 1964, trans. Noriko Mizuta Lippit and Kyoko Iriye Seldon 1991; trans Lucy North 1996) and "Yōjigari" (Toddler Hunting 1961; trans Lucy North 1996). Particular attention will be paid to the characteristics of contractual masochism as discussed in Chapter 1 so as to explore the masochistic contract as portrayed in Kōno's violent fantasies. While the main focus will be the two short stories mentioned above, reference will be made to other works by Kōno, and also to works by a number of her contemporaries, with a view to presenting as wide a range as possible of masochistic imagery.

Kōno Taeko was born in 1926 in Osaka. As a high school student she developed an interest in the work of Izumi Kyōka and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō.³ In 1940, after failing the entrance exams for the department of Japanese literature at Osaka Women's College (now Osaka University), Kōno

¹ Tanaka and Hanson 1994, p. 44; Bullock 2010, p. 43.

² Tanaka and Hanson 1994, p. 44.

³ Bullock 2010, p. 39.

enrolled in the economics department.⁴ However, soon after this, like many teenage girls, she was drafted as a student worker and spent the remainder of the war years working in a military factory manufacturing clothing.⁵ At the end of the war Kōno ‘recalls feeling a sense of “liberation”’ from the austerity of life under the war time regime.⁶ At this time, she turned her hand to writing, eventually joining one of the literary groups common at that time in which ‘would-be writers spent the years of their apprenticeship.’⁷ Her family objected to Kōno’s chosen profession and pressured her to get married instead. Eventually Kōno took an office job in the hopes of saving enough money to move to Tokyo. Kōno suffered from tuberculosis until the early 1960s and several of her short stories feature characters who have also suffered from the disease. For these characters, recovery often signals a turning point of some kind, as was the case in Kōno’s own life.

In 1963 at the age of 38 Kōno resigned from her job to become a full time writer. Soon after this she was nominated for the 1964 Spring Akutagawa prize for “Bishōjo” (Beautiful Girl 1963). Kōno went on to win the Autumn Akutagawa prize later that year for “Kani” (Crabs trans Phyllis Birnbaum 1982; trans Lucy North 1996), after which she continued to garner a swathe of prestigious literary awards. In 1967 she received the Women’s Literary Prize for “Saigo no toki” (The Last Time trans Lucy North 1996) and the Yomiuri Prize for “Fue no koe” (A Sudden Voice) the following year. In addition, she was the recipient of the Tanizaki Prize in 1980 for *Ichinen no banka* (A Year-long Pastoral) and the Nōma Literary Prize in 1991 for *Miiratori ryōkitan* (Cruel Tale of a Hunter Became Prey). These awards confirm Kōno’s status as one of the most significant writers of the post-war and subsequent eras.

⁴ Mizuta Lippit and Selden 1991, p. 273.

⁵ Kan and Natsuo 2006, p. 115.

⁶ Bullock 2010, p. 40.

⁷ Tanaka and Hanson 1994, p. 44.

“Yōjigari” follows the day to day life of a single working woman in her thirties, Hayashi Akiko, who has an obsessive hatred for little girls and a penchant for visually fixating on young boys. Akiko leads something of an alternative life for a Japanese woman in the 1960s – a promising opera singer she was forced to retire due to ill health and now works as a translator. She has no interest in motherhood or marriage, instead preferring to enter into a relationship of convenience with a man called Sasaki who is two years her junior. The narrative climaxes in an extended fantasy of a young boy being beaten. This fantasy experience is reprised in narrative “real life” at the end of the story when Akiko meets a different young boy who gives her a piece of watermelon. Although “Ari takaru” was written three years after “Yōjigari,” there are several similarities between the two short stories. Like Akiko, the protagonist of “Ari takaru,” Fumiko, is in her thirties and shares a similar dislike for small girls. Both protagonists also enjoy masochistic and violent sex. Unlike Akiko, Fumiko is married to a journalist named Matsuda. While “Ari takaru” takes place over the space of one morning, the narrative – which depicts Akiko’s concerns that she has conceived a child – is fleshed out with flashbacks and fantasy sequences similar to those found in “Yōjigari.” Pregnancy is something that would be most inconvenient, not only because Akiko does not like or want children, but because both Akiko and her husband are due to travel to America. As in the narrative of “Yōjigari,” the climax of “Ari takaru” comes in the form of a final fantasy in which yet another child is being mistreated, in this case a young girl.

Fumiko and Akiko, the protagonists of “Ari Takaru” and “Yōjigari,” are representative of the women found in many of Kōno’s short stories: both characters are independent women in their early thirties who are ‘never satisfied by ordinary lovemaking;’⁸ both have a tenuous relationship with their husband/lover and both work fulltime. Furthermore, neither of these two

⁸ In the original Japanese the term for ordinary is 人並みのふう (*hitonami no fū*) ‘like ordinary people.’ Kōno 1977a, p. 368; Kōno 1996, p. 139.

protagonists has, or wants, children. Indeed, Akiko has been warned that due to a prior illness, tuberculosis, childbirth might kill her. Each of these points immediately sets Kōno's protagonists outside the accepted (expected) 'hegemonic' norm for Japanese women of the time. In the 1960s less than 4% of Japanese women above the age of 25 remained single.⁹ Of the 96% who married, giving birth to between 2.00 and 2.13 children was the norm.¹⁰ In other words, the childless woman remained a distinct anomaly in Japan at the time that Kōno commenced writing. "Yōjigari" and "Ari takaru" introduce many tropes that are present in other Kōno narratives such as a past illness, menstruation, childlessness or infertility, issues surrounding resistance to motherhood, in addition to fantasy and memory, all of which will be discussed in detail throughout this chapter. While only Kōno's early short stories published in the 1960s and 1970s will be examined, it should be noted that she is a prolific writer who has continued to publish novels, short stories and essays into the twenty-first century.

Much has been made of the masochistic and 'sado-masochistic'¹¹ violence present in Kōno's narratives. Her texts have most often been examined in terms of the negative attitudes to motherhood said to be presented in subversive 'feminist' narratives that highlight the struggle of women locked in abusive relationships and who have no recourse but to vent their frustrations on their (real or imaginary) children. However this kind of analysis often seems to mistake masochism for spousal and/or child abuse. Van C. Gessel, for example, views Kōno's 'sado-masochistic' fantasies as 'intended as a denial of the motherly instincts within the

⁹ Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare *Jinkō Dōtai Tōkei* (Statistics of Popular Dynamics), 2006. There is an analogy that relates women aged 25 to Christmas cakes: 'Social wisdom in Japan [...] suggests that women are like Christmas cakes. [...] The interest in [both Christmas cakes and Japanese women] continues to rise until age twenty-four or twenty-five, at which time they command the greatest and can be sold at the best price.' Creighton 1996, p. 205. It should be noted that since the early 2000s, this adage have fallen out of use as the average age at first marriage for women has risen above the age of 25.

¹⁰ Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare *Jinkō Dōtai Tōkei* (Statistics of Popular Dynamics), 2006. See also Retherford, Ogawa and Sakamoto 1996, pp. 9-10.

¹¹ For more on the use of the term 'sado-masochism' see Chapter 1.

characters.¹² Nina Langton applies Nancy Chodorow's theory that 'women fear motherhood as an all-consuming experience' and 'come unconsciously and consciously to resent, fear, and feel devoured by their children.'¹³ Langton states that the 'sadistic, immoral, pathological and anti-social' fantasies in Kōno's work represent 'hostility against those individuals who threaten our separateness or who dominate or control our existence.'¹⁴ This is especially the case in relation to motherhood. Langton sees Kōno's fantasies as a 'weapon' for her marginalised women protagonists to 'protest against the society' that does not recognise them as 'whole person[s]'.¹⁵ Other theorists who suggest that Kōno's use of masochism is principally a means to protest the link between woman and motherhood include Uema Chizuko,¹⁶ Orie Muta,¹⁷ Maryellen T. Mori¹⁸ and Yoshikawa Atsuko.¹⁹ Furthermore, Yoshikawa links the paederastic and paedophilic elements of Kōno's writing with the repeated instance of childlessness in Kōno's narratives, reading both elements as a denial of motherhood.

While the attitudes displayed by Kōno's characters towards motherhood and child-rearing no doubt touch on these feelings of resentment, fear and denial, the theories proposed by the scholars given above do not, I would argue, fully cover the scope of her work. We might also observe from a slightly different perspective, that these scholars appear unaware of Adrienne Rich's distinction between motherhood as institution and motherhood as experience. Rich argues that unlike motherhood as institution, which women loath as they are required by hegemonic authority to sacrifice their all as mothers for the benefit of the state or society,

¹² Van C. Gessel's position as a Mormon must be taken into consideration when examining his work. Gessel 1988, p. 414. Jones also refers to Van C. Gessel in regards to his criticism of motherhood in Kōno's narratives. See Jones 2000, p. 80.

¹³ Langton 1997, p. 298; Jones 2000, pp. 80-81.

¹⁴ Langton 1997, p. 293.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Uema 1998. Jones also makes reference to the work of these four authors in regards to their work on Kōno. See Jones 2000, pp. 80-82.

¹⁷ Muta 1990, p. 151.

¹⁸ Mori 1996. See also Mori 2000, pp. 537-94.

¹⁹ Yoshikawa 1993.

motherhood as experience is a highly pleasurable, corporeal experience.²⁰ We will see that while Kōno's protagonists might completely reject motherhood as institution, there are muted suggestions in her texts that they are not necessarily averse to the possibility of the physical experience of being a mother.

In the previous chapter I introduced the work of Gretchen Jones, in particular her 2000 article "Subversive Strategies," in which she draws on Deleuze's theories to examine the masochistic aesthetic found in "Yōjigari." Jones, who explains that her principal objective is to examine this text in terms of 'confusion' and 'insanity' as a strategy for challenging patriarchy,²¹ argues that the masochistic aesthetic employed by Kōno is a specific choice, employed with deliberate purpose.²² It is her opinion that Kōno's use of the masochistic aesthetic, especially in her early short stories, such as those which will be examined in this chapter, is an 'implicit commentary on gender, power, and modern Japan.'²³ Sharalyn Orbaugh goes further by contending that 'Kōno ... uses [masochistic] sex to explore female self-expression and socially determined self loathing.'²⁴ While these factors are undoubtedly present, we will see that they do not adequately explain the nature of some of the elements which appear in the works being examined. Furthermore, it seems somewhat limited to dismiss the masochistic sexual preferences evident in Kōno's characters by equating social oppression or limited social opportunity with a desire for a painful sexual experience. As I have already suggested, it would be a brave critic that made this claim against the great representative of male masochistic experience, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō. On the contrary, Tanizaki's masochistic narratives are lauded for their repeated portrayal of masochistic heroes who are enslaved by *femme-fatales* of their own creation.²⁵

²⁰ See Adrienne Rich 1976.

²¹ Jones 2000, p. 82.

²² Ibid., p. 14.

²³ Ibid., pp. 79-107.

²⁴ Orbaugh 1996, p. 128.

²⁵ Mizuta Lippit 1977, p. 230.

In *The Other Women's Lib* Julia Bullock examines Kōno's work alongside two of her contemporaries: Kurahashi Yumiko (1935-2005) and Takashi Takako (b. 1932). For Bullock, Kōno's use of masochism and masochistic women protagonists provides a 'theoretical framework' that assists in 'understanding femininity as embedded in relationships of dominance and submission that are integral to the institution of marriage.'²⁶ Bullock gives a close reading of four of Kōno's texts including "Yōjigari," *Haisei* (Broken Oath, 1966), "Hone no niku" (Bone Meat, 1969; trans. Lucy North, 1996) and "Rōjo" (On the Road, 1964), while also referencing a number of the writer's other works. Bullock observes the following regarding "Ari takaru:"

As the protagonist is depicted as playing the role of masochist vis-à-vis her husband, this fantasy of abusing a daughter seems to replicate the treatment she receives at the hands of her husband, allowing her at last to take up the position of sadist in this cruel family game. Presumably it is easier to envision playing the dominant role vis-à-vis another woman who is younger and dependent on her than it is for the protagonist to imagine turning the tables on her husband, a man in a position of power over her. This highlights the way that power asymmetries between men and women produce misogynist dynamics, which then reassert themselves in relationships between women.²⁷

However, in this relatively recent reading of masochism in "Ari takaru,"²⁸ Bullock is yet another scholar who seems to mistake masochism for spousal abuse. Bullock continues, stating that 'such narratives underscore the irresistible force of the gendered roles ingrained into both women and men in Japanese society.'²⁹ She further argues that these roles are not 'natural' to Kōno's characters but have been woven 'into the fabric of marriage patterns and prove exceedingly difficult to subvert, even when they are distasteful to the characters themselves.'³⁰

²⁶ Bullock 2010, p. 43.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 42.

²⁸ Published in 2010, this text signals a new interest in the work of Kōno and her contemporaries.

²⁹ Bullock 2010, p. 43.

³⁰ Ibid.

There are two points to be made here. Firstly, as has been noted, the violence directed towards the child in Kōno's material never extends beyond fantasy, which, although it may be confronting/problematic/unacceptable – or any other negative epithet – does not venture into 'real-life' textual behaviour. Secondly, while it may be that some women in abusive relationships are violent to their children as a form of escapism or deflected retribution, this is not necessarily the case in the classic masochistic relationship. We will see that Fumiko's seemingly sadistic fantasy of beating her (imaginary) daughter is actually a masochistic performance. "Ari takaru" follows a similar path to Severin's journey in *Venus in Furs*: from willing recipient of masochistic torture to loving inflictor of whippings and beatings. While it is important to acknowledge the unalterably gendered nature of men and women in all societies, as well as the fact that the imbalances of social power in favour of males can lead to various forms of violence against women, the violence of masochism need not *necessarily* be tied to this. For the purpose of this thesis, I am not interested in abusive or sadistic relationships

Kōno Taeko and her Contemporaries in the 1960s and 1970s

Kōno debuted as an author in 1963. The 1960s in Japan was a period of remarkable economical and social stability. In the wake of the post-war Occupation (1945-52) and the subsequent withdrawal of Allied forces, Japan emerged from the ashes to become 'an independent nation under increasingly conservative rule.'³¹ While the left wing fragmented into factions, conservative parties merged into a single Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) which dominated Japanese politics from 1955 until 1993.³² The Japanese economy regained its pre-war strength in 1964 and then rapidly exceeded this mark throughout the rest of 1960s and early 1970s. The 1960s can be seen

³¹ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

³² Hane 1996, pp. 45, 62.

as a time of ‘individual prosperity’ and ‘economic growth.’³³ 1966 is said to have been the first year of *maikā*, ‘my car;’ the last item in a long line of must-have ‘my’ purchases from 1955 onwards until well into the 1970s, such as *maikara*, ‘my colour’ meaning ‘my television,’ *maikūra*, ‘my cooler’ or air conditioner and *maihōmu*, ‘my home.’³⁴ This rapid economic growth would later escalate to the heady extremes of the Bubble period.³⁵

Japan’s ‘new beginning’ was showcased in the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, the World Expo in 1970 in Osaka and the Sapporo Winter Games of 1972. The 1964 Tokyo Olympics have been referred to as post-war Japan’s *seijinshiki* or ‘coming of age ceremony.’³⁶ If this event proclaimed the rebirth of war-ravaged Japan and confirmed the country’s re-entry into the global community, Expo 70 provided a further showcase for national growth with its display of Japan.³⁷ During its six-month run over 65 million visitors, including half a million from overseas, visited the exhibition. The Sapporo Winter Games, at which Japan made a clean sweep of the medals in the normal hill ski jump event, rounded out this trio of showcases. These three events ‘stand for Shōwa’ as ‘treasured examples’ of Japan’s return to the world stage.³⁸ The 1960s also heralded a time of desire for material goods, sexual freedom and the rise of the ‘myth of the middle class.’³⁹ Although I do not wish to develop this discussion further, when considering Kōno’s texts an understanding of the social conditions of the time of her textual production when Japan re-entered the ranks of the world’s ‘A-class nations’ is useful in order to highlight the stark contrast between the immediate post-war and the late post-war period.

³³ Bullock 2010, pp. 14-15.

³⁴ Plath 1990, p. 229.

³⁵ For more on the Bubble period or Bubble *jidai* see Chapter 3.

³⁶ Brinckmann 2008, p. 12.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 13

³⁹ Sugimoto 1997, pp. 36-37.

At the same time that Japan was regaining its position on the global stage the country was rocked by unease. The vast student demonstrations of 1968-69 which saw university campuses overrun and occupied by protesting students, echoed the instability that had occurred at the start of the decade with *ANPO bantai* (anti-ANPO) rallies that protested the renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. These student demonstrations, which shut down universities throughout Japan, saw the ‘emergence of youth culture’ in Japan, reflecting social revolutions and unrest felt around the world in events such as Paris 1968, Woodstock, and youth protests against the Vietnam War.⁴⁰ The period saw a complete overturning of social assumptions. Author Murakami Haruki (b 1949) refers to the student riots in his fictional narratives such as *Noruei no mori* (Norwegian Wood 1987, trans. Jay Rubin 2000),⁴¹ as does Kurahashi Yumiko in her debut “Parutei” (Partei, 1960; trans. Yukiko Tanaka and Elizabeth Hanson 1994) which lampooned the post-war Marxist student movement.⁴² Although by 1972 ‘normality’ had been restored, the student protests and general unrest created an opening for the emergence of ideas that had previously been taboo.

The position of women, too, in the 1960s and 1970s changed dramatically in the wake of the immediate post-war and Occupation years. Article 14 of the new Japanese Constitution that took effect in May 1947 states that: ‘all of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin.’⁴³ Article 24 assigns ‘essential equality of the sexes’ in regards to the selection of spouse, property rights, inheritance and divorce et cetera. Marriage was to be based on the

⁴⁰ Godoy 2007, p 11.

⁴¹ In *Murakami Haruki and the Music of Words* Jay Rubin relates Murakami’s experience of the riots. Waseda University, where Murakami was studying, was one of the universities shut down by the protests. Murakami says that he enjoyed throwing rocks during the riots but found the idea of student unionism unappealing. The author avoided taking part in the protests for the most part, instead opting to spend his time seeing over 200 movies in a single year. Rubin 2002, pp. 19-24.

⁴² Kurahashi uses the German ‘Partei’ as opposed to the English ‘Party’ to further the Marxist allusion. Tanaka and Hanson 1994, pp. 1-16.

⁴³ “The Constitution of Japan.”

‘mutual consent of both sexes’ grounded in the ‘equal rights of husband and wife.’⁴⁴ Other socially significant reforms that shaped the position of women during the post-war period include the abolition of primogeniture – meaning that daughters (and second or third sons) were now able to inherit the same share of family property and chattels as eldest sons – and the raising of the legal age for marriage from seventeen to eighteen for men and from fifteen to sixteen for women, although in practice minors under the age of twenty required parental or guardian consent.⁴⁵ However, as might have been expected, even though these constitutional and legislative changes were put into practice they ‘did not bring about an immediate end to the old ways.’⁴⁶ The Meiji period ideal of the good wife/wise mother archetype (*ryōsai kenbo*), which required women to be educated solely in order to produce generations of upstanding Japanese sons, remained a ‘dominant discourse of female sexuality.’⁴⁷

As a result of the residual influence of *ryōsai kenbo*, even with societal changes such as those outlined in Article 14 of the constitution, well-educated and professionally trained women were still regarded as temporary workers.⁴⁸ The attitude that ‘for women, the happiest job in the world is to be a wife and mother’ remained a widespread one.⁴⁹ Women were expected to enter the workforce only to leave to marry and have children. The industrial production of the late 1950s and early 1960s brought with it the archetype of the ‘salaryman family’ (a nuclear family headed by a ‘salaried male breadwinner,’ two children and a full-time *sengyō shufu* housewife) which, although in the minority, became the ideal.⁵⁰ One means of reinforcing this ideal was through university education for both men and women which fed directly into the company system. In this structure the university educated *kyōiku mama* (lit. education mother) was created as a media

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Röhl 2005, p. 286.

⁴⁶ Hane 1996, pp. 32-33.

⁴⁷ Bullock 2006, p. 663. See also Koyama 1991, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Hane 1996, p. 150.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 151.

⁵⁰ Imamura 1996, p. 2.

construct and the ‘school system and the family counted on her input.’⁵¹ She became an important foundation to Japan’s economic growth. Without the wise post-war mothers watching over their son’s education the whole system may have fallen apart entirely.

Following the 1957 ‘tennis court’ romance of the crown prince and his commoner wife, love marriages became an attainable reality in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵² The question ‘of whether or not one should marry’ at this time was better phrased as ‘what sort of marriage should one aspire to.’⁵³ In the 1970s the image of a ‘successful woman’ expanded to include one who had experience in ‘education, work, marriage, community and child-related activities, hobby and study circles, part-time work, and family leisure.’⁵⁴ Yet, although during the period of rapid economic growth that occurred between 1965 and 1975 women increasingly left the household to take temporary, part-time and full-time jobs at places such as supermarkets, convenience stores, and fast-food chains,⁵⁵ marriage and particularly children remained central to their lives. While they might have had more time as a result of the increasingly widespread use of electrical appliances such as those of the ‘my’ boom mentioned above, the focal point of their lives should be the husband and the home. Very few, indeed, were the women who, like Fumiko from “Ari takaru,” could expect to prioritise their own work schedule and own activities over that of their male partner.⁵⁶

Orbaugh and Bullock both delineate the period between 1960 and 1973 as a key moment in Japanese women’s writing.⁵⁷ This period begins with Kurahashi Yumiko’s satirical “Parutei,” and ends with the oil crisis which stalled economic growth when Arab petroleum producing states

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵² Bullock 2010, p. 21; Imamura 1996, p. 3.

⁵³ Bullock 2010, p. 21.

⁵⁴ Imamura 1996, p. 3.

⁵⁵ Hane 1996, p. 152.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Orbaugh 1996, p. 126; Bullock 2010, p. 6.

imposed an oil embargo on importing nations.⁵⁸ Kurahashi's debut was quickly followed by the debuts of Kōno and other authors such as Ōba Minako (1930-2007), Takahashi Takako (b 1932), Tomioka Taeko (b 1935), Tsushima Yūko (b 1947), and Kanai Mieko (b 1947). The period was further enriched by the work of already established authors including Amino Kiku (1900-1978), Uno Chiyo (1897-1996), Sata Ineko (1904-1998), Enchi Fumiko (1905-1986), Mori Mari (1903-1987) and Hirabayashi Taiko (1905-1972). According to Tanaka and Hanson, the '1960s was the beginning of an era when women writers became increasingly important.'⁵⁹ While women had long engaged in significant acts of writing, the decade nonetheless heralded a time when these writers were published and acknowledged as never before.

It was against a background of rebirth and change, expressed through the success of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and the violence associated with the student riots at the end of the decade that many of these emerging authors were writing on themes that ranged from incest, masochism, infanticide, cannibalism and murder to dismemberment and disfiguration.⁶⁰ Understandably, these were themes that many readers found, and continue to find, disturbing or offensive. However, these are not simply tales of men hurting or killing women.⁶¹ As Orbaugh points out, most of the violence depicted in these stories is performed, either in actuality or in fantasy, by women on themselves.⁶² As we will see, many of Kōno's short stories from this period feature female protagonists who enjoy initiating masochistic and violent sex. Yet, it remains significant that the sex in these stories takes place wholly according to the desires of the women who, although they take what might be interpreted as the submissive role, demonstrate considerable agency.

⁵⁸ See for example Shina 1974, pp. 335-344.

⁵⁹ Tanaka and Hanson 1994, p. xv.

⁶⁰ Orbaugh 1996, p. 127.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

There is little doubt that the experiences of the war years and the social privations of the immediate post-war were factors in the choice of violent and disturbing themes by Kōno, Ōba and their contemporaries. Two of Kōno's short stories in particular deal directly with issues related to the Pacific war. "Michi-shiho" (Full Tide 1964; trans. Lucy North 1996) relates the war from the perspective of a 10 year old girl, while "Tetsu no uo" (Iron Fish 1976; trans. Yukiko Tanaka 1985) concentrates on the memories of an older woman.⁶³ Ōba stated that her experience of seeing the mushroom cloud on the day that Hiroshima was bombed and later witnessing a crowd of people with disfigured faces was a recurring image that haunted her while she wrote.⁶⁴ However, the evocation of war-time violence is far too simplistic an interpretation to account for everything that is going on in the narratives of these writers and their contemporaries. While there may be some association between these women's experiences during the war and the themes that they explore in their literary works, I strongly support Bullock's suggestion that the use of violent themes by these authors is also a way for women to reclaim the body from its appropriation by males into the 'good wife/wise mother' archetype.⁶⁵ In order to fulfil the role assigned to them by the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology, women are inevitably rendered a-sexual. In Bullock's reading, Kōno and her contemporaries are part of an unseen wave of feminism – that took place during the 1960s before so-called 'Second Wave Feminism' that swept through Japan in the 1970s⁶⁶ – and which sought to reclaim overt, including sometimes violent and confronting, sexual activity as a right for women.

In noting the list of disturbing themes found in the work of women writers during this fifteen year period – murder, infanticide, cannibalism and so on – Orbaugh highlights the fact that these

⁶³ Other works by Kōno that touch on this theme include "Hei no naka" (Inside the Fence, 1962) and "Tōi natsu" (Distant Summer, 1964).

⁶⁴ Tanaka and Hanson 1994, p. 88.

⁶⁵ Bullock 2006, p. 663;

⁶⁶ Bullock 2010, p. 3.

themes each ‘involve the body directly, and violently.’⁶⁷ For Orbaugh, this body is more than just the metaphoric literary, erotic or religious ‘abstraction’ of a woman’s body but also the physical, bloody body represented by the ‘legal and moral’ concept:⁶⁸

I am referring not only to the female body, which reduces it [...] to the status of Woman – a cultural sign that can be activated by any one of various physical elements: breasts, hips, thighs, buttocks, a dainty foot, the nape of the neck, a maternal countenance. I am referring more specifically to the way a legal and moral abstraction is made out of the body in which a woman lives and walks around – this specific amalgam of muscle, blood, bone, fat, and so on that types these words.⁶⁹

Both of these notions of the body, which we might explain as the cultural construct created in the service of men and the legal restrictions implemented to ensure the maintenance of this, extend from the body of the protagonist to that of her family and/or, as is the case in Kōno’s work, her lover(s). It is very much this specific amalgam of Orbaugh’s ‘muscle, blood, bone and fat’ that is the body of the Kōno protagonist. While the maternal countenance may be absent, the women we meet in Kōno narratives are no literary, erotic, or religious ‘abstractions’ but living, breathing feminine flesh.

In *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature* Susan J. Napier suggests that the literature written in the post-war and late post-war periods confronted and deconstructed the ‘widely held notion of Japan as a homogeneous middle-class nation, supported by traditional and uniquely Japanese values founded on harmonious nuclear families.’⁷⁰ She further argues that it is in the fiction written by women that the family structure is most distorted. While Napier does not engage with Kōno’s texts, her observations are equally applicable in the case of this writer. She elaborates that, ‘some of the most savage and memorable attacks’ on the nuclear family come from women

⁶⁷ Orbaugh 1996, p. 127.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 124.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Napier 1996, pp. 52-92.

writers whose works ‘describe a world in which the fantasy of the harmonious nuclear family imposed by the Japanese establishment is turned into a nightmarish vision of repression and despair.’⁷¹

This subversion of the nuclear family is clearly visible in Kōno’s short stories. However, her work is more complex than the one-dimensional ‘nightmarish-vision’ suggested by Napier’s words. In addition to the masochistic scenes for which she is famous, Kōno embeds in her narratives the small details of everyday life – a swarm of ants, a dropped button, the breeze from an open window,⁷² the need to buy groceries such as butter or ice, and the everyday occurrence of urination and menstruation. Likewise, her characters are grounded in the flesh and not merely in an overtly sexual sense. Akiko and Fumiko constantly express the feeling of heat and cold on their bodies as much as they revel in sensations of pain and pleasure. This corporeal awareness is often accompanied by a sense of closed space. Unlike some of the narratives that Napier discusses, such as Tsutsui Yasutaka’s “Poruno wakusei no sarumonera ningen” (The Salmonella Beings From Planet Porno, 1982), that are located in unlimited spatial dimensions, Kōno’s women protagonists are more often than not confined to small, liminal sites that can be termed ‘women’s traditional space.’⁷³ Mizuta Lippit and Selden argue that these women appear in a ‘closed room or house’ in which they pursue masochistic ‘illusions of pain-pleasure sex’ and fantasies in which they abuse children.⁷⁴ Certainly the closed room of these texts becomes a space in which the writer’s protagonists and also her readers can engage in activities that are completely off-limits to the modest, child-caring wife.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 53.

⁷² We must compare Kōno’s attention to detail to that of fellow author Kōda Aya.

⁷³ Mizuta Lippit and Selden 1991, pp. ix – xxiv, xxi.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Kōno's Soundproof Room

The small settings that are a feature of Kōno's fiction can be seen as a continuation of the 'small space' found in literature from the Taisho era, such as the attic space featured in the works of Yoshiya Nobuko.⁷⁶ They also evoke the confined spaces of the later pre-war girl. In "The Genealogy of *Hirahira*" Honda Masuko talks of entering a 'different time,' upon entering Yoshiya's small space 'redolent with the imagined fragrance of hot-house freesias,' a 'small be-ribboned room' accessible only to the *shōjo*.⁷⁷ Kōno's heroines are, of course, no longer *shōjo*. In fact, both Akiko and Fumiko shudder at the thought of having once been young girls, let alone still being associated in their thirties with the ideals of the *shōjo*: Akiko dislikes girls to the point where she 'could not bear to remember that she herself had once been a little girl,'⁷⁸ Fumiko too does not like children, stating that she is 'especially harsh' on girls.⁷⁹ Nevertheless the 'small space,' albeit a highly sexualised version of Honda's be-ribboned bower, is present in the narratives of all three of the authors examined in this thesis, as well as in the 'ladies' comics' examined in Chapter 5. We will furthermore see that in 'ladies' comics' the ribbons and flowers of the *shōjo* blossom into visual representations of desire, pleasure and ecstasy.

Kōno is not the only author to more or less aggressively sexualise the small space. Acclaimed author, Mori Mari, the daughter of Mori Ōgai, utilised the small space in her full-length 'father-daughter love affair,' *Amai mitsu no heya* (The Sweet Honey Room, 1975).⁸⁰ In "Japanese Female Writers Watch a Boy Being Beaten by his Father" Kazumi Nagaike reads the work of Kōno and Mori, along with the work of women writers such as Okamoto Kanoko and Matsuura Rieko,

⁷⁶ For more on Yoshiya Nobuko see Frederick 2005, Dollase 2003, pp. 724-755.

⁷⁷ Honda 2010, pp. 20, 37.

⁷⁸ "Yōjigari," p. 321; "Toddler Hunting," p. 45.

⁷⁹ "Ari takaru," p. 44; "Ant Swarm," p. 176.

⁸⁰ Aoyama 2001, p. 179.

through Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten."⁸¹ Mori's sweet honey room drips with the incestuous love between a father-daughter pair which Deleuze proposes is to sadism what the mother-son pair is to masochism.⁸² Aoyama points out that although no violation takes place between the father and the daughter there is a plethora of men who fall prey to the 'innocent demon' lurking inside the daughter protagonist.⁸³

Rio Otomo refers to the small space in Kanehara's *AMEBIC* (2005) as 'a room of one's own,' referencing Virginia Woolf's 1929 work of the same name.⁸⁴ Drawing on Woolf, Otomo refers to the space to indicate that given a 'room of her own and a means of living, a woman writer could achieve as much as a man.'⁸⁵ A similar reading can be made of Kōno's small space. Each of Kōno's protagonists possesses a room of her own and a means of earning a living. In this space they also engage in masochistic sex with their chosen partners. After a particularly loud session of sex, Fumiko's lover promises: 'Don't worry, [...] I'll make us a soundproof room. We need one already, if you ask me.'⁸⁶ The soundproof room is Kōno's small space, sweet honey room or 'room of her own.'

This closed space or soundproof room takes on a different guise in each of Kōno's narratives.

"Ari takaru" is set inside the boundaries of Fumiko's house. The story is located in a confined domestic setting, especially the kitchen space featured in the second part of the narrative. In

"Kani," Yūko effectively kidnaps her nephew when he is brought to visit her at the seaside retreat where she is staying alone to recover from tuberculosis; a couple who contemplate

swapping partners with their closest friends have more satisfactory sex in the pool of light cast

⁸¹ Nagaike 2004a, pp. 45-55. Nagaike's paper draws on her PhD dissertation which looks at fantasies of male homosexuality in the work of Japanese women writers with reference to Freud's work on female sexuality. For more on beating fantasies see "In the Realm of the Senses" in this chapter.

⁸² Deleuze 1991, pp. 62-63.

⁸³ Aoyama 2001, p. 182.

⁸⁴ Otomo 2010, p. 133. See Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*.

⁸⁵ Otomo 2010, p. 133.

⁸⁶ "Ari takaru," p. 49; "Ant Swarm," p. 182.

by a candle in a certain holder in “Yoru wo yuku” (“Night Journey,” 1963; trans Lucy North 1991); behind the closed doors of her house a woman (literally) tidies herself out of her life after being informed that she has only a number of hours left to live whilst on her way to a friend’s funeral in “Saigo no Toki” (“The Last Time,” 1966; trans Yukiko Tanaka and Elisabeth Hanson 1982; trans Lucy North 1991); a married woman living on her own finds herself increasingly attracted to a hunchback and his beautiful wife when she starts to visit their house after meeting them at a theatre in “Gekijō” (“Theatre,” 1962; trans Lucy North 1991). Given the sheer size of Kōno’s oeuvre this is nowhere near an exhaustive list. Nevertheless, each of these confined spaces, which include closed rooms and houses, the light cast by a candle, the dark of night, and the theatre, are different constructions of ‘the soundproof room’ for which Fumiko yearns in “Ari takaru.” In these works, the outside world exists purely as superfluous scenery glimpsed from the window of the closed room.⁸⁷ It is almost as if so much of the attention of Kōno’s protagonists is trained on their own bodies that they have no mental capacity left to focus on the exterior world.

In “Yōjigari,” the small room, or rather, the soundproof room is Akiko’s apartment. However, unlike the room that Matsuda promises to make for Fumiko, this apartment is anything but soundproof. One night when Akiko and Sasaki are engaging in masochistic sex involving a strand of pearls and a washing line, the pair are interrupted by the building’s superintendent asking them to ‘keep it down.’⁸⁸ The narrator explains that ‘the other tenants of the building were familiar with the going-on in this room. That night, however, they [Akiko and Sasaki] must have gone a little too far.’⁸⁹ As soon as the door closes on this exchange Sasaki demands that Akiko prepare a written statement outlining that their ‘sexual habits maybe having certain consequences,’ so that if anything were to happen while they are engaging in violent sex, Sasaki

⁸⁷ Mizuta Lippit and Selden 1991, p. xxi.

⁸⁸ “Yōjigari,” p. 333; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 63.

⁸⁹ “Yōjigari,” p. 333; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 63.

would be able to ‘prove it was an accident.’⁹⁰ This is the first mention of the masochistic contract, as discussed in Chapter 1, which exists between Akiko and her consort/partner/torturer, Sasaki. The contract that Kōno and her contemporaries have with their readers is similar. The reader knows that by stepping inside the closed world of the narrative (the small space; the soundproof room; the room as sweet as honey; the attic; the be-ribboned bower) they will witness any number of violent acts. However, like the transgressor in other classic ‘forbidden chamber motifs,’ Kōno’s readers cannot help but look.⁹¹ This small space/soundproof room/room ‘of her own’ evokes the forbidden chamber motif of countless folktales. The motif of the small space and other liminal settings will be revisited throughout the thesis.

In the Realm of the Senses⁹²

As we saw in the previous chapter, in *Masochism in Modern Man* Reik outlines what he refers to as the three main characteristics of masochism, namely: ‘the *special significance of phantasy*, the *suspense factor* (that is, the necessity of a certain course of excitement), and the *demonstrative feature*.’⁹³ In other words, according to Reik, a masochist takes pleasure in imagining a certain scenario, enjoys waiting for it to come to pass and revels in the event when it finally occurs.⁹⁴ Masochism, in this respect, is placed firmly in the realm of the senses – a realm denied by the hegemon to the good wife and wise mother - in which all sensory responses are heightened and enhanced. In the scene in “Yōjigari” mentioned briefly above, Akiko holds herself in readiness for Sasaki to begin beating her and is ‘so aroused she felt as if every nerve in her body was concentrated in the flesh

⁹⁰ “Yōjigari,” p. 334; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 64.

⁹¹ For more on the forbidden chamber see “The ‘Forbidden Chamber Motif’” in Kawai Hayao’s influential work *The Japanese Psyche: Major Motifs in the Fairy Tales of Japan*, 1997, pp. 1-26. We might also recall Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) in this context.

⁹² The title of this section quotes Ōshima Nagisa’s 1976 film *Ai no korīda* (In the Realm of the Senses).

⁹³ Reik 1949, p. 44.

⁹⁴ Ibid. For more on masochism and fantasy see Chapter 1.

of her back.’⁹⁵ The key to her excitement is the anticipation with which she awaits the blows. In this instance, wanting something different from her usual lovemaking routine, Akiko has instructed Sasaki to use a strand of fake pearls. The necklace breaks after only one blow and Akiko’s arousal quickly turns to anger and annoyance as Sasaki turns his attention to gathering the small beads. Her fantasy broken and scattered, Akiko can no longer sustain her interest in the proceedings until Sasaki finds the previously referenced clothes-line with metal hooks that clink promisingly.⁹⁶

Sound, too, plays an important part in the realm of the masochistic fantasy. The narrator explains that Akiko and Sasaki are especially fond of ‘the sound things made [when] whipped against her skin.’⁹⁷ In *Masochism in Modern Man*, Reik introduces the link between *phantasy* and the appeal of sound in a number of masochistic case-studies, noting that for one subject ‘the sound of clinking iron awakened the pleasurable *phantasy* of being chained.’⁹⁸ Susan Sontag catalogues the various whips, chains and masks that are used in *Histoire d’O*, observing that in masochistic narratives these items creak and groan as they must first become clichés before they can ever be erotic.⁹⁹

The scenario with the strand of pearls is just one of the many masochistic scenes featured in both “Yōjigari” and “Ari takaru.” However, even given the violence inherent here, and in other similar scenes, the masochistic scenarios that the protagonists act out in the course of the narratives are quite mild in comparison to the scenarios that occur only in the protagonists’ fantasies. We might say that if the ‘real-life’ textual activities of Kōno’s masochistic women push sensory response to the limit, the fantasy activities of these women cross all boundaries. Thus,

⁹⁵ “Yōjigari,” p. 333; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 62.

⁹⁶ “Yōjigari,” pp. 333-334; “Toddler Hunting,” pp. 62-63.

⁹⁷ “Yōjigari,” p. 334; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 63.

⁹⁸ Reik 1949, p. 49.

⁹⁹ Sontag 1969, p. 51.

while Akiko is beaten to the point of collapse on more than one occasion, in her fantasy a small boy is beaten, burnt and eventually has his stomach split open and his intestines pulled out. In the realm of fantasy the everyday is taken to the extreme. We will see that the fine line between ‘real-life’ and ‘fantasy’ is similar to the one that masochists, especially women masochists, traverse between pleasure and annihilation.

Both the “Yōjigari” and “Ari takaru” narratives are split unevenly between that which occurs in the realm of the everyday lived experience and that which takes place in the realm of the protagonists’ fantasies. “Yōjigari” contains no less than five fantasy sequences: Akiko imagining a young boy trying to wriggle out of a shirt; that same boy being beaten by his father in an erotically charged daydream in which Akiko indulges; Akiko’s plan to have her lover Sasaki beat her with the strand of pearls; a second daydream involving a young boy walking over to her while she is at a public bath; and, at the end of the narrative, a young boy eating a watermelon that may or may not actually take place only in Akiko’s mind. “Ari takaru” features three fantasies: Fumiko’s imagined pregnancy; a daydream in which she burns her imaginary daughter with cigarettes and hot butter; and a fantasy in which Fumiko is able to give birth to a child because Matsuda beats her during the labour.

While each text features a number of masochistic scenarios, both also focus on an extended fantasy – the beating fantasy in “Yōjigari” and the burning fantasy in “Ari takaru” – that are graphically and almost lovingly rendered. Each is coloured red through repeated references to blood, meat, unrelenting heat, glowing sunlight and throbbing arousal.¹⁰⁰ In the beating fantasy a little boy of seven or eight is physically chastised by his father – a man in his thirties. Before the fantasy proper begins, the stage is set in the ‘strange world’ into which Akiko ‘plunge[s]

¹⁰⁰ “Yōjigari,” pp. 331- 332; “Toddler Hunting,” pp. 60-61; “Ari takaru,” pp. 47-48; “Ant Swarm,” pp. 179-180.

herself.¹⁰¹ Although the faces of the boy and the man are obscured, it is important for Akiko to believe that ‘the child, at least, [is] very, very sweet.’¹⁰² The beatings begin with the father ‘scolding’ the boy in ‘so gentle a tone’ that it is ‘harrowing;’ first the father strikes the boy across his face with the back of the hand, after which he uses an alligator skin belt and lastly a cane with which to beat the child.¹⁰³ After several blows the father sets down the cane and takes the boy over to a tin shack and ‘forces him against the scorching metal.’¹⁰⁴ In the ‘full heat of the summer sun’ the corrugated metal leaves ‘dark red stripes branded’ onto the boy’s flayed back.¹⁰⁵ The fantasy does not end there. Next the boy’s hands are tied above his head and he is hung from a tree. The father gives the boy’s stomach a few lashes at which point the child’s stomach splits like a ripe melon and the intestines, ‘an exquisitely coloured rope of violet, slither out.’¹⁰⁶

It is crucial to note that, throughout this fantasy, these acts of almost unspeakable violence against the child are directed through the voice of a disembodied woman.¹⁰⁷ The cane, for example, is only used at her suggestion; the same is true for the whipping of the boy’s belly. Even more disturbingly, this woman’s voice also offers commentary and joyful exclamations: ‘Look. Look at the blood,’ the voice cries, directing the attention of both the man and the reader to the trickles of blood snaking down the boy’s naked legs.¹⁰⁸ Throughout the fantasy the boy is turned and displayed for this woman’s perusal. The identity of the woman providing directions and commentary remains unclear for the duration of the fantasy. Perhaps it is Akiko, perhaps it is the narrator, or perhaps it is even the reader. Regardless of the speaker’s identity, the voice adds a dimension of spectatorship to the incident which compounds the illicit nature of the fantasy. Furthermore, while the reader might condemn Akiko and the man for their atrocities, by

¹⁰¹ “Yōjigari,” p. 330; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 59.

¹⁰² “Yōjigari,” p. 330; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 59.

¹⁰³ “Yōjigari,” pp. 331- 332; “Toddler Hunting,” pp. 60-61.

¹⁰⁴ “Yōjigari,” p. 332; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 61.

¹⁰⁵ “Yōjigari,” p. 331; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 61.

¹⁰⁶ “Yōjigari,” p. 331; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 61.

¹⁰⁷ This point is also made by Jones 2000 a, p. 96.

¹⁰⁸ “Yōjigari,” p. 330; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 60.

the very fact of reading on, she or he (the reader) becomes to some extent complicit in these acts of violence.

The presence of an onlooker in this fantasy sequence evokes Freud's essay "A Child is Being Beaten," as referred to in the 2000 work of Jones and then Nagaïke again in 2004. In his essay, Freud delineates a male and a female version of the beating fantasy.¹⁰⁹ Nagaïke gives the following outline of the three phases of the female fantasy that Freud gives in his essay:

- 1) on the first level, the child is being beaten by the Father: the impulse of sexual desire is represented as sadistic;
- 2) on the second level, I (the referent) am being beaten by the Father: the impulse of sexual desire is masochistic, and the situation is subjectified.
- 3) on the third level, I (the referent) am watching the child being beaten by the Father: the impulse of sexual desire is represented as scopophilic,¹¹⁰ and the situation is objectified.¹¹¹

As Jones notes, the similarity between the third phase of Freud's theory and Kōno's beating fantasy is uncanny, particularly as Kōno reputedly had no knowledge of Freud's work at the time she wrote "Yōjigari."¹¹² Nagaïke, also recognised as an authority on boy love and *yaoi* (homo-erotic) genres, states that this similarity is no coincidence as 'both works suggest the prevalence of unified structures of female psychological ambivalence regarding male homosexual fantasies.'¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Jones 2000, pp. 97-98.

¹¹⁰ There is some debate surrounding both the spelling of this term – scopophilic as opposed to scopophilic – and whether or not the term conveys the intention of Freud's original. However, the term has now been subsumed into literature in the sense of the lust of the gaze or voyeurism.

¹¹¹ Nagaïke 2004, p. 45; Freud 2006, pp. 286-288. There are interesting parallels between Freud's work and two German tales dating back to 1555 and 1600 regarding a group of children pretending to be butchers who slaughter another child who has taken on the role of a piglet. Both tales were published in the first edition of the Grimm Brothers' *Children's Stories and Household Tales* (1812; 1815) but not in subsequent editions as they were felt to be too violent and disturbing. Grimm 2004, pp. 371-372.

¹¹² Jones 2000, p. 97.

¹¹³ Nagaïke 2004, p. 47 note 3.

Jones cites Jean François Lyotard's discussion of the position of the woman in the third phase of the beating fantasy. For both Jones and Lyotard, what is important is that:

the *phantasizing* subject is not herself represented. She is not on stage and loses herself among the spectators. She is therefore at once behind the scenes, prompting her father, and in the audience clapping.¹¹⁴

Jones surmises that 'as a result of these dual identifications, the binary opposition of active/passive is severely compromised' and therefore 'any sort of categorisation as actor or acted upon becomes impossible.'¹¹⁵

Both Jones and Nagaike read the beating fantasy as a commentary on the 'subconscious desire for motherhood and its ultimate failure.'¹¹⁶ While this may be the case, I find that it is more instructive to look at the purely masochistic elements inherent in the scene. As suggested by Jones' commentary on the *phantasy* subject provided above and as introduced in Chapter 1, a defining characteristic of the masochist is the desire to stage-manage the scenarios that they act out with their partner through the use of education and the contract.¹¹⁷ It should come as no surprise, then, that the masochist would direct the action even *inside* her or his own fantasies. Freud notes that the child who is beaten in phase 3 is nearly always a boy, but that it is a father substitute more often than the father who does the beating.¹¹⁸ Although in the beating fantasy in "Yōjigari" it is the father who does the beating, he does so only at the direction of the woman's disembodied voice. Freud notes that 'the essential characteristic' of the third phase of the beating

¹¹⁴ Jones 2000, p. 98; Lyotard 1983, p. 349 after D. N. Rodowick's translation, Rodowick 1991, p. 75.

¹¹⁵ Jones 2000, p. 98.

¹¹⁶ Nagaike 2004, p. 49.

¹¹⁷ See Reik 1949, p. 49; see also Bersani 1984, p. 292.

¹¹⁸ Freud 2006, p. 287.

fantasy is that ‘the fantasy is now the vehicle for [...] masturbatory satisfaction.’¹¹⁹ We might in that respect note the auto-erotic element present in Kōno’s disembodied woman’s voice.

It is important that, while the beating fantasy in “Yōjigari” can be interpreted in terms of the apparent incestuous, sadistic and homoerotic tendencies exhibited, the fundamental elements of this scenario are taken not from a wildly perverse or violent real-life encounter, but, paradoxically, from a number of mundane elements that have occurred in Akiko’s daily life. The little boy is undoubtedly an extension of a small boy – the child of a singer in the opera troupe of which Akiko was previously a member – that she presented with a striped shirt on impulse, as is her habit, earlier in the day. The boy’s burnt and flayed back might be read as the pattern on the shirt. The final suspension of the boy from a tree and the heat of the fantasy mimic the way in which the shirts were displayed in the shop window in which Akiko first saw them. The pavement outside the store is flooded with ‘heavy sunlight,’ while in the ‘showcase window’ a display of ‘pretty little shirts for boys’ were ‘pinned up.’¹²⁰

In contrast to the father-son coupling in “Yōjigari,” the burning fantasy in “Ari takaru” is centred on a mother-daughter pair. The fantasy occurs one morning as Fumiko and Matsuda lie together in bed after Fumiko has discovered that her period has started and she is not, in fact, pregnant. Fumiko and her husband are discussing how they would treat their children if they ever decided to have any, and, in particular, if they were to have a daughter. Fumiko states that she’ll be ‘mean and cruel,’ so cruel that people will think she is the girl’s ‘stepmother.’¹²¹ She warns Matsuda that regardless of the level of violence he is capable of inflicting during their lovemaking, she herself will be so harsh on their daughter that he will ‘have to go hide in the

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 288.

¹²⁰ “Yōjigari,” p. 322; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 47.

¹²¹ “Ari takaru,” p. 44; “Ant Swarm,” p. 176. The evil stepmother trope is not limited to western fairytales such as *Cinderella* or *Snow White*. *Ochikubo Monogatari* (The Tale of Ochikubo) is a Japanese Cinderella-like tale that dates back to the 10th century during the Heian period. It is one of the oldest Japanese tales that feature harassment and bullying from a stepmother.

closet and cover his ears.’¹²² It is important to note that this fantasy takes place only after Fumiko has confirmed that she is *not* pregnant. The couple are not – as is clearly implied if not explicitly stated in some commentary – lying in bed rejoicing that they now have a child to torture. The main point to note, rather, is that the image of the daughter she would treat so cruelly stirs Fumiko’s imagination thus ‘stimulat[ing] all sorts of fantasies.’¹²³

In her fantasy Fumiko berates the girl for entering the room without knocking and failing to close the door. She strips the girl naked, pinching and prodding her as she does, revealing cigarette-like scars on her back, a litany of past abuse.¹²⁴ During the fantasy, Fumiko remembers that there is no butter in the house. Chastising her daughter for not buying any, she drags the child to the kitchen where a pat of butter ‘slid[es] from the ceiling.’¹²⁵ Fumiko scoops a spoonful of butter and starts melting it using the heat of the gas stove. There is an unwritten implication that once the butter has melted to a clear yellow liquid Fumiko will pour it over her daughter, adding to the scars and burns that already mark the girl’s flesh.

Like the beating fantasy which Akiko enjoys, Fumiko’s fantasy is characterised by what seems to be a high level of sadism. Indeed, “Ari takaru” can be seen as following a similar narrative path to Sacher-Masoch’s *Venus in Furs*. At the end of his masochistic odyssey, Severin, the protagonist of *Venus in Furs*, declares himself ‘cured’ of masochism and turns to ‘whipping and torturing women.’¹²⁶ However, as we saw in the previous chapter, Deleuze maintains that ‘it is difficult to say that sadism turns into masochism and vice versa’ as the ‘masochist’s sadism’ is not the same as that of De Sade or a sadist, and the ‘sadist’s masochism’ is not that of Sacher-Masoch or a

¹²² “Ari takaru,” p. 47; “Ant Swarm,” p. 179.

¹²³ “Ari takaru,” pp. 44-45; “Ant Swarm,” p. 176.

¹²⁴ “Ari takaru,” p. 47; “Ant Swarm,” p. 179.

¹²⁵ “Ari takaru,” p. 48; “Ant Swarm,” p. 180.

¹²⁶ Sacher-Masoch 1991, pp. 150-151, 271; Deleuze 1991, p. 39.

masochist.¹²⁷ This paradoxical reversal only occurs at the end of the enterprise when the masochist has reached a sufficient level of experience. As Deleuze points out:

Severin's 'sadism' is a culmination; it is as though expiation and the satisfaction of the need to expiate were at last to permit the hero what his punishments were previously intended to deny him.¹²⁸

Akiko's pleasure during the beating fantasy is derived from the masturbatory nature of the fantasy. In "Ari takaru," Fumiko's key pleasure in fantasising about torturing her daughter is drawn from the moment she imagines showing her daughter the scars Matsuda has inflicted on her: 'I'll show her my body. "Look!" I'll tell her: "Look at what your father does to me. I can bear it, and so should you!"'¹²⁹ The burning fantasy, as in the beating fantasy in "Yōjigari," marks the culmination of not only Fumiko's masochism but also of the narrative of the short story.

Both the beating fantasy in "Yōjigari" and the burning fantasy in "Ari takaru" are filled with elements that reinforce Akiko and Fumiko's identities as masochistic women (as opposed to Freud's feminine masochists who 'naturally' desire to submit to male dominance). Throughout *Venus in Furs* the ideal masochistic woman is described in terms of Titian's 1555 painting, *Venus with the Mirror*, in which a half-naked woman covered in a fur-lined velvet robe sits and gazes at her reflection in a mirror held by a cupid.¹³⁰ However, in spite of the seductive allure of this image, there is a more mundane function at work that relates to Kōno's protagonists and also to Wanda. Both the aged Severin in the frame narrative of *Venus in Furs*, and Deleuze in his study of Sacher-Masoch's work, point out that these furs retain their 'utilitarian function' – in other words, the furs are included in the painting less for the woman's modesty or decoration than for fear of her catching cold.¹³¹ Deleuze states that Sacher-Masoch's heroines 'frequently sneeze.

¹²⁷ Deleuze 1991, p. 40.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ "Ari takaru," p. 46; "Ant Swarm," p. 178.

¹³⁰ Sacher-Masoch 1991, p. 149; Titian, *Venus with a Mirror*, ca. 1555.

¹³¹ Deleuze 1991, p. 53; Sacher-Masoch 1991, p. 149.

Everything is suggestive of coldness: marble body, woman of stone, Venus of ice, are frequently used' throughout Sacher-Masoch's narratives.¹³² Akiko and Fumiko are warm only when they are taking part in masochistic sex with their partners or indulging in masochistic fantasies. As we have seen, the beating fantasy in "Yōjigari" takes place in the blazing summer sun. Prior to this Akiko is cold - her fingers are 'frozen numb' from carrying a block of ice home;¹³³ the too-strong beer that she drinks is 'pleasantly chilly';¹³⁴ she falls asleep on the floor and wakes up 'cold and clammy',¹³⁵ she sneezes several times and gets a blanket from the cupboard.¹³⁶ Akiko even states that if she had a daughter she would be an excessively 'cold and harsh' parent.¹³⁷ However, as the beating fantasy begins Akiko feels her body begin to warm, and when Sasaki beats her with the washing line it is as if 'her body had been a mass of red-hot iron filings.'¹³⁸

The same pattern of coldness and warmth is also present in "Ari takaru." After Fumiko and Matsuda have sex in the wake of the burning fantasy, Fumiko finds herself 'concentrating on her physical sensations':¹³⁹ heat, stinging pain and waves of feeling caused by the 'pleasant early summer breeze.'¹⁴⁰ It is the sensations of her body that centre Fumiko's pleasure in the moment – the first time in the short story that she is not worrying about the future (whether or not she is pregnant and, if so, if this will disrupt her plans), the past (that first, unsatisfactory bout of sex) or fantasising about something else altogether. Kōno's use of cold is not limited to "Ari takaru" and "Yōjigari." The protagonist of "Yuki" (Snow, 1962; trans. Lucy North 1996) is both fascinated and terrified by snow and everything associated with it. After recovering from tuberculosis, the protagonist of "Kani" would still catch cold easily. In "Gekijō" the protagonist visits her friends

¹³² Deleuze 1991, p. 53.

¹³³ "Yōjigari," p. 327; "Toddler Hunting," p. 52.

¹³⁴ "Yōjigari," p. 328; "Toddler Hunting," p. 55.

¹³⁵ "Yōjigari," p. 328; "Toddler Hunting," p. 55.

¹³⁶ "Yōjigari," p. 328; "Toddler Hunting," p. 55.

¹³⁷ "Yōjigari," p. 321; "Toddler Hunting," p. 45.

¹³⁸ "Yōjigari," p. 334; "Toddler Hunting," p. 63.

¹³⁹ Ari takaru," p. 49; "Ant Swarm," p. 182.

¹⁴⁰ Ari takaru," p. 49; "Ant Swarm," p. 182.

– the hunchback and the beauty – for Christmas, only to be told that despite the cold she is not allowed to join them under the *kotatsu* (a heated table covered with a blanket). In this instance the protagonist of “Gekijō” is physically cold. At the same time, she is exposed to the coldness of the hunchback whom we might interpret as the beauty’s consort/partner/torturer. Upon the completion of the hunchback’s directions to clean the room the protagonist is finally permitted to join the pair under the warm table.

We have previously noted how in “Coldness and Cruelty” Deleuze outlines the relationship between the masochist and his or her consort/partner/torturer and states that this relationship relies above all on two non-negotiable elements – that of the contract and that of education. In Deleuze’s model, furthermore, a key element of the role of the masochist is educator of the chosen consort/partner/torturer in order to ensure that the ‘torturer’ experiences pleasure whilst being able to ensure this also for the masochist. Masochism is ‘above all formal and dramatic,’ demanding a ‘peculiar kind of formalism’ to be successful.¹⁴¹ The masochistic contract ensures that the needs and desires of the masochist will be provided for in spite of their surrendering certain rights to their partner. However, things do not always go to plan – Sasaki’s hurried attempts to gather the fallen pearls annoy Akiko. In the fantasy she strives to realize, Sasaki is a figure of dominance who should not be crawling around on his hands and knees searching for errant pieces of costume jewellery.

Despite the fact that Akiko is the one who will be beaten, she is also the one who is in control of the situation. In masochistic relations, it is the pleasure of the masochist that is the governing aspect. It is to this end that the masochist educates his or her consort/partner/torturer so as to produce the desired sensations. As a result it is the masochist and not the ‘torturer’ who governs all interactions between the pair and therefore it is the masochist who holds the balance of

¹⁴¹ Deleuze 1991, p. 109.

power, regardless of how things appear to a casual observer. Contrary to Bullock's commentary on "Ari takaru" introduced above, the protagonists of the two stories examined in this chapter are not the victims of a sadistic husband or a sadistic lover. Nor are their fantasies of beating or burning children a direct product of a form of spousal/partner abuse. Rather, both Fumiko and Akiko, as the masochists in their respective relationships, are the dominant partners.

In "Ari takaru" Fumiko's contract with her husband, Matsuda, is not only a formal masochistic one, but since they are married a legal one as well. At the outset of the story Fumiko defines her relationship with Matsuda in terms of their different work schedules, their sexual practices, their plans to study abroad and their decision not to have children. Matsuda is a reporter with unpredictable hours while Fumiko works for an American law firm with regular hours and the weekends off. In addition to detailing Fumiko's lust for pain and Matsuda's willingness to satisfy this, the narrator notes the regularity of Fumiko's periods which dictate when and how the couple interact sexually. It is Fumiko's work and her regular schedule that determines when the couple wake in the morning and eat at night. In their sexual relationship it is Fumiko's reliable menstrual cycle that dictates when and how she and Matsuda interact. After their masochistic sexual encounters, Matsuda heals Fumiko's wounds, sometimes using meat to sooth the bruises that she has asked him to inflict on her.¹⁴² Likewise it is her decision not to have children, as opposed to it being Matsuda's, which is the determining factor in their childlessness. At one point during the narrative Matsuda states that 'not many men get obsessed with kids [...] it is women who end up insisting on having them.'¹⁴³ Although the passage suggests little intent one way or the other on Matsuda's part, it nevertheless implies that his possible desire for children is secondary to Fumiko's lack of interest in starting a family. This further confirms her position of dominance in the relationship.

¹⁴² "Ari takaru," p. 49; "Ant Swarm," p. 182. In the second half of the narrative, Fumiko notices that the 'lump of raw meat' that Matsuda has used to draw out her bruises is covered with crawling ants – the 'ant swarm' of the title.

¹⁴³ "Ari takaru," p. 40; "Ant Swarm," pp. 170-171.

Similarly, in “Yōjigari,” Akiko’s dominance is evident on all levels of the relationship. In fact, given that she is two years older than Sasaki, and that all of their sexual encounters take place at Akiko’s apartment, Akiko’s dominance extends further than that of Fumiko in “Ari takaru.” While Fumiko holds the balance of power in the masochistic relationship between herself and Matsuda, Matsuda, as her husband, is legally recognised as head of the household. However, the narrative space of “Yōjigari” is very much a room of Akiko’s own. Here Sasaki fulfils the role assigned to him in order to realise Akiko’s fantasies. In fact, to some extent, he fills a ‘superficial role’ in the relationship which is held together purely through his and Akiko’s ‘compatible sexual tastes.’¹⁴⁴ At one point Akiko goes so far as to state that the ‘thought of being tied down by [...] a long commitment was insufferable’¹⁴⁵ concluding that, almost paradoxically, it is her very impatience and need for freedom which keeps her in the relationship with Sasaki. It is a relationship from which both partners feel they are able to walk away at any point in time without regret. Such an agreement is greatly at odds with a scenario featuring spousal abuse by either person.

“Yōjigari” begins with the following statement: ‘Hayashi Akiko couldn’t abide little girls between three and ten years old – she detested them more than any other kind of human being.’¹⁴⁶ This hatred of small girls which is shared by many Kōno protagonists is clearly one of the reasons that the writer’s work is so often examined in terms of its rejection of motherhood. While her childhood was not a particularly unhappy one, Akiko remembers feeling as if her senses were being oppressed by ‘something loathsome and repellent:’

¹⁴⁴ “Yōjigari,” p. 328; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 56.

¹⁴⁵ “Yōjigari,” p. 330; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 59.

¹⁴⁶ “Yōjigari,” p. 321; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 45.

it was as if she were trapped in a long, narrow tunnel; as if a sticky liquid seeped unseen out her every pore – as if she were under a curse.¹⁴⁷

Akiko remembers a science lesson from about this period in her life in which the class studied silk worms. When she examined a cocoon that her teacher had sliced open with a scalpel blade revealing a loathsome worm wriggling inside, ‘suffocating in its own threads of silk,’¹⁴⁸ Akiko felt as if ‘she was seeing the embodiment of the feelings that afflicted her.’¹⁴⁹ The image of the silkworm in the cocoon was also theorised by Honda Masuko, who noted that ‘girlhood (*shōjo no toki*) is often likened to the sleep of a pupa awaiting transformation into a butterfly, a time spent in a closed world.’¹⁵⁰ Honda continues:

there comes a day when the girl realises that she herself is a *shōjo*, a day she also learns she can never be a boy, a *shōnen*. From that time it is as if she spins a small cocoon around herself wherein to slumber and dream as a pupa – consciously separating herself from the outer world. Here she lives life to her own time, a time that can never be lost.¹⁵¹

For Honda, girlhood is a time for sleep and dreaming from which emerges a blinking and bewildered figure who was ‘once a girl.’¹⁵²

As noted above, however, Akiko cannot ‘bear to remember that she herself had once been a little girl.’¹⁵³ Instead of a time of dreaming, Akiko sees the ‘filthy closeness she had glimpsed in the pupa’ in the form of a young girl. She is what Honda would term a ‘non-girl;’ one who seeks ‘to justify themselves by neglecting and ‘marginaliz[ing]’ the figure of the girl.’¹⁵⁴ When Akiko finally reached her early teens, however, the ‘queasiness left her’ and she felt as if ‘she had stepped out

¹⁴⁷ “Yōjigari,” p. 321; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 46.

¹⁴⁸ Jones 2000a, p. 100.

¹⁴⁹ “Yōjigari,” p. 321; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 46.

¹⁵⁰ Honda 2010, p. 20.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ “Yōjigari,” p. 321; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 45.

¹⁵⁴ Honda 2010, p. 20.

of a tunnel into the vast free universe' where she is 'finally' able to breathe.¹⁵⁵ In "Yōjigari," the image of the butterfly/moth/pupa is repeated in the opera that Akiko's old company is performing – Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*.¹⁵⁶ For Jones, this sense of confinement and suffocation that 'dominate[s] Akiko's feelings as a child' is related to 'her view of the place of women within the social order.'¹⁵⁷ Jones links the use of the silk worm to motherhood and Akiko's inability to have children due to illness.¹⁵⁸ She states that 'the pupae encased in cocoons eventually become butterflies.'¹⁵⁹ However, silk worms do not become butterflies, or more accurately moths; they are killed in the manufacturing process to make silk.¹⁶⁰ This metaphor could be read as one which symbolises the death of the innocent young girl as she grows to womanhood – the perfect *yamato nadeshiko* wrapped in silken cloth, tamed by men (industry, the father, society) and transformed into a product designed by a hegemonic patriarchy. Jones argues that 'the indescribable dread at the pit of Akiko's stomach as a child can be interpreted as a dread of attaining womanhood and facing the limited set of choices available to women in 1960s Japan.'¹⁶¹ This reading, however, presents some difficulties, given that Akiko's feelings of confinement and suffocation eased or even ceased once her body began the physical changes that would lead to both sexual independence, or at least sexual capacity, and reproductive womanhood. In the case of Kōno's characters, I would argue that this sexual independence is expressed through the medium of masochistic sex; repugnance gives way to a full – although not necessarily unproblematic - experience of the adult body. While Honda uses the silkworm cocoon as a form of armour which protects the *shōjo* from conforming corporally, in Kōno's world, the squirming,

¹⁵⁵ "Yōjigari," p. 322; "Toddler Hunting," p. 46.

¹⁵⁶ In the opera Chocho-san can be seen as the archetypal butterfly woman: trapped and waiting in vain for her lover to return and set her free. *Madam Butterfly* (circa 1906).

¹⁵⁷ Jones 2000, p. 100.

¹⁵⁸ The links between silk, spinning and women are almost endless from Classical references, such as Minerva (Greek Athena), the Roman goddess of spinning and womanly arts, to European medieval women continually spinning wool on their distaffs to Japanese women spinning cotton to weave at home in the pre-modern era and the mill girls of the 1930s.

¹⁵⁹ Jones 2000, p. 101.

¹⁶⁰ "History of Sericulture."

¹⁶¹ Jones 2000, p. 100.

confined girl emerges as a woman with a functioning reproductive system which also gives her access to a sexual identity and the pleasure/pain that this brings.

Filthy Blood and Illness

The protagonists of “Yōjigari” and “Ari takaru” are both women who experience (or suffer from) regular periods. Without doubt, Akiko’s emergence from the cloying confines of girlhood is linked with the beginning of her menses.¹⁶² As mentioned above, the regularity of Fumiko’s periods is the only contraceptive precaution that she and her husband Matsuda take since ‘from the start, her period had always been regular, so punctual as to be almost amusing. Even the time it came – the evening – was usually the same.’¹⁶³ In “Yōjigari” we are told that, apart from one occasion when Akiko had made Sasaki ‘whip her so violently that she couldn’t stand up for two days,’¹⁶⁴ Akiko’s periods also always arrived regularly. However, in spite of their apparent fertility, neither of the women has, nor wants to have, children. As Fumiko is about to embark on study in America with her husband, a child would be a serious inconvenience at this point in her life. In Akiko’s case, after surviving pulmonary tuberculosis, she is told that she would never survive a pregnancy. For both, a child would mean an end to their current lives and aspirations or even, as is the case for Akiko, death.

When Kōno was completing her early work, women with regular periods, such as the protagonists of “Ari takaru” and “Yōjigari,” were seen as fertile women for whom not having a child indicated deviance and social failure. The link between regular menstruation and fertility was only discarded by the medical world in the late 1980s.¹⁶⁵ In “Ari takaru” the inclusion of Fumiko’s menstrual cycle firmly grounds the narrative in the body of the protagonist, a fertile

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ “Ari takaru,” p. 37; “Ant Swarm,” p. 167.

¹⁶⁴ “Yōjigari,” p. 331; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 58

¹⁶⁵ Molony 1995, p. 279.

body that ‘should’ give birth. And although for some western readers, talking openly about ‘that time of the month’ is one of polite conversation’s unmentionables, in modern Japan mention of menstruation has never been much of a taboo at all.¹⁶⁶ It has long been a subject included in literature by women writers such as Higuchi Ichiyo (1872-1896) and Tamura Toshiko (1884-1945), both of whom hint ‘overtly at the spoiled nature of a woman’s smelly, bloody body.’¹⁶⁷

The abject nature of menstruation was not merely related to the manner in which it ‘spoiled’ a woman’s body.’ Japanese criminal psychologists also linked menstruation and other reproductive functions to increased crime rates in women offenders.¹⁶⁸ In his 1930 *Hanzaisha no shinri* (The Criminal Psychology), Kaneko Junji proposed that ‘sexual desire and crime’ were inherently related in women as a result of the ‘criminal danger of the menstrual cycle.’¹⁶⁹ Elizabeth Grosz suggests that bodily fluids ‘attest to a certain irreducible “dirt” or disgust, a horror of the unknown or the unspecifiable that permeates, lurks, lingers, or at times leaks out of the body, a testimony of the fraudulence or impossibility of the “clean” and “proper.”’¹⁷⁰

In *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva argues that menstrual blood ‘threatens the relationship between the sexes with a social aggregate and, through internalisation, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference.’¹⁷¹ Kristeva defines menstrual waste as one of the main categories under which all polluting objects fall; the other being excrement and disease.¹⁷² She goes on to state that while excrement and its equivalents, disease and waste, represent a danger to the identity that

¹⁶⁶ As early as 1928 women conductors on Tokyo public transport called for menstruation leave and during the immediate postwar period a three day, later two day, menstruation leave was implemented and included in the Labour Standard Laws of 1947 (Article 67). These stipulations were still in place until they were limited in the 1986 Equal Employment Opportunity Law some four decades later. Molony 1995, p. 279; Mackie 2003, pp. 84, 130.

¹⁶⁷ Jeffs 2002.

¹⁶⁸ Marran 2007, pp. 116-117.

¹⁶⁹ Kaneko Junji, *Hanzaisha no shinri* (The Criminal Psychology), quoted in Marran 2007, pp. 116-117.

¹⁷⁰ Grosz 1994, p. 194.

¹⁷¹ Kristeva 1982, p. 71.

¹⁷² Ibid.

originates from without the self, menstrual blood represents a danger that comes from within. That is, on the one hand excrement represents a threat that is present in the social order, while on the other menstrual blood represents the threatening elements that reside within the woman's identity.

The threat of pregnancy and the disruption of Fumiko's regular menstrual cycle is the driving force behind the "Ari takaru" text. The narrative begins when Fumiko wakes one morning some hours earlier than she is accustomed to. As she walks through her house she realises that it is the time of morning in which she generally sleeps the deepest and that only some major concern or worry could have driven her from her sleep. She thinks back to a morning two weeks earlier when her husband, Matsuda, had dragged her back to bed and initiated sex even though he is aware it is a dangerous time in Fumiko's cycle.¹⁷³ Fumiko muses that something about their lovemaking that morning had felt very different to what normally occurred. Not only was there the worry of conception due to Fumiko's menstrual cycle but Matsuda, despite his apparent eagerness, had almost lost his nerve at one point leaving Fumiko feeling obliged to encourage him to continue: she finds that as his behaviour 'was so unusual' she is unable to 'reject him too adamantly' and even 'urged him on.'¹⁷⁴ To make matters worse, Fumiko, who was almost ready to leave for work, stated that it was 'impossible for her to get carried away' as there was no physical pain involved in the sex.¹⁷⁵

We will see that in this regard, "Ari takaru" follows a similar pattern to the narratives found in the 'ladies' comics' that will be examined in Chapter 5 – an unsatisfactory sex scene at the beginning of the narrative which is later redeemed in a round of fulfilling and romantic sex at the

¹⁷³ "Ari takaru," p. 38; "Ant Swarm," p. 168.

¹⁷⁴ "Ari takaru," p. 38; "Ant Swarm," p. 168.

¹⁷⁵ "Ari takaru," p. 38; "Ant Swarm," p. 168.

narratorial climax.¹⁷⁶ As a result of this first round of ‘bad sex,’¹⁷⁷ Fumiko finds herself distanced from Matsuda, and even from herself; she feels ‘irritated’ and ‘indignant.’¹⁷⁸

Fumiko’s feeling of separation from herself comes not only from the threat to her identity which, as Kristeva maintains, is symbolised by menstrual waste, but also from the threat of pregnancy and motherhood. When Fumiko announces that there is a chance she may have conceived, it is Matsuda who first shows enthusiasm for their ‘sesame child.’¹⁷⁹ It is because of Matsuda’s enthusiasm, rather than maternal instinct on her part, that Fumiko finds herself taking pleasure in the idea of a child; she enjoys seeing Matsuda imagine himself as a father figure. Fumiko has previously struggled against motherhood as institution. However, having convinced herself (incorrectly) that she is pregnant, Fumiko contradictorily encourages her husband’s dreams of their child. At one point she even acknowledges that she has become a ‘double hypocrite,’¹⁸⁰ actively encouraging Matsuda in his enthusiasm for fatherhood. True to the practicing masochists’ proclivity for pleasure through expectation, the enjoyment Fumiko derives from listening to Matsuda as he tells stories about his own childhood comes from the anticipation of his uncovering her true feelings towards the situation. The suspense Fumiko experiences as she waits for him to discover her antipathy towards bearing a child, an antipathy that she has hidden behind sweet words, and her anticipation of Matsuda’s angry reaction and his possible physical retribution, combine to make the situation intensely pleasurable.

In “Yōjigari” the threat posed to Akiko’s identity by pregnancy is much greater. Instead of merely altering her way of life, a child could annihilate her identity completely. Two or three years before the events of “Yōjigari” occur Akiko suffered from a short but severe bout of

¹⁷⁶ Williams 1999, pp. 126 – 134; Jones 2002, p. 16.

¹⁷⁷ Williams 1999, p. 166.

¹⁷⁸ “Ari takaru,” p. 38; “Ant Swarm,” p. 168.

¹⁷⁹ Matsuda supposes that their child must be about the size of a sesame seed and so refers to it in this manner. “Ari takaru,” p. 41; “Ant Swarm,” p. 172.

¹⁸⁰ “Ari takaru,” p. 42; “Ari takaru,” p. 38; “Ant Swarm,” p. 173.

pulmonary tuberculosis.¹⁸¹ Although her recovery was rapid, she was warned never to have children as the strain might kill her.¹⁸² For Akiko this was no real loss as, like Fumiko, she feels no great desire to have a child in the first place. Akiko is nonetheless constantly amazed at her body's 'strangeness.'¹⁸³ Each month her body would prepare 'a little bed inside for a baby,' and then take it apart again.¹⁸⁴ Before her brush with tuberculosis Akiko had thought it was a 'grave matter' that there was no person on this earth who had been 'created [...] out of her own blood.'¹⁸⁵ However, at the same time Akiko would find herself wondering whether or not it would be possible to give birth to a child and then 'get someone else to take care' of it with only minimal input on her part.¹⁸⁶ This suggests that it is not the physical process of reproduction or childbirth of which Akiko is wary, but the social expectations placed on the mother to sublimate her identity in that of her child and to erase her own sexual identity while doing so. We should note that Akiko did not entertain the thought of abandoning the child. It is, in fact, the all-consuming social demands of the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology that is unquestionably repugnant to her.

Both Jones and Nagaike point out the links between menarche and childbirth and the image of the boy in Akiko's beating fantasy. The blood running down the boy's leg that we are directed to look at by the woman's voice is reminiscent of menarche, although at seven or eight the boy is below the age usually associated with a girl's first period. This imagery violently culminates in the final scene of the fantasy when the boy's stomach splits open 'as if giving birth.'¹⁸⁷ For Jones the 'dual motifs of blood and female reproduction' provide 'further indications of Akiko's

¹⁸¹ "Yōjigari," p. 330; "Toddler Hunting," p. 59.

¹⁸² In his work on tuberculosis in Japan, William Johnston states that 'childbirth aggravates existing tuberculosis or induces it by decreasing resistance to the disease.' Furthermore, 'biological evidence suggests that the onset of the menses' can also lead to a decreased resistance to tuberculosis. Johnston 1995, p. 30.

¹⁸³ "Yōjigari," p. 331; "Toddler Hunting," p. 58.

¹⁸⁴ "Yōjigari," p. 331; "Toddler Hunting," p. 58.

¹⁸⁵ "Yōjigari," p. 331; "Toddler Hunting," p. 58.

¹⁸⁶ "Yōjigari," p. 331; "Toddler Hunting," p. 58.

¹⁸⁷ Jones 2000, p. 99.

identification with the boy in her fantasy.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore the extraordinary image of the emergence of a child from the birth canal or caesarean opening with the overflow of intestines from a boy's stomach further remind us of the grotesque and struggling pupae with which Akiko had identified herself as a child. At the end of the beating fantasy, the broken body of the boy is repeatedly 'smashed against' the hot tin of the metal shack, swung by the purple rope of intestines as if 'trying to get a kite to rise into the air.'¹⁸⁹ Once again the reader is presented with Kōno's signature coupling of what is fundamentally abhorrent – a tortured child swung by his intestines – with the minutiae of everyday life, here the child's kite rising into the air.¹⁹⁰ We might also note the paradoxical coupling of the tortured boy with a plaything – the kite – symbolic of the idyllic time of modern childhood.

This horrific image of the tortured child that so galvanises reader's attention, contrasts starkly however, with the reference to the little bed for a baby that Akiko imagines her body preparing inside of her. This is a remarkably maternal idea for a narrative that is used by some critics to illustrate the denial of motherhood present throughout Kōno's work. The seeming disparity between these two extremes is echoed more than two decades later in the poetry of Itō Hiromi (b. 1955). Itō's work came into prominence in the 1970s and 1980s with collections such as *Teritori ron 2* (On Territory 2, 1985) and *Teritori ron 1* (On Territory 1, 1987) both of which are works that feature the body, sexuality and violent attitudes towards motherhood.¹⁹¹ Poems such as "Kanoko koroshi" (Killing Kanoko, 1985, trans. Jeffrey Angles 2009), "Bunbengo" (Postpartum, 1986, trans. Jeffrey Angles 2009) and "Logical like a Baby" (1986, trans. Jeffrey Angles 2009) investigate imagery of mothers dreaming of killing and dismembering or harshly abusing the child. However, in the same collection Itō's poem "Kanoko no shishun wo naosu"

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ "Yōjigari," p. 331; "Toddler Hunting," p. 61.

¹⁹⁰ This is even more disturbing if we think of the longstanding association of boys with their kites in narratives such as A. A. Milne's Christopher Robin stories (*Winnie the Pooh* was translated into Japanese in 1940 by the famous children's writer Ishii Momoko.)

¹⁹¹ Several works from both of these collections have been translated into English by Jeffrey Angles.

(Healing Kanoko's Rash, 1985, trans. Jeffrey Angles 2009) describes feeding a child. A later poem "Tennōji" (1993, trans. Jeffrey Angles 2009), which Angles links to "Kanako koroshi,"¹⁹² contains the words: 'I am necessary of course / This child needs this mother / This mother needs this child / This is how a bond is formed between mother and child / I do not want to test this intergenerational bond.'¹⁹³ As in "Ari takaru" these children are all daughters. It is possible that the horrific images of the broken child in Akiko's beating fantasy in "Yōjigari" and the scarred daughter in Fumiko's burning fantasy in "Ari takaru" speak of both characters' horror at the idea of childbirth and the threat that it poses to the body, as trenchantly argued in Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*. This is particularly the case with Akiko as her body is already weakened by tuberculosis. Like Itō, Kōno – in spite of the representation of shocking violence – does not completely negate the possibility of the maternal. Rather, what these texts indicate is the impossibility for women to experience maternal relations on their own terms, free from the structures of *ryōsai kenbo* which, as previously noted, was still alive and well in 1960s and 1970s Japan.

In several of her stories, Kōno writes of characters who have also suffered from some form of tuberculosis, usually after they have recovered fully or partially from the disease. For these characters recovery signals a turning point of some kind. This is not only in terms of regaining their health but also in the direction that they choose to take their lives. However, her narratives are not so simplistic as to use this recovery as some sort of instant reaffirmation of the wonder of life. Instead, the characters reassess their lives in terms of what they have gained, or lost, and alter the direction of their lives in accordingly. Prior to contracting tuberculosis Akiko graduated from music college with high results and was 'on the diva track' intent on entering into the world

¹⁹² Translator's notes for "Tennōji," Itō 2009, p. 123.

¹⁹³ Itō 2009, p. 84.

of opera.¹⁹⁴ Her brush with illness not only frees her of the problem of children but also robs her of her ability to sing.

Another such story featuring a character who is recovering from tuberculosis which explores the theme of the threat to identity from an outside source is the 1963 short story, “Kani.” This work follows a woman, Yūko, on her month-long seaside health retreat – previously a conventional treatment for tuberculosis which could on some occasions be cured by a change of air.¹⁹⁵ The narrative can be roughly split into two parts, the first dealing with the protagonist’s illness and the second with Yūko’s hunt for crabs with her nephew when he visits her at the retreat.¹⁹⁶ For the purpose of this section I will look only at the first part of the narrative. It becomes evident that underlying Yūko’s desire for the seaside trip, ostensibly to regain her strength after three years of battling tuberculosis, is a need to get away from her husband.¹⁹⁷ Like Akiko and Fumiko, Yūko enjoys engaging in masochistic sex with her husband and despite his concern that these activities will only make her weaker, as Yūko’s consort/partner/torturer, he complies with her demands.¹⁹⁸ One evening as she is about to take her medicine she is stopped by her husband and she realises that he is starting to resent her constant illness.¹⁹⁹ At this point tuberculosis has started to control the rhythm of Yūko’s daily activities. Every evening she reaches for a sachet of powdered medicine and every afternoon finds her asleep in an attempt to regain her strength. The health retreat is not Yūko’s only attempt to gain time away from her husband. Yūko has previously tried to persuade him to go skiing in order that they might have some time apart. Yūko’s narrative is also tinted red by the blood motifs which we have noted that Kōno employs

¹⁹⁴ “Yōjigari,” p. 330; “Toddler Hunting,” p. 59.

¹⁹⁵ Fukuda; Sontag 1991, pp. 16-17.

¹⁹⁶ While I do not investigate the hunt for crabs in this thesis it is worth noting the links between tuberculosis and cancer (symbolised by the crabs, Latin: cancer) as suggested by Susan Sontag in *Illness as Metaphor*. Sontag points out that ‘throughout most of their history, the metaphoric uses of TB and cancer crisscross and overlap.’ both diseases consume the body. Sontag 1991, pp. 10-11.

¹⁹⁷ Kōno 1977a, p. 368; Kōno 1996a, p. 140.

¹⁹⁸ Kōno 1977a, p. 368; Kōno 1996a, pp. 139-140.

¹⁹⁹ Kōno 1977a, p. 368; Kōno 1996a, p. 139.

throughout many of her narratives. Her tuberculosis is heralded with a mouthful of blood coughed up from her lungs and her period regularly causes her to run a high fever. As with Fumiko and Akiko in “Ari takaru” and “Yōjigari,” it is possible to identify Yūko’s menstruation as indicating a threat to the unity and harmony between the sexes just as tuberculosis poses a threat to Yūko and to her identity (and her life).

As in the west, tuberculosis has been misreported, feared and romanticised throughout modern Japanese literature. Prior to the Meiji restoration it was known as *rōgai* (roughly translatable as ‘coughing and consuming’)²⁰⁰ and was thought to be predominant amongst the daughters of the upper class and diligent students. Even in the modern era, the disease was rarely referred to as ‘tuberculosis,’ (*kekkan*) due to the high death rate and belief that it was an inherited condition. Such was the fear and superstition linked to the disease, even as late as the 1950s, that if a person contracted tuberculosis members of their entire family would be discriminated against, to the point where, for example, marriage became an impossible prospect.²⁰¹ In contrast, in literature, the disease and those that it infected were romanticised to a point where it became a ‘category of beauty’²⁰² despite its grim and painful reality. In the Meiji period two novels in particular were influential in propagating the idea that tuberculosis took the most beautiful and most talented and left the dull and ordinary behind. These texts were Tsunashima Ryōsen’s *Zangiku* (The Last Remaining Chrysanthemum, 1889) and Tokutomi Roka’s *Hototogisu* (Nightingale, 1898), the latter brilliantly analysed by Karatani Kōjin in “Sickness as Meaning.”²⁰³ This romanticised version of tuberculosis persisted through the Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa eras.²⁰⁴ Kōno’s sufferers, however, are not the dutiful pale daughters waiting to die a beautiful death that were so popular with

²⁰⁰ Fukuda.

²⁰¹ This was the same in many European countries where tuberculosis also ran rife. Fukuda; Johnston 1995, pp. 116-118. Between the late 1890s and 1950 the tuberculosis epidemic in Japan underwent various periods of stagnation, resurgence and finally, decline. Johnston 1995, pp. 90-99; See also Hunter 1993, pp. 69-97.

²⁰² Fukuda; Sontag 1991, p. 17.

²⁰³ Karatani 1993, pp. 99-109.

²⁰⁴ Fukuda.

romanticist authors. They resist death, hungering selfishly for life. Furthermore, in resisting death, they also resist the social expectations of life. As we have noted, Kōno's heroines ignore the conventions that demand that they produce children, choosing instead to revel in masochistic fantasies that culminate in violent acts of sex.

Kōno's story, "Saigo no toki," intensifies this brush with illness to the more dramatic dimensions of a brush with death. As she makes her way to a friend's funeral, Noriko, yet another Kōno protagonist who neither has nor wants children, is told that she is about to die. It is never made clear who her informant is, or whether there is actually someone else present when Noriko learns that her life is due to end. After begging her informant for more time Noriko manages to negotiate another twenty-six hours in which to tie up her affairs.²⁰⁵ As a result of this encounter she finds herself drawing conclusions about her married life. As Phyllis Birnbaum notes, 'pressing herself to sum up, [Noriko] decides that the bond with her husband has been a mere sham.'²⁰⁶ The affairs that seemed so pressing are, in fact, nothing more than everyday household tasks. Noriko writes a list to herself so as to remember to throw out her dirty clothes and linens and also to write a letter for the milkman instructing him to deliver only one bottle. Noriko's conviction that her marriage is false is confirmed when she and her husband see a film about a woman returning from a health retreat and the loveless relationship by means of which she is tied to her husband. The film acts as a *mis-en-abyme*, highlighting the loveless marriage that is a feature of Noriko's own life. The concept of a loveless marriage is further replicated in a number of Kōno's other texts, such as "Kani," mentioned above.

As she negotiates for more time in which to complete her affairs, Noriko has one other intention in mind. Like the masochist with her or his desire for correct costume or accoutrement, she is

²⁰⁵ Kōno 1977b, pp. 417-18; Kōno 1994, pp. 45-46. North translates "Saigo no toki" as "Final Moments" in *Toddler Hunting and Other Stories*.

²⁰⁶ Commentary on "Crabs," Birnbaum 1982, p. 99.

determined to find the perfect outfit in which to go forth and meet death. To be garbed in her mourning kimono, appropriate for the friend's funeral, would make it appear that she had welcomed death;²⁰⁷ dying compliantly and politely in a manner similar to the much romanticised pale daughters of the upper-class suffering from tuberculosis discussed by Karatani and others. However, this quiet departure from life is not to Noriko's liking. What she really desires is to die in a way that will show her defiance against death and her desire to live. Noriko finally decides that the perfect outfit to meet her death in is a beige skirt-suit. The colour of the suit pleases her as she imagines it will show a lot of blood: Noriko intends to make her death as bloody as she can manage; to leave 'traces of the most appalling death agony.'²⁰⁸ She imagines herself with blood pouring out of every orifice, leaving 'the most gruesome stains,' as she struggles to her very last breath, thrashing her arms and legs around so as to smear blood everywhere.²⁰⁹ While "Saigo no toki" does not feature overt references to masochism, we are reminded of Bersani's comments on sexual theatre and performance. The scene further it makes it clear that, to Kōno, the conventional Japanese marriage of the 1960s is one in which sexual fulfilment for a woman is anathema. Denied access to the realm of the senses in this arrangement, the sexually desiring woman is almost forced to engage in the perverse to achieve some modicum of fulfilment.

Conclusion

The first section of this chapter introduced the works of Kōno and her contemporaries in the context of the historical time period in which they were produced. This was a period during which women were largely denied access to a sexual identity by the hegemonic norms that operated. The chapter then introduced "Yōjigari" and "Ari takaru," the two short stories that have been the main focus of the discussion. These narratives, along with other early texts written

²⁰⁷ Kōno 1977b, p. 418; Kōno 1994, p. 46.

²⁰⁸ Kōno 1977b, p. 421; Kōno 1996b, p. 191

²⁰⁹ Kōno 1977b, p. 421; Kōno 1996b, p. 191.

by Kōno, were examined in terms of their masochistic content, both in relation to the sexual scenarios featured and the use of masochistic accoutrements such as the small space and the tools used by each protagonist's consort/partner/torturer.

In the introduction to her translation of “Kani” Phyllis Birnbaum makes reference to “Saigo no toki” suggesting that ‘in her moment of understanding,’ Noriko speaks for many of ‘Kōno’s restless heroines.’²¹⁰

‘I want no part any more of living in the belief that my married life is a true marriage.

At the time of my actual death, I would like after all to feel something at the end.

And if this means I will leave the world with regret or lingering attachments, I don’t mind. For only that will prove I lived a full life.’²¹¹

The protagonists of “Yōjigari” and “Ari takaru” have found for themselves true partnerships within the context of their masochistic needs. For Fumiko, her consort/partner/torturer is her husband and they have what Noriko would term a ‘true marriage.’ Akiko’s relationship with Sasaki is based on her need to escape from the control she has over her life. While at first glance it may seem that Kōno’s short stories, with their masochistic heroines, support the existing hegemony and rhetoric of submissive women cowering under dominant men, this is not the case. As we have seen throughout this chapter, it is the masochist who is always in control of their interactions with their surroundings.

Throughout this chapter reference has been made to the importance of the masochistic fantasy. As we have noted previously, the importance of *phantasy*/fantasy and the ability to fantasize in the masochistic individual is almost impossible to overstate. More than any

²¹⁰ Birnbaum 1982, p. 99.

²¹¹ Kōno 1977b, pp. 437-438; Birnbaum 1982, p. 99 (Birnbaum’s translation); Kōno 1996b, p. 66.

other of the prevalent motifs and devices such as menstrual blood, illness, marriage and paedophilia, fantasy remains the most important in Kōno's works. Kōno's use of fantasy undermines the expected and accepted hegemonic norms present in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s which endure, as we will see in later chapters of this thesis, even to the present day. Each of Kōno's protagonists retires to her soundproof room and fantasises about her existence, mining her day to day realities to produce confronting dreamscapes.

In this chapter masochism has been explored in terms of the Deleuzian contract. It is through the means of the contract that Akiko and Fumiko negotiate their relationships with their lover and husband respectively. In the next chapter the masochistic contract will be examined from the view point of the consort/partner/torturer as found in the work of Yamada Eimi. Whereas Kōno's masochistic heroines take on the 'submissive' role in the masochistic scenarios they enact with their partners, Yamada's protagonists in *Hizama* *asbi wo o-name* take on the role of dominatrix for their paying clients.

Chapter 3: Yamada Eimi – Reclaiming the Role of Consort/Partner/ Torturer: Excess in Bubble Japan

Kneel Down and Lick My Feet; ‘Bubble *jidai*’ Japan; More than Just a ‘Yellow Cab,’ Big Sister, Little Sister; the ‘Yamada Girl’ and the *Shōjo*; Venus in High-Heeled Shoes

If Kōno Taeko’s protagonists are women who choose relationships that occur outside socially accepted hegemonies, Yamada Eimi’s sashay all over those boundaries in glittery spike-heeled shoes. A Yamada protagonist is a character who knows what she wants and exactly how to get it; she knows that with a crook of her perfectly manicured finger, a glance from the corner of her eye, the right pair of stiletto-heeled shoes or a pout from her cherry red lips, the world is hers for the taking. These women protagonists or ‘Yamada Girls’ as I will call them, position themselves as barely controlled forces of nature. Yamada is widely considered the pioneer of a ‘generation of Japanese women novelists noted for their frank, sexually explicit portrayals of women’s lives.’¹ Her narratives dance their way through ‘spiralling’ patterns of desire, loss and satiation as ‘lovers meet, gaze, touch, kiss, make love, eat, drink, smoke and part.’²

In contrast to Kōno, who emerged during the period in which Japanese society was recovering from the lingering effects of the Pacific War years before fully taking a place on the world stage as a global economic power, Yamada began her career as Japan entered a period of excess. The years of the mid to late 1980s are known as the Bubble *jidai* (lit. period) due to an era of intense economic speculation and inflation. This chapter will look at masochism in Yamada’s pseudo auto-biographical novel,³ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* (Kneel Down and Lick My Feet, 1989; *Hizamazuite* for the rest of this chapter). As per the works of Kōno in the previous chapter,

¹ Layne 2006, p. 170.

² Cornyetz 1996, p. 429.

³ While there is some overlap between Yamada’s life and the events that occur in the novel there is debate as to how biographical the novel is. Russell 1998, p. 154.

Hizamazuite will be examined in terms not only of its masochistic content, but also of desire and fantasy. Throughout the chapter, reference will be made to other works by Yamada, in addition to the work of her contemporaries.

The chapter will begin with a discussion of the main text, *Hizamazuite*, and an explanation of the relationship between Yamada's texts and the Bubble Era in Japan. This will be followed by an overview of Yamada's narratives in the context of the media criticism and scholarship that these works received. In this section I will show that Yamada's protagonists are more than a one dimensional depiction of Japanese women who sleep with African American men.⁴ The third section of this chapter will examine the unique interpersonal relationships of the 'Yamada Girls' as they are portrayed in the masochistic world of the S/M club in *Hizamazuite*. As noted in the introductory chapter of the thesis, this chapter will also examine the relationship of Yamada's work – and the work of her contemporary, Yoshimoto Banana – to *manga*. Furthermore, as we have seen in the previous chapters, the clothes that the consort/partner/torturer wears play an integral part in the masochistic relationship. We will see that in the case of 'Yamada Girls,' each of whom are the embodiment of Venus in high-heeled shoes, this is particularly applicable to their lingerie and footwear.

Kneel Down and Lick My Feet

Hizamazuite is unlike many of Yamada's other novels, short stories and essays. Rather than concentrating on the sexual adventures of a 'Yamada Girl,' *Hizamazuite* revolves around the lives of Shinobu, the novel's narrator, and Chika, a 'wannabe' author widely regarded as 'Yamada's alter-ego.'⁵ Both characters work as dominatrices, or 'Queens,'⁶ at an S/M club called the

⁴ I have consciously chosen to use 'African American' so as to avoid the stigma of the 'hyphenated other.'

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ 「女王様」 *jo-ō sama* lit. Queen.

‘Queen’s Palace’ located near a U.S. military base in Tokyo.⁷ Outside work, Shinobu and Chika live with their boyfriends in small apartments in Tokyo. They are stereotypical ‘Yamada Girls’ who date non-Japanese men, spend their time at clubs, and have a history of working in the sex industry. This chapter focuses on their activities within the scenario rooms where they interact with the clientele of the S/M club at which they work.

It is important to note at the outset of this chapter that the masochistic imagery showcased in *Hizamazuite* presents the flipside of that found in Kōno’s works such as “Yōjigari” and “Ari takaru.” We will thus see that, in comparison to Kōno’s protagonists, Chika and Shinobu have an inverse relationship to masochism. Contrary to colloquial misconceptions raised earlier that masochists choose sadists as their consorts, Chika and Shinobu are not sadists. Rather, they perform a vital role in the masochistic partnership – that of consort/partner/torturer. Deleuze states that ‘the [...] torturer of masochism cannot be sadistic precisely because she is *in* the masochistic situation.’⁸ In fact, as we will see in the next chapter, disastrous consequences can result when the ‘rules’ of the masochistic game are broken through the masochist’s conscious choice of a sadistic consort. Following on from previous statements that the masochist is always in control of any masochistic scenario they choose to enact, there is an expectation that Chika and Shinobu, as consorts/partners/torturers, have no influence over the scenarios they take part in as dominatrices. We have seen in Chapter Two, however, what happens when the masochistic consort/partner/torturer fails to live up to their end of the contract. By refusing to act in the manner prescribed in the masochistic contract, they are very much able to exert control beyond the masochistic scenario.⁹ Indeed, this is what happens at the end of *Venus in Furs* when Wanda decides that she no longer wants to be a part of Severin’s enterprise and leaves him for another man. Shinobu and Chika are bound by the masochistic contract that exists with their paying

⁷ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 6, 8; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” pp. 188, 189.

⁸ Deleuze 1991, p. 41.

⁹ See “Yōjigari,” pp. 333-334; “Toddler Hunting,” pp. 62-63 and “Ari takaru,” p. 38; “Ant Swarm,” p. 168.

clients, but also by the rules of the S/M club at which they work. In this context, it is important to note that although Shinobu and Chika are sex-workers, they are not prostitutes. This is reflected in the rules of the ‘Queen’s Palace’ which stipulate that, amongst other things, Queens and their clients do not have sex.¹⁰ Thus, while both women play a very different role in the masochistic relationship to that of Kōno’s masochistic protagonists, Deleuze’s theories of masochism permit us to ‘read’ these women as masochists given that they are clearly embedded in this type of arrangement.

Born in Tokyo in 1959, Yamada started writing in the early 1980s after a short career as an author/illustrator of *shōjo manga* which, although mildly successful, left her feeling dissatisfied with the range of expression available to her in that form.¹¹ Endeavouring to write ‘by experiencing,’ she embarked on a ‘life of adventures’ that saw her, as mentioned above, work in a variety of roles that included a Ginza hostess and a nude model.¹² It was towards the end of this period of her life that Yamada worked as a dominatrix in an S/M club for several months before quitting upon receiving an award for new writers.¹³ This stint as a bondage mistress would be used as part of the inspiration for *Hizamazuite*. In a later interview Yamada stated that:

I used to work in a sex club before I became a writer. It was a lot of fun. I wanted to be a writer. ... So when I was working there I kept thinking, I must write about this. Then I got the chance to publish the story. The editor-in-chief told me the story would be too controversial...¹⁴

Yamada’s experiences as a nude model, which resulted in a photo scandal that occurred shortly after she received her first literature prize, and as a dominatrix by day and writer by night, are related at the end of Chapter One of *Hizamazuite*. The closing paragraphs of the chapter, which,

¹⁰ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 7-8; “Kneel Down and Lick my Feet,” p. 189.

¹¹ “Yamada Eimi (Amy).”

¹² Mulhorn 1994, p. 457.

¹³ Hobbs 1999, p. 36.

¹⁴ Dowling 1995, p. 25.

incidentally, are not included in Gallagher’s English translation, detail a photo scandal which threatens to derail Chika’s burgeoning career as a writer. Chika confesses to Shinobu that she has been contacted by a number of tabloid magazines that are about to publish several photos of her in bondage poses. This is a problem for Chika as she has recently been awarded a prize for young authors and there is a huge pressure to be perceived as a ‘good girl.’¹⁵ According to an article by Yamada published in *Fujin Kōron*, this is the incident that she actually experienced.¹⁶

Instead of masochistic women who bargain, extort, beg and demand to be whipped and beaten, the protagonists of *Hizamazuite* – clad in black silk lingerie and sky-high stiletto-heeled shoes – take on the role of consort/partner/torturer for their adoring (paying) slaves. Unlike the consorts in Kōno’s work, such as “Yōjigari” and “Ari takaru,” whose actions are governed only by their masochists, Akiko and Fumiko respectively, Shinobu and Chika must perform their consort roles according to the rules of the ‘Queen’s Garden’ S/M club. The masochistic relationships in *Hizamazuite* are further complicated by the fact that the clients of the ‘Queen’s Garden’ must also adhere to these rules. In this way, the masochistic scenarios represented in Yamada’s novel speak to the observations made in the Japanese language Wikipedia entry introduced in Chapter 1 regarding masochism in the context of organised prostitution and the *mizu shōbai* entertainment industry. That is to say, Chika and Shinobu, in their work as dominatrices provide ‘favourable conditions’ for their paying clients in ‘exchange for cash.’¹⁷ We will see that women who work in the *mizu shōbai* are a recurring feature of Yamada’s narratives.

Hizamazuite plays on the notion of the socially powerful male as masochist suggested by *Venus in Furs*, the ‘source’ masochistic text, and as previously discussed with reference to the work of Tanizaki Jun’ichirō. The clientele of the S/M club include highly paid company executives, ex-

¹⁵ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 26-28, 42.

¹⁶ See Yamada 1986, pp. 292-297.

¹⁷ “Mazohizumu,” Wikipedia.

army officers and well educated men. Why is it somehow acceptable, as noted previously, for these men to surrender control into the hands of loving, ‘maternal’ dominatrices while masochistic women, such as Kōno’s protagonists, are presented as on the one hand being in opposition to the institution of motherhood while at the same time propagating patriarchal doctrines?

This question is further complicated when we consider that Chika and Shinobu (and their sister dominatrices, strippers and hostesses)¹⁸ are ‘considered dirty’ by society at large because of their work,¹⁹ i.e. because of the ‘service’ they provide to the masochistic men who frequent the S/M parlour.²⁰ In other words regardless of which side of the masochistic contract upon which she places herself, the woman is inevitably vilified. In more recent times we are reminded of the practice of *enjo kōsai* (compensated dating) in the 1990s. Essentially, the practice involves young women, often high-school students, who date older men in return for gifts or money.²¹

Reportedly, those involved in the practice, estimated to be less than 5 percent of all middle and high-school girls,²² were interested only in ‘*asobu kane*’ (lit. money to have fun) to pay for designer goods.²³ However, while this practice involved adult males, it was school girls, regardless of whether or not they were actually engaged in *enjo kōsai*, who were vilified in the moral panic that consumed the media.

¹⁸ Both Chika and Shinobu have worked in these professions. *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 139. Furthermore, both women have also ‘sold their bodies’ when they were younger. *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 98-102.

¹⁹ Yamada, *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 139.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Any definition is further complicated by those offered by schoolgirls themselves: ‘high schoolgirls don’t really sell their bodies for just 20,000 yen or 30,000 yen [...] People misuse the phrase *enjo kōsai*. Real *enjo kōsai* is when a girl plays the role of a lover to a rich man in exchange for 200,000 yen to 400,000 a month. We do not consider one-night relationships *enjo kōsai*.’ Otsu 1996.

²² Kingston 2001, p. 117; Leheny 2006, p. 72.

²³ Leheny 2006, p. 108.

Hizamazuite opens with the words: '[...] the first time Chika saw me spit in a guy's mouth, she had to run to the toilet.'²⁴ This image sets the scene for the two bondage scenarios which occur at the S/M club during the first chapter of the novel. The initial scenario takes place on Chika's first day as a Queen. In this scenario the client is a company executive who always asks for the 'full course, hard.'²⁵ He is bound in ropes and hung upside-down from the ceiling before being sat on, spat on, and whipped. The session finishes with Shinobu talking the client to ejaculation as he masturbates to the sound of her voice. This scene is followed by one that is, on many levels, much more confronting and which occurs some time after Chika has been working as a Queen at the S/M club. In this scenario, the client is a young man who arrives at the club and begs Chika to stick his step-mother's old, rusty sewing needles into his penis. In the end, only the club's Mama-san has the fortitude to complete the session with Shinobu's assistance.

In spite of the these two graphic bondage scenarios, both of which occur in the first chapter, the *Hizamazuite* narrative revolves as much around Chika's (or Yamada's) burgeoning career as a writer as around masochistic sex. As a background to this, the narrative often meanders gently through various conversations between Shinobu and Chika about the men they have each known and loved, and the places that they have both worked, from their first meeting at a strip club in Ikebukuro to their current work at the S/M club. Throughout the novel repeated references are made to Shinobu's and Chika's clients. However none of these descriptions of the activities desired by these men repeat the detail given in the first chapter of the novel. Examples include 'the old ex-soldier who likes having rocks placed on his legs in a Japanese-style room'²⁶ and 'the client who just wants to play the fool on all fours at Chika's feet.'²⁷

²⁴ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 5; "Kneel Down and Lick My Feet," p. 187.

²⁵ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 9; "Kneel Down and Lick my Feet," p. 190.

²⁶ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* p. 118

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 119; There is something reminiscent of Aristotle on all fours as Phyllis' steed in this image. At the end of his life, Aristotle agreed to act as a steed for his lover. This image of one of the Classical world's greatest minds 'debasing' himself was seen as 'evidence for a universal occurrence of male masochism.' Noyes 1997, pp. 99 – 100.

For readers who are familiar with *Hizamazuite* only in the form of “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” the excerpt from the first chapter of the novel published in English translation in *Monkey Brain Sushi* (1993),²⁸ a collection of English translations that showcases Japanese authors writing between 1983 and 1989, there can be the reasonable expectation that the novel will be a masochistic or an S/M fantasy in the tradition of Sacher-Masoch’s *Venus in Furs*, Sade’s *The 120 Days of Sodom* or Réage’s *Histoire d’O* (1954).²⁹ While there are superficial similarities between *Hizamazuite* and *Histoire d’O* in that both are written by women (allegedly in the case of *O*) and have stylish young women protagonists (*O* is a Parisian fashion photographer), any further comparisons are invalid. In fact, in the very first chapter Shinobu cautions Chika against expecting situations such as those found in *Venus in Furs*, *The 120 Days of Sodom* and *Histoire d’O*.³⁰ For Shinobu these works are meaningless and sentimental, especially when compared to her daily experience of getting excrement on her hands whilst cleaning enema equipment.³¹ It is useful to note that while male writers such as Sacher-Masoch and Tanizaki construct masochistic narratives characterised by style and glamour, the woman writer Yamada exposes the excessively mundane side of this reality. In presenting masochism from the perspective of the consort/torturer/partner instead of the masochist, Yamada invites her readers to venture behind the curtain and experience the burden of providing for the masochist’s needs.

The most important distinction between the masochistic scenarios in *Hizamazuite* and the other texts examined in this thesis is not that it is women who perform the role of

²⁸ At the time of submission, the only English language translation of *Hizamazuite* was the excerpt from Chapter One published in *Monkey Brain Sushi*. This has led to some confusion amongst English language readers who have not realised they were reading an excerpt and not a short story. Comment boards on internet sites such as Amazon.Com for Yamada’s translated works which praise her mastery of the short story but criticise her novels, such as *Tora’shu* (Trash, 1991; trans. Sonya L Johnson, 1995) as being overly long, poorly written and populated with shallow characters. See “Trash – Amy Yamada.”

²⁹ These texts are discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.

³⁰ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* p. 11; “Kneel Down and Lick my Feet,” p. 192. This admonishment is of interest given the current media and popular interest in E. L. James’ erotic novel, *50 Shades of Grey* (2011).

³¹ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* p. 11; “Kneel Down and Lick my Feet,” p. 192.

consort/partner/torturer, nor that these women are being paid for their services. The main difference lies in the fact that Chika, Shinobu and the other Queens experience little, or more often, no sexual gratification for their efforts.³² The masochistic scenarios featured in Kōno's works which take place in the 'soundproof room' are performed by individuals according to the masochistic contract. For Kōno's protagonists, each successful masochistic scenario relies on pleasure for all involved. As we have seen in "Ari takaru," where the 'bad sex' that occurs at the beginning of the narrative is tedious for both Fumiko and Matsuda, both nonetheless find ecstatic pleasure in the successful masochistic encounter that they experience at the end of the narrative. The roles that Chika and Shinobu act out for their clients in the scenario rooms at the S/M club, however, are part of their job. They are employed to become the loving, mothering, torturer/partner/consort; to be, for their clients, 'the very whip of love.'³³ Personal pleasure for the club's Queens is noticeably absent from this equation.

In *Masochism in Modern Man*, Reik argues that the idea of a man paying a woman, such as a prostitute, to treat him in a particular 'highly uncomfortable' manner is 'shameful' or 'grotesque,' and something that 'most men would abhor.'³⁴ It must be remembered nonetheless that rather than prostitutes, Chika and Shinobu are dominatrices; they do not sleep with their S/M club clients. While Reik judges negatively men who frequent establishments such as the Queen's Garden, the S/M club in *Hizamazuite*, Chika and Shinobu make no such judgement. Rather Shinobu sees social significance in the service that she and the other Queens provide for their slaves: 'I like this job. I think that it is the pinnacle of the service industry. I feel like a therapist.'³⁵

³² *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 103-104.

³³ *Ibid.*, 14; "Kneel Down and Lick my Feet," p. 194. Indeed Shinobu's very name is indicative of her role as loving torturer as the name 'Shinobu' has a long association with dominatrices. See Constantine 1993.

³⁴ Reik 1949, pp. 84-85.

³⁵ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 196.

Both the Japanese and English language body of criticism on Yamada's work tends to focus on the fetishisation of non-Japanese men, in particular African Americans, and on the claims of their alleged sexual superiority of their race. Commentary, especially by Japanese critics, often expands this to include Yamada's unconventional lifestyle (i.e. her interracial relationships and eventual marriage to a non-Japanese man). Yamada has in fact disclosed that after the appearance of her 1985 debut work, "Beddo taimu aizū" (Bedtime Eyes, 1985, trans. Yumi Gunji and Mark Jardine 2006), interviewers would always begin by asking her: 'How are black men?' adding a 'sexual connotation' to 'everything'.³⁶ The hysteria surrounding Yamada and her choice of African American lovers can be viewed as similar to, or even part of, the 'yellow cab' phenomenon – a highly offensive term that refers to the allegedly large numbers of young Japanese women who travelled overseas at that time and who were claimed to be easier to 'pick up' than a yellow taxi cab – which attracted prurient male press interest in the sexual activities of young Japanese women. Another reaction to Yamada's work is to dismiss it as a sexual curiosity.

One such article briefly introduced in Chapter 1 is Wada Hirofumi's 2001/2002 article "SM," which compares *Hiŕamazuite* to Numa Shōzō's *Kachikujin yapū* (Domesticated Yapoo). In this article, Wada reads Yamada's novel as representing the modern day reality to Numa's futuristic masochistic fantasy.³⁷ While this may appear to give value to Yamada's work, in fact for Wada it seems as though *Hiŕamazuite* merely represents a diversion for those who long to be a part of Numa's futuristic masochistic world rather than a text worth reading in its own right.³⁸ Women critics and commentators, however, view Yamada's material with completely different objectives in mind. Noted feminist and literary critic, Ueno Chizuko, praises Yamada's work stating that she

³⁶ *Tokyo Journal*, p. 22.

³⁷ Wada 2001/02, p. 202.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-202.

has ‘always loved “Beddo taimu aizu.”’³⁹ For Ueno, every woman should aim to take control of their relationships and become a ‘Yamada Girl.’

Bubble *Jidai* Japan

Yamada emerged as a literary phenomenon in the 1980s, a time when Japan saw the emergence of the so-called ‘Bubble period’ of the second half of the decade.⁴⁰ Although economists usually date the ‘Bubble period’ as starting in September 1985 and ending soon after ‘black August’ of 1990 when the Japanese stock market fell by over 16 per cent in a single month,⁴¹ the mass consumption that led to the swelling of the Bubble began with the *mai* boom (my car, my home) of the 1960s.⁴² Prior to the bursting of the Bubble, Japan had established itself as the ‘second most powerful economy in the world.’⁴³ The decade is renowned for excess with rumoured indulgences of this era including gold flecked tooth paste, bouquets of flowers wrapped in un-cut note currency and noodles served with a garnish of gold flakes.⁴⁴ Extraordinary economic transactions of the era included the purchase of property and artwork,⁴⁵ with Japanese corporations purchasing Hollywood Studios and the Rockefeller Center in Manhattan,⁴⁶ while Van Gogh’s *Sunflowers* was bought for 5.3 billion yen by the Yasuda Fire and Marine Company.⁴⁷

³⁹ Ueno 1988, p. 55.

⁴⁰ Yoda 2006, p. 19.

⁴¹ McCargo 2004, p. 58. Most sources seem to be content to state that the Bubble began in the late 1980s and ended in the early 1990s. The dates given here, 1985 – 1991, are the broadest range given by examining different sources.

⁴² For more on the ‘my’ boom of the 1960s see Chapter 2.

⁴³ Harootunian 2006, p. 104.

⁴⁴ Smith 1997, p. 129; Kingston 2001, p. 108.

⁴⁵ McCargo 2004, p. 58.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “Vanishing Works of Art.”

The excesses of the Bubble *jidai* are creatively captured in the literature of the decade. While Kōno and her contemporaries continued to write, new authors such as Yamada and Yoshimoto Banana (b. 1964) emerged onto the literary scene. Critics such as Miyoshi Masao initially dismissed the writing of the era as shallow texts that depicted little else than the ‘cool and abundant delights of gourmet consumer life.’⁴⁸ While much subsequent commentary has rejected this view, focusing instead on the innovative nature of the narratives of these women, this dismissive critical attitude to the work of young women writers endures among contemporary scholars. We will see in the next chapter that, for example, the work of Kanehara has been critiqued by Mark Driscoll as successfully oiling Japan’s capitalist and neoliberal machine.⁴⁹

Kurahashi Yumiko, whose work was introduced in the previous chapter, viciously satirises the extreme consumerism of the decade in a short story entitled “Banpīru no kai” (Vampire Club, 1985) in which a group of ‘ladies-who-lunch’ are so jaded by wealth and luxury that their only release is found in the consumption of suspiciously blood red wine.⁵⁰ It is useful to examine this work more closely in the context of the current discussion of masochism. Like Tanizaki’s “Bishoku kurabu” (The Gourmet Club, 1919, trans. Anthony H Chambers), “Banpīru no kai” plays with the themes of extreme gourmandism and addiction that might be theorised as a masochistic obsession with extravagant self-destruction. Both narratives possess a decadence that would not be out of place in Sacher-Masoch’s texts. The women in “Banpīru no kai” are described as looking like glamorous, modern-day Phaedras.⁵¹ In classical mythology, Phaedra

⁴⁸ Miyoshi 1991, p. 37. This assessment of Yoshimoto’s work predicts the consumerism of the ‘Chick lit’ genre in English writing in the 1990s and early 2000s. See also Treat’s description of the *shōjo* as being obsessed with ‘stuffed animals, pink notebooks, strawberry crepes, and Hello Kitty novelties’ in his work on Yoshimoto Banana. Treat 1993, p. 353-387.

⁴⁹ See Driscoll 2007.

⁵⁰ Kurahashi 1985b, pp. 7-18. It should be noted that Kurahashi’s title uses *banpīru* (ヴァンピール) as opposed to the more commonly used *banpaia* (ヴァンパイア).

⁵¹ Kurahashi’s work is filled with literary pastiches and parodies of the classics and French and European literature as well as classical Japanese narratives. Kurahashi does not name all of the women in the group, but we do learn that one is called Naomi, possibly after the heroine of Tanizaki’s *Chijin no ai*.

commits suicide after her handsome step-son rejects her advances. The boy is framed for her death and later dies.⁵²

There is a resonance between Kōno's early narratives such as "Yōjigari" and "Ari takaru" discussed in the previous chapter and "Banpīru no kai." It is not only the allusion to Phaedra and her predatory advances towards her husband's son which is reminiscent of Akiko's fascination with young boys. At one of the vampire club's outings, a woman brings a 'five or six year old boy' to the gathering saying 'today I've managed to get my hands on some fresh wine for us.'⁵³ The predatory nature of the Phaedra references is driven home when one of the wait-staff at the restaurant where the group meet is found dead and drained of blood at the end of the short story. These women can be seen as the extreme example of the cold and cruel Deleuzian consort/partner/torturer introduced in Chapter 1.

The repeated pairing of adult woman/mother figure and young boy/son also reminds us of Deleuze's theories of masochism as maternal as introduced in Chapter 1. However, "Banpīru no kai" brings something sinister to the equation. The members of the club are not cold, severe, mothers. Rather they are all-devouring women, so jaded by Bubble period excess that their consumerism has escalated to the consumption of human blood. The women are accordingly reminiscent of the three 'Brides' in Bram Stoker's archetypal vampire novel, *Dracula*.⁵⁴ The brides of Dracula speak to 'man's fear of women' which had 'become a prominent theme in popular novels and medical treatises' of late 1800s Europe.⁵⁵ In *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature* Susan Napier examines the repeated occurrence of 'mysterious and dangerous female

⁵² Isbell 1990, pp. 228-246. See also Ovid 1983, pp. 380-382.

⁵³ Kurahashi 1985b, p. 16.

⁵⁴ 'Literary historian Asahiko Sunaga stated that vampires did not enter in Japanese literature until 1930' with the appearance of 'Edogawa Rampo's *Vampire*, [...] Hinatsu Kōnosuke's essay on vampires and Jo Masayuki's short story, "Vampire.'" Bush 2001, p. 193. See also Stoker 2008, pp. 79-84.

⁵⁵ Frayling 1996, p. 81.

monsters,’ who recall the women in the vampire club and Dracula’s brides.⁵⁶ While it is possible that the ‘powers attributed to these monstrous women’ illustrate the ‘low status of women in [Japan],’ I find the idea that Japanese women have traditionally had access to magic (such as transformation and possession) that was inherently out of the reach of men is far more appealing.⁵⁷

Interestingly, Nina Cornyetz likens the ‘Yamada Girl’ to the *yamauba* or mountain witch of Japanese myth and legend and featured more recently in works by authors such as Ōba Minako. Cornyetz argues that both are archetypal forms of the ‘dangerous, lusty woman’ who is ‘frequently associated with nature and the bestial.’⁵⁸ It is also important to remember the figure of Izanami, introduced in Chapter 1, who is eventually transformed into a vengeful hag when Izanagi looks upon her after she has asked him not to. In “Mythical Bad Girls,” Rebecca Copeland compares the hag-Izanami with the figure of the *yamauba*.⁵⁹ Furthermore, we might recall the figure of Aguri as a symbol of Taisho consumerism in Tanizaki’s “Aoi hana” (Blue Flower, 1929, trans as “Aguri” by Howard Hibbett, 1963). All of these women, vampires, *yamauba* and ‘Yamada Girls,’ are constructed as fierce consumers, driven by desire and renowned for their (literal and figurative) consumption of attractive males.⁶⁰

One of the key cultural responses to the strengthened yen that lowered the cost of imports and promoted a consumer mentality during the Bubble years was a dramatic shift in attitudes to the

⁵⁶ Napier 1996, pp. 99-100.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Cornyetz 1996, p. 432. For more on *yamauba* and modern Japanese literature see Dollase 2004, pp. 109-23. See also King 2008, pp. 82-98.

⁵⁹ Copeland 2005, pp. 14-31. See also Chamberlin 1981, pp. 22-24 and Ashton 1972, pp. 12-21.

⁶⁰ Consider Sayuri’s ‘harem’ of male lovers in *Hāremu wārudo*, (Harem World, 1990) and Ruiko’s string of African American boyfriends in “Yubi to tawamura” (lit. Finger Games, 1986, translated as The Piano Player’s Fingers, Yumi Gunji and Mark Jardine 2006), both of which will be examined later in this chapter. Furthermore, another ‘Yamada Girl’ describes herself as ‘always starved and wretched’ due to her unquenchable desire for her lover. Yamada 1991, pp. 50-51.

Japanese language.⁶¹ This in turn led to a change in the nature of Japanese narrative. In the introduction to *Monkey Brain Sushi*, Alfred Birnbaum notes that writers of the period grew up with ‘omnipresent media,’ their lives ‘steeped in Hollywood movies and television series.’⁶² Given the technological leaps, including the introduction of *keitai* (mobile phones), ipods, the internet and mobile phone fiction,⁶³ that took place during the 1990s and 2000s, this statement might seem more applicable to Kanehara and her twenty-first century contemporaries.⁶⁴ However, it is important to remember that it was in the 1980s that technology such as pagers, console games, word processors and even mobile phones started to become part of the everyday landscape in Japan and the western world. Expanding on his reference to the influence of Hollywood on the generation, Birnbaum notes that all of the authors in *Monkey Brain Sushi*, including Murakami Haruki (b. 1949), Ohara Mariko (b. 1959), Makino Eri (b. 1959) and Yamada herself⁶⁵ were ‘born and raised in an Americanised post war Japan.’⁶⁶ This Americanisation led to changes in the Japanese language that range from vocabulary (‘whole dictionaries of new [loan words] are published every year’) to grammar (‘writers of *fuikkushon* are more apt to use complete sentences with clearly stated subjects and objects – closer to translated forms [...] or again, they might shift into commercialese – the copywriter’s flair for chopped, quirky phrasings that don’t add up to sentences at all’).⁶⁷

This change in language is clearly evident when one reads Yamada’s texts through the narratives of Kōno, written some two decades earlier. Yamada’s narratives are typically written in the first

⁶¹ Birnbaum 1993, p. 2.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Known as *keitai shōsetsu* (lit. mobile [phone] literature) mobile phone fiction is written by authors directly on their mobile phones and then posted on the internet. See for example Nishimura 2011, pp. 86-109.

⁶⁴ The influence of mobile phones on changing attitudes to sex in the 1990s and early 2000s will be examined in Chapter 4.

⁶⁵ As mentioned earlier, Yamada’s contribution to this collection is an excerpt from the first chapter of *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*: “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet” trans. Terry Gallagher in *Monkey Brain Sushi*, pp. 187 – 204.

⁶⁶ Birnbaum 1993, p. 2.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

person in colloquial speech which brings a vibrancy and an urgency to her texts. Unlike Kōno's material which is often conveyed through an omnipotent third person narrator, this first person narration creates a sense of intimacy and disclosure. Yamada's works are peppered with sentences punctuated with English loan words or swear words, a technique which, during the 1980s and early 1990s, was relatively new and provocative. Writing in 1991, Tanaka Yukiko observes that 'no other Japanese writer has so extensively used this original and ironic stylistic approach.'⁶⁸ Often these words are written in the text in English – especially swear words such as 'fuck'⁶⁹ – or given as *furigana* glosses to Japanese words. For example, in "What's Going On" (1987) the expression 'dōshiteru?' is written in hiragana characters (どうしてる?) with katakana *furigana* that gives the reading of the characters as 'wa'tsu goingu on?' (ワッツゴーイングオン), literally, 'what's going on?'⁷⁰ While this is not a particularly innovative use of *furigana*, (Mori Mari, Yoshiya Nobuko and Ariyoshi Sawako are but three authors who use *rubi* glosses to write a second language beside a Japanese word), Yamada brings an urgency and tension to this that is suggestive of the obsessive pursuit of pleasure of the time. The importance of language, especially in regards to masochism, will be investigated later in this chapter.

If Yamada's novels are clearly products of the climate of excess that was the hallmark of the 1980s, they are also the product of a Japanese society beginning to 'offer more opportunities to women.'⁷¹ Unlike the 1960s and 1970s when the nuclear family of salaryman father and *sengyō shufu* fulltime housewife reigned supreme, the 1980s saw the opening of employment opportunities that led directly to the 'career woman' of the 1990s. Between 1975 and 1985 there was a thirty five per cent increase in the number of working women and from 1984 onwards

⁶⁸ Tanaka 1991, p. xii.

⁶⁹ 「私は立ち上がって、『FUCK YOU!』と呟き、ドアを開ける。ウイリー・ロイは静かに微笑しながら、『YOU TOO』などと言う。[...] 頭にきちゃうわ。(ピスミーオフ)」 Yamada 1987e, p. 192.

⁷⁰ Yamada 1987c, p. 15.

⁷¹ Kuwahara 1994, p. 107.

working women (in either full or part-time positions) outnumbered full-time housewives.⁷²

Industries which increased their use of women's labour included information services and advertising, commodity leasing, food and beverage marketing, department stores and medicine.⁷³

Of these, the rate of women working in information services, advertising, and commodity leasing rose by over 150 per cent, while rates in food and beverage marketing, department stores and medicine rose between 60 and 100 per cent.⁷⁴ However, 'the traditional sex roles [...] persisted in Japan,'⁷⁵ and the vast majority of women who entered the workforce at this time did so as 'office flowers' who performed basic, non-career track jobs such as serving tea until they married or were asked to leave the workforce due to their fading looks.⁷⁶ It was against this background that Yamada pursued an unconventional career path of university drop out, *shōjo mangaka* (girl's comic author and illustrator), hostess, nude model and S/M club dominatrix. She emerged as an author at a time when the disposable income of women meant that they could express their sexuality where and with whom they liked.

More than Just a 'Yellow Cab'

As mentioned above many of Yamada's heroines are viewed through the filter of the grossly offensive 'yellow cab' archetype, and it is in this context that much of her work has been examined.⁷⁷ As Karen Kelsky points out, the term 'yellow cab' refers to 'the small but highly publicized population of young, single Japanese women' who spend their savings, acquired through years of low-status, 'dead end secretarial work,' on 'erotic adventures with a variety of non-Japanese men in places such as U.S. military bases in Japan, tourist resorts of Bali and

⁷² Mackie 2003, p. 187.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Kuwahara 1994, p. 107.

⁷⁶ Often at the haggard age of 25. Creighton 1996, p. 194.

⁷⁷ See, for example, the work of Karen Kelsky, Nina Cornyetz, John Russell and Richard Okada.

Hawai'i, and Tokyo's Roppongi nightclub district.⁷⁸ The term allegedly arose from American slang for Japanese ('yellow') women who were claimed to be as easy to 'hitch a ride in' as one of the famous New York taxi cabs of the same name.⁷⁹ This damaging stereotype was prevalent during the years of the strong yen throughout the Bubble period. The spread of the 'yellow cab' motif suggests that ladies' comics and *shōjo manga* were not the only medium that Japanese women were using to explore their new found sense of sexuality and freedom. Cornyetz, along with Kelsky and John Russell, are three critics who have written on Yamada in relation to Japanese popular culture and racial tropes. Commenting on the putative preference for non-Japanese men on the part of Japanese women that drove the 'yellow cab' discourse, each make statements to the effect that 'Yamada's female protagonists devalue the Japanese penis [and by extension, the Japanese male] while paying homage to the black penis.'⁸⁰ While not an overt expression of the masochistic ethic, this statement does resonate with notions of the discipline and punishment approach that characterises the consort of the Japanese masochist client.

However, Yamada's protagonists, especially the protagonists of *Hizamazuite*, are *more* than just 'yellow cabs.' In the Japanese colloquial parlance of 'S' and 'M' introduced in Chapter 1, Yamada's women protagonists are 'S' women who dominate their 'M' lovers. These protagonists include Ruiko in "Yubi to tawamura" (lit. Finger Games, 1986, translated as The Piano Player's Fingers, Yumi Gunji and Mark Jardine 2006)⁸¹, Sayuri in *Hāremu wārudo* (Harlem World, 1990) and Watashi⁸² in "Seijin muki mōfu" ("X-Rated Blanket," 1988, trans. Nina Cornyetz 1991),⁸³ along with Kim from "Beddo taimu aizu." Ruiko and Sayuri move in their own secluded worlds

⁷⁸ Kelsky 1994, p. 465.

⁷⁹ Controversy has surrounded this term after the discovery that Ieda Shōko's ground breaking work on the yellow cab was largely fraudulent. However, following the release of Ieda's book the idea of the yellow cab took the Japanese media by storm, sensationalising the phenomenon and encouraging its growth from a small group of women to the latest fashion trend during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Kelsky 2001a, pp. 134-135.

⁸⁰ Cornyetz 1994, p. 128.

⁸¹ Yamada 2006a, pp. 65-140

⁸² As the first person narrator/protagonist, I have chosen to use 'Watashi' or 'I' as a signifier for the character.

⁸³ Yamada 1991, pp. 50-54.

of doting lovers and attentive slaves, taking and discarding men as their mood suits them. Both women play at being masochistic consorts. In contrast, Shinobu and Chika walk a delicate line between abusive dominatrix and well-trained consort/torturer/partner. They are reliant on the continued patronage of their masochistic ‘slaves’ at the S/M club.⁸⁴ Furthermore, while the protagonists of these texts can be read as representative of the stereotypical ‘yellow cab,’ they are the archetypal ‘Yamada Girl.’ Cornyetz notes that sex for these women is ‘like eating when hungry.’⁸⁵ Her choice of words, which link the ‘Yamada Girl’ once again to consumption and devouring, reminds us of the image of women as wild *yamauba* introduced above.

Yamada is not the first Japanese author to write about African Americans. Ariyoshi Sawako’s 1963 *Hishoku* (Not Because of Colour) investigates racism in Japan and the position of African Americans and other minority groups in America, while Ishiwaka Jun’s *Ōgon densetsu* (Legend of Gold, 1946; trans. William J Tyler, 1988) returns to the motif of woman-as-prostitute in *nikutai bungaku* and the *buraiha* introduced in Chapter 1.⁸⁶ Nor is Yamada the first author to associate black penises with phallic power. Abe Tomoji (1903-1973) and Murakami Ryū (b. 1952) are but two of a number of Japanese male authors who reference African Americans in this way. Abe’s pre-war “Shinema no kokujin” (“A Negro in Cinema,” 1930; trans. William Jefferson Tyler, 2008) is a portrait of African American film star Stepin Fetchit (1902-1985) while Murakami’s post war *Kagiri naku tōmei ni chikai burū* (Almost Transparent Blue, 1976; trans Nancy Andrew, 1992) gives an account of the subculture of youth living near U.S. military bases in the 1970s and interactions with African Americans in that context. However, Yamada certainly is one of the

⁸⁴ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 12-13; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” p. 193.

⁸⁵ Cornyetz 1996, p. 430.

⁸⁶ Further to the post war attitudes of decadence introduced in Chapter 1 Dower’s comments on US African American servicemen in *Embracing Defeat* are worth noting. Of the women who ‘volunteered’ to prostitute themselves to the occupying forces those ‘designated for use by black soldiers were said to have been horrified – until they discovered that many black GIs treated them more kindly than the whites did.’ Dower 1991, p. 130.

first women to make such overt judgements on the genitals of her countrymen and to visit such harsh assessment on their prowess.

Yamada has received criticism for reducing her male characters in this way to little more than penises. However, at the same time that Yamada was criticised for this, the Japanese media was doing the exact same thing – discussing African Americans in terms of their penises. The idea that the non-Japanese male exposes the shortcoming of the Japanese male was co-opted into the male dominated media hysteria surrounding ‘yellow cabs’ as a highly developed form of racially driven penis envy.⁸⁷ Yamada in turn writes against this (writes back/writes black) in *Hizamazuite*. While Shinobu is currently dating a Japanese man, both she and Chika have sexual experiences with African American and other non-Japanese lovers. A reoccurring theme throughout the novel is anger at ‘[Japanese] jerks who use the size of their pricks as an excuse for their poor sexual performance.’⁸⁸ Again we see an example of social castigation that ‘disciplines’ and condemns the sexuality of (all) Japanese men. However, Chika and Shinobu save their greatest wrath for the girls who go out with these men and ‘pretend that they feel something’ instead of teaching ‘them about women’s bodies.’⁸⁹ Perhaps the ire that Chika and Shinobu feel towards the women who are not strong enough to ask for what they want in the bedroom comes from their experiences as dominatrices: ‘If Chika and I knew what we know now about men from working at the S/M club [earlier] we would have been all “kneel down and lick my feet.”’⁹⁰

Indeed it has been suggested that all ‘yellow cab’ relationships have an element of ‘sadoomasochistic fantasy’ given the supposed super sized African American penis:⁹¹

⁸⁷ Kelsky 1996, p. 184.

⁸⁸ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* p. 32.

⁸⁹ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 16; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” pp. 195-196.

⁹⁰ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 70.

⁹¹ Russell, “Consuming Passions,” p. 136-137.

Black penises are huge. Too big for the bodies of us Japanese women. I've heard that after having sex with them, the sheets are stained with blood. If they put it all in, the pain is unbearable, so they wrap a towel around the base to keep all of it from going in.⁹²

The above is the response given by a Japanese woman when asked as to why she prefers dating 'blacks' quoted by Russell to illustrate the 'perception that these women are somehow enacting sadomasochistic fantasies.'⁹³ He continues by linking masochism with the 'metaphor of addiction' (once you go black, you never go back) which allows:

these Japanese women to deny female agency, while still flaunting their delinquent identity. At the same time, it indicts Japanese men, since it implies that had they performed their function as lovers and companions properly, these women would not have strayed into self-abuse.⁹⁴

Russell concludes that there is a question overhanging these relationships as to who takes on the role of consort/partner/torturer and who adopts the position of the masochist.⁹⁵

Big Sister, Little Sister: The Consort/Partner/Torturer and their Constructed Communities.

Yamada's texts have had a pedagogic effect almost to the point where her narratives have acted as guides on how to become a woman for countless Japanese school girls from the late 1980s to present day.⁹⁶ In autumn 2004, the Japanese literary world was set alight when the prestigious Akutagawa prize was awarded to 20 year old Kanehara Hitomi and 19 year old Wataya Risa.

Both have stated, as will be expanded upon in the case of Kanehara in the following chapter, that

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Yamada continues to be a mentor figure to young girls, writing advice columns in popular young women's magazines such as *An-an* and *Non-no* (both published by Shūeisha).

they were strongly affected by Yamada's 1989 collection *Hōkago no kīnōto* (After School Keynotes, trans. Sonya L Johnson, 1992).

In her 'winner's interview' in *Bungei shunjū*, Kanehara revealed that it was while she was living in America with her father, a translator and college professor, she started reading *Hōkago no kīnōto* and Murakami Ryū's *69: sixty nine*. In the same interview Kanehara admits that prior to living in America she was not particularly interested in literature but began reading it after her father borrowed some Japanese novels, including *Hōkago no kīnōto*, and left them 'lying about' the apartment they were living in.⁹⁷ Kanehara states that she remembered reading Yamada's and Murakami's books even in her dreams. It was these two texts that inspired her to try her hand at writing.⁹⁸ In the 2004 soft cover edition of *Himegimi* (Princess, 2006) Kanehara provides the commentary/postscript included at the end of the collection where she notes that *Hōkago no kīnōto* was the first book by Yamada that she had ever read; she has been able to re-read it multiple times. While Kanehara admits that although the 'freshness' of the stories has disappeared, each time she reads *Hōkago no kīnōto* she experiences it in a different way – skipping over some parts, pausing over others and finding elements that she did not notice or had not understood during previous readings.⁹⁹

This sisterhood of reader/protagonist evokes the sororal relationships that develop between the young women deuteragonists in Yamada's work. Her debut narrative, "Beddo taimu aizū," tells the story of Kim, a 'naïve' Japanese club singer,¹⁰⁰ and her Harlem born lover 'Spoon,' an African American GI 'gone UA' (lit. unauthorised leave.) In this work, which has been described

⁹⁷ "Jushō intabyū," p. 320.

⁹⁸ Ibid. It is interesting to note that both of these authors were part of the judging panel the year that Kanehara won that Akutagawa prize.

⁹⁹ Kanehara 2004, p. 254.

¹⁰⁰ Russell 1991, p. 21.

as a ‘simple love story,’¹⁰¹ Yamada utilises a number of conventions that appear repeatedly throughout her work: socially marginalised characters (a cabaret singer, a GI and a stripper); two women locked in a *sempai/kōhai* relationship (lit. superior/subordinate) couched in terms of sisterhood (Kim and Maria the stripper); a liminal, contained setting, inaccessible to most readers (a US Naval base and surrounds somewhere near Tokyo); Japanese spiced liberally with American slang and expletives; and a number of explicit, bordering on pornographic, sex scenes. Yamada’s position as a writer of note was cemented when “Beddo taimu aizu” was awarded the Bungei Prize in 1985 and nominated for the prestigious Akutagawa prize later the same year.¹⁰²

“Beddo taimu aizu” reflects the excess of the Bubble period in the extremes of the main characters, specifically Spoon; he is simply too much. Spoon is portrayed throughout the narrative as both violent and childlike – a man of extremes; he is always too sweet or too spicy¹⁰³ – incapable of clear verbal articulation or rational thought.¹⁰⁴ While Kim is addicted to the way that he makes her feel, she is never certain whether or not Spoon is going to hit her or kiss her.¹⁰⁵ (We might note the difference here between Kim’s experience and the highly structured relationships of Kōno’s protagonists.) Many of the non-Japanese men that Yamada writes about come across as childish in their excess. It could be argued that ‘Yamada Girls,’ who (in general) are the providers of shelter, food, sex and comfort, mother their lovers. It is little wonder then that Shinobu and Chika feel at ease in their roles as S/M club dominatrices (read ‘salaried masochistic consort/torturer/partner’).

¹⁰¹ Kodama, Sugino and Yasumori 2007, pp. 288-289.

¹⁰² The Bungei prize is awarded by publisher Kawade Shobō Shinsha aimed at discovering new writers. Yamada has received numerous literary awards throughout her career but has never won the Akutagawa prize despite receiving three nominations. She is currently a member of the selection committee.

¹⁰³ Yamada 1985, pp. 57-58; Yamada 2006b, pp. 28-29.

¹⁰⁴ Okada 1995, p. 117.

¹⁰⁵ ‘How was it that the same hands that hurt me like that could also [...] take me to the very heights of ecstasy?’ Yamada 1985h, pp. 58; Yamada 2006b, p. 29.

In the previous chapter we saw that Kōno draws on private, liminal and internal spaces (the ‘soundproof room’) to create a contained locale in which to display her protagonist’s masochistic tendencies. In some cases it could be said that these spaces form part of the paraphernalia required to fulfil the masochistic contract between, for example, Fumiko and Matsuda in “Ari takaru.” However, as Noriko Mizuta Lippit points out in an article that examines the work of Kōno and Yamada, ‘since the 1970s, contemporary women’s thought has left the back alley for the main street.’¹⁰⁶ For Mizuta Lippit, this shift from the relatively hidden (the back alley) to the open (the main street) offers a ‘new site’ for ‘self-representation.’¹⁰⁷ In addition to the private living spaces of her protagonists and their friends or lovers, Yamada sets her stories in an array of clubs and public spaces. As mentioned above, like the masochists themselves, many of these clubs and public spaces are on the fringe of Japanese society and unlikely to be frequented by the majority of readers, making these settings at once public but also liminal. Furthermore, Mizuta Lippit argues that Yamada’s narratives ‘portray the world of women’s eros’ making women’s bodies a new site of ‘power.’¹⁰⁸ Mizuta Lippit further argues that in Yamada’s narratives ‘there is no drama and no plot, only the validation of women’s eros and its power, and the temporal space of the present which makes that eros possible.’¹⁰⁹ I have previously noted that for the most part, Yamada’s characters wear their sexuality as armour: they masturbate at windows, have sex with random strangers in clubs and work in the *mizu shōbai* ‘entertainment industry’ while still maintaining relationships with their own boyfriends and lovers.¹¹⁰

Hizamazuite, however, presents an alternative to this ‘sex in public places’ paradigm. Rather than having sex in ‘the open,’ Chika and Shinobu are situated in the masochistic small space

¹⁰⁶ Mizuta Lippit 1995, p. 100.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 100-101. The delicate balance of power between a ‘Yamada Girl’ and her lover is discussed in more detail below.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 101.

¹¹⁰ Chika becomes a dominatrix solely so as to have some money to spend on her boyfriend. *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 6; “Kneel Down and Lick my Feet,” p. 188.

introduced in the previous chapter. The two protagonists of this text are generally depicted in the confined ‘scenario’ rooms in the S/M club where they work, the staff space at the back of the club or in their cramped apartments. Each of these closed spaces is reminiscent of the ‘soundproof room’ or small space that we have seen in the work of Kōno. In her discussion of eros in *Hāremu wārudo*, notwithstanding her identification of a shift from ‘the back alley’ to ‘the main street,’ Mizuta Lippit refers to this small space in Yamada’s narratives by stating that ‘Harlem is a sexual space created around female eros, and a space of life that transcends the real.’¹¹¹

The interpersonal relationships that are showcased throughout *Hizamazuite* change depending on the environment in which they occur. Inside the scenario room, Shinobu and Chika take on the role of the masochistic consort/partner/torturer as they play the role of arrogant S/M Queens. However when they escort their clients out of the room and to the showers at the end of each session, Chika and Shinobu lose their arrogance just as their ‘slaves’ stop playing the role of servant and return to their original persona of company president.¹¹² There is also something of Yoshiya Nobuko’s ‘attic’ in the small space in Yamada’s work, especially when it is inhabited by a pair of ‘Yamada Girls’ such as Chika and Shinobu who share a sisterly relationship. The stories that Chika and Shinobu tell each other of their sex lives, experiences at different clubs and their family life are told in these small spaces such as their apartments or place of work.

It is in these spaces that Chika tells Shinobu, her ‘older sister,’ about her triumphs and new conquests, as well as her failures and disasters. The pairing of older and younger sister can be found in many of Yamada’s narratives, the most obvious being the (pseudo-*dōseiai*) pairing of

¹¹¹ Mizuta Lippit 1995, p. 101.

¹¹² *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 15-16; “Kneel Down and Lick my Feet,” p. 196.

Kim and Maria in “Beddo taimu aizū.”¹¹³ For Kim, Maria is the perfect woman. Prior to her relationship with Spoon, Kim made each of her potential boyfriends sleep with Maria so as to ascertain their worth as lovers. Maria and Kim’s relationship falls apart when Maria reveals her love for Kim. Maria sleeps with Spoon, not to steal him from Kim, but to taste/feel/touch the remnants of Kim that remain on Spoon’s body.¹¹⁴

Chika and Shinobu, Kim and Maria are all involved in different pleasure businesses of the *mizu shōbai* world. Chika and Shinobu first meet at a strip club while Kim and Maria sing at the same cabaret. The *mizu shōbai* nightscape is organised by a vertical system of extended pseudo-familial relationships with titles of address to match; these include the Mama-san who is in charge of the girls, the cluster of ‘older sisters’ ranked in experience and seniority, and the Father or *Otōsan* who manages the strip bar, club or hostess bar.¹¹⁵ Yamada’s narratives employ a similar set of vertical arrangements to those found in this world – with the ‘Yamada Girl’ firmly in a position of power. Although Chika’s habit of referring to Shinobu as her sister stems from this hierarchical arrangement, she has developed a genuinely close bond that gives their friendship precedence over every other relationship.

Early in *Hizamazuite* Shinobu kicks her boyfriend out of bed and sends him home when Chika calls her on the phone late at night. When her boyfriend complains that Shinobu just wants to sleep with Chika, Shinobu explains that ‘sometimes female friends are just more important than men.’¹¹⁶ In her work on Yamada, Alwyn Spies notes that:

¹¹³ While *dōseiai* literally means ‘same sex love’ (and is increasingly translated as ‘homosexual’) there is an overtone of ‘purity’ to *dōseiai* relationships. The term has come to primarily indicate relationships between young women such as those found in the work of Yoshiya Nobuko. See Frederick 2005, pp. 73-77. See also Angles 2011, pp. 6-7 and Robertson 1999, pp. 9-11.

¹¹⁴ Yamada 1985, pp. 64-70; Yamada 2006b, pp. 35-41.

¹¹⁵ Allison 1994, p. 59.

¹¹⁶ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* p. 26.

‘vertical relationships make the definitions of “man” and “woman” very difficult.

The only thing that is clear in this equation is the connection between power, control and sexual pleasure.’¹¹⁷

Spies’ assessment of vertical relationships in terms of power and sexual pleasure link them to the masochistic relationship between the masochist and their torturer/consort/partner.

As dominatrices in a Tokyo S/M club, Chika and Shinobu are at times a long way from the Sacher-Masoch’s aloof fur-clad Venus (and indeed from Kōno’s cold women examined in the previous chapter). The closest Chika and Shinobu come to furs is when Candy, a stripper at a different club, gets shit on Chika’s fur coat with her dirty enema equipment.¹¹⁸ Through its representation of the masochistic fantasy, the S/M club, like the holiday destinations of the ‘yellow cabs,’ is an escape from the reality of Japanese society. Thomas Wetzstein describes the creation of new identities and escapism at an S/M club in the following manner:

The actors hand in their everyday identities at the door of the marital torture chamber or the Dominatrix Studio. But they receive them back again when they leave the situation. These two points mark the boundaries of the SM frame.¹¹⁹

Within the boundaries of the of the S/M scenario room, or any other liminal setting where masochistic acts are played out such as those in Kōno’s narratives or Yamada’s novels, each person has an assigned role that they must attempt to act out perfectly if the scenario is to be successful.

¹¹⁷ Spies, p. 90.

¹¹⁸ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 61. Chika notes that Candy was ‘always trouble.’ ‘Candy’ is an archetypal sex worker name and can be seen in such disparate sources as Diablo Cody’s 2008 *Candy Girl: A Year in the Life of an Unlikely Stripper* and in the cult film classic *Highlander* (1986, dir. Russell Mulcahy). In the latter a bleach blonde prostitute in ill-fitting leather introduces herself to the film’s antagonist by saying: “Hi. I’m Candy.” To which he replies: “I bet you are.”

¹¹⁹ Noyes 1997, p. 215.

Chika and Shinobu are not the only of Yamada's protagonists who take on the twin role of 'Yamada Girl' and consort/partner/torturer. Mizuta Lippit refers to the protagonist of *Hāremu wārudo*, Sayuri, as a goddess.¹²⁰ This description is reminiscent of the perfect masochistic woman (consort) as discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis – Sacher-Masoch's lover who is inherently linked with the Roman goddess of love in *Venus in Furs*. In other words, Mizuta Lippit advocates the dominatrix as the ideal of women's sexuality.¹²¹ In *Onna asobi* (Women's Play, 1988) Ueno Chizuko also praises *Hāremu wārudo*.¹²² For Ueno, *Hāremu wārudo* is a 'very educational book.'¹²³ Indeed, it is so educational that Ueno wishes that 'all men would read it' and learn from Sayuri's harem of four lovers.¹²⁴ At the same time, Ueno proposes that all women should undergo a course of *education* so as to learn how to become dominating consorts/torturers/partners.¹²⁵ The questionable status of this advocacy is apparent when we recall the mundane nature of the dominatrix role. The need to clean up shit, in fact, makes it clear that her role is little different from that of the toilet-cleaning *senryō shufu*.

For Mizuta Lippit, Sayuri is an 'erotic goddess' who 'attracts men one after the other.'¹²⁶ Sayuri's sexuality 'arouses the desire for sex' in her lovers and 'simultaneously provides the power for them to want, become aware of and validate themselves.'¹²⁷ It is important to note that although Sayuri is viewed as being the central figure of her harem, her power originates with her lovers who allow her to maintain control over them. As soon as they stop playing along (breaking their unwritten contract to be good little boys and act in accordance to Sayuri's commands) the relationship collapses.

¹²⁰ Mizuta Lippit 1995, p. 101.

¹²¹ This positioning of the sex-worker as a strong feminist figure is explored in Ariel Levy's *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, Levy 2005.

¹²² Ueno 1988, p. 53.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 53-55.

¹²⁶ Mizuta Lippit 1995, p. 101.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

We have seen in the preceding chapters that when a consort does not act in the prescribed manner, the masochistic relationship starts to fall apart. While the masochist dictates what they wish to experience, their reliance on their chosen consort leaves them vulnerable. In the case of the ‘Yamada Girls’ in this chapter who take on the role of Queen (Chika and Shinobu) or a goddess (Sayuri), their African American or non-Japanese lovers are little more than play things; they are commodities similar to other Bubble era accessories, such as the perfect brand label bag or pair of earrings;¹²⁸ more kept pet than equal lover.¹²⁹ This attitude bears a striking similarity to that of the matriarchal EHS goddesses of Shōzō’s *Kachikujin yapū*. Sebe Rin’ichirō, a young Japanese man on exchange in Germany can be seen as the mirror image of one of Yamada’s African American lovers living in Japan. It must be remembered that at the end of *Kachikujin yapū* Rin’ichirō is himself little more than a kept pet.

The ‘Yamada Girl’ and the *Shōjo*

No discussion on the work of Yamada Eimi is complete without some reference to the inevitable comparison that is made between her work and that of fellow emergent 1980s author Yoshimoto Banana. Critics such as Miyoshi Masao have dismissed the work of Yamada, Yoshimoto and their contemporaries as a ‘host of disposables’ that ‘dutifully [serve] the needs of production, circulation and consumption.’¹³⁰ Yoshimoto’s works in particular have been dismissed as ‘absurd nonsense.’¹³¹ We have already seen that Yamada’s narratives are often studied solely in terms of their sexual content, especially with reference to her use of African American or non-Japanese lovers. Conversely, Yoshimoto’s have been quite trenchantly

¹²⁸ Okada 1995, p. 118.

¹²⁹ Yamada 2006b, p. 51.

¹³⁰ Miyoshi 1991, p. 37.

¹³¹ See for example Aoyama Minami, Enaka Naoki and Suga Hidemi. “Dakara, gendai bungaku wa omoshiroi,” (That’s Why Contemporary Literature is Fun), in Bessatsu Takarajima Henshūbu ed., *Gendai bungaku de asobu hon*, Tokyo: JCCC, 1990, cited in Kawasaki 2010, pp. 50-51; White 1995, pp. 255–73.

critiqued for their seeming absence of sex and/or sexuality. Studies such as Yamashita Mayumi's "'Amae' to josei no sekushuariti: Yoshimoto Banana to Yamada Eimi" ("Amae' and Women's Sexuality: Yoshimoto Banana and Yamada Eimi"),¹³² position the work of Yamada and Yoshimoto as two 'polar' opposites: the bedroom and the kitchen.¹³³

The two works that Yamashita examines are Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* (Kitchen, 1988; trans Megan Backus, 1993) and Yamada's *Hizamazuite*. In her analysis, Yamashita draws heavily on the work of Doi Takeo regarding the concept of *amae*. 'Amae,' defined by Yoshio Sugimoto as 'psychological dependence,'¹³⁴ relates to the 'feelings that all normal infants at the breast harbour toward the mother – dependence, the desire to be passively loved, [and] the unwillingness to be separated from the warm mother-child circle.'¹³⁵ As formulated by Doi in 1971, this feeling of *amae* is prolonged in Japanese society, especially in the case of Japanese boys and men.¹³⁶

Sugimoto has dismissed this concept as a fabricated notion that contributes to a misleading reading of Japanese homogeneity, or so-called 'nihonjinron.'¹³⁷ Yet, while not wishing to buy into stereotypical interpretations of the existence of some Japanese 'essence,' the concept of *amae* – or at least the pervasive presence of this in the consciousness of everyday Japanese who have been the targets of sustained campaigns by successive Japanese administrations to the effect that Japan and its people are 'uniquely unique'¹³⁸ – might explain in part why masochistic men, such as Tanizaki's protagonists, are so celebrated but masochistic women, such as the protagonists of the texts examined here, are seen by some commentators as passive and submissive creatures conforming to social norms. For Yamashita, Mikage, the protagonist of *Kitchen*, is caught in the male dominant, *amae*-driven economy of Japanese society and is unable to escape from the

¹³² Yamashita 1996.

¹³³ For another example of the kitchen vs bedroom in the work of Yoshimoto see "Yoshimoto Banana's Feminine Family" in Murakami 2005, pp. 58-94.

¹³⁴ Sugimoto 1997, p. 3.

¹³⁵ Yamashita 1996.

¹³⁶ See Doi 1973.

¹³⁷ Sugimoto 1997, p. 3.

¹³⁸ See Dale 1986.

nurturing mother role.¹³⁹ She suggests that, like Yoshimoto's other protagonists, Mikage is too busy cooking in the kitchen for anything else. Yamashita continues by arguing that if Yoshimoto's characters would only leave the kitchen and move to the bedroom they would be able to become active sexual partners, like the protagonists of Yamada's narratives. Yamashita claims that Yamada's protagonists are 'women who are like men.'¹⁴⁰ women who are aggressive, who tell men frankly when they want to sleep with them or find them attractive, and who think that Japanese men who want to marry pliable virgins are 'stupid.'¹⁴¹

In contrast to Yoshimoto's protagonists who are often seen as *shōjo* there is little doubt that the 'Yamada Girl' is aggressively and sexually adult – she smokes, drinks, wears makeup and high-heels, lives with her lovers and has a job (usually, as noted, in the entertainment/sex industry). This is so in spite of the fact that she is just as likely to throw a childish tantrum as to seduce someone. In *Hizamazuite*, moreover, Shinobu states that being adult means knowing suffering: 'A real adult, no matter how much he or she wants to sleep with someone, endures not sleeping with them and learns to deal with pain.'¹⁴² This perception of prolonged suffering and unrequited feelings mirror Deleuze's characterisation of masochism as being cold and eternal. The 'Yamada Girls' endless wait for the object of her affection to respond to her feelings, the ability to endure 'not sleeping them' as Shinobu puts it, speaks to the masochist's interminable wait for the crack of the whip to come from the hand of her or his consort/partner/torturer.

Although Yoshimoto's protagonists are essentialised as *shōjo* and Yamada's protagonists as adult women, I would argue that the representations created by both writers are neither *shōjo* nor adult. In fact the writing of both women recalls the work of Saitō Minako and her notion of "L-

¹³⁹ Yamashita 1996. Yamashita uses the example of Mikage taking food to Yūichi. Yoshimoto 1993, pp. 92-102. Ueno also criticises this scene in "Midnight Call," in *Asahi Shinbun* (4 June 1989).

¹⁴⁰ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 40. Also cited by Yamashita 1996, p. 417.

¹⁴¹ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 40-41. On the flip side, Levy points out that it takes more than having lots of sex for a woman to act in a strong, feminist way. See Levy 2005, p. 82.

¹⁴² *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 15; "Kneel Down and Lick My Feet," p. 195.

bungaku” (L literature) which can be instrumental in unravelling the representations of the protagonists given in both *Kitchin* and *Hizamazuite*. Saito defines L-*bungaku* as ‘popular literature targeted at young (and not-so-young) women.’¹⁴³ The ‘L’ (*eru*) stands for Lady, Love, and Libu (suggesting the women’s liberation movement of the 1970s).¹⁴⁴ The basic premise of L-*bungaku* is that the authors are women, as are their heroines and the majority of the readers. L-*bungaku* builds on the codes of ‘girlhood’ that were formed in the *shōjo* collective culture featured in media such as magazines, *manga*, dramas and novels and which has flourished since the 1980s.¹⁴⁵ Given this basic premise as set down by Saitō, L-*bungaku* covers a wide array of women writers and their works, including Yoshimoto and Yamada as well as Kirino Natsuo (b 1951), who wrote *manga* prior to becoming a crime novelist.¹⁴⁶ Although based on *shōjo* culture, the ‘feeling of L’ is not the same as ‘the feeling of being a girl,’ rather it is ‘the mentality of a woman who longs for the stage of girlhood or still holds on to the girls’ culture in which she grew up.’¹⁴⁷ To use Honda Masuko’s elegant phrase, it is the feeling of someone who was ‘once a girl’ and of ‘no longer a girl:’ ‘like a toccata and fugue [...] the different keys of these two language registers resonate in mutual harmony.’¹⁴⁸

While we saw in the previous chapter that the image of the mother (even when she is absent) plays an important part in Kōno’s work, to the limited extent that either parent is profiled in Yamada’s material, it is the father rather than the mother who takes on this role – Shinobu realises from an early age that her mother was ‘more like the hired-help’ than a parent.¹⁴⁹ Until she was 15, Shinobu bathed with her father,¹⁵⁰ who also watched his daughter masturbate when

¹⁴³ Aoyama 2010, p. 44.

¹⁴⁴ Dollase 2011, p. 756; Aoyama 2010, p. 44.

¹⁴⁵ Dollase 2011, p. 756.

¹⁴⁶ Dollase 2011, p. 757; Aoyama 2010, p. 44.

¹⁴⁷ Dollase 2011, p. 756.

¹⁴⁸ Honda 2010, p. 20.

¹⁴⁹ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 148-150.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

she was around the age of 7.¹⁵¹ Shinobu's relationship with her father ends when she leaves home and enters the realms of masochistic activity. Furthermore, if we link this instance in *Hizamazuite* to *Hōkago no kōnōto*, it becomes clear that, like Kōno's protagonists who resist any connection with girlhood, the young 'Yamada Girls'-in-the-making cannot wait to shed their cocoon of girlhood and become fully fledged, adult women.

While Yamada wrote and drew *manga* before she turned her hand to writing literature, a number of scholars have noted the association too between the work of Yoshimoto Banana and manga. Both women grew up reading *shōjo manga* magazines such as *Ribon* (Ribbon) and *Bessatsu Margaret* (Margaret Supplement)¹⁵² and the pervasive influence of this form of cultural production on their lives is apparent in an off-the-cuff reference to manga in *Hizamazuite*. Relating a story from her youth when she saw a man commit suicide in the house next door from the window of the room in which she is meant to be studying, Shinobu confides that, 'of course I didn't do any work, all I did was read *manga*.'¹⁵³ In *Yamada Eimi ai no sekai: manga ren'ai Yoshimoto Banana* (Yamada Eimi The World of Love: *Manga* True Love Yoshimoto Banana) Matsuda Ryōichi also highlights the strong connection that Yamada and Yoshimoto have with *manga* in terms of the ease with which their literary works can be compared to the pop-art/comic feel of *manga* artwork.¹⁵⁴ It is not only the narrative devices that both writers utilise but also the choice of narrative style which adds to this comparison. However, Kawasaki Kenko points out that there is more to the connection between Yoshimoto's work and *shōjo manga* than a 'mere shared language.'¹⁵⁵ *Shōjo manga* are defined by their characteristic use of white space to convey the passing of time as well as the

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 155, 157.

¹⁵² Matsuda 1999, p. 39; Dollase 2011, p. 757. *Ribon* and *Bessatsu Margaret* are two iconic *shōjo manga* that have been in publication since the late 1970s. At one stage *Ribon* was printing around 2 million copies per issue. Takeuchi 2010, p. 88.

¹⁵³ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 131.

¹⁵⁴ Matsuda 1999, p. 18

¹⁵⁵ Kawasaki 2010, p. 56.

feelings, dreams, hopes and desires of the *shōjo manga* protagonist.¹⁵⁶ In the work of Yoshimoto, a similar sort of white space provides ‘an interval within the narrated texts itself, or the interval between the text and that which is narrated.’¹⁵⁷ This will be further explored in Chapter 5. Returning to the putative ‘lack’ of sexual discourse in Yoshimoto’s works, I would furthermore argue that this blank space is reminiscent of the ‘fade to black’ found in the heavily censored movies of the 1930s and 1940s – movies that, like a Yoshimoto text, do not show any overt sexual activity but which brim with sexual tension, desire and even lust.¹⁵⁸

In contrast to the use of the fade out in *shōjo manga* and Yoshimoto’s narratives, Yamada’s narratives depict every sexual encounter in minute detail. In her short-lived career as a *mangaka* under her birth name of Yamada Futaba,¹⁵⁹ Yamada published her first commercial comic, *Shugā bā* (A Sugar Bar), in 1981 as part of the ‘amateur *manga* movement.’ Sharon Kinsella states that this movement allowed its participants to experience a form of escapism ‘facilitated by the medium of (erotic) mass media.’¹⁶⁰ Prior to her debut as a *mangaka*, Yamada was a member of Meiji University’s *manga* club where she was enrolled in the department of Japanese Literature.¹⁶¹ A brief look at the catalogue of Yamada’s *manga* from her time in the *manga* club onwards reveals that many of the hallmarks of her fiction were already developing. With titles such as “KIND OF BLUE” (1978), “MISS DOLL” (1981), “Fuūru sō guddo” (Feel So Good, 1979), “Fuankī fuakku” (Funky Fuck, 1981) and “Memorīzu obu yū (Memories of You, 1981),¹⁶² it is easy to see that even as a member of a university *manga* club Yamada had already established the use of

¹⁵⁶ Takahashi 2008, pp. 126-127.

¹⁵⁷ Kawasaki 2010, p. 56.

¹⁵⁸ See for example Sheri Chinen Biesen, “Censorship, Film Noir and *Double Indemnity*.”

¹⁵⁹ Yamada reputedly changed her name after some American friends noted her likeness to an African American singer of the same name. Instead of using *katakana* for the name, Yamada instead chose two *kanji* characters: 詠 *ei*, which can mean to write or compose, especially of poetry (archaic) and 美 *mi* which was frequently used in girls names as it denotes the quality of beauty and loveliness.

¹⁶⁰ Kinsella 1998, pp. 289-315.

¹⁶¹ Yamada entered Meiji University after failing the Waseda entrance exams. She enrolled in the Japanese literature department as she didn’t feel her English was strong enough to study African American literature.

¹⁶² Matsuda 1999, pp. 95-180.

English language titles (using both English and katakana characters) for her narratives. These titles also show the soul music influences that would later lead to literary works such as *Sōru myūjikeku rabāzu onuri* (Soul Music Lovers Only, 1987). Additionally, each of these *manga* also establishes Yamada's penchant for graphic sex scenes and eroticism. "Jashūmon no hikyoku" (The Secret Music of Jashūmon,¹⁶³ 1979), a *manga* that dates back to Yamada's student days, graphically depicts a woman kneeling between the legs of a man and performing oral sex, confirming that these narrative elements have been part of Yamada's style from the very beginning.¹⁶⁴

Yamada's sexually explicit *manga* reflected a wider trend in *manga* during the late 1970s and early 1980s. *Manga* and comics became popular in Japan during the 1950s and exploded into a golden age during the 1970s. Of particular relevance to this thesis is the change that was taking place in *shōjo manga*, a genre of comics primarily written for young and adolescent girls but read by a much wider audience, during the 1980s. As the first waves of young *manga* readers grew up, so too did the *manga* that they were reading.¹⁶⁵ The shift culminated in the genre of ladies' comics, which, as the name suggests are most often written by women for a mostly female audience. Ladies' comics are a brand of erotic *manga* written and drawn specifically to cater to women and their tastes. Many of the themes and narratives that remain popular in *shōjo manga*, such as true love, science fiction, historical fiction and boys' love, have been adapted to ladies' comics – with one key difference. Where *shōjo manga* fades to white, or focuses on showers of flower petals to imply sexual activity, ladies' comics, as in Yamada's narratives, provide graphic illustrations. In these scenes flower petals no longer symbolise sexual release, forming instead a border that

¹⁶³ Interestingly, *Jashūmon* is the name of the first poetry collection by Kitahara Hakushū (1885-1942) published in 1909. Furthermore, Jashū seems to have been an obscure Edo era Christian sect which has now become a by-word for fast spreading religious sects.

¹⁶⁴ Hobbs 1999, p. 35, note 12. Hobbs states that "Jashūmon" depicts non-Japanese characters. Without having access to the *manga* it is impossible to know if the characters are actually non-Japanese or if in designing each character Yamada chose to conform to *manga* tropes of the period in which all characters were drawn with western looking features. For more on stylistic conventions in *manga* see Chapter 5 of this thesis.

¹⁶⁵ See Fujimoto 1998, pp. 89-107.

frames the graphic depiction of each sex act. In ladies' comics of a masochistic nature, these flower petals are often replaced by sweat droplets and leather strapping or other BDSM accoutrements.

In preparation for the Chapter 5 discussion of ladies' comics (another L word), it is worth briefly acknowledging these texts here as a product of the 1980s and of Bubble *jidai* excess. We have noted that, in addition to being a period of consumer excess, the Bubble period was a time when 'working women disrupted sexist myths' in which they were 'presented as unattractive and sexually frustrated.'¹⁶⁶ Women began to enjoy a 'new' economic and sexual freedom.¹⁶⁷ In accordance with this, the first ladies' comic, *Be Love*, was released by publishing house Kōdansha in 1980 at the beginning of the 'Bubble' decade.¹⁶⁸ By the end of 1980 there were two recognised ladies' comics in monthly production and by the close of the decade there were more than fifty such *manga* being purchased by regular readers.¹⁶⁹

Venus in High-Heeled Shoes

Referencing the furs that cloak Sacher-Masoch's Venus, we have earlier noted the critical role played by costume and clothing in the masochistic enterprise. Throughout *Hizamazuite* Shinobu, as the narrator, places an emphasis on the difference between the sex work that she performs at the S/M club and 'making love' with her boyfriend.¹⁷⁰ For both Shinobu and Chika an important factor distinguishing between their experiences with their lovers (making love) and their clients (work) is the different lingerie that they wear when they are at home as opposed to when they are working as Queens. Furthermore, there is a vast difference between black lingerie and high-heels

¹⁶⁶ Ogi 2003, pp. 780-803.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 103.

worn as the Queens’ ‘uniform’ at the S/M club and similar items worn by ‘other women’¹⁷¹ – the implication being that these ‘other women’ are amateur lingerie wearers who don the occasional black lacy garment merely for their partner’s entertainment rather than for serious work. When Chika starts at the S/M club she makes the shift from amateur lingerie wearer to professional. Although she had modelled for S/M magazines before she took a position as a Queen and Shinobu, literally, taught her the ropes, Chika ‘didn’t know the letter ‘S’ about S/M.’¹⁷² At the start of the narrative, therefore, Chika is instructed in the difference between wearing black lingerie and high-heels for her boyfriend(s) and wearing the same outfit with the authority that a police officer wears his uniform in order to successfully dominate her clients – the service for which they willingly pay.¹⁷³

High-heeled shoes hold a special place in the wardrobe of the ‘Yamada Girl’ – particularly given her position of consort/partner/torturer within the masochistic relationship. Sacher-Masoch’s Venuses have their furs, ‘Yamada Girl’s have their sky high-heels. Indeed, in *Masochism in Modern Man*, Reik notes that the high-heeled shoe or boot is as important to the masochistic scene as ‘fur’ and the ‘whip or birch.’¹⁷⁴ At the end of *Hizamazuite*, when Chika has left the world of the S/M club for good to pursue her literary career she swaps her black lingerie for a smart business suit but keeps the stiletto shoes that she ‘borrowed’ from Shinobu. For both girls, ‘the most important thing is that your legs look good.’¹⁷⁵ In “Yubi to tawaramono,” Ruiko has worn scarlet stilettos ‘during so many encounters’ that a mere glimpse of them ‘was bound to make any number of faces turn red.’¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 7; “Kneel Down and Lick my Feet,” p. 189.

¹⁷³ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 77-79.

¹⁷⁴ Reik 1949, p. 204.

¹⁷⁵ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 308.

¹⁷⁶ Yamada 2006a, p. 97.

Shinobu makes a ‘habit’ of starting each masochistic scenario with the client rubbing her legs as she thinks about ‘what to put on the day’s menu.’¹⁷⁷ For Shinobu this simple act is all part of the game. She claims that ‘most men like women’s legs, but masochists are crazy about them.

Getting to rub a fishnet-stockinged leg gets their mouths watering.’¹⁷⁸ Shinobu continues:

some guys go wild for black high heels and will lick them all over, even the soles. We call this “purification” – but it means that *good* shoes would be a waste. One time I was out shopping with the Mama-san of the club. We were passing by a shoe store, and I said, Look, Mama-san, let’s find a nice pair of shoes. How about these? Don’t you think they’re great? She just looked at the price tag and said, Oh, Shinobu, they’re too expensive. You’re just going to let people lick them.¹⁷⁹

While, as commentary on Tanizaki makes clear, there is debate as to where the line between foot fetishism and shoe fetishism should be drawn, it is hard to ignore the fact that the high heel literally presents the foot on a pedestal as a precious and desirable object. Noting that ‘Tanizaki’s heroes find the essence of feminine beauty in women’s feet,’¹⁸⁰ Mizuta Lippit argues that the link between Tanizaki’s masochistic heroes and foot fetishism cannot be overstated. The fetish stems from a disavowal of the ‘absence of the woman’s [phallus]’ and the fetishist takes as her or his fetish ‘the last object seen before becoming aware of the missing [phallus].’¹⁸¹ This seems all the more pertinent in the case of shoe fetishism if we consider that Freud’s theories added to the ‘sexual charge’ and ‘clearly phallic’ nature of the high heel.¹⁸² Freud notes that ‘the foot for instance is an age-old sex symbol which occurs even in mythology’¹⁸³ and suggests that the ‘shoe or slipper is a corresponding symbol of the female genitals.’¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, Deleuze states that fetishism, as ‘defined by the process of disavowal and suspension of belief belongs essentially to

¹⁷⁷ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 10; “Kneel Down And Lick My Feet,” p. 191.

¹⁷⁸ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 10; “Kneel Down And Lick My Feet,” p. 191.

¹⁷⁹ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 10-11; “Kneel Down And Lick My Feet,” p. 191.

¹⁸⁰ Mizuta Lippit 1977, pp. 221-240.

¹⁸¹ Bogue 1989, p. 47; Deleuze 1991, pp. 31-32. See also Freud’s essay “Fetishism” (1927).

¹⁸² Semmelback 2008, p. 40.

¹⁸³ Freud 1983, p. 159.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 159 note 1.

masochism.¹⁸⁵ For Mizuta Lippit, the Tanizakian hero does not pursue beautiful women for ‘the sake of erotic fulfilment’ but rather he seeks ‘an unattainable absolute, the symbolic essence of feminine beauty.’¹⁸⁶

One definition of foot fetishism is ‘a pronounced sexual interest in the lower limb or anything that covers portions of them.’¹⁸⁷ Elevated shoes, in the form of high-heels or platform shoes are particularly fetishist in that they transform women into towering seductresses: Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love (and forerunner to Sacher-Masoch’s Roman Venus) was represented in platform sandals while Japanese courtesans, the *taiyu* and the *oiran*, wore exaggerated platform *geta*.¹⁸⁸ Even today, *geisha* are renowned for the ‘pokkuri’ sound of their hollow platform *geta* or *okobo* make as they walk.¹⁸⁹ These shoes place a greater impost on the body that wears them when compared with the furs draped over Venus for warmth in Sacher-Masoch’s text. High-heeled shoes produce an erect ankle and extended leg. As the height of the heel increases so too does the curve of the arch of the foot. The lower body is thrown ‘into a state of tension’ that resembles ‘female sexual arousal.’¹⁹⁰ As the foot arches, it causes the pelvis to tilt, the back to arch, the bust to thrust forward and the derrière to protrude. A woman in heels looks taller and thinner, her feet appear smaller and both her breasts and buttocks are more prominent. Literally placed upon a platform or pedestal, a woman wearing elevated shoes is also hyper-sexualised. Is it any wonder then, that Shinobu’s masochistic slaves go mad for their Queens in black silk and high-heels?

The club where Shinobu and Chika work is one devoted to S/M purists who go there to find a form of masochistic release. While the clients inevitably reach sexual relief through ejaculation,

¹⁸⁵ Deleuze 1991, p. 32.

¹⁸⁶ Mizuta Lippit 1977, pp. 221-240.

¹⁸⁷ Brame and Jacobs 1996, p. 56.

¹⁸⁸ Chaiklin 2011, p. 176.

¹⁸⁹ See for example Kiritani 1995 p. 198 and Carpenter 2005, p. 51.

¹⁹⁰ Sancaktar 2006, pp. 57-58.

the Queens maintain a (tension-inducing) distance by never having intercourse with their paying clients. Thus the illusions created in the various S/M scenarios remain, for both the clientele and the girls who work there, unsullied by the abject elements of everyday relationship sex. This is not unrelated to the issue of the paraphernalia of masochism, including costume. In fact, the standards of hygiene imposed by the club management are as important to client satisfaction as the high heels and lingerie. Shinobu, too, feels safe in her work as the club is spotless – all equipment is scrupulously washed and disinfected between scenarios and the clients shower before and after each session. Early in the novel Shinobu states that there are ‘S/M clubs, and then there [are] S/M clubs,’ detailing a litany of clubs run by mobsters with exorbitant prices and filthy equipment.¹⁹¹ The clients’ repeated showers, too, are as much a part of the ritual of the masochistic encounter as the clothes that the Queens wear. As noted briefly above, upon entering the shower, the masochistic client washes away the outside world in preparation to enter the scenario room and submit themselves to the mercy of the S/M club Queen as consort/partner/torturer. After the S/M scenario finishes, the client once again enters the showers and prepares to re-enter the world outside of the scenario room.¹⁹²

Furthermore, this ritualistic element is reinforced by the language that Shinobu, Chika and the other Queens use when they are in the role of dominatrix in the S/M club scenario room:

Language is one of the most critical things in this kind of play. You need to speak in a dignified matter, but you must also be polite and show respect. Not least of all to yourself. We Queens are terribly important personages after all. It behoves us to use words that elevate all our actions.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 7-8; “Kneel Down and Lick my Feet,” p. 189.

¹⁹² *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 15-16; “Kneel Down and Lick my Feet,” p. 196.

¹⁹³ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 14; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” p. 194.

The importance of language in the masochistic relationship was introduced in Chapter 1 in relation to masochistic desire: the ‘subject is linked by its desire to the signifier.’¹⁹⁴ In this instance, Shinobu’s usage of elevated, almost archaic language is as essential to the masochistic scenario in the S/M club as her wardrobe of black lingerie and high-heeled shoes.

The spoken word is of equal importance as the written contract in masochism.¹⁹⁵ This is especially evident in classic masochism governed by the contract such as those in both Kōno’s and Sacher-Masoch’s texts,¹⁹⁶ but also in masochistic scenarios that conform to a series of rules enforced by an institution such as the S/M club in *Hizamazuite*. It is these words that govern each act (who does what to whom, in what manner and for how long) and which, as we have seen, form a central tenet of masochism through the contract. On Chika’s first day she slips out of persona, something that is noticed by both Shinobu and the client to a negative effect. Shinobu knows that if she says the ‘wrong thing at the wrong moment, it’s all over’ for the client; however Chika has yet to learn this.¹⁹⁷ Chika’s lapse is tantamount to a breach of the masochistic contract between the Queens and the patrons of the S/M club.

There is an association between language and desire that is visible throughout Yamada’s extensive body of work. The notion that ‘desire is formed by language’¹⁹⁸ is well articulated in *Hizamazuite* when Shinobu comments that ‘technique takes a secondary role. That’s why lots of clients say they are completely satisfied with purely verbal play.’¹⁹⁹ Throughout her work, Yamada situates language at a critical site of erotic pleasure. The only time that the ‘Yamada Girl’s’

¹⁹⁴ Kristeva 1980, p. 116.

¹⁹⁵ Jones references Deleuze’s approach to masochistic languages in “Subversive Strategies.” See Jones 2000, p. 85. See also Deleuze 1991, p. 16.

¹⁹⁶ In *A Defense of Masochism*, Anita Phillips, closes with a postscript regarding the ‘short-term contracts’ between herself and her lover. While Phillips, unlike Wanda von Sacher-Masoch, refuses to disclose the contents of each agreement, she states that re-reading them makes her ‘smile and blush.’ Phillips 1998, p. 165.

¹⁹⁷ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 15; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” p. 195.

¹⁹⁸ Egan 2003, p. 110. See also Lacan 1982, p. 120; Lacan 2004, p. 243; Lacan 1991, p. 228.

¹⁹⁹ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 14; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” p. 194.

childish lover becomes articulate is when he uses his verbal skills to please her: ‘it is his words, even more than his penis, which turn into a naughty toy which makes me wild, makes me salivate. This is loving.’²⁰⁰ Hidden in the pages of every Yamada narrative and essay is the author’s message to her male readers: language is as essential to desire for a woman as it is for a man.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, desire, particularly masochistic desire, is intimately linked to fantasy. All-consuming desire is synonymous with the work of Yamada as has been noted by various commentators including Richard Okada, Miyoshi Masao and Nina Cornyetz. For Okada, ‘Yamada allows each of her protagonists to narrate her own tale of desire and love in an exotic [or] foreign location.’²⁰¹ This is, literally, very noticeable in the case of Chika (an author) and Shinobu (*Hizamazuite*’s narrator). Miyoshi describes Yamada as ‘a connoisseur of dark penises’ whose ‘heroine devours brown and black men against the pornotopic scenery of hotel rooms and South Pacific beaches. The heroine’s body is a supreme object of the insatiable desire of darker skinned men.’²⁰² In the case of *Hizamazuite*, Chika and Shinobu are in the unique position of being both desired object *and* desiring subject. Unlike the masochist, for whom the ability to fantasise is a large part of their identity, ‘Yamada Girls’ are the objects of fantasy and thereby of desire.²⁰³ Cornyetz goes so far as to say that ‘desire propels [Yamada’s] narratives with little or no attention to plot.’²⁰⁴

Yamada’s narratives of pleasure have no room for mundane concerns. Readers spiral through repeating patterns of desire (lack) and fulfilment (presence).²⁰⁵

In *Hizamazuite* the protagonists move through their lives lurching from one desire to the next – when Shinobu and Chika go to town they are certain to ‘get anything [they] wanted from any man [they] wanted.’²⁰⁶

²⁰⁰ Yamada 1991, p. 53.

²⁰¹ Okada 1995, p. 119.

²⁰² Miyoshi 1991, p. 38.

²⁰³ Egan 2003, p. 110.

²⁰⁴ Cornyetz 1996, p. 428.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 429.

Representative of the role of fantasy in masochism is the scene from the opening chapter of *Hizamazuite*, briefly referenced in Chapter 1, in which a new client of the S/M club begs Chika to stick sewing needles into his penis in re-enactment of the treatment he received at the hands of his foster mother.²⁰⁷ I would like to revisit this scene here through the lens of Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten" which was discussed previously in relation to Kōno's "Yōjigari."²⁰⁸ There, the beating fantasy was examined in terms of the female variant. Freud, however, also introduces a male variant of the fantasy, as is evident in the following passage:

The fantasy of the second phase, of oneself being beaten by the father, generally remains unconscious, probably because of the intensity of the repression. I cannot say why it was consciously remembered in one of my six cases (a male). This man, now adult, had clearly remembered that he used the idea of being beaten by his mother for masturbatory purposes; however, he soon replaced his own mother with the mothers of schoolmates of other women who were in some way similar.²⁰⁹

There are several parallels between Freud's reading of a male who fantasises about being beaten by the mother and the scenario that takes place in *Hizamazuite*. The client requests that his penis be stuck through with old sewing needles that, when he was young, his foster mother had used as tools of abuse. Requesting also that a calligraphy brush be inserted into the 'hole in his penis,' he explains that, rather than performing these acts himself, he 'thought it would be better to have a beautiful woman do it.'²¹⁰ This client's wishes echo a similar although much earlier sentiment expressed by Severin in *Venus in Furs*:

²⁰⁶ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 6; "Kneel Down and Lick My Feet," p. 188.

²⁰⁷ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 20-22; "Kneel Down and Lick My Feet," pp. 200-203.

²⁰⁸ See "In the Realm of the Senses" in Chapter 2.

²⁰⁹ Freud 2006, p. 291.

²¹⁰ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 21; "Kneel Down and Lick My Feet," p. 201.

If I were faced with the choice of dominating or being dominated, I would choose the latter. It would be far more satisfying to be the slave of a beautiful woman. But I should hate her to be a petty, nagging tyrant.²¹¹

Like the S/M club client, Severin then wonders where it would be possible to find a woman to ‘dominate’ him in a ‘serene’ and ‘conscious manner.’²¹²

While he is recovering from the scenario, the client tells his story to Shinobu and the club’s Mama-san as they remove the needles from his penis and soak up the resultant blood that seeps from his wounds with a towel. The client is an illegitimate child and he was often teased because of this. The woman who took him in, his foster mother, was the only person who was kind to him. However, explaining that ‘there were times [...] when she [his mother] couldn’t take it any longer,’²¹³ the client reveals that his mother ‘would call [him] to the room where she was sewing kimono, and she would do things to me [...]. It became a kind of habit.’²¹⁴ For Freud, the beating fantasy symbolises incestuous love: I am being beaten by the mother/father because she/he loves me.²¹⁵ In other words, rather than being a sign of rejection, the beating – or mistreatment – is an indication of care and affection. It is important to note that in the ‘pin’ scenario that takes place in the S/M club in *Hizamazuite* it is the Mama-san of the club and the very experienced Shinobu, not Chika or any of the other younger Queens, who fulfil the client’s wishes. The younger girls are simply not able to cope with the client’s requests and leave the room squealing. It is also the Mama-san who comforts and scolds the client as she fulfils his requests. As noted earlier, the client climaxes in her arms screaming for his mother.²¹⁶

²¹¹ Sacher-Masoch 1991, p. 163.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 24-25; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” p. 202.

²¹⁴ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 24-25; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” p. 202.

²¹⁵ Freud 2006, pp. 290-292.

²¹⁶ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 24; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” p. 202.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, classical Deleuzian masochism has been investigated from the position of the consort/partner/torturer as portrayed in Yamada's *HiɁamaɁuite ashi wo o-name*. Whereas the previous chapter concentrated on the desires and fantasies of the masochist, this chapter has focussed on those of the consort/partner/torturer both within and without the masochistic scenario. When Chika and Shinobu are in their Queen uniforms of black lingerie they take on the role of the untouchable, unattainable and eternally aloof consort/partner/torturer. Unlike Kōno's masochistic protagonists who spend much of their time fantasising, Yamada's characters are creatures of fantasy. They do not fantasise but are fantasised about. Outside of their jobs as professional dominatrices they, like other 'Yamada Girls' pursue relationships with African American and non-Japanese lovers. Regardless of their position in the masochistic partnership, Yamada's women characters 'deviate from the traditional female sex role which emphasises passivity and virginity.'²¹⁷

The first section of this chapter, "Kneel Down and Lick My Feet," introduced *HiɁamaɁuite* contrasting it with the rest of Yamada's *oeuvre*. Even though *HiɁama Ɂuite* is quite different from the author's other works, the narrative nevertheless revolves around a pair of 'Yamada Girls.' The subsequent section introduced the heady 'Bubble' years of the 1980s. It is highly possible that the 'Yamada Girl' archetype could not have emerged in any other period of Japanese history – certainly not the 'Lost Decade' that will be examined in Chapter 4. Following on from this, I suggested that Yamada's protagonists are more than just 'yellow cabs. As we have seen, many critics have slammed Yamada's work for portraying non-Japanese men as nothing but lustful creatures, violent in their hunger for their 'Yamada Girl' mistresses. While these notions might follow the media representation of African American males in Japan during the period when

²¹⁷ Kuwahara 1994, p. 109.

‘yellow cabs’ were causing social panic (“‘What’s so great about blacks?’” [...] “‘They’re like walking penises. All they think about is sex. That’s why sex with them is so great!’”²¹⁸), this reading fails to fully represent what is going on in Yamada’s work, especially *Hizamazuite*.

“Big Sister, Little Sister” examined the *dōseiai*-like relationship between Yamada Girls. It should be noted that these relationships are a form of ‘sisterhood’ and do not take place between mothers and daughters. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, there is no stable place for daughters within the masochistic landscape. This chapter also examined the similarities between Yamada’s work as a *mangaka* and her work as a novelist. The sexual content of the *manga* that Yamada created as a student as a professional artist foreshadow that of the ladies’ comics that are the central focus of Chapter 5 of this thesis. Finally, this chapter examined the specific relationship that Chika and Shinobu, as consumerist ‘Yamada Girls,’ have with their clothing and high-heeled shoes. As with the furs of Sacher-Masoch’s Venus, the stiletto shoes worn by the ‘Yamada Girl’ are vital accoutrements utilised in the successful completion of any given masochistic scenario.

The masochistic imagery presented in *Hizamazuite* is gritty and realistic – as Shinobu points out ‘make one mistake and you end with shit on your hands.’²¹⁹ During the 1980s, the consumerist party of the Bubble period spilled from the business world into one of every day consumerism so that nothing was off limits. In the next chapter we will see what happens to the masochist after the collapse of the bubble economy in the grey ‘Lost Decade.’

²¹⁸ Russell 1998, p. 137

²¹⁹ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* p. 12; “Kneel Down and Lick my Feet,” p. 192.

Chapter 4: Kanehara Hitomi – ‘Pricking Pain Surrounds Us:’¹ Masochism in the 21st Century

A Room of Her Own; Japan’s Lengthening ‘Lost Decade’; Young Akutagawa Prize Recipients; Harajuku Girls; Permanent Markings

Kanehara Hitomi burst onto the Japanese literary scene in 2004 when she became, with Wataya Risa (b 1984), one of the youngest Akutagawa Prize recipients in history.² Kanehara and Wataya are part of a growing number of ‘young women novelists’ who first made their presence felt in the Japanese literary scene during the early 2000s, novelists whose work ‘skilfully depict[s] the lives of young girls.’³ This chapter will examine the masochistic imagery in Kanehara’s prize-winning debut novella *Hebi ni piasu* (Snakes and Earrings, 2004; trans. David James Karashima 2005). While the focus will be on Kanehara’s novel, reference will also be made to the 2004 *manga* adaptation of *Hebi ni piasu*, drawn by Watanabe Peko, and the 2008 film directed by Ninagawa Yukio. Throughout the discussion I will occasionally draw on Kanehara’s other early works as well as those of her contemporaries.

In Chapter 2 we saw that Kōno’s short stories showcase women masochists who extort pain and pleasure from their chosen (and educated) consort/partner/torturer, while Chapter 3 examined the manner in which Yamada’s novel, *Hizamaazuite ashi wo o-name*, presented the figure of the S/M club dominatrix catering to her paying masochistic slaves. Kōno Taeko’s masochistic women and Yamada Eimi’s ‘Yamada Girl’ protagonists take control of their sexuality with both hands.

Kanehara’s protagonists, too, have objects of desire in their line of sight. However, their approach is much less focussed than that of their literary predecessors so that they often drift listlessly with little thought for the future or desire to revisit the past. It is not surprising, then,

¹ The title of this chapter borrows from the subtitle of the *manga* adaptation of Kanehara’s *Hebi ni piasu*. Kanehara and Watanabe 2004.

² The 130th Akutagawa prize of March 2004.

³ Otomo 2010, p. 130.

that the masochistic imagery examined in this chapter departs markedly from the Deleuzian concepts of education and the contract introduced in Chapter 1. Indeed, in *Hebi ni piasu* these two key elements of masochism are in part reversed or discarded entirely. This notwithstanding, we will see that contracts of one kind or another continue to be a presence in Kanehara’s narratorial landscape. We will also see that in *Hebi ni piasu* masochism is not only commodified, as we have seen in the previous chapter, but virtual as well.

Hebi ni piasu tells the story of 19 year old Lui, a young woman living in Tokyo, and her relationships with two ‘obsessively unstable’ young men: a young punk with a split tongue called Ama, and a tattoo artist known as Shiba.⁴ It should be noted that both men have multiple tattoos and piercings. Like the tattoo artist in Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s short story “Shisei” (Tattoo 1910, trans. as “The Young Tattooer” Asatarō Miyamori, 1914; trans. as “The Tattooer,” Howard Hibbett, 1963), which tells the story of an apprentice geisha who is kidnapped, drugged and forcibly tattooed, there is something sinister and vaguely sadistic about the tattoo artist in Kanehara’s text. *Hebi ni piasu* begins when Lui meets Ama at a nightclub where he shows her his split tongue. Lui is entranced, although more with the tongue than the young man to whom it belongs, and the pair spend the night together. As Lui gets to better know Ama (and his tongue) she decides that she, too, wants to pierce and split her own tongue. A few days after this meeting, Ama takes her to “Desire,” Shiba’s tattoo and piercing parlour/adult toy store, which Lui observes is a shop for ‘perverts.’⁵ While waiting for her tongue to be pierced Lui impulsively decides that, in addition to splitting her tongue, she wants a large tattoo on her upper back.

The tattoo design that Lui selects incorporates elements of the numerous tattoos that Ama and Shiba sport over their bodies, in particular a dragon that spans Ama’s upper back and arm and a

⁴ “130th Akutagawa Prize.” (www.jlit.net)

⁵ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 7; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 4.

kirin (Asian unicorn)⁶ on Shiba’s upper arm.⁷ Karin Beeler points out that the combination of these two elements ‘reminds us of the tattoo practice of the 17th century courtesans who would hide tattoos of their main patrons on their bodies.’⁸ Before he inks the tattoo onto Lui’s back Shiba asks if there is anything in the design that Lui would like to change. She requests that the animals be drawn without eyes. Lui explains that without its eyes the creatures will not be able to abandon her. While this request is couched in the terms of a literary reference – a story in which a temple dragon flies away after the artist painting it completes the beast’s eyes⁹ – it gives some insight into Lui’s past. We are left wondering by whom she has already been abandoned. Towards the end of the narrative, Lui finally asks Shiba to tattoo in the eyes of her dragon and *kirin*. In doing so, she grants the beasts, and also herself, permission to fly.

As the novel progresses, Lui is increasingly torn between Ama and Shiba. Although she is in a live-in relationship with Ama, Lui frequently sleeps with Shiba at his tattoo shop. Ama is fiercely protective of Lui, beating to death a random gangster who tries to touch her breasts one night when they are walking through the darkened Tokyo streets. The trio continue in this manner until Ama mysteriously disappears. After Ama’s mutilated corpse is discovered, Lui finds herself living with Shiba. There are eerie similarities between Lui’s relationship with Ama and her relationship with Shiba. In each case, when Lui enters into a live-in arrangement with one of the men, it is with no apparent forethought or active decision on her part. Similarly, when both men are suspected of committing murder, Lui takes steps to protect them from discovery and possible arrest. However, while her relationship with Ama ends when he dies, Lui’s relationship with Shiba undergoes a significant change when she refuses to submit to his sadistic advances.

As we saw in the scene from the movie adaptation of *Hebi ni piasu* cited at the beginning of the

⁶ The *kirin*, or *qilin* in Chinese, is a hoofed mythological creature with a body made up of several different animals including a ‘wolf, snake and horse with a single horn encased in flesh,’ now more easily recognisable as the symbol of the Kirin beverage company. *Hebi ni piasu*, p.35; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 33.

⁷ In the *manga* version, Shiba is drawn with the *kirin* tattoo on his back. Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, p. 34.

⁸ Beeler 2006, pp. 42-43.

⁹ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 67; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 68.

introductory chapter of the thesis, Shiba is a ‘psycho-sadist’ unable to have sex the ‘normal’ way.¹⁰ In order to maintain an erection he needs to inflict pain that results in a visible, physical reaction, for example crying, in his partner. At the end of the novel, Lui refuses to react to Shiba’s attempts to make her cry, preventing him from having sex with her.¹¹

The bodies of Kanehara’s protagonists are not only modified by their own actions but (co)modified by those around them. *Hebi ni piasu*’s young protagonist, Lui, gives her name as ‘Lui for Louis Vuitton.’¹² Although her given name is in fact Rui,¹³ Lui’s identity is clearly grounded in the high-end European brand so beloved by Japanese women that in 1999 an estimated 40 percent owned at least one Louis Vuitton product.¹⁴ However, this self-identification with luxury items does not end here. Through her work as a kimono-clad hostess, pouring beer for affluent business men, Lui, in a similar way to Chika and Shinobu in the previous chapter, has become a product in which her ability to ‘loo[k] pretty’ is a valuable commodity; Lui feels that she is ‘fortunate to have been born with a face people liked.’¹⁵

In the same way that Kōno’s narratives are grounded in the flesh and Yamada’s narratives return to the clothing and accessories that adorn her protagonists, Kanehara’s narratives repeatedly reference the motif of the body. Her young protagonists ceaselessly aim to control, modify, and commodify their sun-tanned *gyaru* (lit. ‘girl’ or ‘gal’)¹⁶ forms. In addition to the depiction of masochistic elements in sexual relations, many of Kanehara’s early novels, including *Hebi ni piasu*, graphically depict characters who modify their bodies via body piercing, tattooing, starvation or

¹⁰ *Hebi ni piasu*, pp 37-38; *Snakes and Earrings*, pp. 35-36.

¹¹ *Hebi ni piasu*, pp. 37; 38-39; 102; 106; *Snakes and Earrings*, pp. 35; 36; 106; 109.

¹² *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 31; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 28.

¹³ As noted in the introduction, throughout this thesis I have chosen to translate レイ as ‘Lui’ with an ‘L’ in accordance with the protagonist’s own preference.

¹⁴ Bardsley and Hirokawa 2005, p. 111.

¹⁵ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 53; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 52. In Watanabe’s *manga* adaptation Lui works as a hostess and wears a western evening dress as opposed to kimono.

¹⁶ *Gyaru* or Gal style arose in the late 1990s. Macias and Evers 2007, p. 49. For more on *gyaru* see “Harajuku Girls” in this chapter.

food refusal, wrist cutting and skin branding. The writer demonstrated this tendency even in her pre-*Hebi ni piasu* texts, including the early short story entitled “Banpaia rabu” (“Vampire Love,” 1999). The story tells of a young girl who engages in wrist cutting and self mutilation.¹⁷ These deliberate and carefully planned acts of body-modification and self-mutilation, also known as ‘self-injury,’¹⁸ lead to intense pleasure for those who practice them, while also granting the practitioners control over their bodies and their lives that they might otherwise not experience.¹⁹ While Kanehara’s protagonists freely admit to being masochistic – in conversation with Shiba regarding piercing, Lui openly concedes, “Well. I’m a masochist [...] perhaps I’m giving off that kind of vibe.”²⁰ – we might question whether or not the acts of self-harm in which they engage can be simply explained away in this manner.

As suggested above, the tattoo is a key trope in *Hebi ni piasu*. It is possible to argue that there is something inherently masochistic in this form of body modification. By this I do not mean that anyone with a tattoo is a masochist, or that all masochists would necessarily find the painful ordeal of having ink injected under the skin by multiple needles pleasurable or sexually arousing. Nevertheless, both the masochistic scenario and the act of being tattooed begin with the negotiation of a contract. This contract details the event that will occur (which masochistic acts/what tattoo design) and the responsibilities of all parties involved (the masochist and their consort/the client and their tattoo artist) and the duration of the event. In the same way that the masochist derives pleasure from the thought of the pain to come, the tattoo recipient eagerly anticipates the finished image inked on the skin.

¹⁷ “Jushō intabyū,” p. 322

¹⁸ Laurie M. Zila and Mark S. Kiselica suggest in their 2001 article that there are as many as 33 terms in use to describe self-mutative behaviour. Zila and Kiselica 2001, p. 46.

¹⁹ Zila and Kiselica 2001, p. 47.

²⁰ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 16; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 12. Interestingly, this line, while kept in the movie, is omitted from the *manga*.

At first glance, self-harm activities may appear to be random. However, there is a logic to the changes that Kanehara’s protagonists enact on their bodies through tattoos, piercings, scars and lesions. This logic recalls Alphonso Lingis’ ideas on increasing the surface of the skin through scarring to enhance pleasurable sensation. Although Lingis’s work on non-European cultures has been the subject of considerable criticism,²¹ his work on scarification and body modification provides insights into one rationale for the interest shown by Kanehara’s young women protagonists in marking their bodies in ways that might be regarded as perverse or sensationalist. In his 1983 article, “Savages,” Lingis examines the practice of scarification in certain tribes in terms of erotogenic surfaces. He states that ‘of all that is savage about savages, the most savage is what they do to themselves’²² – a statement that might well be attributed to Kanehara’s young ‘savages.’ Lingis discounts the theory that this sort of practice is no more than an idle form of slow self destruction, interpreting it instead as a form of ‘inscription.’²³ A key benefit of scarring is the expansion of the skin surface that leads to a greater expanse upon which to experience a correspondingly heightened physical sensation. Furthermore, through these markings the character of the subject is extended and expanded; she or he becomes something greater and more socially significant than what they were prior to being marked. Lingis uses the example of a Yoruba tribesman marked by an encounter with a leopard. For the tribesman, these scars are ‘his pleasure and his pride and his very identity’ as it proves that he was strong enough to ‘hold the embrace of the leopard.’²⁴ Furthermore, with the expanded body surface that results from the scar comes a heightening of desire that transforms these scars into ‘gaping cavities’ of ‘demand, want, desire [and] hunger.’²⁵ The expanded desire of Lingis’ savages is remarkably compatible with Theodor Reik’s fantasy component of masochism: without desire, there is no need for

²¹ See for example Jackson 1999.

²² Lingis 1983, p. 22.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

fantasy.²⁶ This reference to gaping cavities also recalls the opening pages of *Hebi ni piasu* and Lui’s fascination with Ama’s split tongue.

While I have introduced Lingis’s ideas in the context of Kanehara’s work, his ideas relate also to the work of Kōno (both Fumiko and Akiko speak of the injuries on their skin as a result of their masochistic love making) and Yamada (Chika and Shinobu are constantly depicted in high heeled shoes which can deform and markedly change the shape of the foot). We will also see that Watanabe’s S/M ladies’ comic illustrations are filled with images of women’s bodies that are repeatedly marked and scarified by their violent lovers.

In addition to exploring issues related to piercing, tattooing and food refusal, *Hebi ni piasu* showcases what happens in one of the rare instances in which a masochist interacts with a sadist without the safeguard of the contract. In Chapter 1 we saw that the partnership of masochist and sadist (or an S type person with an M type) is often popularly regarded as the ideal masochistic couple.²⁷ Furthermore, neither Kraft-Ebbing nor Deleuze fully reject the possibility of this partnership. However, as mentioned previously, given that Deleuze argues that the ‘masochist’s sadism’ differs from that of a sadist and that a ‘sadist’s masochism’ differs from that of a masochist, it is unlikely that a masochistic scenario (or a sadistic scenario) performed by such a partnership would be wholly successful.²⁸ We will see in this chapter that the relationship between a masochist (Lui) and a sadist (Shiba) degenerates into a series of high tension encounters which, although both parties reach orgasm, result in little satisfaction for either. However, certainly in the case of Lui, far from being at the mercy of a powerful – and, in this case, sociopathic – sadist, the masochist most definitely retains some decision-making power in the relationship.

²⁶ Reik 1949, p. 44. For more on fantasy (*phantasy*) and desire see Chapter 1 of this thesis.

²⁷ “Mazohizumu”

²⁸ Deleuze 1991, p. 41.

With her large *ukiyo-e* style tattoo, Lui joins a long Japanese literary tradition of tattooed women protagonists. These include the girl in “Shisei” and the quasi-historical ‘poison woman,’ Takahashi Oden (1848-1879).²⁹ Oden’s tattoo has become the key feature of her legend.³⁰ Her tattooed skin is rumoured to be preserved in the so-called Tokyo tattoo museum in the Specimens Room of the Medical Faculty of Tokyo University,³¹ alongside that of another Meiji anti-heroine of poison woman fame, “Lightning” Oshin, who was said to have brightly coloured tattoos.³² In the introduction to *The Japanese Tattoo*, a photographic essay showcasing the work of world renowned tattoo artist, the late Horikin I (Ōwada Mitsuaki 1936-1989),³³ D. M. Thomas referring to Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), observes that ‘it would be easy to imagine a psychotherapy based on tattoos’ in which ‘it would not be necessary to associate from dreams; the dreams would be visible.’³⁴ Thomas continues:

Freud would have traced the sadism of the tattooist, the masochism of the tattooed, to the Oedipus complex. The art of [tattooing], we learn, may have begun with the branding of malefactors. “These men,” Freud might have said, “still wish to be punished for their incestuous and parricidal desires.”³⁵

As previously noted, *Hebi ni piasu* showcases this relationship between ‘sadistic’ tattoo artist and ‘masochistic’ tattooed subject. In traditional Japanese tattoo practices it is the artist, and not the client, who decides who, where and with what they will tattoo: Horikin I ‘tattoo[ed] no one for

²⁹ The tale of *yasha* (demon) Takahashi Oden, as she became known, remains arguably one of the most popular and enduring of all the ‘poison woman’ narratives. The various Oden narratives, including pulp fiction and film, mix historical fact with myth to form chilling tales of murder and deceit. See Silver 2003a, pp. 5-67; Marran 2007 and Silver 2004b.

³⁰ Regardless of whether or not the historical Oden was tattooed, most fictional variants of the narrative portray her as such. These include the 1958 film *Dofuku Takahashi Oden* (A Wicked Woman) dir. Nakagawa Nobuo.

³¹ Kan 2010. For more on the skin museum see Poysden and Bratt 2006, pp. 158-161.

³² Oshin is not to be confused with Tanokura Shin, the protagonist of the NHK drama (1983-1984). See Marran 2007, p. 76.

³³ 1936 is a speculative date based on the fact that Horikin was born in the year of the Rat.

³⁴ Thomas 1986, p. 9.

³⁵ Ibid. Interestingly, Thomas links the grotesque inherent in tattooing to ‘white girls’ in relation to ‘black men.’

whom he ha[d] little empathy, regardless of the amount of money proffered. Similarly, he w[ould] tattoo free of charge if someone please[d] him.³⁶ In the novel, Shiba transfers this tattoo protocol to the related body-modification field of piercing when he completes both Lui’s piercing and tattoo without charging a monetary fee. While he tells her not to ‘worry about’ paying for the tongue piercing,³⁷ he suggests that the price for each tattoo session should be ‘one fuck.’³⁸ Although for some this would be too high, Lui merely replies ‘is that all?’ before removing her clothes. While she is clearly drawn to Shiba’s sinister nature, this willingness to disrobe should not be interpreted as enthusiasm. Rather, it is as if Lui expects such an arrangement and complies with disinterest. This scene plays out countless times throughout *Hebi ni piasu*, even after the dragon and *kirin* tattoo that Lui requests is complete. Thomas suggests that for most people with tattoos, their ‘deepest relationship’ is with the artist who ‘so tirelessly penetrate[s] them.’³⁹ Perhaps this explains Lui’s need to return continually to Shiba.

A number of scholars have identified the connection, through the image of a young girl with a tattoo inked on her back, between Kanehara’s *Hebi ni piasu* and Tanizaki’s “Shisei.” Examples of this approach can be found in articles such as Takeuchi Kiyomi’s “Kanehara Hitomi ‘*Hebi ni piasu*’ – ‘Shisei’ to ‘utsukushisa to kanashimi to’ no yukue” (Kanehara Hitomi *Hebi ni piasu* – “Shisei” and the Whereabouts of ‘Beauty and Sorrow’)⁴⁰ and Ruben Welsh’s “Japanese Female Sadism.”⁴¹ While the latter study raises some interesting points, Welsh insists upon referring to Lui as a ‘sadist’⁴² despite the latter’s repeated declaration throughout *Hebi ni piasu* of being,

³⁶ Fellman 1986, p. 14.

³⁷ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 15; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 12. The issue of payment is not raised in the *manga*.

³⁸ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 36; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 34; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, p. 38.

³⁹ Thomas, “Introduction,” p. 9.

⁴⁰ Takeuchi 2008, pp. 172–177.

⁴¹ Welsh 2008, pp. 156 – 165. It should be noted that throughout the chapter Welsh refers to Lui as ‘Liu.’ It is unclear if this is a mistake on his part or something that occurred in the editing process.

⁴² For example: ‘Liu, the main character in [Kanehara’s] text has pale and luminous skin which is what attracts the tattoo artist to her; she not only has “latent sadism” in her but also a wilful nihilism with which she attempts to destroy her beauty through the consumption of alcohol.’ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

amongst other things, a masochist.⁴³ As per the work of Deleuze and Reik, who both refuted Freud’s initial claims to the contrary, masochism and sadism cannot occur in the same person. Welsh’s paper also ignores the fact that in “Shisei,” the ‘sadism’ of the girl who is kidnapped and tattooed is something that is constructed by the tattoo artist. We have already seen that Tanizaki’s masochistic heroes create their ideal women and are celebrated for doing so.⁴⁴

Since receiving the Akutagawa prize in 2004, Kanehara has ‘maintained a steady output of new work’⁴⁵ producing novels such as *Asshu beibi* (Ash Baby, 2004), *AMEBIC* (2005),⁴⁶ *Ōto fikusbon* (Auto-fiction, 2006, trans. David James Kawashima, 2006), *Haidora* (Hydra, 2007), *Trip Trap* (2009) and *Mazūzu* (Mothers, 2011). Both *Hebi ni piasu* and *Ōto fikusbon* were translated and published in English very soon after their original release. This is in stark contrast to the low number and delay of translations for Kōno and Yamada.⁴⁷ At present there is only one collection of Kōno’s early short stories available in English translation in addition to a number of short stories in various anthologies of Japanese literature, while Yamada’s translated works consist merely of three translated novels and a handful of short stories and excerpts in anthologies. As both Kōno and Yamada continue prolifically to produce best-selling works, Kanehara’s popularity in Japan is not the sole reason for the high rate of translation of her work. Rather, like the novels of Murakami Haruki and Yoshimoto Banana, along with countless *shōjo manga* featuring sailor-suit clad heroines, Kanehara’s texts were quickly turned into exports for the ‘cool Japan’ market.⁴⁸ However, since there have been no translations of Kanehara’s works after 2006,

⁴³ *Hebi ni piasu*, pp. 16, 76; *Snakes and Earrings*, pp. 12, 79.

⁴⁴ Mizuta Lippit 1977, pp. 221-240.

⁴⁵ Otomo 2010, p. 130.

⁴⁶ This is the American English spelling of the title which is presented on the front cover of the novel with the Japanese reading. AMEBIC is given as an acronym for ‘Acrobatic Me-ism Eats away the Brain, it causes Imagination Catastrophe.’ Kanehara 2008d, front cover.

⁴⁷ ‘For a Japanese author who is so prolific it is odd that she remains relatively untranslated in English.’ Sakaki, Atsuko, private conversation, University of Toronto, 2010. For more on Japanese women writers and their works in translation see Fraser 2008, pp. 1-20.

⁴⁸ The term was first coined by Douglas McGray in his 2002 foreign policy essay, “Gross National Cool” to indicate a national Japanese ‘brand’ driven by soft power - the appeal of a culture’s sensibility and products.

we might surmise that, with the abatement of the media furore that surrounded her early work, she too has now become less appealing as an export commodity.

Even given the local press melee that surrounded Kanehara’s Akutagawa prize win, an unusual number of English language publications around the world, including the *New York Times* and *The Guardian* U.K., featured articles on this young woman writer at the time of her receiving the award. Kanehara’s work is still examined, as we will see, in light of this hype in both English and Japanese language criticism.⁴⁹ An offshoot of this branch of commentary focuses on Kanehara’s repeated portrayal of *freeter* and NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)⁵⁰ characters struggling to find their place in a fictionalised representation of post-Bubble Japan. Although related to *freeters*, NEETs are distinguished from the former in that they are not working or actively looking for work, studying or involved in looking after a home and family. This group is therefore perceived as ‘lazy and pampered cowards who are wasting their lives away.’⁵¹ Kanehara’s characters are often used as examples in a recent tendency to morally code ‘newly emergent social subjectivity’ into binary pairings – for example, the ‘good’ *freeter* versus ‘irresponsible’ *freeter* discussed by Mark Driscoll, to whom we will return later in the chapter – that are heavily dependent on the requirements of ‘Japanese capitalism’ at any given moment.⁵²

A Room of Her Own

Given the youth and adolescence of many of Kanehara’s characters – Lui in *Hebi ni piasu* has not yet reached the age of majority, not to mention the fact that Kanehara herself was only 20 when

Scholars such as Roland Kelts are now questioning whether or not this term has ‘passed its use by date.’ Kelts 2010.

⁴⁹ See for example Onishi 2004a; Thorne 2008.

⁵⁰ The term was originally used in the UK in 1999 to replace the phrase ‘Status Zero.’ The term has since spread into use in Japan, China and South Korea. Furlong 2006, pp. 553-569.

⁵¹ Kawanishi 2009, p. 99. For more on NEETs see Tuukka Toivonen 2012, pp. 139-158.

⁵² Driscoll 2007, p. 171.

she received the Akutagawa prize and, at the time of writing this analysis, is still in her twenties – her work is also studied in terms of the field of ‘girl’ or ‘*shōjo* studies.’⁵³ In the introduction to *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley refer to Kanehara as a ‘contemporary literary girl’ who, along with less recent literary girls, including Yoshiya Nobuko (1986-1973) and Yoshimoto Banana (b. 1964), has been dismissed by ‘prominent mainstream commentators.’⁵⁴ Aoyama and Hartley argue that this dismissal, aimed at both the individual girls and their texts, denies the worth of the writers as well as the preferences of their readers. However, through the act of reading and writing the girl is able to construct a ‘parallel imagined fantasy world,’ which ‘acknowledges her aspirations,’ ‘fulfils her desires’ and enables the girl to deflect ‘negative assessment in both the social and cultural spheres.’⁵⁵ This parallel fantasy world evokes the masochist’s fantasy world and is, in spite of its putative chastity, strongly reminiscent of Kōno’s soundproof room or the S/M club scenario rooms in Yamada’s novel.

While Kōno’s protagonists use contractually defined masochistic fantasies to give a dimension of highly charged sexuality to their quotidian lives in order to resist the hegemonic demands to devote their all to the family and the child, Yamada’s protagonists, as I have noted before, grab sexual experiences – masochistic or otherwise – with both hands. Both groups use sex as a method to exert control over their relationships with men. Kanehara’s protagonists, however, drift into sexual liaisons without conscious deliberation about either the cause or the consequence. While they might have a measure of control, they rarely set forth with a conscious desire for dominance. Lui, for example, spends her days (and nights) in the Tokyo precincts of Shibuya and Shinjuku, drawn moth-like from the provincial topos of Saitama to the bright city lights. There is a dreamlike quality to the way in which she wanders from place to place. In

⁵³ See Miller and Bardsley 2005 and Aoyama and Hartley 2010 for more on girl and *shōjo* studies.

⁵⁴ Aoyama and Hartley 2010, p. 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

Ninagawa’s 2008 film adaptation of *Hebi ni piasu* this quality is highlighted by the light, shifting musical score that accompanies the film’s visuals.

Hebi ni piasu contains a number of short fantasies, each of which are featured in the novel, film and *manga* versions, including one in which Lui imagines Shiba having sex with Ama – something that she thinks would be quite ‘beautiful.’⁵⁶ In the film version Lui’s fantasy of the two men together, which incidentally occurs while Lui is having sex with Shiba in his tattoo room, is a heady, dreamy fragment that flickers on the screen momentarily in time with the swell of the operatic soundtrack. In the *manga*, however, this ‘beautiful’ fantasy is presented as a disturbing full page image of Shiba choking a naked and battered Ama. In this picture Shiba’s hands are locked around Ama’s neck in exactly the same manner as when the tattooist has sex with Lui.⁵⁷ In another fantasy that occurs at the end of *Hebi ni piasu*, one that is reminiscent of the ending of “Ari takaru” when Fumiko is in her kitchen reflecting upon recent events, Lui imagines that her body is filled with raging water – a river inside of her.⁵⁸ Like the cool breeze which grounds Fumiko, the water steadies Lui and draws her attention to the bright morning sun.⁵⁹ Rather than wanting to ‘live recklessly’ leaving nothing but ‘ashes’ in a world that she describes as ‘dark’ and ‘dull,’ where ‘the sun doesn’t shine and there are no love songs,’⁶⁰ for the first time in *Hebi ni piasu* Lui basks in warm light and looks to the future.

As in the work of Kōno and Yamada, Kanehara’s characters often spend their time in a closed world of their own making. In *Asshu beibi*, the characters move in and out of their ‘room share’ apartment. Throughout *Hebi ni piasu*, Lui shifts between Ama’s apartment (represented in the film as a small, one room apartment) and the back room of Shiba’s tattoo store. In Kanehara’s

⁵⁶ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 39; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 36.

⁵⁷ Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, p. 118.

⁵⁸ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 113; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 118.

⁵⁹ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 113; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 118.

⁶⁰ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 45, 46, 77; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 43, 44, 80.

novel, the masochistic retreat represented by Kōno’s ‘soundproof room’ and Yamada’s ‘Harlem World’ or ‘S/M club scenario room’ has become the hellish tattoo room where Lui is pierced, tattooed, restrained and penetrated.

In the novel, the only furnishings in the room in which Lui and Shiba have sex are a leather bench and a metal chair while the walls of this space are decorated with photos of pierced genitals and tattooed bodies.⁶¹ In the *manga* version of *Hebi ni piasu*, however, the tattoo room is decorated with images of 14th Century European *transi* tomb sculptures. *Transi* sculptures, although limited to a localised development in Gothic artwork of France and Germany, were based on the ideal of *memento mori* (lit. Latin ‘remember your mortality’) that was widespread throughout Europe during the Middle Ages.⁶² These *transi* images represent the transition from life to death and are exemplified by edifices such as the *Tomb of Franz von La Sarra* (1363) – a monstrous effigy of a bloated corpse covered in writhing snakes and toads that huddle on the figure’s face and stomach.⁶³ In these images the ‘body of the deceased is used to give the living an especially chilling reminder: “Remember that you will die.”⁶⁴ The image of the *Tomb of Franz von La Sarra* is later repeated in the *manga* adaptation when Lui imagines Ama’s face covered with frogs as she lies in a drunken stupor on his couch. It is a reminder that, as readers of the *manga* familiar with the original novel are already aware, Ama will die. Chronologically, the image of Ama’s face covered with frogs occurs on the very morning that he goes missing.⁶⁵

The risk-taking behaviour of Kanehara’s young protagonists resonates with Freud’s death drive, which recalls the rhetoric of *memento mori*. Lui and her friends do not seem to worry about tomorrow but live only in the now. We will see that this attitude to life is often attributed to

⁶¹ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 7, 10; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 4, 6.

⁶² Kimura 2007, pp. 14-19.

⁶³ Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, pp. 43-44.

⁶⁴ Kimura 2007, pp. 16, 17.

⁶⁵ Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, p. 81.

young Japanese *freeters* who are repeatedly portrayed in the media as only taking enough part-time work to provide themselves with alcohol, food and money to go out to a night club.⁶⁶ This is indeed what happens in *Hebi ni piasu* when Lui takes a couple of hours work as an escort and then spends all of the money she earns, ¥30,000 (approximately AUD350.00), at a *yakiniku* (Japanese barbecue) restaurant later the same evening. Acts of body-modification, self-mutilation or self-injury performed by some young *freeters* can also be interpreted as modern day *memento mori*. Similarly, while images of *transi* iconography are only found in the *manga* version of *Hebi ni piasu*, there are obvious parallels between the depiction of Shiba’s tattoo room and a crypt containing a *transi* tomb. These are spaces in which bodies undergo physical transformations that are inherently linked with the rhetoric of human mortality. The blood that wells from the self-harmer’s wounds reminds them that, no matter what else is occurring in their lives, they are still alive.⁶⁷ Each of these acts speaks to the masochistic element of the death drive.⁶⁸ The death instinct ‘pushes everything that is being created back into cold immobility and into right not-being.’⁶⁹ The counterpart to the death drive is Eros,⁷⁰ which retaliates by forcing the being into ‘life, light, warmth and movement’⁷¹ (remember Lui basking in warm light). Reik describes the struggle between these two forces as a ‘titanic battle’ that is ‘fought in every living being.’⁷² It should be noted that, as with masochism, the aim of body-modification, self-mutilation or self-injury bears ‘no direct relation to pain.’⁷³ We might recall that in discussing the death instinct Deleuze, in fact, states that ‘pain should be regarded as an *effect* only.’⁷⁴ Furthermore, for Deleuze

⁶⁶ This was particularly the case during the early 2000s. See Driscoll 2007.

⁶⁷ Strong 1999, p. 194.

⁶⁸ See Freud 1920-22, p. 44.

⁶⁹ Reik 1949, p. 31.

⁷⁰ The use of the term Eros reminds us once again of Sacher-Masoch’s *Venus in Furs*. Eros, the Greek word for love or affection, is also the name of the Greek counterpart to the Latin god of love, Cupid, who is Venus’ son.

⁷¹ Reik 1949, p. 31.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Deleuze 1991, p. 121.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

the ‘anchoring’ of ‘masochism in pain’ cannot be wholly ‘understood in isolation: pain in this case has no sexual significance at all.’⁷⁵

In her third novel, *AMEBIC*, Kanehara explores the notion of the small space. The novel tells the story of a young woman novelist living on her own in Tokyo. Throughout the narrative, the boundaries between the protagonist’s body and her apartment become progressively blurred: first the narrator’s consciousness – through her computer - and then her physical body merge with the apartment. As Rio Otomo points out, *AMEBIC* begins with several pages of what the protagonist calls ‘*sakubun*’ (錯文 delusional writing), which is a pun on the Japanese synonym word for the composition essay or writing form (作文).⁷⁶ Although the narrator often wakes to find pieces of *sakubun* flashing on the screen of her computer she never remembers writing them. It is as if, while she sleeps, her subconscious produces texts using the tools that exist in the small space of the apartment. In this way the small space of the apartment serves as an extension of the protagonist’s mind. However, it is also an extension of her body. Otomo discusses how, at one point, upon finding a puddle of her own dried vomit, the narrator protagonist says ‘it is warm, just as when it came out of my body. Maybe this floor is a part of my body and is even looking after the things that come out of me.’⁷⁷ For Otomo, this ‘compulsively’ expelled food is a counterpart of the ‘incoherent *sakubun*’ that is ‘written at night in a delusional state and belched out from her body in a non-solid form.’⁷⁸ Otomo surmises that ‘reading and writing through the machine’ provides a comfort for the protagonist of *AMEBIC* akin to the small space.⁷⁹ Otomo in fact argues that the physical space becomes a threat to the *AMEBIC* protagonist in which she is ‘vulnerable to disintegration and the blurring of the inside-outside boundaries.’⁸⁰ Rather than

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 120.

⁷⁶ Kanehara 2008, pp. 5-9; Otomo 2010, p. 130.

⁷⁷ Kanehara 2008, p. 17; as per Otomo’s translation. Otomo 2010, pp. 133-34.

⁷⁸ Otomo 2010, p. 133.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 134.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 135.

the physical space, for this young woman, it is the virtual space that provides the safe room of her own.

Japan’s Lengthening ‘Lost Decade’

We noted earlier that the ‘Lost Decade’ had lengthened into fifteen years – or, we might even argue in 2012, into two decades.⁸¹ The bursting of the economic bubble that preceded this put an abrupt end to the heady spending of the previous decade that was explored in the works of Yamada and her contemporaries. Instead, as economic, political, religious and geological disasters followed one after another, it seemed that Japan was being punished for its short period as a star on the world stage. In addition to the Bubble collapse, the 1990s saw a sharp rise in distrust of the ‘system,’ which could neither respond adequately following the 1995 Great Hanshin earthquake, nor prevent the Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway system that occurred later in the same year.⁸² While neither Aum nor the Hanshin earthquake are the focus of this chapter, these events, and the lack-lustre government response to them, added to the sense of despair that grew during the ‘Lost Decade’ and the years that followed.

The lost years produced a new Japan, or, as Harry Harootunian and Tomiko Yoda interpret the dramatic changes that occurred in the social landscape, a ‘Japan after Japan.’⁸³ By 1995 there was a consensus that ‘something’ had changed and that this something ‘went far beyond a simple business downturn, or a small group of mass murders, or a bumbling response to a natural disaster.’⁸⁴ However we define this shift, it produced a widespread sense of hopelessness that Kanehara perceptively captures in her protagonists who aimlessly wander through the territory

⁸¹ Japan’s ‘lost decade’ is so labelled by economists in reference to the ‘lost decade’ faced by Latin-America in the 1980s. Driscoll 2007, p. 168.

⁸² Leheny 2006, pp. 27-47.

⁸³ See Harootunian 2006.

⁸⁴ Leheny 2006, p. 46.

of her novels. I have previously noted that many of these protagonists are *freeters* who engage in, for example, part-time work. They are products of the youth unemployment that has characterised the Japanese labour market since the early 1990s. In 1991, according to the first Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare survey of *freeters*, there were 1,830,000 *freeters* in Japan,⁸⁵ the figure increasing steadily as more graduates unable to find permanent work join *freeter* ranks, while existing *freeters* continue to fail to find permanent positions. Debate has raged around the notion of the *freeter* and their NEET compatriots. For some, this was an ideal imbued with a sense of hope, independence, fun and freedom, hence *free-ter*. The archetypal *freeter* was said to represent a ‘liberated choice’ made by ‘young people seeking their own lifestyle,’⁸⁶ refusing to enter the drudgery of the company system and preferring instead to support their exciting lifestyle by temporary work of various forms.⁸⁷ However, the image of the carefree *freeter* has come to be tempered by an equally pervasive discourse of moral panic which paints both *freeters* and NEETs as representative of the social decay of the era and as responsible for the collapse of the Japanese economy.⁸⁸

I have a number of times noted a genealogy that connects the authors discussed in this thesis and the *nikutai bungaku* writers of the immediate post-war. Certainly, there are parallels that can be drawn between the economic contingencies of the immediate post-war period and the late twentieth century economic downturn that lead to and characterised the ‘Lost Decade/s.’ In the 1990s, too, Japan was once again humiliated in the face of the west, as it had been by defeat in the war, after climbing to the pinnacle of global financial success. Kanehara has stated that her generation never knew the wealth of the Bubble *jidai* and thus, unlike previous generations of disillusioned writers, is yet to become disenchanted as the members of this group ‘never

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Kawanishi 2009, p. 129.

⁸⁷ In government White Papers, *freeters* are defined as being ‘between the ages of 15 and 34, unmarried women or men who had never stayed in the same job longer than five years, and who understood themselves to be part-time workers.’ Quoted in Driscoll 2007, p. 170.

⁸⁸ Toivonen 2012, pp. 2-3.

expected anything from society in the first place.’⁸⁹ It could almost be said that they have nothing to become disenchanted with. Instead, young writers of this generation, of whom Kanehara is perhaps the most well-known, construct characters whose lifestyles conflict with the expected social hegemonies of gender and sexuality. Members of this group could be considered a new school of decadent writers similar to the *buraiha* or authors of *nikutai bungaku* discussed in Chapter 1. However, unlike their masculine *buraiha* literary forebears, Kanehara and her contemporaries search for liberation in their own bodies, not in the bodies of partners of the opposite sex.

While they initially may have been celebrated for their apparent desire to live lives to the full, free from the restrictive salaryman/white collar life of overtime and company loyalty, *freeters* have since been damned for ‘choosing’ the so-called ‘easy’ path of part-time employment.⁹⁰ Held ‘personally responsible’ for not only their own ‘declining economic fortunes’ but for Japan’s as well,⁹¹ the ‘irresponsible’ *freeteer* became the overt focus of public excoriation in April 2004 when three Japanese civilians, all of them *freeters*, were taken hostage in Baghdad during the Iraq war.⁹² Through a mix of neoliberal and nationalist codes that were deployed by the government and the mass media,⁹³ the young *freeters* were vilified for putting themselves in danger and behaving in a manner that brought shame and embarrassment to their country.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Onishi 2004a, p. 11.

⁹⁰ Driscoll 2007, p. 176. In 2003 the UFJ Institute (United Financial of Japan, now MUFG, which includes the Mitsubishi UFJ Bank, amongst other corporations) calculated that the economic loss resulting directly from *freeters* not entering the workforce fulltime at 1.2 trillion yen in tax revenue, 8.2 trillion yen in consumer spending and 3.2 trillion yen in savings. In *Yomiuri Shinbun*, December 8, 2004, p. 3.

⁹¹ Driscoll 2007, p. 176.

⁹² Japan’s involvement with the ‘War on Terror’ was the first deployment of soldiers in a non-peacekeeping mission. In spite of wide spread opposition by the Japanese public Prime Minister Koizumi authorised the dispatch of 550 Japanese soldiers to Iraq.

⁹³ Driscoll 2007, p. 176.

⁹⁴ For more on this see Leheny 2006, pp. 147-180. See also Driscoll 2007, p. 181.

The rise of the *freeter*, however, was a function of a labour market that increasingly failed to provide job opportunities comparable with university graduate numbers. Young women graduates were particularly vulnerable in the economic stagnation of the time and sometimes found that hostessing or escort roles were the only types of work available after four years of university study. Indeed in the year 1999 there was a marked increase in the number of young women who, upon graduating from university, found it necessary to look for work in the so-called *mizu shōbai* industry.⁹⁵ We have seen that this term refers to a constellation of insecure occupations that include outright prostitution in addition to work in massage parlours, soaplands and hostess bars, none of which is the type of employment that offers a career path for the young women involved. Those reluctant to take this work often had no alternative but to become the much maligned ‘parasite single,’ the name given to young Japanese – often women – who, with no means of independent support, stayed in the family home and lived off the earnings of their parents.⁹⁶

Mark Driscoll is one critic who takes Kanehara to task for what he regards as her complying with Japan’s increasing neo-liberal administration juxtaposing both her personal actions and those of her literary creations against the actions of the *freeter* protesters held hostage in Iraq. Driscoll posits that Lui and her friends represent the ‘good *freeter*’ alternative to the ‘irresponsible *freeter*.’ For Driscoll, *Hebi ni piasu* is:

a neoliberal utopia, where young people can exist without complaint but minus any social support. *A fortiori*, they seem to be able to function and find pleasure without any society. Their atomized identities are sustained through monadic pleasures

⁹⁵ Kingston 2001, p. 109.

⁹⁶ For more on parasite singles see Genda 2006, p. 30. Laura Miller calls parasite single ‘a nasty term’ that ‘caught the fancy of the American media.’ Miller 2006, p. 197. It has also been suggested that many parasite singles remain at home so as to ‘provide their parents, especially their mothers, with a purpose in life’ as many ‘middle-aged or older Japanese couples do not know what to do once their children leave home.’ Kawanishi 2009, p. 124.

purchased in a highly differentiated consumer market – the neoliberal world of the near future.⁹⁷

Driscoll states that the characters portrayed in Kanehara’s text are ‘acceptable with a neoliberal and national hegemony. As long as [...] *freeters* refrain from demanding that the state and the family provide any aid [...], then the *freeters* depicted in *Hebi ni piasu* are up-standing and positive.’⁹⁸

While Driscoll is right in identifying an overt lack of social consciousness on the part of Lui and her peers, his criticism of Kanehara is nevertheless uncomfortably reminiscent of the negative assessments of Yoshimoto Banana’s early work. Deeply disappointed that this daughter of the great Ryūmei produced such putatively vapid and lightweight work, mainstream critics dismissed Yoshimoto’s narratives as ‘nonsense.’⁹⁹ Yet, in the same way that feminist critics have rehabilitated Yoshimoto from the condemnation of those unwilling or unable to recognise her literary worth, we must question whether Kanehara’s presentation of murderous youths and self-destructive anorexic girls, who cling precariously to a socially meaningless existence, can be regarded as ‘positive.’ We could in fact argue that, Lui Vuitton accessories notwithstanding, there is a parallel between the empty lives of Kanehara’s creations and contemporary Japan’s inability to provide a productive social role for many young people. And although Driscoll is correct in his discussion of the manner in which Kanehara’s young people appear to have no need for work – a luxury that is not available in the desperate real lives of the young people forced by the notorious Koizumi reforms into poorly paid work with grossly inadequate conditions – the text reads against itself in this respect by foregrounding the tragic lack of direction and marginality of their lives.

⁹⁷ Driscoll 2007, p. 184.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Skov and Moeran 1995, pp. 276-277. See Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Murder is a persistent trope in *Hebi ni piasu*. The murders that Ama and Shiba commit can be directly linked to both men’s need to protect and, more tellingly, possess Lui. Ama murders a gangster who molested Lui. His anger can be read as twofold – firstly at the thought of the thug hurting or touching Lui and secondly at the thought of anyone *apart from Ama* hurting or touching Lui. Shiba’s violent torture and murder of Ama occurs on the very same day that he, Shiba, proposes to Lui, even though she is still dating Ama.¹⁰⁰ By murdering Ama, Shiba removes his main competition for Lui’s affection. Furthermore, Shiba’s rape of Ama can be read as his attempt to possess whatever traces of Lui that remained on Ama. Thus, the *manga* depiction of Shiba strangling Ama in the same manner as when he has sex with Lui becomes even more significant and more harrowing. Lui inadvertently sums up both Ama and Shiba’s need to possess her when she observes that ‘possession can be such a hassle, and yet we are still driven by the desire to possess people and things. Maybe it appeals to the masochist and sadist in every one of us.’¹⁰¹ In both instances, Lui takes steps to ensure that neither man will be convicted for their crimes, becoming an accessory to murder in the process. Lui dyes Ama’s distinctive red hair an ash blond and makes him wear long sleeved shirts to hide his dragon tattoo.¹⁰² She commands Shiba, with whom she has been living since Ama’s disappearance, to grow his hair out and to use a different brand of incense in his studio after the distinctive brand he uses is linked to Ama’s death.¹⁰³ No matter how one chooses to read it, this complex web of interactions is anything but utopic or positive.

The rise of the *freeter* is not the only long term effect of Japan’s lengthening Lost Decade. Indeed, next to the growing homeless problem and sharp rise in suicides attributed to debts or job loss,¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 86; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 89.

¹⁰¹ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 76; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 79. In the original, Kanehara uses ‘M’ and ‘S’, as introduced in Chapter 1, instead of ‘mazohisuto’ and ‘sadeisuto.’

¹⁰² *Hebi ni piasu*, pp. 47-52; *Snakes and Earrings*, pp. 46-51.

¹⁰³ *Hebi ni piasu*, pp. 107-110; *Snakes and Earrings*, pp. 110-114.

¹⁰⁴ Kingston 2001, p. 109.

the problems of the *freeter* may seem ‘inconsequential.’¹⁰⁵ Yet the growth of their numbers and their public visibility pose a ‘profound challenge to the idealised economic institutions of postwar Japan.’¹⁰⁶ Kanehara, Wataya and their contemporaries who grew up during this extended period of economic uncertainty have been labelled a generation of ‘damaged youth’ (sometimes referred to as the ‘Lost Generation’) who are searching for a way to live in a ‘materially wealthy but spiritually hollow age marked by isolation, alienation, [...] and violence.’¹⁰⁷ For Kanehara, this search has led her protagonists to the two types of small rooms discussed above in which her protagonists struggle to find their place in the world: the tattoo parlour and the apartment. In the first the protagonist is brought alive through the sensations of pain she experiences at the hands of her sadistic lover. The risk involved in this, however, is considerable and in the second room she attempts to cocoon herself away from harm in the same way that Honda Masuko’s butterfly-like *shōjo* escaped the realities of wartime Japan as discussed in previous chapters.¹⁰⁸ As Otomo points out, however, the space of the physical rather than virtual room can lead to a damaging disintegration of self.

In the face of this bleak reality, the primary concern for Kanehara’s protagonists is to ‘locate new modes of sensation that will lift [them] out of a generalized post-bubble anomie.’¹⁰⁹ Lui, who proclaims ‘I can’t believe in anything; I can’t feel anything. I can only feel alive while I’m experiencing pain,’¹¹⁰ – a declaration that reveals the questionable nature of Driscoll’s claim that the protagonist’s ‘atomized identities are sustained through monadic pleasures purchased in a highly differentiated consumer market’¹¹¹ – uses the dragon and *kirin* tattoo and the process of

¹⁰⁵ Leheny 2006, p. 34.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ashby 2004. The ‘Lost Generation’ (ロス・ジェネレーション *rosuto jenerêshon*), in a clever pun on ‘Lost Decade,’ refers to the ‘cohort of young adults who,’ like Kanehara, ‘left school in the 1990s and early 2000s’ and ‘failed to gain a stable position in the labour market.’ Goodman, Imoto and Toivonen 2012, p. 179.

¹⁰⁸ See Honda 2010, pp. 20; 37.

¹⁰⁹ Driscoll 2007, p. 182.

¹¹⁰ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 45. *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 43. As per Driscoll’s translation.

¹¹¹ Driscoll 2007, p. 184.

splitting her tongue for this purpose. This is something that she seeks, albeit in different circumstances, in the same way that Kōno’s protagonists seek the masochistic experience. For both, the ability to ‘indulge’ in a form of corporeal excess is a subversive disruption of the hegemonic discourses that deny women access to the heights of sensation/sensuality of which the body is capable. As with any masochist, Lui’s anticipation of pleasure is heightened by the expectation of pain – the initial buzz of Shiba’s needles before he penetrates her skin with ink is later mimicked when he ties Lui up then penetrates her body during sex. The first time that she has sex with Shiba, Lui notices that her vagina gets ‘wet’ before he ever ‘even [lays] a finger on [her].’¹¹²

While this is indicative of Lui’s acute anticipation of what Shiba might do with, or rather to, her, the pairing of sadist and masochist complicates the theories of masochism presented previously. Lui states that she had ‘been with sadists before’ and proclaims that, in complete contrast to the ideals of the masochistic contract, ‘you never know what they’re going to do.’¹¹³ Rather than direct her sexual experience, for the most of the novel Lui seems content to lie back and let not only Shiba but Ama as well use her body as they wish. The inability to direct her relationships as per, for example, the classic masochistic contract, is perhaps a metaphor for the rest of Lui’s life, especially given her status as a *freeter*. It should be noted that this inequity in the masochistic contract only exists for as long as Lui allows Shiba to dictate their relationship.

As Rio Otomo notes, Kanehara’s heroines are isolated and marginalised, caught in a ‘masochistic loop’ of their own devising.¹¹⁴ It is therefore perhaps not surprising that one of the few ways in which these protagonists do display agency is in their acts of self-mutilation. It is almost as though, unable to direct their economic futures as *freeters* and NEETs, or even their love lives,

¹¹² *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 38; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 38.

¹¹³ *Hebi ni piasu*, pp. 39-40; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 36.

¹¹⁴ Otomo 2010, p. 131.

these young women resort to pushing themselves to ‘the point of self-harm’ as a means of controlling their bodies so as to be in charge of one aspect of their lives.¹¹⁵ In *Hebi ni piasu* this obsession with controlling the body takes the form of piercing, body modification and tattooing. In her other novels, such as *AMEBIC*, Kanehara explores this theme in the form of both the protagonist’s refusal to eat and her fixation with clothing such as corsets (which further change and control body shape) and brand goods with which she dresses her ever-diminishing body. In *Haidora* the protagonist disciplines herself by chewing but never swallowing large amounts of junk food and confectionary.¹¹⁶ Lui’s need to control her body can be seen as a masochist’s reaction to the lack of a (willing and educated) consort/partner/torturer – or perhaps her disinterest in imposing an educative regime on a prospective partner. Without the assurance of a partner to manipulate in order to elicit the correct feeling, Lui acts on her own body. That is, she, in effect, negotiates a contract with herself.

Young Akutagawa Prize Recipients

Kanehara famously dropped out of school at the age of 11 to pursue a career in writing literature. This was played up in ‘the girl from the streets’ discourse that accompanied the advertising campaigns for both the Japanese and English editions of *Hebi ni piasu* and the English language translation of *Ōto fikushon*. However, the fact that after leaving home at an early age Kanehara would email her stories to her academic father who would help her edit them is often overlooked. A review of *Auto-fiction* states that because of this marketing strategy ‘[it is] a mild disappointment to discover that writers like Kanehara, and Yoshimoto Banana before her, are the privileged offspring of literary and academic parents’ and not ‘gifted, world-weary

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

delinquents hailing from the tough public housing estates of east Tokyo.’¹¹⁷ In an interview published in *Bungei shunjū* after receiving the Akutagawa prize, Kanehara confesses that she often stayed home from elementary school, but that grade 4 was the year that she stopped going altogether. Following this, she spent her days at home or waiting for her friends to finish school so that they could go shopping or sing karaoke together. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, Kanehara spent a year living in San Francisco with her father where she started reading contemporary Japanese narrative, in particular Yamada’s *Hōgako no kīnōto*. Upon returning to Japan, Kanehara refused to attend middle school and would occasionally attend her father’s university tutorials where he would look over her literary attempts.¹¹⁸ However, while Kanehara would sometimes spend all night away from home partying with friends, in no way was she living ‘rough’ on the streets of Shinjuku or Shibuya as suggested by the various marketing campaigns that have been used to promote her novels.

This section will look briefly at Kanehara’s explosion onto the Japanese literary scene as propelled by the marketing strategy that surrounded her Akutagawa prize win. It will also investigate the speculation that Kanehara’s and Wataya’s Akutagawa prizes, as well as those of the other young women writers in their twenties who were nominated and/or received the prize over the following years, including authors such as Shimamoto Rio (b. 1983, nominated in 2003 and 2004), Aoyama Nanae (b. 1983, recipient in 2006), Kawakami Mieko (b. 1977, recipient in 2008), and Asabuki Mariko (b. 1984, recipient in 2010), were merely attempts to boost faltering sales of literature in Japan. Each of these young women writers creates stories that, while not necessarily masochistic, focus on a search for belonging which is often grounded in the body.

¹¹⁷ Mansfield 2008.

¹¹⁸ Kanehara states that one of the reasons she refused to attend school was that the uniform was so ugly, she would ‘rather die’ than wear it. “Jushō intabyū,” p. 321.

On the day of the Akutagawa award ceremony Kanehara and Wataya represented a study in contrasts which allowed for a clever marketing strategy. Wataya, at that time a sophomore at Waseda University, looked like a ‘demure *ojōsan*’ while Kanehara was dressed in Shibuya *gyaru* style with ‘tinted contact lenses, dyed hair, pierced ears and flared miniskirt.’¹¹⁹ The pair’s novels were promoted accordingly: Kyoto-born Wataya to the more traditional ‘Akutagawa prize reader’ market and Tokyo native Kanehara was marketed as a ‘free-spirit’ to a younger audience.¹²⁰ At a time when book sales were at a low, both novels enjoyed record sales. Shortly after the announcement of the prize *Hebi ni piasu* had sold over 500,000 copies and Wataya’s *Keritai senaka* (lit. The Back I want to Kick, translated as Kick Me, 2004) sold 900,000. Sales of the March issue of *Bungei shunjū* magazine, which publishes each winning Akutagawa story, almost doubled to reach a record 1,185,000 copies on February 23 2004.¹²¹ The last Akutagawa prize-winning piece to produce sales of over 1 million copies of the magazine was Murakami Ryū’s 1976 novel *Kagiri naku tōmei ni chikai burū* (Almost Transparent Blue; trans Nancy Andrew, 1992).

Kanehara’s and Wataya’s 2004 joint award for *Hebi ni piasu* and *Keritai senaka* respectively was followed by awards for Aoyama Nanae for *Hitori biyori* (A Good Day for Being Alone, 2006) and Kawakami Mieko’s *Chichi to ran* (Of Breasts and Eggs, 2008). These authors and their contemporaries are seen as part of what literary critic, Tomioka Kōichirō, has termed a ‘generational shift’ that took place in a literary world in which women writers have begun to outstrip male novelists born in the ‘war time generation.’¹²² The works of Kanehara and her contemporaries can be read as portraying the rapid decay of Japan’s established moral codes and value systems regarding family, marriage, love and friendship in wake of the collapse of the

¹¹⁹ Ashby 2004.

¹²⁰ Masangkay 2004.

¹²¹ Ibid. To put this number in perspective, *Bungei shunjū* usually sells around 650,000 copies a month. Sales of these two works are astounding given that an Akutagawa prize-winning work is considered a hit if it sells one million copies.

¹²² Tomioka 2004.

Bubble economy. However, as we have seen throughout this thesis, Japanese women writers have been challenging socially accepted mores long before the Lost Decade began.

Literary critics such as Saitō Minako demanded to know why it was deemed normal for men in their thirties to be nominated for the Akutagawa prize but not young women such as Kanehara, Wataya, Aoyama, Kawakami and their contemporaries. Saitō argued that the recent rise in recognition of women authors was not due to a sudden increase in ‘outstanding female writers,’ but a change in the attitudes of the older men in the literary establishment.¹²³ The attitudes towards young women Akutagawa prize winners mirror attitudes towards women masochists. We have already seen in Chapter 3 that masochistic men, such as the company chiefs who frequent the S/M club in Yamada’s *Hizamazuite* or the masochistic protagonists found in the work of Tanizaki, are praised for their masochism. These powerful men are valorised as heroes who are willing to submit to the loving ministrations of their chosen (woman) consort/partner/torturer. Women masochists, however, are constructed as deviant. Similarly, the popularity of young women writers creates an unjustifiable moral panic.

For the most part, a major theme in the work of authors such as Kanehara, Wataya, Shimamoto, Aoyama, Kawakami and Asabuki, is the protagonists’ search for belonging. In these narratives the discovery of self is facilitated through the bodies of each protagonist. In an interview in the *Japan Times* shortly after her Akutagawa award, Kawakami declared that her novel is about ‘living, [the]body, the change[s] of the heart that accompany the body’ and ‘the fact that we are always doing our best at living.’¹²⁴ Lui’s attempts to ‘do her best at living’ are tempered by her seeming lack of control over her life. As Lui’s control over her life slips away she increases the control that she exerts over her own body: Lui eats less and less, surviving only on beer and handfuls of

¹²³ Ashby 2004.

¹²⁴ Kageyama 2008.

bar-snacks.¹²⁵ After Ama’s death, she stops eating entirely.¹²⁶ At this point in the narrative Lui desperately wants to ‘tell [Shiba] to just go ahead and kill [her ...]’ (she is convinced that he will do so ‘gladly’)¹²⁷ but she never does.¹²⁸ Lui herself has trouble deciding why she never demands that Shiba end her life; she is unsure if it is ‘too much trouble,’ or if it is because she still ‘had the desire to live,’ or even because she ‘wanted to believe that’ somewhere, ‘Ama was still alive.’¹²⁹

Flirting with the death drive or total annihilation is something that Kanehara returns to in other works. One advertisement for *Asshu beibi* reads ‘I love you. I really love you. So please. Please kill me ...’¹³⁰ Lui is fully aware of the pain that is inherent in the body modifications she undergoes – such as stretching the piercing in her tongue from a 14 gauge (1.6 mm) to a 00 gauge (10 mm) – and yet she nevertheless forces an oversized stud through the still-bleeding hole in her tongue. This act reaffirms Lui’s knowledge that ‘she is still alive,’¹³¹ that, unlike Ama, she has managed to survive. From this perspective, masochism becomes a perverse determination to live.

We have already seen in the previous chapters that there is a link between food and life – the meat that Fumiko uses to soothe the wounds her husband inflicts on her in Kōno’s “Ari takaru;” the vampire club in Kurahashi’s “Banpīru no kai” and Tanizaki’s “Bishoku kurabu;” and Yamada’s protagonists who describe themselves as ‘hot chilli sauce’ when in bed with their lovers.¹³² Food and the preparation and/or consumption of food, or the refusal or inability to do so, and a corresponding gain in, or loss of, vitality are motifs that are also present in Aoyama’s *Hitori biyori* and Kawakami’s *Chichi to ran*. In *Hitori biyori* the two protagonists communicate only

¹²⁵ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 83; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 86; there is no direct reference to this in the *manga*, however Lui’s weight loss is depicted – her cheekbones are drawn more prominently and her eyes seem to grow bigger.

¹²⁶ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 102; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 106; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, p. 108.

¹²⁷ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 102; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 106.

¹²⁸ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 102; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 106.

¹²⁹ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 102; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 106; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, pp. 107-111.

¹³⁰ Back material, Shūeisha paperback edition of *AMEBIC*. Note there is no omission, the original Japanese finishes with an ellipsis.

¹³¹ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 102; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 106; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, pp. 107-111.

¹³² Yamada 2006b, p. 19.

when they are eating or drinking to the point that when the young protagonist leaves her older relative’s house she notes that ‘we had run out of things to eat and things to talk about.’¹³³ In *Chichi to ran* the mother and daughter reunite in a cathartic scene in which the pair smash eggs at each other late one night. However in Kanehara’s novels food is not something that is consumed – or is consumed only to be expelled – and she often returns to the theme of girls and young women who do not eat.¹³⁴ Otomo notes that according to the narrator of *Haidora* ‘the making of the emaciated body is driven by the desire to become [...] a doll-like girl who lives in the liminal moment where life is “fading away from the body.”’¹³⁵ Similarly, Tomoko Aoyama notes that ‘for the young heroine of [*Hebi ni piasu*], anorexia nervosa represents only a small part of her obsession with modifying, manipulating and even transgressing her body and body image.’¹³⁶ Here, the eating disorder is tied to other practices often labelled as masochistic.

I have noted previously the manner in which Kōno’s protagonists use masochism as a means of experiencing both the power and sensuality denied to women by the mainstream. Similarly, for Otomo this act of ‘sculpting the skinny’ body is a masochistic one that Kanehara’s protagonists carry out so as to discover a sense of ‘power and self-worth.’¹³⁷ Otomo quotes the protagonist of *Haidora* when she says:

So I became thinner, as if I could touch the invisible value that I gained by that [...] the thinner I became, the happier I was. Staring at the bones that were now more noticeable, I would touch them, being entranced by them.¹³⁸

¹³³ 「食べるものも話すことがなくなっ[た]」 Aoyama 2007, p. 159.

¹³⁴ The fable of women who do not eat is widespread throughout Japan. Often she takes the form of a young woman who is courted solely because she appears to eat nothing. Eventually it is revealed that she has a hidden mouth in the top of her head through which she devours vast quantities of food and, frequently, her husband. For more on this variant of the *yamauba* mythos see Kawai 1997, pp. 27-45. See also Fisher 1990.

¹³⁵ Otomo 2010, p. 181; Kanehara 2007, p. 37.

¹³⁶ Aoyama 2008, p. 206. At the beginning of the novel, Lui makes a list of all of the body modifications that she knows of: ‘There was foot-binding, waist-tightening with a corset, and neck-extension practiced by some tribes. I wondered whether or not braces counted.’ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 14; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 11.

¹³⁷ Otomo 2010, p. 181.

¹³⁸ Kanehara 2007, p. 38. Otomo’s translation, Otomo 2010, p. 181.

Despite the constant pressure for young Japanese women to remain thin,¹³⁹ Kanehara’s protagonists do not exert such fierce control over their bodies in order to become more attractive. David Holloway examines Lui’s food refusal in his 2011 article, “Skin-Deep,” in which he also examines the work of Hasegawa Junko (b 1966). Holloway sees Lui’s refusal to eat as a rejection of the ‘the family, community and the state’ as per the work of Laura Spielvogel.¹⁴⁰ Useful though this reading is, Holloway also makes the questionable claims that ‘as Lui continues to lose weight Shiba loses sexual interest in her [...]. Indeed, what had been wild sadistic sexual intercourse early in Kanehara’s narrative is muted by Lui’s uncontained weight loss.’¹⁴¹ This reading is problematic, however, since it is not a loss in interest on Shiba’s part that stops him from having sex with Lui, but Lui’s refusal to play into his sadistic demands. As we have already seen, without her tears, Shiba is unable to maintain an erection.¹⁴² In this way, Lui (who is, above all, a masochist) is able to wrest control of the situation away from Shiba (a thwarted sadist) and form a power-dynamic akin to the masochistic contract.

Lui is fully aware of how ‘grotesque’ her rapid weight loss has made her – she notes that she looked like a ‘crane-fly.’¹⁴³ As mentioned above this weight loss is not about attractiveness but is one more way for Lui, and Kanehara’s other protagonists who refuse to eat, to exert control over some small aspect of their lives. Lui is only vaguely troubled by her diminishing body. Although she visits a doctor, who politely tells her to eat something or she will die, Lui cannot bring herself to follow his advice.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Women’s magazines, including ladies’ comic magazines which will be examined in Chapter 5, invariably devote the last pages of each edition to infomercial advertisements for dieting drinks and the like. For more on this see Miller 2006, pp. 159-175.

¹⁴⁰ Spielvogel 1998, pp. 192-193.

¹⁴¹ Holloway 2011, p. 35.

¹⁴² *Hebi ni piasu*, pp. 37; 38-39; 102; 106; *Snakes and Earrings*, pp. 35; 36; 106; 109.

¹⁴³ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 83, *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 86.

¹⁴⁴ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 103; *Snakes and Earrings*, pp. 106-107; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, p. 108.

Lui is torn between two unstable men, both of whom may kill her at any moment; she has no permanent job and no relationship with her parents.¹⁴⁵ Her desperate need for some modicum of control over something manifests itself in the curtailment of her food intake shortly after Ama beats a small-time *yakuza* to death. After a night out, Lui and Ama head home with a friend when they are approached by two gang members who verbally assault them before one tries to grab Lui’s breasts. In a rage, Ama attacks the thug while the other runs away. Having beaten the man senseless, Ama pulls two teeth from the gangster’s open mouth which he then presents to Lui as a symbol of his love. Rachel DiNitto comments that in this scene sex and death are inherently linked.¹⁴⁶ This image is reprised the first time Lui has sex with Shiba when he forces his fingers soaked in vaginal fluid into her mouth.¹⁴⁷ It is only after Lui eats Ama’s ‘love token’ – the dead man’s teeth – that she is able to eat proper food again.¹⁴⁸ This act of cannibalism, one that we might find reminiscent of the Christian rite of Holy Communion (this is my body, do this in remembrance of me), restores and renews Lui.

Harajuku Girls¹⁴⁹

The image that the media projected of Kanehara in the early 2000s is that of a young, trendy *gyaru* living in Tokyo in an ‘apartment of her own.’ Her countless ensuing interviews with literary magazines and newspapers continued to be accompanied by full page photo spreads featuring Kanehara in thigh-high leather boots, fashionable summer dresses or designer jeans in the latest

¹⁴⁵ The conspicuous absence of a mother figure throughout Kanehara’s work could be linked to her own fraught relationship with her mother.

¹⁴⁶ Di Nitto 2011, p. 467.

¹⁴⁷ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 40; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 38; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, p. 40.

¹⁴⁸ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 115; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 111; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, pp. 106-107. Lui crushes the teeth with a hand weight and washes them down with beer. In the *manga* it is interesting to note that Lui eats the teeth and then goes to the doctors, whereas it is the opposite in all other versions.

¹⁴⁹ The title from this section is taken from Gwen Stefani’s song of the same name which helped to confirm the image of the Japanese school girl Harajuku fashionista on the world stage in the 2004 album *Love. Angel. Music. Baby*. Harajuku is a shopping precinct in Tokyo near Yoyogi Park which is famous for alternative street fashion that is invented/bought/created in the precinct’s winding back alleyways. For more on fashion in Harajuku see Godoy 2007. See also Sanders 2001.

style. This image of Kanehara as fashionable *gyaru* icon remains current as can be seen in a 2010 interview published in book review magazine, *Hon no tabi*. The eight page article has no less than eight portraits of Kanehara including a two page photo-spread, one full page image and one three-quarter page head shot.¹⁵⁰ Even advertisements for her books are accompanied by photos of Kanehara.¹⁵¹ Similarly, the DVD release of the film adaptation of *Hebi ni piasu* features an interview with Kanehara in which she walks through Shinjuku dressed in the *gyaru* fashions portrayed in the film. The question that must be asked is does the constant emphasis on the appearance of young women writers such as Kanehara and her contemporaries (a different article notes that ‘on the day of the interview, Kanehara was wearing silver Gucci sandals’)¹⁵² take the emphasis away from their talent as writers? Indeed the editor of *Subaru* magazine, in which *Hebi ni piasu* was first published, noted that ‘the media played up too much about [Kanehara] being a young woman instead of focusing on the material itself.’¹⁵³ What does Kanehara’s continued association with *gyaru* style mean given the negative image of *gyaru* projected during the (lengthening) lost decade years? Furthermore, how does *gyaru* fashion relate to the masochistic imagery that is the focus of this thesis?

We have already seen the importance of clothing as fetish object in masochism in Chapter 3. Kanehara’s *gyaru* fashions are, in a sense, the equivalent of the ‘Yamada Girl’s’ high-heeled shoes. It is vital for the masochistic consort/partner/torturer to dress in a way that the masochist finds appealing and arousing; for example, in *Venus in Furs* Wanda has her furs while in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* Chika and Shinobu adorn themselves in black lingerie. In his introduction to *The Japanese Tattoo*, Thomas draws a parallel between this use of costume and the tattoo. Thomas notes that ‘making love’ to a woman with a tattooed back would be more about ‘making love to

¹⁵⁰ “TRIP TRAP Kanehara Hitomi Interview,” pp. 22-29.

¹⁵¹ See, for example, an advertisement for *AMEBIC* in a 2005 edition of *Non-No*. The ad takes up a third of the page and of this, a quarter is devoted to a head shot of a stylish, yet frail looking, Kanehara. *Non-no* (vol. 15, no. 786), p. 211.

¹⁵² “Sakka Kanehara Hitomi,” p. 17.

¹⁵³ Masangkay 2004.

the tattoo than to the woman. [...] It is not unlike the fetishist’s need to interpose a symbol – fur or leather, garter belt or high-heeled shoes – between himself and his naked lover.¹⁵⁴ It stands to reason then that the costume of the masochist holds just as much significance. Be it the stereotypical leather harness, collar and lead, hobble chains, gimp mask or baby-doll dress, donning a certain costume helps the masochist to assume and maintain her or his role. And perhaps the consort needs these, also, to perform his or her part.

The term *gyaru* or ‘gal’ has been in ‘circulation in Japan since the 1980s’ and is currently used to describe young women who dress in a manner regarded as ‘trendy and sexy.’¹⁵⁵ ‘*Gyaru*’ can be seen as an umbrella term that describes any heavily tanned Japanese young woman with bleached hair. No matter the overlapping style, the archetypal *gyaru* figure is recognisable by the ‘basic template’ of a ‘thin body with largish breasts and smooth, hairless skin’ teamed with high-heeled or platform shoes and a mini-skirt.¹⁵⁶ Two key ‘subcategories’ of *gyaru* are the *koggyaru* (lit. little gals, also written as ‘kogal’)¹⁵⁷ of the late 1990s who flaunted short school uniforms and dark tans and the *onēgyaru* (lit. older sister gal) of the early 2000s who ‘graduated’ to a more grown up style. Like *freeters*, *gyaru* styles have sparked repeated bouts of ‘moral panic’ throughout Japan.¹⁵⁸ There is a vast gulf between the accepted (and expected) doll-like look of black haired girls in neat school uniforms and the *gyaru* with their coloured hair and often extreme fashion choices.¹⁵⁹ For Japanese girls, especially Japanese school girls whose schools often have rules regarding hair

¹⁵⁴ Thomas, “Introduction,” p. 9.

¹⁵⁵ Macias and Evers 2007, p. 49.

¹⁵⁶ Miller 2006, pp. 27-30.

¹⁵⁷ The ‘ko’ is said to be alternately either from ‘*kodomo*,’ child, or ‘*kōkō*,’ high school. Macias and Evers 2007, p. 49; Leheny 2006, p. 50.

¹⁵⁸ This was particularly noticeable when the *gonguro* or *yamamba* girls with their extremely dark tans and silver streaked hair first emerged in 1999. For more on *gonguro* and *yamamba* fashion (not to be confused with folkloric mountain witches) in the media see Kinsella 2005, pp. 143-157.

¹⁵⁹ *Gyaru* were/are renowned for shortening their school skirts (by changing the hem or rolling the skirt up at the waist band) with the shortest skirts on record occurring in Niigata in the north of Japan – even in the winter months which bring heavy snow falls.

colour as part of their uniform regulations, coloured hair is a badge of freedom and individuality.¹⁶⁰

Hebi ni piasu repeatedly references *gyaru* fashion and culture. Lui is portrayed as the typical *onéggyaru* who uses her status as a *freeter* to find casual work where possible and parties until she runs out of cash. Although Lui repeatedly denies her *gyaru* status,¹⁶¹ her hair is bleached and curled and her few female friends, such as Maki, are ‘real girly girls.’¹⁶² Much of *Hebi ni piasu* occurs on the streets of Shibuya, a fashion trend Mecca where *gyaru* of all ages go to shop, work, party and generally hang out. The rise of Shibuya as a shopping destination sharply mirrors the rise of the *gyaru* and her spending power. *Gyaru* tastes tend to run towards expensive brand labels, especially Burberry and Louis Vuitton – the latter of which, as we have already seen, holds a special resonance with Lui in *Hebi ni piasu*. The first *kogyaru* are said to have been ‘rich, private school girls rebelling against conformity.’¹⁶³ They were seen as standing for ‘rebellion against a crushingly patriarchal social order’ or alternately ‘an amoral slide from traditional values.’¹⁶⁴ Their refusal to conform and their subversion of uniform codes sparked the beginning of social anxiety that became a full-scale media alarm with the rise of *enjo kōsai* or ‘compensated dating.’ Indeed, *kogyaru* and *enjo kōsai* are so synonymous that they are sometimes used incorrectly as interchangeable in some English language studies.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ ‘The wearing of uniforms in schools [...] diverts attention away from individual, particular bodies. [...] Many high schools have a “Lifestyle Guidance Leader” who polices and tries to enforce rigid dress codes and rules for hair colour and style.’ Miller 2006, p. 150.

¹⁶¹ ‘I’ve never been a *gyaru*.’ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 24; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 22.

¹⁶² *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 21; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 18; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, p. 25.

¹⁶³ Ashcraft 2010, p. 105.

¹⁶⁴ Leheny 2006, p. 51.

¹⁶⁵ For example: ‘The consumerist vices of narcissism and a delusional sense of entitlement are, for Ishihara, intimately connected to glaring social problems in contemporary Japan, stretching from *high school sex work* (*ko-gyaru*), to the rise of graffiti in Tokyo (harshly criminalized recently by Ishihara), to the explosion in NEETs, to the nagging Japanese account deficit.’ Driscoll 2007, p. 177. Emphasis is mine.

The virtual nature of the *gyaru*’s activities is a feature of Kanehara’s narratives. In her discussion of the protagonist of *AMEBIC* and her ‘writing machine,’ for example, Otomo discusses *gyaru* and their constant attachment to their individual writing machines, that is, to their mobile phones:

With this machine, the solitary girl writes messages, a diary, or captions to accompany her phone photos, and there is always the task of re-reading them all. [...] Messages arrive and are sent, and she manages them with the confidence of a station master. She and her *keitai* [mobile phone], which she feels as an extension of her body, thus become a terminal, a communications processing station.¹⁶⁶

For a generation that is always connected through mobile phone internet technology, however, *gyaru* have never been more alone. When Ama disappears, both the film adaptation and the *manga* version of *Hebi ni piasu* poignantly portray Lui sitting alone in the apartment repeatedly dialling Ama’s mobile phone only to be connected to a message bank service.¹⁶⁷ With the loss of Ama, Lui is no longer able to function as a successful ‘terminal.’

Lui’s representation in this scene is indicative of a malaise that afflicts a generation. Psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki observes that:

young people today are divided into two types: those who are poor at communicating and socializing with others and prefer to be alone in their own world and those who are very active in communicating with others and constantly seeking new friends but become extremely anxious if alone or if not in touch with someone.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Otomo 2010, p. 132.

¹⁶⁷ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 88; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 92; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, p. 86.

¹⁶⁸ Saitō Tamaki, “Wakamono no kokoro no SOS” (SOS of the Young Mind), *NHK Ningen Kōza*, (August-September 2003) quoted in Kawanishi 2009, p. 125.

Kanehara protagonists like Lui belong to the second type: they are young people who communicate actively. This group are ‘easy to spot’ as they are frequently seen in the ‘fashionable districts of big cities.’¹⁶⁹ Outwardly this second group seems to be less of a concern than the *bikikomori* recluses of the former group, as they are young people who seem to lead a busy and hectic lifestyle. However, as we have seen in the works of Kanehara and her contemporaries, this is not necessarily the case; the young protagonists created by these writers are more likely to develop insecurities regarding self-image and may find it difficult to maintain stable relationships.¹⁷⁰ In *Mental Health Challenges Facing Contemporary Japanese Society: the ‘Lonely’ People*, Yuko Kawanishi proposes that some of the ‘most extreme cases of insecurity’ lead to self-mutilation in the form of ‘wrist-slashing [more commonly known as ‘cutting’ or ‘*risuto-katto*’ in Japanese], drug overdoses and suicide attempts.’¹⁷¹ It is possible to view *enjo kōsai* also as an extension of these insecurities. Furthermore, all of these activities reinforce the sense of self-annihilation present in masochism via the death drive.

As we have seen throughout this section, body modification and flirtation with the death drive are themes to which Kanehara constantly returns, whether in the form of piercing and tattooing as in *Hebi ni piasu*, starvation such as in *AMEBIC*, or through clothing such as corsets and high-heels as in *Haidora*. Wrist cutting and similar forms of self-destructive behaviour are not necessarily serious attempts at suicide. Rather, as in “Banpairu rabu,” these acts are seen as a way to release tension or ‘to feel alive through experiencing pain.’¹⁷² When questioned about “Banpairu rabu,” Kanehara described the story as ‘being about a girl with self-mutilating tendencies who bites her nails,¹⁷³ tans her skin, and cuts her wrists.’¹⁷⁴ Kawanishi notes that

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 126.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ This image of finger-nail chewing immediately brings to mind the sickening practice of the main character of the Oscar winning movie *Black Swan* (2010) who not only chews her nails down to the quick, but pulls the skin surrounding the nail-beds off, leaving her fingers bloody.

almost 20 percent of high school girls had cut themselves with ‘sharp objects such as knives’ while ‘repeated wrist-slashing is especially increasing among women in their twenties.’¹⁷⁵ These acts of self-mutilation are similar to the masochistic acts undertaken by the protagonists found in Kōno’s narratives and those played-out at the S/M club in Yamada’s *Hizamazuite* in that they are acts in which pleasure is derived, not from the pain itself but from the expectation of both pain and the endorphins that it produces. In *Masochism in Modern Man* Reik further clarifies this in the following manner:

Can the statement be maintained that the masochist originally aims at discomfort, asks for pain and disgrace? Is [her/]his goal shame and abashment? No! [She/]He does not enjoy pain, but what is bought with pain! [She/]He does not strive for discomfort, but for lust that must be paid for with discomfort.¹⁷⁶

In the case of self-harmers the endorphin rush that they receive from the act of, for example, wrist-slashing, is reportedly better than the high experienced by taking drugs or drinking alcohol.¹⁷⁷ In many cases, the promise of this euphoric high is what motivates self-harmers and injurers to mutilate their own bodies.¹⁷⁸ It should be noted that wrist-cutting, like tattooing, piercing and other forms of body modification and self-mutilation is by no means limited to Japan.

Kanehara is not the only author to investigate these themes. Of particular interest is Murakami Ryū’s 1994 novel *Piasshingu* (Piercing 1994, trans. Ralph McCarthy, 2007). The cover of the 2007 Penguin English translation has a picture of a young rabbit that is about to be stabbed by an ice-pick which is reminiscent of the scenes in Kanehara’s *Asshu beibi* in which a disturbed young man

¹⁷⁴ “Jushō intabyū,” p. 322.

¹⁷⁵ Kawanishi 2009, p. 126.

¹⁷⁶ Reik 1949, p. 191.

¹⁷⁷ “Famous Self-Injurers,” reader’s comments.

¹⁷⁸ White Kress 2003, p. 493.

possibly commits bestiality with a rabbit.¹⁷⁹ This novel is another example of an unsuccessful relationship between a sadist – Kawashima, the protagonist, who is terrified he will kill his own baby daughter – and a masochist – Chiaki, the call-girl Kawashima hires with the intention of stabbing her in the stomach with an ice-pick, averting the possibility of infanticide in the process.

There are several parallels which can be drawn between Chiaki and Lui. Both are of a similar age and living similar lifestyles on the edge of Japanese society. While Lui cocoons herself in Ama’s apartment away from the outside world with alcohol, Chiaki does the same with strong sleeping medication – sometimes sleeping for more than fifty hours at a time.¹⁸⁰ For Lui, piercing, and stretching those piercings (and the pain that is inherent in this act), is something that she has become addicted to; one of the first things that we learn about her is the number of piercings in her ears.¹⁸¹ It was this addiction to stretching her earrings that fed her interest in Ama’s split tongue in the first place. Throughout *Piasshingu* references are made to Chiaki’s pierced nipple, numerous scars and burns, and her repeated admissions to hospital as a result of making these modifications. Indeed, the last spoken word in the novel, ‘piercing,’ is said by Chiaki as she sits on her couch carefully punching a hole in her remaining un-pierced nipple.¹⁸² Chiaki might work as an S/M call-girl but her acts of body modification and self-mutilation are far removed from those of the contractual masochist explored in Chapter 1. For Chiaki, these body ‘mods’ are the only way that she manages to maintain her tenuous grasp on sanity: ‘Chiaki believed that if you chose something painful, accepted the pain and left something beautiful behind as a result, you got stronger.’¹⁸³ As the ‘pricking pain surrounds us’ taglines of the *manga* version of *Hebi ni piasu*

¹⁷⁹ See Kanehara 2005. Once again we are reminded of Kanai Mieko’s *Usagi* (Rabbits, 1976; trans. Phyllis Birnbaum, 1982).

¹⁸⁰ Murakami 1994, p. 55; Murakami 2007, p. 65.

¹⁸¹ Two in her right ear and three earrings in her left, each of varying diameters. *Hebi ni piasu*, pp. 6-7; *Snakes and Earrings*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁸² Murakami 1994, p. 163; Murakami 2007, p. 185.

¹⁸³ Murakami 1994a p. 161; Murakami 2007, p. 183.

(and the heading of this section)¹⁸⁴ suggests, the senseless pain of the world is more bearable if you can control other types of localised pain inflicted on the body.

The pain of tattooing is never mentioned in detail in *Hebi ni piasu*. This seems slightly odd given Shiba’s sadistic tendencies and the correlation for him between arousal and inflicting pain.

Likewise the tattoo artist in Tanizaki’s “Shisei” takes his greatest pleasure in inflicting pain on his human canvases – from the inking process itself to making his clients bathe in scalding water to bring out colours in the design.¹⁸⁵ Lui’s sexual reaction to the initial tongue piercing is, however, described in vivid detail in terms of orgasm: from her guess that Shiba’s quiet ‘here it comes’ when he pierces the needle through her tongue is the same line that he uses during sex, to a catalogue of the sensations that she feels throughout her body once the needle has passed out the other side.¹⁸⁶ It could be that Lui views the pain of tattooing as a preliminary to the pain of sex with Shiba that follows each session. In this way Lui is able to undermine Shiba’s sadistic tendencies with her own masochistic agenda. As already noted, at the end of the novel when Lui refuses to cry during sex with Shiba, he is unable to maintain an erection, placing control of the situation firmly in her hands.¹⁸⁷

Permanent Markings

There is, even now, something shocking about a woman with tattoos – the tattooed lady of side show fame, the hardened *yakuza* Moll, the indie/emo/hipster/rockabilly actress/singer/star of

¹⁸⁴ Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, front and back cover matter.

¹⁸⁵ In *The Japanese Tattoo*, Horikin I ‘laughs at the weakling among his customers who cowered during the tattoo’s excruciations. Only one out of a hundred clients who have asked him to tattoo their entire bodies has actually lasted to the end.’ Fellman 1986, p. 14.

¹⁸⁶ *Hebi ni piasu*, pp. 12-13 ; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 9; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, p. 18.

¹⁸⁷ *Hebi ni piasu*, pp. 37; 38-39; 102; 106; *Snakes and Earrings*, pp. 35; 36; 106; 109.

MTV and her army of wannabe fans.¹⁸⁸ Certain Kabuki plays and characters, such as Benten Kozō, a beautiful thief who disguises himself as a woman only to reveal his tattooed chest upon discovery, rely on this juxtaposition of masculine tattoo on feminine skin. In Japan, in spite of a long, albeit uneasy, tradition of tattooing, there is a notion that ‘nice girls don’t:’ nice girls don’t get tattooed; nice girls don’t get pierced; nice girls don’t have sex, don’t sit with their legs open, don’t use bad words. When Lui decides to get a tattoo she crosses over a line from a mere ‘bad *gyaru*’ to something worse. In fact, in 2012 even tattooed young men have been marginalised with the suggestion by the current mayor of Osaka, Toru Hashimoto that municipal employees with tattoos ‘should quit working for the city and go to the private sector.’¹⁸⁹

At the beginning of *Hebi ni piasu* Lui is already in the process of shedding her *gyaru* identity through the practice of stretching her piercings to sizes more readily associated with ‘punks’ or ‘uber-funky Harajuku kids.’¹⁹⁰ Through her choice of a decidedly non-*gyaru* tattoo Lui is further distancing herself from the possibility of a *gyaru* identity. Rather than choose something ‘cutesy’ like a rose or butterfly (i.e. something befitting a *kawaii gyaru*), Lui makes a conscious choice, one of the few decisions she actively makes in *Hebi ni piasu*, to select an *ukiyo-e* style piece.¹⁹¹ The fierce dragon and *kirin* back piece that Lui requests Shiba tattoo on her recalls the large mythological spider tattoos found on the apprentice geisha in Tanizaki’s “Shisei” and in the quasi-historical narrative of Meiji era murderess, Takahashi Oden. It should be noted that while Lui chooses her companions, the apprentice geisha in Tanizaki’s story has no such choice.

Although Lui makes these changes to her body under the guidance of Ama, it is Shiba who physically implements these modifications: it is Shiba who pierces her tongue and Shiba who

¹⁸⁸ Chart topping artists Lady Gaga and the late Amy Winehouse immediately spring to mind. Namie Amuro, who was supposedly responsible for several *gyaru* fashion trends including dark skin and platform shoes, is a tattooed Japanese singer/dancer. Miller 2006, pp. 28-29.

¹⁸⁹ Aoki 2012. See also “Hashimoto: answer tattoo survey or else.” *Japan Times*, (23 May 2012); Johnston 2012.

¹⁹⁰ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 21; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 18. See also Holloway 2011, p. 35.

¹⁹¹ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 22; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 19.

designs and then inks the dragon and *kirin* tattoo onto her body. We might suggest that in this way *Hebi ni piasu* showcases the reversal of the masochistic education process. Rather than allowing Lui to shape them into her perfect consort/partner/torturer, Ama and Shiba change and influence Lui. Unlike Tanizaki’s masochistic protagonists who create their ideal torturers, through her adoption of tattoo imagery that references both Ama and Shiba, Lui, while she maintains the upper hand, is shaped by her consorts/partners/torturers.

Throughout nineteenth century Japan, full body tattoos ‘depicting mythological heroes and animals framed by stylized wind or water motifs’ were worn by ‘dandy Edo ... labourers and firemen.’¹⁹² Following the rampant modernisation that took place during the Meiji period, tattoos were outlawed as backward. However, full body tattooing continued as an underground practice that steadily became re-associated with criminals.¹⁹³ The introduction to tattooing in *Japanese Tattooing Now* notes that ‘in recent history full body tattooing became the domain of the Yakuza organised crime families.’¹⁹⁴ Full body tattoos are ‘macho and project traditional, neo-conservative Japanese images and values. [...] Traditional tattoos and the ceremony surrounding them [served] as metaphors that represented the idealised, historical values associated with old feudal Japan.’¹⁹⁵ As Michael McCabe notes, ‘Edo Floating World culture was characterized by a penchant for a pleasurable life emphasizing beautiful women, gallant men, fashion and faddishness – impulses that continue to mould behaviour among urban Japanese youth today.’¹⁹⁶ It is this period in which Tanizaki’s “Shisei” is set and the opening pages of the novel form a detailed description of the time that is arguably applicable to fashionable shopping precincts in

¹⁹² McCabe 2005, p. 6.

¹⁹³ Japan was one of the last countries to outlaw tattoos or brands as criminal punishments. There are some schools of thought that suggest full bodies tattoos were an attempt to cover these brands with something aesthetically pleasing. Poysden and Bratt 2006, pp. 121-122.

¹⁹⁴ McCabe 2005, pp. 10-11.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

Japan today such as Harajuku, Shibuya or Shinjuku.¹⁹⁷ The lifestyle of the modern day *freeter*, perceived to be one of leisure, could be (questionably) constructed as a return to Edo indulgence. What could be more decadent in the gloom of the Lost Decade than to engage in acts of self destruction whilst watching the world collapse around you from the comfort of your own ‘small room’ boudoir?

For the majority of the novel, Lui is content to drift listlessly, going with the flow in a manner that foreshadows the raging water that she imagines filling her body at the end of the text. Water is a repeated motif throughout *Hebi ni piasu*. Water is linked not only to sex and the *mizu shobai* (lit. water trade) but also, through its *yin* associations to women, passivity and submission. It could be argued that masochism in this narrative – unlike that of Kōno’s more assertive texts – is *yin* in its apparent submissive nature. Furthermore the dragon that Lui has tattooed is a water elemental – Asiatic dragons generally reside in lakes and rivers and govern the rains.¹⁹⁸ It is interesting to note that Kanehara herself has a strong connection to water as she was born in 1983 which was a ‘water’ year in the 60 year Chinese zodiac.¹⁹⁹ In addition to its association with water, the *kirin* is a holy creature that exercises influence over living things.²⁰⁰ Shiba tells Lui that it is ‘the god of the animal kingdom.’²⁰¹

In Japanese tattooing tradition, certain tattoos have been seen as auspicious or protective. For instance fire-fighters have favoured dragon tattoos and other water elementals since the Edo

¹⁹⁷ ‘It was a leisurely age, an age when professional wits could make an excellent living by keeping rich or wellborn young gentlemen in cloudless good humour and seeing to it that the laughter of Court ladies and geisha was never stilled. [...] People did all they could to beautify themselves, some even having pigments injected into their precious skins. [...] Exhibitions were held from time to time; and participants, stripped to show off their filigreed bodies, would pat themselves proudly, boast of their own novel designs, and criticize each other’s merits.’ Tanizaki 1969, pp. 8 -9; Tanizaki 1963, pp. 160 -161.

¹⁹⁸ Poysden and Bratt 2006, p. 127; Gulik 1982, p 150.

¹⁹⁹ The 60 year Chinese zodiac is made up of 5 repetitions of 12 animal years – one for each element. 1983 was a water pig/wild boar year. This zodiac is still used throughout many parts of Asia. See Suzanne White.

²⁰⁰ “TATTOO/IREZUMI/ART.”

²⁰¹ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 34; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 32.

period.²⁰² Furthermore, since these tattoos are seen as intensely sensual and seductive, it is rumoured that ‘no woman ever refuses an *irezumi* (person tattooed with traditional Japanese tattoos).’²⁰³ The application of a tattoo through repeated penetration must be read as inherently sexual. The sex scenes in the film adaptation of *Hebi ni piasu* support this theory – as noted above, the act of tattooing is almost an act of foreplay for Shiba and Lui. This is also implied in Tanizaki’s short story. The violence and masochistic implications of a young girl repeatedly penetrated by ink using traditional long needles, her writhing bringing the hideous beast on her back to life, is one that has been embraced by film makers.²⁰⁴ It is the 1966 film adaptation of “Shisei,” *Irezumi*, which remains the archetypal image of the young girl and her spider tattoo.²⁰⁵ The opening sequence is devoted to the depiction of the tattoo/rape of the young girl at the hands of the tattooist and his needles.

The large spider motifs found on both the young girl in “Shisei” and the series of narrative about Oden are based on folkloric monsters known as *gorōgumo* (*gorō* means whore and *kumo* means spider and so literally ‘whore spider’).²⁰⁶ There are numerous references to *gorōgumo* in Japanese folklore²⁰⁷ – most of which include instances when men only just avoid being devoured by them. An English translation with the same connotations might be the black widow spider although

²⁰² Dragons are also frequently seen as guardians on the roofs of (wooden) Japanese castles. Poysden and Bratt 2006, p. 127.

²⁰³ The word *irezumi* can refer both to Japanese full body tattoos and those that wear them. Fellman 1986, p. 15.

²⁰⁴ Unsurprisingly it is a motif that is adored by pornographers, such as the four part *Shisei* series: Hisayasu Satō’s *Shisei* (Tattoo, 2006), Takahisa Zeze’s *Shisei: ochita gorōgumo* (Shisei: Fallen Whore-Spider 2007), Kei Horie’s *Shisei: seou onna* (Shisei: Burdened Woman, 2009), Yukiko Mishima’s *Shisei: nihohi tsuki no gotoku* (Shisei: Foul Moon Elements, 2009)

²⁰⁵ Indeed this image was recently updated in a kimono source book for young girls who want to wear traditional Japanese clothing with a modern twist. See Yoshida 2007.

²⁰⁶ *Gorōgumo* (*Nephila clavata*) are also known as golden spiders, the females of which grow to enormous sizes and are distinguishable by the golden stripes on the back of their otherwise black bodies.

²⁰⁷ There is a spider-weaver story that tells the origin of clouds (spider and cloud are both *kumo* in Japanese) which has resonance with hidden chamber myths such as the crane weaver as well as the classical story of Arachne the weaver who is turned into a spider when her skill surpasses that of the gods. See “The Spider Weaver,” pp. 54-59 and “The Fairy Crane,” pp. 36-39; Ovid 1983, pp. 129-33.

the actual species of spider is different. Indeed Mizuta Lippit makes this very reference in discussing Tanizaki’s masochistic protagonists:

[In] Tanizaki’s stories in which the fatal woman is the main theme, the heroes are involved in drawing out the diabolic nature of beautiful women, thus moulding them into ideal women, black widow spiders which devour males after sexual ecstasy.²⁰⁸

More recently, the figure of the *jorōgumo* has appeared in *manga* collective CLAMP’s *xXx Holic* series as a young woman with *gyaru* style blonde hair and a penchant for short camisole dresses similar to those that Lui is described as wearing in *Hebi ni piasu*.²⁰⁹

After enduring the tattooing process, the young woman in “Shisei” has become one of Tanizaki’s perfect, cold, aloof masochistic consort/partner/torturers. There is a marked difference between the shy girl at the beginning of that narrative and the dangerous beauty that emerges from the steaming waters of the bath she takes to set the colours of the tattoo:

[The tattooist] was amazed at the change that had come over the timid, yielding girl of yesterday [...] “All my old fears have been swept away – and you are my first victim!” [...] Just then her resplendently tattooed back caught a ray of sunlight and the spider was wreathed in flames.²¹⁰

Similarly, for Tanizaki, Oden presents as the ultimate heroine: beautiful, terrifying and cruel to a fault, closely mirroring the perfect woman in a masochistic relationship as described by Deleuze. In *Fūten ryōjin nikki* (A Diary of a Mad Old Man, trans. Howard Hibbett,) the diarist declares that ‘sometimes think I would be happier if a woman like Oden turned up to kill me.’²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Mizuta Lippit 1977, p. 230.

²⁰⁹ *Hebi ni piasu*,” p. 22; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 19; CLAMP.

²¹⁰ Tanizaki 1969, p. 17; Tanizaki 1963, p. 169.

²¹¹ Tanizaki 1977, p. 28.

Irezumi, the film version of “Shisei,” proposes that the girl’s cruelty and eventual murderous intent are inherently linked to her tattoo. Oden’s criminality, too, was said to have been a product of her sexuality.²¹² Under the layers of myth, poison woman narrative, kabuki, film and the like, the facts of Oden’s case remain: her leprosy ridden husband died of poisoning but the crime for which she was arrested was the murder of a business associate in a deal gone bad.²¹³ After a drawn out trial, she was eventually put to death, the last woman to be beheaded in Japan. On the basis of repeated post-mortem examinations of her sexual organs, which were deemed to be abnormally large, Oden was condemned as a sexual deviant driven to a life of crime by her unhealthy libido. These organs were preserved and were repeatedly examined as late as 1935, some 56 years after the initial autopsy in 1879.²¹⁴ As noted previously, her tattooed skin is also rumoured to be preserved in the so-called Tokyo tattoo museum in the ‘Specimens’ Room of the Medical Faculty of Tokyo University.²¹⁵

It seems slightly odd that, if the girl in “Shisei” and Oden were so heavily influenced by their spider tattoos, Lui, marked with two of the most powerful mythological beings, seems without direction in her relationships. However, Lui, like any true masochist, maintains some degree of control at all times. She is not just a victim of Shiba’s repeatedly violent sexual acts. As we have already seen, Lui is able to prevent Shiba from gaining erection by refusing to participate fully in his scenarios – without her tears he is unable to perform sexually. Lui and Shiba’s relationship, between masochist and sadist, is based on a compromise without the protection of the masochistic contract. It was only when Lui was willing to play along with Shiba’s fantasies, instead of demanding the re-enactment of her own, that they are able to have sex. In this way, the masochist, Lui, is still in control of sexual situations. For the majority of *Hebi ni piasu* Lui has

²¹² Marran 2007, p. xiii. Oden’s regular periods, which link the character to Kōno’s protagonists introduced in Chapter 1, were also said to have contributed to Oden’s criminality.

²¹³ Ibid., pp. 21-24.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Kan 2010.

no interest in what happens in her relationships or to her body. She simply cannot be bothered. It is only when Ama disappears, for example that Lui realises how much he meant to her. Towards the end of the novel she even stops eating and stretching her tongue; without Ama, the goal of achieving a split tongue seems pointless.²¹⁶

The moment Lui sees the design that Shiba has drawn for her incorporating Ama’s dragon and Shiba’s *kirin* she declares them to be ‘a pair of exquisite companions inseparable from each other and from my life.’²¹⁷ However, as we have noted, Lui asks for the creatures to be tattooed without their eyes. Referring to the tale of *garyōtensei* in which the white dragon that is being painted in a temple comes to life and flies to heaven when its eyes are completed,²¹⁸ she explains that she does not want them to leave her. Without their eyes, the beasts are unable to come alive. Could it be that without their eyes, the dragon and the *kirin* inflict a kind of lethargy and hopelessness on Lui? This is something that Lui is obviously aware of. At the end of the novel she decides to give eyes to her *kirin* and dragon: ‘I didn’t know exactly why I’d decided to get a tattoo in the first place any more, but I knew that this one had meaning for me. I wasn’t just giving life to my dragon and my Kirin – I was giving it to myself.’²¹⁹ *Hebi ni piasu* ends with Lui standing wreathed in sunshine. However, unlike the young girl in “Shisei” wreathed in flame, Lui is filled by flowing water. Her declaration that her body is filled with a river indicates that her dragon, a water spirit, has finally been awoken. The duality of these two elements can be read as indicative of the different nature of the masochists and their consort. The girl in “Shisei” serves as the consort/partner/torturer for the tattooist while Lui, is a masochist in her own right. Fire represents destructive forces that have an immediate and devastating effect on their

²¹⁶ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 106; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 109.

²¹⁷ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 59; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 59.

²¹⁸ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 67; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 68.

²¹⁹ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 112; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 116.

surroundings.²²⁰ In contrast, water, although it too can destroy and devastate, is fluid and receptive.²²¹

Conclusion

In Chapter Two we saw that Kōno’s masochistic women were in control of their sex lives, their torturers and their masochistic pleasure. In Chapter 3, Yamada’s characters’ operated conversely as torturer in the highly artificial masochistic world of the S/M club. However, as they derived no sexual pleasure from the arrangement, that scenario was less than perfect. In this chapter we have seen how the masochistic relationship has deteriorated further to the least preferable contract between a masochist and a sadist as described by Deleuze. In an interview in *Seishin to dokusha* (Writers and Readers) entitled “S to M no aida” (In Between ‘S’ and ‘M’), Kanehara talks of a neutral space that exists between sadism and masochism.²²² It is possible that this space is where the events in *Hebi ni piasu* occur. We may even go as far as to say that the small space of the soundproof room, scenario room and the tattoo parlour have spread out to encompass Tokyo in a giant neutral zone.

It is within this space that Kanehara’s protagonists put their bodies through numerous modifications including piercings, tattoos and cutting. Kawanishi highlights the fact that ‘there is no right answer’ as to why instances of body modification, self-mutilation and masochistic acts are ‘increasing among young people.’²²³

However, in many cases, it is based on an inner fragility and a sense of anxiety about human relationships. If their behaviour is a form of communication with the outside

²²⁰ Gulik 1982, p 151.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 154.

²²² Kanehara and Hanamura 2004, pp. 6 – 11.

²²³ Kawanishi 2009, pp. 126-127.

world, it is a reflection of their inability to express themselves in other ways, such as articulating verbally or using creative methods as an emotional outlet.²²⁴

In Kanehara’s protagonists, the inability to express themselves by more conventional means is the precarious foundation in which their masochistic tendencies are located.

The first section of this chapter introduced Kanehara’s *Hebi ni piasu* in the context of Honda’s small *shōjo* space. In the subsequent sections Kanehara and her characters were positioned as *freeters* who are still living in the shadow of the bursting of the Bubble in the early 1990s. The youth and apparent ‘freedom’ of not only Kanehara and the characters that she constructs, but also of the young women writers who are contemporaneous with her, has had a dramatic impact on the way that the work of these authors was, and continues to be, received by critics. The critical reception of Kanehara’s works was heavily influenced by her, at the time, unconventional *gyaru* fashion style.

Throughout this chapter the classic masochism explored in the work of Kōno and Yamada has been largely absent. We will see that this too is the case in ladies’ comics where the ideal of the contract is altered to encompass a relationship between, not the protagonist and her lover, but the *manga* author and her audience.

²²⁴ Ibid.

Chapter 5: Ladies' Comics – *Phantasy* for Everyday Women: Masochism in the Visual Realm

Shōjo Manga – Comics for Young Ladies; The Wonderful World of Ladies' Comics; Watanabe Yayoi: 'Hey We Lust Too!'; Masochistic *Phantasy*/Rape Fantasy

The image of the seemingly submissive masochistic woman at the mercy of a seemingly dominant male sexual partner is a motif that is repeated in the work of Kōno Taeko and Kanehara Hitomi. Furthermore, while not as prominent in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, it is an image that is found in Yamada Eimi's other works. However, as we have seen, these labels of 'dominant' and 'submissive' are misleading. As Linda Williams notes:

These [...] genres which may seem so violent and inimical to women cannot be dismissed as evidence of a monolithic and unchanging misogyny, as either pure sadism for male viewers or masochism for females. [...] To dismiss them as bad excess whether of explicit sex, violence, or emotion, or as bad perversions, whether of masochism or sadism, is not to address their function as cultural problem solving. Genres thrive, after all, on the persistence of the problems they address; but genres thrive also on in their ability to recast the nature of these problems.¹

In Kōno's short stories examined in Chapter 2, the masochistic woman is acting out a fantasy in which she surrenders control in return for sexual pleasure on her own terms. The protagonists of "Ari takaru" and "Yōjigari" rely on the contract that exists between each masochist and their chosen consort/partner/torturer to govern their interactions with their lovers. The archetypal 'Yamada Girl' is renowned for revelling in the physical power that her (frequently African American or non-Japanese) lover has over her body and the social power that she herself derives from this. In Yamada's *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* Chika and Shinobu carry out the role of the masochistic torturer as part of their employment at a Tokyo S/M club. However outside of work

¹ Williams 1991, p. 12.

these two women are fully fledged 'Yamada Girls' who choose to date men of African American or non-Japanese heritage. Kanehara's young women protagonists can only feel alive when they are experiencing pain. We have seen that in, for example, *Hebi ni piasu*, Kanehara's protagonist is so desperate to feel something that she turns to a sadist when she is unable to find a suitable masochistic consort/partner/torturer. In the absence of a suitable partner, and perhaps too indifferent or jaded to educate a consort of their own, Kanehara's protagonists turn their need for control onto their own bodies.

These images of woman in sexual situations that are as agonising as they are pleasurable resonate with those found in many *manga*, especially the genre known as ladies' comics, a sub-genre of which are explicitly erotic or pornographic in nature. This chapter will give a brief overview of the history of ladies' comics including the genre of comics that preceded them, *shōjo manga* (lit. girls' comics), before investigating the masochistic and violent imagery found in both genres. In spite of popular assumption, *shōjo manga* are not necessarily all girlish frills and frippery. Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase points out that while 'mainstream *shōjo manga* are filled with flowers, ribbons and cute imagery' other genres, such as horror *shōjo manga*, are 'permeated with blood, death and ghosts.'² I will argue that ladies' comics have emerged from *shōjo manga* of this latter variety. They further, as Kinko Ito points out, portray their heroines as active sexual subjects.³ Particular attention will be paid to the 'Queen of Ladies' Comics,' *mangaka* Watanabe Yayoi,⁴ and the heterosexual S/M and rape fantasy comics for which she is renowned.⁵ A close reading will be

² Dollase 2010, p. 59; See also Dollase 2012, p. 60.

³ Ito 2011c

⁴ Kitahara 2005, p. 71; Jones 2005. It should be noted that Kinko Ito also refers to ladies' comic *mangaka* Ide Chikae as the 'Queen of Ladies' Comics.' Ide's career as a *mangaka* is renowned for its longevity and continued popularity. However, whereas Watanabe's ladies' comics are predominately erotic or pornographic in nature, Ito takes pains to point out that Ide's are not. See Ito 2011a, pp. 3-17.

⁵ As per the use of 'S/M' in Chapter 3 to denote the club where Chika and Shinobu work, 'S/M' will be used throughout this chapter to denote the heavily masochistic ladies' comics written by Watanabe and her contemporaries. I maintain that terms such as 'somasochism' are inherently flawed in the context of Deleuze's theories of classic contractual masochism. While a masochist and a sadist might occasionally partner

given of two of Watanabe's ladies' comics published in the 2009 and 2010 August editions of ladies' comic magazine *Komikku amour*: “Ze’chō bakutōsō” (Strife Explosion, 2009) and “Hitotsuma renjō” (The Passion of a Married Woman, 2010).

Most scholars writing on ladies' comics with explicit sexual content including Ito Kinko, Fujimoto Yukari, Gretchen Jones, Deborah Shamoon, Ogi Fusami and Sakamoto Mimei seem to use the term ‘pornography’ (*poruno*). However, Gretchen Jones notes that the Japanese to whom she spoke who were involved with the production of ladies' comics objected to the term and insist on ‘erotica’ instead.⁶ Defining exactly what separates pornography from erotica is not an easy task. Deleuze suggests that ‘what is known as pornographic literature is a literature reduced to a few imperatives (do this, do that) followed by obscene descriptions.’⁷ Although ladies' comics often include a greater or lesser element of this, they also transcend these boundaries, I will argue, by providing readers with access to sexual experiences otherwise denied them. In the 1970s and 1980s pornography divided the feminist movement into ‘two distinct and passionately oppositional factions.’⁸ Andrea Dworkin, a leader in the anti-porn feminist movement of the 1970s, wrote that ‘erotica is simply high-class pornography,’⁹ while Ellen Willis, a front-runner of sex-positive feminism, suggests that ‘erotica’ is overly vague and euphemistic. She argues that: ‘in practice, attempts to sort out good erotica from bad porn inevitably come down to “What turns me on is erotica; what turns you on is pornographic.”’¹⁰ There is a notion that porn is visual and ‘geared towards men’ and its sole purpose is to ‘arouse and stimulate’ while erotica ‘appeals more to women.’¹¹ Compounding this notion is the perception that erotica is produced by women. Given this, it seems that ladies' comics, written and produced by and for women, would fall

one another as per Kanehara's *Hebi ni piasu*, the occurrence of masochism and sadism in the same person is, for the purpose of this thesis, untenable.

⁶ Jones 2002, p. 26 note 4.

⁷ Deleuze 1991, p. 17.

⁸ Levy 2005, p 6

⁹ Dworkin 1979a, p 10.

¹⁰ Willis 1981, p 222.

¹¹ Mills.

under the category of erotica. On the other hand, as pornography is seen as a visual medium, it follows that ladies' comics could also be classed as pornography. I have decided to err on the side of caution and use both terms without judgement.

Watanabe's work was selected as the focus of this chapter predominately because of her recognisable art style. While each cell is filled with complicated illustrations of heaving bodies, gaping mouths, dripping body fluids, emotive backgrounds and crudely written sound effects, her storylines are relatively easy to follow.¹² Furthermore, although they may be depicted in the midst of the messy act of sex, Watanabe's characters are realistically and aesthetically proportioned. We will see that even a rape scene is beautiful in the world of ladies' comics.

In this chapter we will see that the masochistic contract has shifted once again. In Chapter 2 Kōno's short stories exemplify Deleuze's theories of classic contractual masochism between a masochist and their chosen consort/partner/torturer. In Chapter 3, the masochistic contract was examined from the side of the consort/partner/torture in the form of dominatrices working at an S/M club. At first glance, Kanehara's narratives discard the contract entirely. We have seen in *Hebi ni piasu* the dysfunctional partnership that ensues when a masochist chooses to interact with a sadist without the safety of a contract. The novel shows the masochistic relationship as dysfunctional without the ideal of the contract. In this chapter we will see that, once again, the masochistic contract is conspicuous in its apparent absence.

Rather than showcasing a classic contractual masochism, ladies' comics skew the notion of the contract. The masochistic contract in the context of rape fantasy or S/M themed ladies' comics lies, not between the protagonist and her lover, but between the *mangaka* and her readers. Ladies'

¹² The complicated arrangement of cells in ladies' comics and *manga* is an issue that will be returned to later in this chapter.

comics are produced as items of erotica and/or pornography with the promise to provide readers with fantasies that arouse. Ito notes that:

Redikomi provides the readers with dreams, romances and fantasies that cannot be easily materialised in real life, and by experiencing them vicariously the reader may be able to get rid of the monotony of everyday life, as well as stress in her personal and work situations.¹³

There is an understanding that the *mangaka* will allow the ladies' comic reader to forget her surrounds and be herself. In contrast to the unredeemed, some might argue unredeemable, degradation that occurs in rape narratives published in *ero manga* magazines aimed at men, there is a possibility of hope in ladies' comics. This hope has its origins as part of the contractual agreement between ladies' comic *mangaka* and ladies' comic readers. In ladies' comics, 'even the rapist can be redeemed and become the lover.'¹⁴

Ladies' comics (*redisu komikku* or *redikomi*) are a genre of erotic *manga* which grew out of *shōjo manga* in the early 1980s. As the name suggests, ladies' comics are (on the whole) written by women, for women. Unusually in *manga* which, as Ito Kinko points out, 'has always revolved around [...] male artists, editors and publishers,'¹⁵ ladies' comics are often, but not always, produced under the guidance of women editors.¹⁶ *Shōjo manga* became widespread during the 1950s, building on the tradition of pre-war *shōjo* magazines. This new genre of *manga* combined the *jojō-ga* (lit. lyrical painting or illustration) of the early twentieth century with the 'story *manga*' of authors such as Tezuka Osamu, sometimes referred to as the 'God of *manga*.' Renowned *jojō-ga* artists include Takehisa Yumeji (1884-1934), Takabatake Kashō 1888-1966), Fukiya Kōji

¹³ Ito 2002, p. 81.

¹⁴ I am indebted to Barbara Hartley for pointing this out to me in such an elegant way. We will see that this is the central theme of Watanabe's "Hitotsuma renjō."

¹⁵ Ito 2005, pp. 456-475.

¹⁶ Jones 2005, p. 99.

(1989-1979) and Nakahara Jun'ichi (1913-1983).¹⁷ The work of these artists often featured in girls' magazines such as *Shōjo no tomo* (Girls' Friend, 1908) and *Shōjo gabō* (Girls' Periodical, 1912).¹⁸ Tezuka's adoption of *shōnen manga* (lit. boy's comics) style storylines for young girls combined with the saucer-eyed, willow-waisted, dreamy girls of *jojo-ga* in his 1953 *Ribon no kishi* (Princess Knight), paved the way for the stardust and flower-petal strewn genre of *shōjo manga* which came of age in the 1970s.¹⁹

As we have already seen in Chapter 3, Kawasaki Kenko, writing on the work of Yoshimoto Banana, points out that 'simplistic connections between girls' comics and the sorts of adjectives used by Banana elide the difference between the images featured in girls comics and those that appear in Banana's world.'²⁰ For Kawasaki, the connections between *shōjo manga* and the work of Yoshimoto are deeper than a shared language of adjectives and hyperbole. This is also the case in the work of Kōno, Yamada and Kanehara. There is a dialogue of stylistic imagery and conventions (such as Yoshimoto's use of narrative white space, Kōno's small details, Yamada's dialogue and Kanehara's character descriptions) that allow the work of these authors to converse with genres such as *shōjo manga* and ladies' comics.

The authors whose work was examined in the preceding chapters all utilise graphic descriptions of their protagonists' actions and surrounds, any of which would translate well into *manga* and other visual media representation. As noted in Chapter 2, Kōno's work is renowned for the small, incongruous details of everyday life. These descriptions, which include elements such as a curtain that has not been completely drawn or a bead that has rolled under furniture, complement her use of masochistic scenarios, thus making the narrative feel all the more real. In Chapter 3 reference was made to the themes that Yamada's novels and ladies' comics share. We saw that

¹⁷ Takahashi 2008, p. 118.

¹⁸ For more on pre war *shōjo* magazines and culture see Dollase 2010d, pp. 80-91.

¹⁹ Takahashi 2008, pp. 117-127.

²⁰ Kawasaki 2010, p. 56.

Yamada originally worked as a *mangaka* before she turned to literature after finding the range of expression available in comics too restrictive. Yamada's work remains rich in detail, especially her descriptions of clothing, sex scenes and emotions, descriptions that mirror the images found in *shōjo manga* and ladies' comics.²¹ Indeed, two of Yamada's novels have been made into films: *Beddo taimu aizū* (1987, directed by Kumashiro Tatsumi) and *Boku wa benkyō ga dekinai* (1996, directed by Yamamoto Yasuhiko). Likewise, we have already seen that Kanehara's *Hebi ni piasu* has been adapted into both a *manga* comic and a film. The fact that all three versions of Kanehara's *Hebi ni piasu* – novel, *manga* and film – are almost identical with only minor variations between each narrative speaks to the graphic nature of the author's prose.

As the first generation of *shōjo manga* readers and writers grew from adolescence into adulthood, the range of *manga* grew to accommodate the newly developed tastes of adult readers, including concerns with issues such as marriage, family and sex.²² Kinko Ito notes that ladies' comics are grounded in their readers' everyday reality: 'readers are young women and mature adults. [...] The majority of ladies' comics deal with everyday social, emotional, and psychological issues that adult women encounter at home, at work or in the [wider] community.'²³ Prior to the emergence of ladies' comics as a genre, many writers of *shōjo manga* retired in their late twenties or early thirties.²⁴ This was most likely due to a feeling that they were too old to draw comic narratives for young girls, but it could also have been due to marriage and motherhood, which, as we have seen, was the expected norm for Japanese women during the 1970s. With the advent of the new genre, *mangaka* were able to continue working for more years by creating narratives that were appropriate for adult women.

²¹ For more on Yamada and *manga* see Matsuda 1999.

²² Jones 2005, p. 98.

²³ Ito 2001, pp. 11-12.

²⁴ Ito 2005, pp. 456-475.

In 1980 the first ladies' comic, *BE LOVE*, was released by Kōdansha and by the end of the decade there were more than fifty recognised ladies' comic titles in circulation.²⁵ In Chapter 3, the period of the 1980s was discussed in terms of excesses of the 'Bubble *jidai*.' Whereas the 1970s had seen Japan return triumphantly to the world stage, the 1980s was the period in which the country basked in its position as a world economic powerhouse. It was during the 1980s that the sexual freedoms won in the student movements of a decade earlier were finally given expression for Japanese women in the *manga* that they read.²⁶ Ogi Fusami claims that, according to critics such as Ishida Saeko, one of the reasons for the vast popularity of ladies' comics in the 1980s was 'the introduction of the theme of sexuality.'²⁷

The content of ladies' comics range in ratings from the equivalent of G through to R18+/NC17+/X18+ and cover a wide range of fantasies and subgenres.²⁸ These subgenres include, but are not limited to, romance, homo-erotica such as *shōnen ai* or 'boys' love' (BL),²⁹ gothic horror, erotica and 'S/M' or masochistic themed comics. Ito's 2000 study is based on an analysis of one hundred and eighty four ladies' comics. She points out that recurring themes in this material include: 'love, mate selection, marriage and family,' in addition to other themes 'that women encounter in their everyday life whether they are single career women or housewives.'³⁰ In this way, ladies' comics are similar to Mills and Boons or Harlequin Romances, as well as 'Chick Lit' narratives such as Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*.³¹ Each volume of ladies' comics contains several self contained narratives (known as *yomikiri* stories) by different authors. Ito

²⁵ Ogi 2003, pp. 780-803.

²⁶ Kurata 2012, p. 22.

²⁷ Ogi 2003, p. 784; See also Ishida 1992, pp. 54-89.

²⁸ Ito 2002b, p. 70.

²⁹ '[BL is an anime and *manga*] subgenre that depicts passionate love between male companions, usually of a sexual nature. BL is a term that came into usage during the latter half of the 1990s, indicating, for the most part, original stories written/drawn by professional writers and found in both *shōjo manga* and *shōjo shōsetsu* issued by established publishing houses.' Takeuchi 2010, p. 91.

³⁰ Ito 2002, p. 70.

³¹ Fujimoto 1998b, p. 38; Jones 2002b, p. 16; Fielding 1997. 'Chick-lit novels detail the trials and tribulations of young women searching for mates and/or struggling in jobs.' Modleski 2008, p. xxi.

notes that ladies' comic volumes are printed on cheap paper, and are designed to be read and then thrown away: '*Redikomi* are disposable commodities and not collectors' items.'³² In any given volume of ladies' comics many, if not all, of the genres and sub-genres listed above are included.

There are essentially two main types of ladies' comics: those that have 'little to no' sexual content³³ and those that can be considered pornographic. About 70-80 percent of the ladies' comics in production are released by 'more established major publishing houses' and fall into the first type.³⁴ Comics in magazines produced by these publishers, such as *YOU* from Shūeisha, *BE LOVE* from Kōdansha and *Jour* from Futabasha, tend to focus on motherhood, child-raising and family life.³⁵ The remaining ladies' comics are those released by smaller firms such as the Sun Publishing Group which focus on producing comics that feature depictions of confronting sexual encounters including 'gang rape, various forms of sexual degradation and humiliation, and [...] torture.'³⁶ Like the graphic and often violent masochistic scenarios in the work of Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and their contemporaries, ladies' comics transgress a range of 'boundaries' and this is what makes them 'at once fascinating and abhorrent to so many.'³⁷

Throughout this chapter reference will be made repeatedly to the depiction of rape and rape fantasies in ladies' comics. This seemingly casual depiction of rape scenarios can be quite confronting – even the act of typing the word 'rape' is one that I have had to come to terms with in order to complete this document. Ito points out that although rape fantasies are depicted in ladies' comics as a 'sexual act that can be satisfactory for women,' rape is 'definitely unethical, a

³² Ito 2002, p. 70.

³³ Jones 2002, p. 7; Ito 2005, pp. 456-475.

³⁴ Jones 2002, p. 7; Ito 2005, pp. 456-475.

³⁵ Jones 2002, p. 7; Ito 2005, pp. 456-475.

³⁶ Jones 2002, p. 3.

³⁷ Jones 2005, p. 97.

violation of basic human rights.³⁸ Actualised rape is a violent and disturbing crime. However, it must be remembered that the rape fantasies presented in ladies' comics are just that, fantasies printed on cheap paper in a volume of pornographic *manga* aimed at select group of women readers. I do not approach rape or rape fantasy lightly. However, as pointed out repeatedly in the preceding chapters, actualised violence and abuse has no part in the definition of masochism used throughout this thesis.

For the purpose of this chapter, I am interested only in the sexually explicit, predominately heterosexual S/M ladies' comics such as those drawn by Watanabe Yayoi and/or published in monthly anthologies such as *Komikku amour*, a leading ladies' comic magazine produced by the Sun publishing group. S/M comics are often indicated by the use of bondage items and adult toys as well as the depiction of stylised and/or actual rape scenes. Ito lists the following items as being regularly used in S/M comics: 'whips, eye-masks, candles, chains, bondage, suppositories, liquids to induce defecation et cetera.'³⁹ These items are often teamed with protagonists wearing 'sexy underwear and negligees' or 'kinky leather straps and boots,' which remind us of the Queen's 'uniforms' in Yamada's *Hiçamaçuite asbi wo o-name*, to complete the S/M theme.⁴⁰ These toys and costume items are signifiers that reinforce the notion of the contract between *mangaka* and reader: if you see a picture of a woman wearing 'kinky' boots you are assured of an S/M narrative.

Jones and Ito both point out that violent, sexually explicit ladies' comics reached something of a peak in the early 1990s, but the genre is still popular and remains in production to this day.⁴¹ In the late 1980s, in a move that can be seen as a precursor to the 2010 Tokyo ordinances regarding the portrayal of 'non-existent minors' and 'characters that people can assume to be underage' in

³⁸ Ito 2002, p. 78.

³⁹ Ito 2011, p. 161.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Jones 2002, p. 7; Ito 2005, pp. 456-475.

sexual situations in *manga* and *anime*,⁴² 'Japanese housewife, PTA, feminist and citizen groups' mobilised and protested the 'highly sexual nature' of print and visual media available at the time.⁴³ While these protests were largely aimed at the explicit representation of 'rapes of underage girls' depicted in 'boys' and men's comics,' large publishing houses that produced ladies' comics agreed to self-censor their products.⁴⁴ On the other hand, smaller publishing houses, such as Sun, had little to lose by continuing to release sexually explicit material and, in actual fact, found themselves enjoying something of a 'niche' market.⁴⁵

Gretchen Jones points out that 'Japan's highly visible sex business' is well known and that, in Japan as in 'nearly all parts of the world,' the 'creation and consumption of pornography, or any sexually explicit material, have been primarily associated with men.'⁴⁶ Indeed, given the visual conventions of ladies' comics - 'highly explicit representations of sexual acts' with an emphasis on the 'constant display' of women's bodies almost to the 'exclusion of the male body'⁴⁷ – it is easy to understand why early English language criticism dismissed ladies' comics as nothing more than an offshoot of *ero manga* (lit. erotic *manga*), traditionally the domain of male readers. Anne Allison writes in her 1996 book *Permitted and Prohibited Desires: Mothers, Comics and Censorship in Japan* that the narratives and images in ladies comics are 'not significantly different to those in *ero manga*.'⁴⁸ However, as Susan Napier is credited as saying in Roland Kelts' *Japanamerica*, in Japan visual pornography is not 'read just by men by any means.'⁴⁹

Napier's comment reminds us that some scholars seem to support the position that the existence of pornography for women is somehow a marker of gender equality. In 1981, the year after the

⁴² Fukuda 2010; Kyodo News, "'Manga' Child Sex Clampdown Fails."

⁴³ Jones 2002b, p. 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Shamooin 2004, p. 83.

⁴⁸ Allison 2000, p. 185 n. 12.

⁴⁹ Kelts 2006, p. 134. Kelts does not give a citation for Napier's comment.

publication of the first ladies' comics in Japan, some women scholars in the west were asking 'why is there no pornography for women? [...] If women are going to have equality with men, why not have pornography for women?'⁵⁰ A decade later, in the 1996 publication, *Dreamland Japan*, Frederick Schodt noted that 'Japanese females may have a long way to go before they achieve equality with males in the workplace, but in the erotic *manga* they read [...] they are rapidly approaching parity.'⁵¹ While Schodt's comments make it clear that access to erotica or pornographic content by women in no way confirms access to any sort of social power, matters of gender equality have interestingly been a concern of masochism since, if not before, the publication of Sacher-Masoch's influential text. At the end of *Venus in Furs* Severin proposes:

Woman, as Nature created her and as man up to now has found her attractive, is man's enemy; she can be his slave or his mistress but never his companion. This she can only be when she has the same rights as he and is his equal in education and work.⁵²

The aged protagonist offers this statement as a sort of moral conclusion to his masochistic tale of adventure with his consort/torturer/partner, Wanda.

Contrary to the 'pornography is the theory, rape is the practice' slogans of anti-pornography feminists such as Dworkin and Catherine Mackinnon,⁵³ the presence, or absence, of women's erotic or pornographic material is not necessarily a marker of either equality or inequality between the sexes. Neither, for that matter, is the consumption of pornography or erotica necessarily a 'feminist' act of 'empowerment' as seems to be increasingly believed by young women caught in the sway of the culture of 'raunch' that emerged 1990s/early 2000s – women

⁵⁰ Faust 1981, p. 1. In the same volume Faust claims that 'cultures with a rich tradition of erotica do not need pornography as we know it in the west. Hong Kong, India and Japan have manufactured pornography for the tourist market and for export.' Ibid., p. 18.

⁵¹ Schodt 1996, p. 127.

⁵² Sacher-Masoch 1991, p. 271

⁵³ Levy 2005, pp. 61-65; Shamooin 2004, p. 80.

whom Ariel Levy terms 'female chauvinist pigs'.⁵⁴ While feeling distinctly cynical of the capacity of 'raunch' to provide social justice for women, I will leave the details of this difficult issue for the consideration of other scholars and return my focus instead to the ways in which the masochistic imagery introduced and examined previously is used in ladies' comics.

In spite of Allison's claims that ladies' comics are not too dissimilar to pornographic and sexually explicit comics aimed at male readers, these *manga* are unmistakably marketed towards women. This can be seen by the inclusion of advertisements similar to those that can be found in any Japanese women's magazine such as those for diet pills, hair-removal products and breast-enlargement services.⁵⁵ The August 2009 edition of *Komikku amour*, for example, has over 9 pages devoted to these sorts of advertisements with the addition of advertisements for adult toys and other sex aids.⁵⁶ Mizuno Masafumi, editor of *Komikku Amour* in 1996, states that eroticism in ladies' comics, in contrast to products aimed at male readers, must not 'be too direct'.⁵⁷ Rather than launching straight into depicting various sexual encounters, ladies' comics must 'depict some psychological interaction, to show the relationship between characters'.⁵⁸ Ito insists that, even in ladies' comics of the 'pornographic genre,' there are 'definite story lines and a plot' which follow the protagonist's sexual, emotional and psychological experiences and development before arriving at 'some kind of resolution'.⁵⁹ Ito refers to an interview with S/M ladies' comic *mangaka* Shiomi Asako in which:

Shiomi said that her comics always have narrative with plots, storylines, [with an] intricate web of human emotions, feelings, and interactions between a woman and a

⁵⁴ For more on female chauvinist pigs and raunch culture see Levy 2005.

⁵⁵ Jones 2002, p. 12; Schodt 1996, p. 126. See also, for example, *Komikku amour* (August, 2009) pp 2-6.

⁵⁶ *Komikku amour* (August, 2009) pp 2-6.

⁵⁷ Schodt 1996, p. 124.

⁵⁸ Ibid. The inclusion of a narrative story – no matter how flimsy – separates ladies' comics from other erotic and pornographic *manga* aimed at a women audience such as *yaoi dōjinshi* (hard core homosexual fan produced parody comics) in which male characters are put 'into bed together on the slenderest of pretexts.' It could be argued that because most *dōjinshi* are based on pre-existing *manga* or *anime* the readers are already familiar enough with the characters that they do not any background story to set the scene. McLelland 2001.

⁵⁹ Ito 2011b, pp. 178-179.

man, and thus they are different from pornography. She portrays the carnal pleasure of a heroine at the very moment when she realises that she is a sexual subject.⁶⁰

Komikku amour editor Mizuno emphasises the importance of plot and narrative when he states that ladies' comics '[do not] work' unless they are drawn by women writers and artists.⁶¹

Furthermore there are hints in the very artwork of the *manga* themselves as to the target audience. Ladies' comics borrow heavily from the stylistic traditions of *shōjo manga* and other commercial artwork aimed specifically at women consumers. Before looking at ladies' comics in depth it is necessary to have an understanding of the *shōjo manga* tradition from which the ladies' comic genre emerged in the early 1980s.

***Shōjo Manga* – Comics for Young Ladies**

Shōjo manga or girls' comics are distinguished from *manga* aimed at boys or young men by several key, easily recognisable characteristics. These characteristics were set in place during the 'Golden Age' of girls comics which occurred during the 1970s.⁶² As we will see, many of these key characteristics have been altered and adopted in ladies' comics. As mentioned previously, in the 1950s, Tezuka's ground breaking 'story *manga*' opened the way for girls comics with a strong plot and narrative content.⁶³ As *shōjo manga* further developed throughout the 1960s and 1970s artists began to explore stories that dealt first with issues related to the home and (step)mothers – the traditional province of *otogibanashi* fairy tales.⁶⁴ *Shōjo manga* narratives were further enriched as *mangaka* turned their hand to creating narratives regarding everything from fairy-tale-like

⁶⁰ Ito 2011c.

⁶¹ Quoted in Schodt 1996, p. 124.

⁶² See Honda 2010, pp. 25-28.

⁶³ See Shimizu 1991.

⁶⁴ One of the most famous tales of a wicked 'step-mother' in Japanese tradition can be found in the form of *Ochikubo monogatari* (The Tale of the Lady Ochikubo) which was written during the Heian period prior to 1001. See Wilfrid Whitehouse and Eizo Yanagisawa trans. 1985.

romance to science-fiction space-operas and homoeroticism.⁶⁵ In many ways, the extension to the excess of ladies' comics was a natural progression from the often explicit imagery of more extreme *shōjo manga*.

Whereas *shōnen* or *seinen manga* (boy's or youth's comics, not to be confused with *shōnen ai manga* – boy's love comics) and *yon koma manga* (four panel comic strips) are often drawn in panels that follow a numeric order, ladies' comics and *shōjo manga* generally utilise a more abstract page layout.⁶⁶ *Mangaka* Yoshino Sakumi comments that:

men think in a precise “1 comes before 2, 2 comes before 3” sort of way ... When I first went to *seinen* [young men's] magazines, they told me that boys can only read according to a numbered choreography. So I tried to draw the frames as separate squares as much as possible. In *shōjo manga* the distribution of frames is peculiar in that whole pages often don't have any partitions. But women readers are able to grasp the whole of an image at once [...] [they] tend to understand which panel comes next without any explanation.⁶⁷

The page layouts are composed of a mix of free-floating prose mixed with speech or thought bubbles, full body illustrations of various characters, multi-layered facial close-ups and rays of light, abstract flowers or swirls.⁶⁸ These layers combine to build a complete *shōjo* space filled with the ‘colours, fragrances and sounds that resonate’ with ‘the aesthetics of the girl.’⁶⁹ Ladies' comics, too, utilise these techniques to create a defined space.

Throughout the preceding chapters reference has been made repeatedly to the small space in which masochistic acts take place. In the work of Kōno it is visible as the ‘soundproof room,’ in

⁶⁵ Takeuchi 2010, pp. 82-85.

⁶⁶ Schodt 1984, p. 89.

⁶⁷ “An Interview with Sakumi Yoshino,” p. 126.

⁶⁸ Schodt 1984, pp. 89-91.

⁶⁹ Honda 2010, p. 27. It is useful to note the link between sound and masochistic arousal raised in Chapter 1.

Yamada's *Hizamazuite ashi no o-name* it is the 'S/M club scenario room,' while in Kanehara's *Hebi ni piasu* it is the backroom of the Tokyo tattoo parlour. In the same way that these small rooms exist within clearly marked boundaries, the distinctive distribution of the *shōjo manga* page forms the confines of the *shōjo* space. Takahashi Mizuki calls this practice 'spatialisation' based on the work of 'canonical' *manga* writer Ishinomori Shōtarō (1938-1998).⁷⁰ By utilising this kind of collage-like 'spatialisation,' *shōjo manga* panels no longer show simply the passage of time. Instead, the decorative elements encourage the reader to linger on the page so that rather than rushing through the *manga* narrative s/he is permitted to completely immerse her/himself in the character's feelings, dreams, hopes and desires.⁷¹ These elements are reflected in everything from the clothing that characters wear to their physical design (facial features, height, build et cetera). The same holds true in ladies' comics. In Watanabe's "Hitotsuma renjō," the protagonist is marked as a housewife at the start of the narrative by her clothes (a tee-shirt under a floral cotton dress) and hairstyle. The story ends with a full page image of the now pregnant protagonist, naked against a background of roses and glittering stars. She cradles her belly protectively and declares her love for the father of her unborn child.⁷² In the course of the narrative, she goes from fully clothed, unfulfilled housewife to joyously naked expectant mother.

Shōjo manga, and by extension ladies' comics, build on the characteristics that were established in pre-war *jojō-ga* girl illustrations that were popular in *shōjo* magazines such as *Shōjo no tomo*, *Sorei-yu* (Soleil) and *Himawari* (Sunflower).⁷³ Like the dreamy *jojō-ga* girls, both *shōjo manga* and ladies' comic characters are easily recognised by their long, slender limbs, delicate features, small noses and lips, thin eyebrows and enormous eyes fringed with long eyelashes. Central to the *shōjo manga*

⁷⁰ Ishinomori is best known for his works such as *Saibōgu 009* (Cyborg 009, 1964-1981) and *Kamen raider* (Kamen Rider, 1971). Takahashi 2008, p. 126; Takeuchi 2010 p. 82.

⁷¹ Takahashi 2008, pp. 126-127.

⁷² "Hitotsuma renjō," p. 54.

⁷³ Takahashi 2008, p. 119. For more on *shōjo* magazines see Dollase 2008, pp. 323-339.

look are the galaxy of star-shaped highlights drawn near the pupils of each character's eyes.⁷⁴ It is these 'orb like' eyes which set *shōjo manga* apart from early *jojō-ga* illustrations and from *manga* aimed at male market. Not only are these large eyes a 'symbol of beauty,' but they are able to 'reflect human emotions as much as verbal messages.'⁷⁵

Another characteristic of *shōjo manga* are the swirls and flower petals that form a border or background for many images and *shōjo manga* cells. This, too, was borrowed from earlier works by *jojō-ga* artists published in pre-war girls' magazines. In *shōjo manga* this stylistic convention was used to convey an extra layer of information which draws the reader into the 'character's inner world,' forging a powerful link between audience and image.⁷⁶ A background of roses might indicate romantic thoughts, a sky full of stars and spangles hints at a character's beauty or confidence, while an explosion of cherry blossoms could indicate the fragility of a character's life.⁷⁷ Within the borders made by these swirls of flowers and stars *shōjo manga* characters are often depicted in fashion-plate-like full body illustrations or facial close-ups which mimic earlier *jojō-ga* illustrations. This concern with clothing and costume, which is also a feature of ladies' comics, resonates with the importance of costume in the masochistic scenario: Sacher-Masoch's furs, Yamada's high-heeled shoes, Kanehara's Tokyo fashions. Like the attire worn by the creations of *jojō-ga* artists, particularly those drawn by Takabatake and Takehisa who were also kimono textile designers, the clothing of *shōjo manga* characters often reflects current style trends or forecasts new fashion directions. Unlike *shōnen manga* in which characters are often assigned one set of clothes and one superhero/action outfit, *shōjo manga* characters change their clothes

⁷⁴ Ito 2011a, p. 10; Shiokawa 1999), p. 101; Schodt 1984, p. 91.

⁷⁵ Ito 2011a, p. 10. In many men's and boy's *manga* characters are often drawn with thick 'kabuki-style' eyebrows and glaring eyes. Schodt 1984b, p. 91.

⁷⁶ Takahashi 2008, p. 122.

⁷⁷ Ibid. The association of cherry blossoms with death can be traced back to the legacy of *kokutai* introduced in Chapter 1: 'You shall die like beautiful falling cherry petals for the Emperor.' Ohnuki-Tierney 2002, p. 3.

every few pages.⁷⁸ These images may take up half, if not the full page, while tresses of the character's hair or floating ribbon accessories, curl around dialogue and into the surrounding panels. Honda Masuko notes that in *shōjo manga* these 'ribbons, frills or even lyrical word chains [...] flutter in the breeze as symbols of girlhood.'⁷⁹ In the world of *shōjo manga* everything is beautiful, even disease and violence.⁸⁰ Anime director Rintaro (b. Hayashi Shigeyuki, 1941) refers to this 'theatrical elegance' as 'Takarazuka violence' after the famed all-women review which draws so much of its source material from girls' comics.⁸¹

Shōjo manga's floral backgrounds and abstract swirls are brought to the foreground in the panels of ladies' comics and are co-opted into a form of censorship covering or obscuring the exposed genitals of male and female characters alike.⁸² The full body illustrations which in *shōjo manga* demonstrate style and personality are used in ladies' comics to achieve what Linda Williams terms the 'frenzy of the visible.'⁸³ In other words, the universe of stars that illuminate the eyes of the *shōjo* character burn more vibrantly in the eyes of ladies' comic characters as a signifier of their lust and desire – that is when they are not tightly closed in pleasure and/or pain. Similarly, while the *shōjo* is fashionably clothed, the ladies' comic protagonist is stripped bare with her breasts, buttocks and genitals on full display. Her sexualised body parts become her 'clothing.' The exaggerated eyes, long limbs and fashionable hair styles of *shōjo manga* characters are

⁷⁸ In the same interview introduced above, *mangaka* Yoshino comments that the 'major difference between *shōjo manga* and *seinen manga* [is that] in *manga* for boys, you can't ever change a character's hairstyle. [...] However, if you look at *manga* aimed at girls, the hairstyles often change.' She notes that for boy readers of *shōjo manga* 'all the characters have the same face and their hair is constantly changing so you don't have a clue who anyone is.' Yoshino adds that 'it seems as though these boys won't recognize their dates when they're waiting for them at a crowded meeting place [if the girls wear their hair differently].' "An Interview with Sakumi Yoshino," p. 128, Parentheses are translator's own.

⁷⁹ Honda 2010, p. 20.

⁸⁰ The ideal of beauty even in disease harks back to the beautiful consumptive examined in Chapter 1.

⁸¹ "Directors Interview." Rintaro is well known for his work on *Tetsuwan atomu* (Astro Boy, 1952-1968) and *Janguru taitei* (Lit. Jungle Emperor, trans. Kimba the White Lion, 1950-54) and as a director for *Moomin* (1969-1970) series and the film version of *Ginga testedō 999* (Galaxy Express 999, 1979).

⁸² Jones 2005, p. 99; Shamoon 2004, p. 87.

⁸³ Williams 1999, p. 50.

transformed in ladies' comics into the large breasts, thin waists and long limbs of the vaguely western looking protagonists.⁸⁴

The westernised body of ladies' comics has come through *shōjo manga* and dates back to the Meiji period and, for example, Yōshū Chikanobu's wood block prints of the Meiji Empress arrayed perfectly in western gowns.⁸⁵ Not only do these images depict the Meiji Empress as the very epitome of European fashion, they show her as modern, enlightened and exotic – she is 'above the clouds,' but also beyond the seas.⁸⁶ On January 17, 1887 the Meiji Empress issued a memorandum on the subject of women's clothing in Japan: 'She [the Empress] believed that western clothes were in fact closer to the dress of women in ancient Japan than the kimonos currently worn and urged that they be adopted as the standard clothes of the reign.'⁸⁷ It is somewhat ironic that, unlike the body of the Meiji Empress corseted and covered from head to toe in European fashions, in ladies' comics the westernised body is stripped naked.

Shōjo manga, and indeed *shōjo* culture as a whole – as can be seen in the work of Yoshiya Nobuko – has always looked to the west, especially Europe and America, for a sense of the exotic. These far-off locals present the creators of *shōjo manga* with a fairy-tale-like playground in which anything is possible.⁸⁸ The setting of a story in a boarding school in a foreign country or a spaceship in a science-fiction world demonstrates yet another incarnation of the small space or

⁸⁴ Much has been made, primarily by western and non-Japanese scholars, of the 'western-ness' of anime and *manga* characters. However, as these characters are invariably given Japanese names and mannerisms it soon becomes apparent that, unless stated otherwise, they are identifiable as Japanese regardless of the way in which they are drawn. Ito 2002, pp. 71-72; Thorn 2004.

⁸⁵ Yōshū's prints of the Meiji Empress in western dress include "Koki noryo no zu" (The Emperor Enjoying the Cool Evening, 1887, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Y%C5%8Dsh%C5%AB_Chikanobu_Koki_noryo_no_zu.jpg) and "Asukayama kōen" (Asukayama Park, c 1890, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Y%C5%8Dsh%C5%AB_Chikanobu_Asukayama_Park.jpg).

⁸⁶ Keene 2002, p. 404. 'Above the clouds' *kumo no ue* is a highly poetic reference to the imperial court and those that reside there. It is used frequently in works such as the *Tale of Genji*.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Schodt 1984, p. 92. Two famous examples of *shōjo manga* set in a foreign country are Hagio Moto's *Jūichigatsu no gimunajiumu* (The November Gymnasium, 1971) and Ikeda Riyoko's *Berusaiyu no bara* (The Rose of Versailles, 1972-73).

closed room as defined by Honda Masuko in “The Genealogy of *Hirabira*.”⁸⁹ Furthermore, the use of a foreign setting is one of the key elements of *shōjo manga*, the post-war foundations of which were laid by Tezuka's *Ribon no kishi*, introduced above. This trope of using an exotic, foreign setting is also employed by ladies' comics: Ito notes that ladies' comics might ‘take place in a romantic foreign country far away from Japan, a different historical time period or even a different dimension of existence.’⁹⁰ Similarly, it is not only the setting of *shōjo manga* and ladies' comics which is westernised. We have already seen that this can occur in the character designs of both *manga* genres.

This process of identifying ladies' comics with the (exotic/foreign) west occurs in the presentation of the comic volumes themselves. Since the appearance of the first edition in 1990, the cover of *Komikku amour* has usually featured a colour photograph of a heterosexual Caucasian couple (or a ‘racially mixed, “half” Japanese woman and a white man’)⁹¹ – the covers of the 2009 and 2010 August editions feature a blond Caucasian man kissing the temple of a laughing brunette Caucasian woman, and a ‘half’ Japanese woman lying nose-to-nose with a Russian looking Caucasian man respectively. Jones points out that ‘fantasy “packaging” begins on the cover,’ with the ‘exotic’ and ‘alluring’ possibility of a relationship with a handsome and ‘desirable Caucasian male.’⁹² Even before the reader turns the cover, she is already transported to a unique fantasy world of her own making.

The 1970s saw the rise of the ‘24 *nen-gumi*’ (lit. ‘Year 24 Group’)⁹³ – an influential group of women *mangaka* who were born in or around the 24th year of Showa (1949) and who were the first to create narratives in a wide range of new genres including science fiction, romance, *shōnen*

⁸⁹ Honda 2010, p. 20; 37.

⁹⁰ Ito 2002, p. 75.

⁹¹ Jones 2002, p. 9.

⁹² Ibid. Consider the exotic allure of *Komikku amour*'s Caucasian male and the priapic power of Yamada's African American lovers.

⁹³ This group is sometimes referred to as the ‘Magnificent Year 24 Group’ or the ‘Forty-Niners’.

ai, comedy and historical stories.⁹⁴ In the hands of the '24 *nen-gumi*' all of these genres have 'love as a central theme.'⁹⁵ In addition to these themes, which remain abundant in both current day *shōjo manga* and ladies' comics, members of the Year 24 Group were also the first *mangaka* to include (implied) sex scenes, referred to as '*beddo shin*' (lit. bed scenes). It is with the introduction of the bed scene that the seed of ladies' comics was sown.

Fujimoto Yukari cites 1972 as the year that the first (heterosexual) 'bed scene' occurred in a *shōjo manga*, namely Ichijō Yukari's *Rabu gēmu* (Love Game, 1972).⁹⁶ These *shōjo manga* bed scenes however rely mainly on suggestion. The bed scene in *Rabu gēmu* shows a young man lying on top of his older girlfriend. While both are naked, only the length of the youth's back and buttocks are visible; his body obscures that of the woman stretched out beneath him.⁹⁷ Fujimoto states nevertheless that the mere 'suggestion of sexual activity was enough to create a great emotional effect.'⁹⁸ The following page of Fujimoto's text reproduces the 'bed scene' in Ikeda Riyoko's *Berusaïyu no bara* (The Rose of Versailles, 1972-73) in which the protagonist, Oscar, and her long time companion, André, finally realise their love for one another. Only the pair's upper body is depicted as they kiss and embrace encircled by a border of flower strewn pillows. Close-ups of clasped hands, budding flowers, whispered promises, and the ubiquitous 'fade to black,' (or as discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to the work of Yoshimoto and Yamada, white narrative space) encourage the reader to 'imagine the rest.'⁹⁹ However, as the girl readers of *shōjo manga* became adults, they desired to see more of the action. As a result, it became a convention of ladies'

⁹⁴ It was this group of women *mangaka* in whose work the characteristics and hallmarks of *shōjo manga* discussed above were confirmed as defining features of the genre. Unlike the *kashihon manga* (lit, rental comics) which mainly depicted 'unfortunate girls who endured a number of trials as they sought love from their mothers,' the Year 24 Group created a range of new genres within the rubric of *shōjo manga*. Takeuchi 2010, p. 82.

⁹⁵ Fujimoto 1998, pp. 22-63; Takeuchi 2010, p. 82.

⁹⁶ Fujimoto 1998, pp. 64-65.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 64-66.

⁹⁹ Schodt 1984, p. 101.

comics to show sexual situations using multiple illustrations from different angles to show as much of the sexual interaction as possible.

From the time that *shōjo manga* came of age in the 1970s to the current day there are scarcely any topics that have remained outside of the scope of the genre. While everything from true love to horror, death, bondage, abuse, incest, murder and under-age sex has been suggested on the spangled and flower petal strewn pages of *shōjo manga*, these elements have been transferred to and enlarged on the tangled and sweat stained pages of ladies' comics. The one taboo that remains unbroken in *shōjo manga* narratives is the depiction of genitalia. The long standing legal probation on the depiction of pubic hair was overturned in the early 1990s.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the display of (thinly veiled) genitalia alone remains the province of ladies' comics. This is one of the key factors that separate ladies' comics as a genre distinct from *shōjo manga*. *Shōjo manga* 'may hint at sexual activity' but ladies' comics 'purport to reveal that action in every detail.'¹⁰¹

The Wonderful World of Ladies' Comics

All of the works examined in detail in the previous chapters are written by women writers who create women protagonists who inhabit a masochistic landscape. Each of these protagonists enjoys masochistic sex and/or engaging in extended masochistic fantasies.¹⁰² The pleasure that each protagonist experiences during the many sexual encounters in the collective work of Kōno, Yamada and Kanehara is described with little consideration for the feelings of their male lover(s). On the rare occasions that the masochistic consort/torturer/partner is given a voice he is usually

¹⁰⁰ (Women's) pubic hair was first shown in a nude photo book collection in 1991 titled *water fruit*. This was followed by a second photo book in November of that same year, *Santa Fe*. Reportedly from this time 'the exposure of pubic hair in different publications was gradually being allowed, provided that the genitals were not shown.' Da Silva 2011.

¹⁰¹ Shamoon 2004, pp. 86-87.

¹⁰² This is applicable even to Yamada's protagonists in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* who, although they do not derive masochistic pleasure from their work, play a valuable role in the masochistic relationship as the consort/partner/torturer for their clients.

over-ridden. For example, in “Kani,” a short story by Kōno that was briefly introduced in Chapter 1, Yūko’s husband cautions her that her tuberculosis will only get worse if they continue to have masochistic sex. He is reluctant to whip her during sex but gives in when she begs him to do so.¹⁰³ Likewise, when a client in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* raises concerns about Chika’s ability to become a successful S/M Queen, he is quickly shot down by Shinobu who protests that all of the S/M club’s dominatrices are ‘top drawer.’¹⁰⁴ As we have seen in the previous chapter, at the end of *Hebi ni piasu*, Lui refuses to cry or otherwise acknowledge the pain Shiba inflicts on her body during foreplay. By withholding her reactions, Lui is able to ensure that Shiba will not be able to gain or maintain an erection, thus putting an end to their sexual encounters but not their relationship.¹⁰⁵ The ladies’ comics that will be examined in this chapter are written by women *mangaka* who also create narratives which centre on women protagonists engaging in masochistic or violent sex with little regard for the male partners’ feelings or state of mind. These comics are usually depicted from a third person (spectator) position, or from the position of the woman protagonist recollecting a past event, dream or fantasy with little to no insight given to the myriad of male characters who pass through the pages of these narratives.

In her article on ladies’ comics entitled “Office Sluts and Rebel Flowers,” Deborah Shamoan notes that the male body is regularly obscured or omitted from the sex scenes depicted in ladies’ comics.¹⁰⁶ This is particularly the case in scenes which depict the woman protagonist’s (frequent and often violent) orgasm in which the male lover (or lovers) is often reduced solely to a hand, a tongue, a few fingers or a censored penis. The male lover is peripheral to the main event of a woman’s body experiencing orgasmic pleasure. In her analysis of the *manga* “Futari no nijikai” (Second Party for Two, Madono Yuki, 1999),¹⁰⁷ Shamoan notes that the inclusion of the male

¹⁰³ Kōno 1977a, p. 368; Kōno 1996a, p. 139.

¹⁰⁴ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, p. 16; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” p. 196.

¹⁰⁵ *Hebi ni piasu*, pp. 37; 38-39; 102; 106; *Snakes and Earrings*, pp. 35; 36; 106; 109.

¹⁰⁶ Shamoan 2004, p. 92.

¹⁰⁷ A *nijikai*, or second party, refers to the second venue of an evening of drinking or partying.

character, is relative to the protagonist's sexual pleasure and release – the closer the protagonist comes to orgasm, the more the focus shifts away from the figure of the lover,¹⁰⁸ regardless of whether they are male or female.

While “Futari no nijikai” does not fall under the S/M genre, Shamoons analysis is included here as the *manga* can be considered a ‘typical’ pornographic or erotic ladies’ comic.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, although the comic does not use any of the toys or paraphernalia that has become synonymous with the S/M genre of ladies’ comics, “Futari no nijikai” walks a fine line between consensual sex and rape fantasy. The narrative occurs during an office function in the small space of a side room of a hotel into which the protagonist has been lured by a work colleague. After a drawn out series of sexual acts including masturbation, oral and anal sex, the couple finally engage in vaginal sex leading to orgasm. The penetration scene which is the climax of the narrative, on multiple levels, is drawn so as to take up the entire page. However, while the protagonist’s body is depicted in full, her lover is reduced to a few ‘speed lines’ at the top of the frame indicating the movement of his penis.¹¹⁰ Watanabe uses a similar technique throughout her *manga* as can be seen in the final, climactic sex scene in “Hitotsuma renjō” (The Passion of a Married Woman).¹¹¹ The protagonist’s body is shown in full, bent at the waist to fit into the panel, with lines of emphasis drawn so as to direct the reader’s attention to her dripping genitals and anus which are filled with large sex toys. Her lover stands to the side of the image, barely included in the frame, his penis obscured and replaced by the phallic toys.¹¹²

It could be argued that, given the focus and repeated portrayal of women’s bodies presented in most ladies’ comics, many readers would be more familiar with the bodies of the protagonists in

¹⁰⁸ Shamoons 2004, pp. 92-93.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 90.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 92-93.

¹¹¹ “Hitotsuma renjō,” p. 48.

¹¹² Ibid.

the comics they read than with their own physical body. This is due to the close-up illustrations of any given main character's genitals, face and hands. In order to describe a full range of action and detail, each scenario is illustrated from multiple angles. The repeated images of the women's bodies are presented to the ladies' comic reader not because she desires to possess the protagonist, as is the case in *ero manga* for men, but, as Shamoons notes, because she desires to become her.¹¹³

In traditional pornography (aimed at men) such as the hard-core 'porno' film, internet pornography or *ero manga*, the focus of the narrative, be it film, print, or prose, is on the 'money shot' (external penile ejaculation)¹¹⁴ and the portrayal of male pleasure: 'if you don't have the come shots you don't have the porno picture.'¹¹⁵ However in the case of ladies' comics the sole focus of each narrative is the achievement of loud, visible and multiple orgasms by the woman protagonist, regardless of whatever else might take place in the narrative: be it rape, torture, infidelity, incest, or abuse. While the 'physiology of the vagina makes female pleasure and orgasm much more difficult to represent on film' or in print,¹¹⁶ ladies' comics solve this by utilising a torrent of different gushing fluids. In almost all narratives, ladies' comic characters are veritably soaked with tears, sweat and saliva.¹¹⁷ The crowning sign of desire and sexual satisfaction in women protagonists is a heaving, dripping vagina.

The motif of the wet vagina as desire is not limited to ladies' comics. Both Yamada and Kanehara explore this image in their work. Yamada's protagonists drip with desire. The narrator

¹¹³ Shamoons 2004, p. 83.

¹¹⁴ Williams notes that 'the most striking way that the feature-length hard-core film signals the narrative conclusion of sexual action [...] is through the [...] convention of external penile ejaculation – or, to use the jargon of the industry, the "money shot."' Williams 1999, p. 73.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 126.

¹¹⁶ Shamoons 2004, p. 88.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 91.

of Yamada's 1988 short story "Seijin muki mōfu" ("X-Rated Blanket," trans. Nina Cornyetz 1991),¹¹⁸ almost drowns in it:

When I say I want a man, I mean this man ... George. The name alone twists open a faucet inside my body. Twisted I am wet; water floods high enough to wet my eyeballs. That's how I clearly recognise my own desire.¹¹⁹

However it is not only their own desire with which the 'Yamada Girl' is drenched. In one scene in "Yubi to tawamura" (lit. Finger Games, 1986, translated as *The Piano Player's Fingers*, Yumi Gunji and Mark Jardine 2006) the protagonist, Ruiko, pours her glass of pina colada (a creamy looking cocktail consisting of white rum, pineapple juice and coconut milk) on the wooden floorboards of her apartment and proceeds to lie naked in it. She invites her lover to lick the alcohol off her skin. When he ejaculates, his sperm mixes with the liquid on the floor, 'one sticky liquid almost indistinguishable from the other,' and Ruiko can only think of 'pouring more rum over [the white mess] and licking it all up off the floor.'¹²⁰ Similarly, the first time that Lui has sex with Shiba in *Hebi ni piasu* she notices that her vagina is 'wet' long before Shiba ever touches her *there*.¹²¹ Shiba ties Lui's hands behind her back, chokes her with his hands and pinches her in various places before he inserts his penis into Lui's 'convenient[ly]' wet vagina.¹²² By the end of the encounter, both Lui and Shiba are covered in sweat, saliva and tears as Lui is in the habit of crying if the '[sex] feels really good.'¹²³ At the end of the novel, Lui's sweat, saliva, tears and vaginal fluids are transformed into the raging water that she imagines is flowing inside of her.

It is worth pausing to re-consider Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* which was briefly introduced in Chapter 2 in the context of menstrual waste and other pollutants in Kōno's masochistic narratives. Kristeva states that 'neither tears nor sperm, [...] although they belong to the border

¹¹⁸ Yamada 1991, pp. 50-54.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

¹²⁰ Yamada 2006a, p. 85.

¹²¹ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 38; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 35; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, p. 40.

¹²² *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 38; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 35; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, p. 40.

¹²³ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 41; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 38; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, p. 41.

of the body, have any polluting value.’¹²⁴ While Kristeva groups sweat with menstrual blood and excrement as a pollutant, she does not mention other vaginal fluids. Like sperm, vaginal fluids are a direct result of sexual stimulation. However, these fluids also originate in the same bodily space as menstrual blood. We might consider, given their place of origin, whether or not vaginal fluids have ‘polluting value.’ If, unlike sperm, vaginal fluids are indeed polluted they would belong to the ‘abject,’ the ‘horror’ which has sacred powers related to the maternal. Shamoon notes that in ladies’ comics the ‘wet vagina takes on a significance comparable to that of the erect penis.’¹²⁵ It may even be that hegemonic phallic power is drowned in ladies’ comics in a tidal wave of desiring fluids.

In nearly every ladies’ comic, as suggested above, the attention of all of the *manga*’s characters is on the protagonist’s wet vagina; they talk about it, touch it and gesture toward it. Ultimately, the wet vagina is used as a sign that it is okay to escalate sexual activity which, depending on the story, often becomes progressively violent. Both Shamoon and Jones note that masturbation and the stimulation of the production of vaginal fluid ‘activates’ the protagonist’s desire:¹²⁶ the wet vagina ‘represents a demand that must be satisfied.’¹²⁷ In “Futari no nijikai,” the protagonist’s colleague forces her to masturbate. When she reaches orgasm, her colleague asks why she does not go home to her husband. In response, the protagonist lifts her skirt and shows him (and the reader) her dripping genitals. She demands that he ‘drive her wild.’¹²⁸ In “Hitotsuma renjō” and “Ze’chō bakutōsō” the bodies of the respective protagonists are just as responsive to the actions of their lovers as their rapists. If we extend Kristeva’s theories then the fluids from their dripping vaginas paint both women as polluted and transgressive for ‘enjoying’ the rape fantasies in which they are depicted.

¹²⁴ Kristeva 1982, p. 71.

¹²⁵ Shamoon 2004, p. 91.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 95; Jones 2002, p. 19.

¹²⁷ Shamoon 2004, p. 91.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Fujimoto suggests that 'Japanese women are unable to overtly express their sexuality.'¹²⁹ Through the consumption of ladies' comic narratives, especially those with elements of masochism or violence, readers are able to 'own' their sexual desire.¹³⁰ As in the masochistic texts by Kōno, Yamada and Kanehara examined previously, ladies' comics are often set in closed, liminal spaces. Kōno's protagonists are aware that the masochistic sex they engage in is deviant. They make sure to keep their masochistic pleasure inside 'the soundproof room.' For the 'Yamada Girl' protagonists of *Hiçamaçuite asbi wo o-name*, the chief masochistic activities take place behind the closed doors of the S/M club. Their other sexual encounters also happen in closed spaces such as back rooms in clubs or their cramped Tokyo apartments. In *Hebi ni piasu*, Kanehara's protagonist only seems to come alive on the metal tables and chairs in the back room of the tattoo parlour. It is there that she is repeatedly penetrated by piercing needles, tattoo needles and by Shiba himself. In line with the closed spaces of these narratives, ladies' comics are often set in closed bedrooms, cramped apartments, side-rooms in function centres and hotel rooms.

In fact, it is almost as if the fantasies played out in the pages of ladies' comics can *only* occur in certain liminal or limited spaces. As noted above, the ladies' comic experience starts on the front cover of each volume with the depiction of western looking couple who set the scene of exotic fantasy. The settings of the ladies' comics that are published *within* the covers of a volume such as *Komikku amour* mirror the very places in which ladies' comics readers are likely to engage with these narratives: behind locked bedroom doors in the privacy of the reader's own home.¹³¹ In *At Home with Pornography* Jane Juffer points out that woman use pornography to 'reconcile the world of fantasy with their everyday lives.'¹³² Unlike male readers of *ero manga* who are a frequent, almost stereotypical sight on Japanese public transport, women are, on the whole, yet to adopt

¹²⁹ Fujimoto 1992, pp. 73-74; as per Jones' translation, Jones 2002, pp. 20-21; Jones 2005, pp. 104-105.

¹³⁰ Fujimoto 1992, pp. 73-74.

¹³¹ Ito 2011b, p. 163.

¹³² Juffer 1998, p. 20; Jones 2005, p. 101.

the habit of reading ladies comics on subway trains. Indeed, Jones notes that readers of ladies comics' are 'notoriously difficult [...] to pin down' and that she has 'never had a woman admit' that she 'reads ladies' comics.'¹³³

Most ladies' comics, as is common with Mills & Boon romances or Chick Lit narratives,¹³⁴ follow a similar, 'romance-type,' pattern.¹³⁵ In a typical romance narrative the protagonist must undergo a series of trials and ordeals before she finds true love and a 'happy ending.'¹³⁶ Although at the beginning of most ladies' comics the woman protagonist is reluctant to enter into sexual activity, she is invariably coerced (or forced) into participating and experiences extreme pleasure (signified by the previously mentioned rush of fluids) at the climax of the story. This pleasurable experience often results in some kind of promise for the lovers to meet again, a longed-for pregnancy or, even, marriage – the ultimate 'happily ever after.'¹³⁷ In ladies' comics that are erotic or pornographic in nature the narratives often begin with a bad sexual experience early in the narrative which is then reconciled by the end of the novel in the form of fulfilling and romantic 'good sex.'

This pattern mirrors the 'sex by numbers' approach to pornography created by Stephen Ziplow in his *Film Maker's Guide to Pornography* (1977) which Williams introduces in *Hard Core*.¹³⁸ Ziplow's system introduces seven sexual acts which he 'deemed essential to a hard-core feature circa 1977.'¹³⁹ These are 1) masturbation, 2) straight sex, 3) lesbianism, 4) oral sex, 5) ménage à trios, 6) orgies, and 7) anal sex.¹⁴⁰ Williams adds an eighth 'number,' 8) 'sadie-max' which she defines as 'a

¹³³ Jones 2005, pp. 102-103.

¹³⁴ See, for example, the author guidelines at Mills & Boon, www.millsandboon.com.au/authorguidelines.asp

¹³⁵ Fujimoto 1992, pp. 73-74.

¹³⁶ Jones 2002, p. 16. The happy ending is also found in many *shōjo manga* especially the early *kashihon* or rental comics of the 1960s. For more on *kashihon* see Takeuchi 2010, p. 82.

¹³⁷ Ito 2002, p. 74.

¹³⁸ Williams 1999, pp. 126 – 134.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

scene depicting sadomasochistic relations such as whipping, spanking, or bondage, performed with or without paraphernalia.¹⁴¹ These numbered acts can be arranged in various configurations (1-4-7-2 et cetera) depending on the requirements of the piece. This 'sex by numbers' approach to pornography production is applicable to the ladies' comics formula; however, it might also be beneficial to add another number to the eight listed above: 0) unsatisfactory 'bad' sex.¹⁴² Furthermore it should be noted that Ziplow's numerical scheme is purely heterosexual, for example the anal sex signified by number 7) is always heterosexual with the woman on the receiving end, in which all acts end with visible male ejaculation.¹⁴³ In contrast, ladies' comics often showcase homo-erotic narratives as a stand-alone feature instead of a numbered act along the journey to heterosexual male orgasm. In these ladies' comics the heterosexual penis is not always necessary to drive the narrative. It is, as Shamoon notes above, the vagina that predominates – even if the penis has been used as a sex object along the way.

In discussing this numerical formula Williams notes that, as in some ladies' comics, sex scenes that occur early in feature-length pornographic films are 'often not pleasurable at all to at least one of [the] participants'¹⁴⁴ – act 0). This formula is applicable to the texts by Kōno, Yamada and Kanehara that have been examined in previous chapters. The central narrative of Kōno's "Ari Takaru" follows the pattern of starting at 0) and ending at 8): the unpleasant (non-masochistic) sex that occurs at the beginning of the narrative (0) is remedied by a beating with a bamboo fishing rod and other masochistic sex acts which occur at the end of the narrative (8).¹⁴⁵ Williams states that a 'peculiar quality' of narrative pornography is the following paradox: 'although built on the premise that the pleasure of sex is self-evident, the underlying and motivating anxiety is

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² 0) has been chosen to represent this new 'number' as, as we will see, the 'bad' sex often occurs so as the 'good' sex/numbers can follow.

¹⁴³ Williams 1999, p. 127.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 134.

¹⁴⁵ "Ari takaru," p. 49; "Ant Swarm," p. 181.

that sometimes it is not.¹⁴⁶ This paradox is most evident in ladies' comics, such as those written by Watanabe, that contain rape narratives. In Watanabe's comics the protagonists are often 'broken' by one rape and then 'put back together' by another. Rape 'represents the unsuccessful, bad sex' to which the *manga's* 'other numbers' respond.¹⁴⁷

Watanabe Yayoi: 'Hey We Lust Too!'¹⁴⁸

Often called the 'Queen of Ladies' Comics,' Watanabe Yayoi (b. 1958) is one of the most prolific authors of erotic and pornographic *manga* for women.¹⁴⁹ Born in Tokyo she made her debut as a *shōjo manga* artist at the age of 19 whilst still a student of Waseda University.¹⁵⁰ Shortly after graduating from university, Watanabe made the jump to ladies' comics at a time when the genre had yet to be named.¹⁵¹ She states that in some ways ladies' comics 'saved her' from being an assistant *shōjo manga* artist.¹⁵² Watanabe's work is renowned for the 'realism' with which her protagonists are drawn and the 'violence' with which she depicts her graphic sex scenes.¹⁵³ Her characters relish 'physical and psychological abuse, humiliation and even rape.'¹⁵⁴ When asked why so many of her women protagonists are masochistic Watanabe indicated that she identifies as 'M,' meaning masochistic as per the Japanese colloquialisms introduced in Chapter 1.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁶ Williams 1999, p. 134.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 166.

¹⁴⁸ The subtitle for this section is taken from an interview with Watanabe published in *The New York Times* in 1995. Kristof 1995.

¹⁴⁹ Kitahara 2005, p. 71; Jones 2005, p. 99.

¹⁵⁰ Kitahara 2005, p. 74.

¹⁵¹ "Karisuma redekomi sakka," p. 160; Schodt 1984, p. 102.

¹⁵² "Karisuma redekomi sakka," p. 160.

¹⁵³ Kitahara 2005, p. 72.

¹⁵⁴ Jones 2005, p. 100.

¹⁵⁵ "Karisuma redekomi sakka," p. 161. More recently, Watanabe has turned her hand to writing novels such as *Wasurenai* (Unforgettable, 2010) and *Pītā Nōsu no shukufuku* (Peter North's Blessing, 2008) see "Watanabe Yayoi no rakuen."

Watanabe's stories often follow the pattern introduced above of: reluctant protagonist, unsuccessful or unsatisfactory sex (for the woman protagonist)/rape; fulfilling sex; extreme (orgasmic) pleasure; 'happily ever after.' Her *manga* repeatedly fall into the S/M genre and consistently include depictions of various 'toys' such as dildos and vibrators in addition to detailed and violent rape sequences, both of which, as we have seen, are linked to S/M narratives in ladies' comics.¹⁵⁶

Watanabe's "Hitotsuma renjō" (*Komikku amour*, August 2010) is a fairly standard S/M ladies' comic. The protagonist, Misa, has been married for five years to a politician. The couple live with his mother in a childless marriage. Misa suspects that it is something to do with her husband – she states that a doctor has said that there is nothing wrong with her.¹⁵⁷ Misa's 'failure' to produce a child is but one more thing that her mother-in-law finds to criticise. In this way "Hitotsuma renjō" can be situated in the widespread body of Japanese literature and popular culture which investigates the often antagonistic mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship.¹⁵⁸ If we return to Deleuze's theories of masochism concerning mothers and daughters introduced in previous chapters we already know that this relationship is bound to be a fraught one.¹⁵⁹ Misa's mother-in-law complains that the *miso* soup Misa makes is too salty. *Miso* soup is consumed at most meals in Japan and has as a result come to represent a happy house – a now out-dated way of for a man to propose marriage was to ask a woman to 'make his miso soup every morning.'¹⁶⁰ The fact that there is something wrong with the *miso* soup in this household hints that there is also something wrong with the household in general.

¹⁵⁶ Ito 2002, pp. 77-79.

¹⁵⁷ "Hitotsuma renjō," p. 11.

¹⁵⁸ Ito 2011a p. 15.

¹⁵⁹ See Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of this thesis.

¹⁶⁰ This way of proposing is so entrenched that it is often found in popular culture such including an animated short film, *Fumiko's Confession*, that can be found here <<http://www.japanprobe.com/2009/11/12/fumikos-confession-a-short-animation/>> and the *Rupan san sei* (Lupin the 3rd) movie. See also "Japanese Classic Marriage Proposals" (www.japanstyle.info).

“Hitotsuma renjō” opens with a four page sex scene between husband and wife. However, throughout the ten cells that depict the multiple positions that the couple perform, Misa’s husband’s face is shown only once. These four pages, the first of a number of ‘0)’s, act as a baseline of sexual activity that all other sex acts in the narrative can be measured against – mediocre sex which serves as a background to the information that Misa relates regarding her husband’s job and the couple’s childless status. One particular day a man wearing dark glasses visits Misa’s home, announcing that he has some photos that she will want to purchase. When Misa enquires as to the man’s price for the photos, which show her husband entering a hotel with another woman, he replies ‘I want you’ and proceeds to rape her.¹⁶¹ The scene ends with the stranger taking a photo of Misa’s semi-naked form covered in sweat and semen for more material with which to blackmail her. The scenario is repeated when the stranger telephones Misa and demands that she meet him at a hotel. This time the pair are joined by a homeless man that the stranger commands Misa to fellate. The stranger takes more photos before penetrating Misa from behind. After the homeless man ejaculates, he disappears from the narrative whereupon the stranger engages in violent sex with Misa once again. Misa calls out ‘Stop!’ repeatedly before declaring ‘I’m turning strange.’¹⁶² Broken by the repeated rapes, Misa begins to enjoy herself like never before. Immediately after this sex scene the stranger confesses that he is trying to blackmail Misa’s husband, the man whom he believes is responsible for the death of his late wife. The stranger rapes Misa once more, however this time Misa gives him permission, telling the stranger that she is his do with as he desires.

In between these two scenes, Misa’s first encounter with the stranger at her house and the pair’s second meeting at the hotel, Misa has sex with her husband once. In contrast to the rape scenes, and even the earlier sex between husband and wife, Misa’s face is expressionless. In this way the

¹⁶¹ “Hitotsuma renjō,” p. 15.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 33. The word Misa uses is *hen* (lit. strange) which is the first syllable of *hentai*, which is often shortened to ‘H’ or *ecchi*, meaning perverted.

rape fantasies in “Hitotsuma renjō” can be seen as a pleasurable alternative to ‘boring’ or unfulfilling sex. If we return to Ziplow’s numeric scheme introduced above, this sexual encounter is another one of the many ‘0)’s in the narrative. Misa and the stranger meet a second time. This time the sex is consensual and features various toys synonymous with the S/M genre of ladies’ comics. After this ‘good’ sex the stranger declares that he can no longer stand to see Misa and tells her to leave. She leaves the hotel room in a daze and is almost knocked down by a speeding car. The stranger arrives in time to push her to safety, dying heroically in the act. The story ends with the revelation that Misa is finally pregnant with the product of ‘her only love.’¹⁶³

In “Hitotsuma renjō” numerous accounts of ‘bad’ sex – the sex with Misa’s husband and the various rapes – eventually lead to, and are redeemed by, ‘good’ sex. Misa’s pleasure is unlocked by rape but fulfilled in consensual, S/M style sex. Ito states that in both S/M style ladies’ comics and rape fantasy narratives (Ito uses the term ‘rape play fantasy’ to further differentiate between the abhorrent act of actualised rape and the fantasy that occurs in, for example, ladies’ comics)¹⁶⁴ there is a psychological struggle that commences at the beginning of the narrative:

At first, the woman feels angry and betrayed by another human being, but afterwards her body cannot forget the pleasing memory or the pleasure of hot and lustful sex that reminds her of this extraordinary and exciting encounter.¹⁶⁵

This is a formula that is visible repeatedly throughout the genre.

“Ze’chō bakutōsō,” published in the August 2009 edition of *Komikku amour* has an even more complex narrative mix of ‘good sex,’ ‘bad sex,’ and ‘happily ever after.’ As with “Hitotsuma renjō,” “Ze’chō bakutōsō” contains several images of rape, in this case mostly gang rapes. “Ze’chō bakutōsō” starts with a full page image of Mika, a woman truck driver, being gang raped

¹⁶³ “Hitotsuma renjō,” p. 54.

¹⁶⁴ Ito 2011b, p. 163.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

in front of her *dekotora* (lit. decorated truck).¹⁶⁶ “Ze’chō bakutōsō” is told in a series of flashbacks until the narrative returns to the initial gang rape. The flashbacks begin with a truck-driver rescuing her from a similar open air gang rape. We are told that prior to her rescue, Mika was abused as a child and has been raped several times already. The pair fall into bed together, marry and have a child. Tragically both Mika’s husband and her daughter are killed in a car crash. Instead of selling her husband’s truck Mika decides to take over his business and drive the truck herself. She builds a reputation as a fast, reliable trucker which soon angers a rival crew. Mika approaches the manager of the rival crew who challenges her to a race with one of his men – Tsuyoshi, a famous truck racer who hates women drivers. If Mika wins the race, the manager of the rival crew will leave her alone; if she loses, however, she must have sex with him. At the start of the race Mika is feeling confident that she can win. However she is distracted by the image of a witch’s mask that is painted on the back of her opponent’s truck. The image of the Noh witch mask is the same design as the tattoo her deceased husband had inked across his back.¹⁶⁷ We have already seen in Chapter 4 that *irezumi*, those tattooed with traditional Japanese motifs, have a powerful sexuality that few women can resist.¹⁶⁸

Mika loses the race and reluctantly agrees to keep her promise. At first she is uninterested in the sex, telling the manager of the rival truck crew to ‘just get it over with.’¹⁶⁹ However, as in the previous story, during the almost-rape (which lasts for a marathon twelve pages) Mika breaks and starts to scream out in pleasure. A panel depicting a syringe suggests that she may have been

¹⁶⁶ *Dekotora* are customised big rig trucks usually decorated inside and out with neon or ultraviolet lights, detailed paint work and oversized chrome bumper-bars. Watanabe’s trucks all seem to borrow heavily from *ukiyo-e* style prints. *Dekotora* were reportedly made famous by the 1970s Toei movie series *Torakku yarō* (Truck Guys, 1975). Interestingly, one of the short stories translated in *Monkey Brain Sushi* is a subversive narrative about a lesbian trucker and the woman who falls in (like/love/lust) with her. See Hashimoto 1991, pp. 205-238.

¹⁶⁷ The witch mask or *hannya* mask depicts the face of a woman who has become a horned demon with golden eyes and a mouth opened in a toothy grimace that extends almost to the ears. It is used in Noh drama to represent a jealous woman such as Hashihime in *Kanawa* (The Iron Ring) or the yamauba/witch in *Momijigari* (The Autumn Foliage Hunt). Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, pp. xxiii-iv.

¹⁶⁸ Fellman 1986, p. 15.

¹⁶⁹ “Ze’chō bakutōsō,” p. 24.

drugged.¹⁷⁰ When the ordeal is finally over Mika leaves the manager's office and encounters her opponent from the race. Tsuyoshi declares that if he had known the full details of the race he would never have participated. Rendered unstable by what she has just experienced (and possibly still under the influence of drugs), Mika starts to strip in front of him demanding that he have sex with her then and there. Not knowing what else to do, Tsuyoshi gathers her in his arms and they have sex in the cab of his *dekotora*. The motif of the witch mask is repeated in this scene as it is depicted on the roof of Tsuyoshi's truck cab as he leans over Mika's body – effectively placing the image of the witch mask tattoo on his back as on Mika's deceased husband's back.

Mika returns to her own trucking business despite Tsuyoshi's warnings that the manager of his crew will not leave her alone. One night Mika's truck will not start. As she tries to figure out what is wrong, she is set upon by members of the rival truck crew bringing the story to the point where the narrative started. Tsuyoshi gathers Mika's crew and mounts a rescue mission. When they arrive the member's of Mika's crew are overcome by the sight before their eyes (Mika surrounded and penetrated by at least three men). Mika tells her crew to leave and 'forget about her.'¹⁷¹ They comply with tears in their eyes. However, the sight of her crew empowers Mika and she bites the penis in her mouth, which happens to belong to the leader of the rival trucking crew.¹⁷² Tsuyoshi arrives in time to pull Mika into his truck and take her to the safety of his apartment. We now learn that Tsuyoshi hates women truck drivers as his wife, a former trucker, died when her vehicle went over a cliff. Mika and Tsuyoshi sleep together, promising each other that from now on, they will drive trucks together. Tsuyoshi approaches his former boss and challenges him to a race. Both trucks crash into each other and erupt into a massive ball of flames. Somehow, Tsuyoshi manages to escape the burning wreckage. He is framed by fire in a

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁷² Ibid., pp. 78-79.

'hero pose' typical of action movies as he walks away from the two trucks to embrace Mika.

They have sex on the front bumper-bar of her truck before driving off into the sunset.

The issue of rape fantasies in comics aimed at women is a difficult one for many non-ladies' comic readers to accept. Watanabe herself states that 'women don't want to be raped ... but [we] can be aroused by imagining it.'¹⁷³ The rape scenarios presented in Watanabe's work seem to read from the script of 'male-centred pornography's fondest fantasy' where rape turns into ecstasy.¹⁷⁴ However, in both of the stories introduced above the rapes are traumatic experiences that result in something 'breaking' within both Misa and Mika before they gain any pleasure from their experiences. In both cases the rapes are 'bad sex' that is included only to intensify the final 'good sex' and happy ending of the narratives end.

By consuming rape fantasies and narratives, it is possible that ladies' comic readers gain a form of agency.¹⁷⁵ In the Japan context, we have noted that agency of any sort, particularly sexual agency, is denied to the 'good wife and wise mother.' Ellen Willis suggests that 'a woman who is raped is a victim, a woman who enjoys pornography (even if that means a rape fantasy) is in a sense a rebel, insisting on an aspect of her sexuality that has been defined as a male preserve.'¹⁷⁶ Moreover, the very act of consumption separates ladies' comic readers from the 'passive' heroines about whom they read.¹⁷⁷ Sakamoto Mimei, another ladies' comic author, is critical of conservative 'Cinderella stories' in which the heroine is saved by a 'prince' who marries her in the end.¹⁷⁸ Yoshino also laments the 'Cinderella' archetype: 'Following on ceaselessly from stories like *Cinderella*, the image of a girl's success is getting a rich man and becoming a princess.'¹⁷⁹

¹⁷³ Kristof 1995.

¹⁷⁴ Williams 1999, p. 165.

¹⁷⁵ Sakamoto 1997, pp. 234-43.

¹⁷⁶ Willis 1981, p. 223; Jones 2005, p. 107.

¹⁷⁷ Sakamoto 1997, pp. 234-43.

¹⁷⁸ Sakamoto 1997, p. 234; Jones 2002, p. 21.

¹⁷⁹ "An Interview with Sakumi Yoshino," p. 125; see also Fujimoto 1998, 114 and Shamooin 2007, p. 6.

Similar to Yamada's assertion in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* that women need to stop putting up with bad sex as previously discussed in Chapter 2,¹⁸⁰ Sakamoto criticises ladies' comic authors and their readers for not taking control of their own sexuality.¹⁸¹

However, reading *manga* is not a passive action, especially if the comics are presented in a large multi-author volume: the reader decides which story to read, in what order and at what speed.¹⁸²

In the two volumes of *Komikku amour* in which “Hitotsuma renjō” and “Ze'chō bakutōsō” were published (August 2010 and August 2009 respectively) there are eight *yomikiri* (stand alone) ladies' comic stories. Each are by different artists with vastly differing styles that range from the ultra-realistic work of Watanabe, to wide-eyed, pointy-nosed illustrations that borrow heavily from the *shōjo manga* tradition to the point where, if it were not the explicit sexual content of the comics in question, a reader might mistake the texts for that genre. The *shōjo manga* characteristics that were designed to enchant the girl reader and lure her into a beribboned world are now used to arouse the ladies' comic reader who chooses how long she lingers on a particular frame or page. In the same way that masochistic women do not simply lie back passively and allow their partners to torture them, ladies' comic readers actively engage with the fantasies presented in the comics they read.¹⁸³

Ladies' comic readers are active consumers. A large part of what is published in ladies comic magazines is directly influenced by the readers through the participation of surveys and the submission of letters and written testimonies. At the end of the 2009 and 2010 August volumes of *Komikku amour* are five pages of reader contributions under the banner of “Amour ura-johō: Kare ni wa naisho!” (Amour Reverse Announcements: Keep it a Secret from Him!). The pages are crammed full of reader confessions, four panel comics and photos of the readers (each with

¹⁸⁰ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* p. 16; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” pp. 195-196.

¹⁸¹ Sakamoto 1997, pp. 234-235;

¹⁸² Jones 2005, p. 106.

¹⁸³ Ito 2011b, p. 163.

her eyes blacked out or covered with a mobile phone or her hands). Subheadings in this section include “100 ji inai no ero-mêru” (100 Word *Ero*-Text Messages), “Kono aitemu – ‘H’ ni chyō tsukaemasu!” (I Totally Use This – For Sex!) and “Otona no omocha ni dai henshin” (Transform [Anything] into Toys for Adults).¹⁸⁴

The last page in *Komikku amour* is generally occupied by a reader survey which asks the readers to rank each story featured in the issue as well as questions about their sexual experiences, their fantasies and what sort of (ladies') comics they enjoy reading. These surveys can be sent into the magazine once completed in return for 'presents' such as comics, clothing or sex toys.¹⁸⁵ Ladies' comic *mangaka* reportedly 'place great stock in these reader comments,' often drawing on them for inspiration.¹⁸⁶ One male editor of male comics notes that the creators of ladies' comics are very serious about their work: 'once the popularity for S/M themes emerged, the creators bought erotic books and started learning how to draw the stories submitted by the readers with painstaking detail.'¹⁸⁷ This practice of reader involvement dates back to pre-war *shojo* magazines. In the same way that pre-war girls used the reader column to 'express their feelings of joy and sadness in extravagant terms,'¹⁸⁸ ladies' comic readers shape the *manga* that they read. Through being a part of the production process, the reader is able to take ownership of the ladies' comic fantasy and utilise it for her own pleasure.¹⁸⁹

Masochistic *Phantasy*/Rape Fantasy

Throughout the thesis repeated reference has been made to the importance of the masochistic fantasy, and indeed, of the importance of the masochist's very ability to fantasise. Fantasy, and

¹⁸⁴ “Amour ura-johō,” pp. 351-356.

¹⁸⁵ *Komikku amour*, p. 358; Jones 2005, p. 103; Jones 2002, p. 13.

¹⁸⁶ Jones 2005, p. 103; Jones 2002, p. 13.

¹⁸⁷ Erino 1994, p. 132. As per Jones' translation: Jones 2005, p. 103; Jones 2002, p. 13.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Dollase 2009, p 81.

the ability to fantasise, is also an important aspect of ladies' comics. In a very real way, ladies' comics are the distillations of the readers' masochistic fantasies as supplied via reader surveys and 'letters-to-the-editor.' For Ito, these fantasies free the ladies' comic reader from her 'existence' in a certain 'role— a wife, mother, and daughter.' Indeed, mothers and children are disposed of in pornographic or erotic ladies comics, reminding us of the apparent absence of mother and motherhood in, for example, the work of Kōno and Kanehara. In "Ze'chō bakutōsō" Mika's child is killed in a traffic accident and a pregnant woman is thrown over a cliff in a *dekotora* accident.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, in "Hitotsuma renjō" Misa is unable to get pregnant with her husband of 5 years. The narrative ends abruptly (with another traffic accident) when she finally becomes pregnant to her rapist/eventual lover and masochistic consort/partner/torturer.¹⁹¹ The 'I' in ladies' comic narratives (symbolising both the ladies' comic protagonist and the *manga* reader) is the active heroine subject, wholly separate from her husband, children, parents and other obligations.¹⁹²

For whatever reason, depictions of rape have become inherently linked to the so-called S/M genre of ladies comics.¹⁹³ It is perhaps because of this that Fujimoto describes masochism in ladies' comics as a 'shattered illusion of love.'¹⁹⁴ While the ladies' comic heroine eventually, and inevitably, finds love, it is not without going through several ordeals. In some ways, rape fantasy in ladies comics has become the equivalent of what Roland Kelts describes as 'the Big Mac' of pornography: 'boring porn in cartoon form [which is] there to serve an immediate purpose, [...] a lot of [which] is terrible.'¹⁹⁵ It goes without saying that not all rape fantasies are masochistic and not all masochistic fantasies involve rape. However, the languages of rape fantasies and of the

¹⁹⁰ "Ze'chō bakutōso," pp. 22, 84.

¹⁹¹ "Hitotsuma renjō" p. 55.

¹⁹² Ito 2002, p. 84.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 78; Ito 2011b, p. 163; Jones 2002, pp. 20-21; Shamoon 2004, p. 97.

¹⁹⁴ Fujimoto 1998, p. 43.

¹⁹⁵ Kelts is quoting a 'self-confessed otaku of pornographic *manga* and anime,' referred to as Hoshizaki, in relation to (presumably) men's *ero manga*. Kelts 2006, pp. 129, 131.

masochistic fantasy share a common vocabulary of contrived derogative words and abusive actions. The stylised, extremely formal vocabulary that Chika and Shinobu use in their role as S/M queens in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* or that Wanda adopts throughout *Venus in Furs*, is just as forced as the guttural language used by the ladies' comic rapist. In “Ze'chō bakutōsō,” Mika's rapists repeatedly call her derogatory names along the lines of ‘bitch pig’ while screaming out hard-core pornography clichés such as ‘how does it feel?’ and ‘take it all!’¹⁹⁶

As stated at the outset of this chapter, the repeated and seemingly casual depiction of rape and rape fantasy is a confronting one. Fujimoto suggests that rape fantasy, especially fantasies that involve gang rapes, allow Japanese women to psychologically let go.¹⁹⁷ It only through being completely overcome with no way to resist that she (both the reader and protagonist) is able to ‘surrender herself to pleasure without feeling she has become dirty.’¹⁹⁸ Williams notes a similar dynamic in American S/M film pornography:

For only by playing the role of the ‘good girl’ that is, by pretending to be good and only coerced into sex – does the woman who is coerced and punished get the ‘bad’ girl’s pleasure. She gets this pleasure *as if* against her will and thus *as if* she were still a good girl.¹⁹⁹

This is also a familiar trope in masochistic scenarios in, for example, the powerful company executive who finds release at S/M clubs such as the one in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name* by surrendering control for the duration of the session. In this way, masochistic scenarios and rape scenes in pornography are seen as an outlet for ‘inherent but never openly acknowledged sexual

¹⁹⁶ “Ze'chō bakutōsō,” pp. 59-79; see also Ito 2011b, p. 159. For more on the ‘sounds’ of pornography and erotica see Williams 1999, pp. 121-126.

¹⁹⁷ Fujimoto 1998, pp. 73-74.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 73; Shamooin 2004, p. 97.

¹⁹⁹ Williams 1999, p. 209. Italics in original.

desire.²⁰⁰ The woman protagonist is able to 'defeat the system' by 'turning punishment into pleasure.'²⁰¹

In comparison to the heterosexual ladies' comics that have been the focus of this chapter, depictions of rape fantasy in boys' love or BL and *yaoi* narratives are seen as an expression of 'pure' love.²⁰² In the case of these homo-erotic *manga*, readers are free to 'imagine love' between two beautiful boy protagonists in a 'sentimental way' free from the frightening reality of heterosexual sex such as pregnancy and disease.²⁰³ In her work on *yaoi manga* as pornography for women, Nagaike describes homo-erotic rape as being used:

to smoothly organise the narrative of *yaoi* in which two men (or boys) gradually realise they are meant to be together: with the *seme* ['dominant' partner] is able to express his absolute love for the *uke* ['submissive' partner] though the act of raping him, the raped *uke* – who previously considered the *seme* as just a close friend – gradually becomes aware that the *seme*'s love and desires are elevated to such an extent that he cannot do anything but rape; consequently, the *uke* is touched by the *seme*'s effusive love and falls in love with him.²⁰⁴

In this way, the rape fantasy has ceased to be a transgressive sex act and has been reborn as a violent and uncontrollable out-pouring of love.

While in the ladies' comics by Watanabe introduced above, rape is not necessarily the result of 'pure love,' it can be the trigger for this to occur. The rapes and gang rapes depicted in "Hitotsuma renjō" and "Ze'chō bakutōsō" are acts of revenge. In "Hitotsuma renjō," Misa is raped as an act of reprisal against her politician husband. Nevertheless by the end of the

²⁰⁰ Fujimoto 1992, pp. 73-74; Jones 2002, p. 21; Williams 1999, p. 209.

²⁰¹ Williams 1999, p. 209.

²⁰² Nagaike 2003, p. 95.

²⁰³ Shamoon 2004, p. 97. The beautiful boys of BL and *yaoi* aimed predominately at women readers should not be confused with homoerotic comics written for homosexual men. Takeuchi 2010, pp. 93-94.

²⁰⁴ Nagaike 2003, p. 95. For more on the use of the terms 'seme' and 'uke' see Chapter 1 of this thesis.

narrative, once the rapes have turned into loving (masochistic) sex, Misa finally has the child she has desired for the past five years of her marriage – a child that is, as quoted above, the product of her only love. Likewise, Mika, the protagonist of “Ze’chō bakutōsō” is raped by a rival crew of truck drivers in an attempt to frighten her out of the truck-driving business. For Mika, the rapes that she experiences are almost something that must be endured – initially as she is only a child when she is first mistreated and then because she is either drugged or overpowered by four or more men twice her size. Mika is not entirely powerless in these situations, using her teeth and refusal to show pleasure to fight back. However, it is her lovers, first her late husband and then Tsuyoshi, who rescue her from scenes of gang rape, swoop her up into the cabs of their *deco*-trucks and drive her away to safety.

Conclusion

In her work on cinematic hard core pornography Williams notes that:

We encounter a profoundly ‘escapist’ genre that distracts audiences from the deeper social or political causes of the disturbed relations between the sexes; and yet paradoxically, if it is to distract effectively, a popular genre must address some of the real experiences and needs of its audience.²⁰⁵

Ladies’ comic *mangaka* Ide, introduced in Ito’s work on non-sexually explicit ladies’ comics above, makes the same observation. Ide, who is well known for both her ladies’ comics and *shōjo manga* states that, ‘you can use your imagination to draw girls’ comics, but the readers of ladies’ comics are adult women and you must have experience in everyday matters.’²⁰⁶ The small details of everyday life which are provided in ladies’ comics so as to ground the reader in the reality of the narrative are, as we have seen, present in the works of Kōno, Yamada and Kanehara. These details include the bead under a chair mentioned above or the need to eat and to defecate or

²⁰⁵ Williams 1999, pp. 154-155.

²⁰⁶ Ito 2011a, p. 11.

even a character's regular periods. In *Hebi ni piasu* Lui is amazed at her body's need to defecate although she is living on nothing but beer and bar snacks. This wonder at the body's regular functions is also shared by Kōno's protagonists, such as Akiko and Fumiko, who are endlessly astonished by their periods which arrive like clockwork. Both of these bodily functions, not to mention the bodily fluids that drench most ladies' comic characters in the sexually explicit *manga* that has been the focus of this chapter, remind us once again of Kristeva's theory of abjection in *Powers of Horror*. Furthermore, these prosaic matters form a touchstone for the (masochistic/rape) fantasy that inevitably follow their depictions.

In masochistic ladies' comics it is difficult to track elements of masochistic theory such as the contract and education due, mainly, to the short length of each *manga*. We have already seen that, while the masochistic contract is rarely, if ever, depicted as being enacted between two or more ladies' comic characters, there is an unspoken agreement between the ladies' comic *mangaka* and her readers. Unlike *Hebi ni piasu* which, for the most part, rejects Deleuze's theories of masochism, ladies' comics are the pictorial representation of pure fantasy. Williams argues that, contrary to Laura Mulvey's analysis, pornography, for both men and women, relies upon the 'unconscious projective identification with the pornographic female.'²⁰⁷ The hard core film viewer is rarely, if ever, asked to identify with the male whose 'activity and pleasure [...] are generally taken for granted.'²⁰⁸ This is the same with ladies comics as, as we have seen, the signs of masculine pleasure, even presence, are often erased entirely in the face of the depiction of the woman protagonist's orgasm and sexual pleasure. Through identifying with the woman protagonist of S/M ladies' comics, the reader 'actively seek[s] her own pleasure through the masochistic ritual.'²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Williams 1999, p. 208.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 208.

²⁰⁹ Noyes 1997, p. 41; Williams 1999, p. 208.

Conclusion

‘I realised my tears had stopped.’ Kanehara Hitomi, *Hebi ni piasu*.¹

At the end of *Venus in Furs* Severin declares that he was ‘cured’ from his masochistic tendencies by a treatment that was ‘cruel but radical.’² The education of his chosen consort/partner/torturer Wanda is so successful that she no longer feels anything for Severin save contempt; where once she was ‘passionately’ in love, by the end of the affair Wanda feels that her feelings have been ‘stifled’ by Severin’s ‘romantic desire and insane passion.’³ In her last letter to Severin, Wanda writes:

What about you? Your life will sure not lack sunshine if your imagination has ceased to govern you and those other qualities that first attracted me to you have gained the upper hand [...]. I hope that my whip has cured you, and the treatment, cruel though it was, has proved effective.⁴

Upon reading this sentiment, Severin sinks into a daydream and remembers fondly of the woman he had loved, the furs she had worn, the whip that she had wielded and the suffering that he had (willingly) endured. Sacher-Masoch’s text shows that at the end of each masochistic scenario or enterprise both partners enter into a period of reflection and gentle affection. This process, known as ‘aftercare’ is also recommended in BDSM circles. The ‘dominant’ partner is encouraged to cuddle and be tender to their ‘submissive’ partner, especially after prolonged acts of bondage, beating, humiliation and the like.⁵

This period of reflection is visible throughout the texts that have been examined in the thesis. In “Yōjigari,” Akiko walks to her local bath the day after experiencing a severe beating at the hands

¹ *Hebi ni piasu*, p. 95; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 99.

² Sacher-Masoch 1991, p. 271.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁴ *Ibid.*,

⁵ Williams 2007, p. 339.

of Sasaki. After Fumiko is beaten by her husband with a fishing rod in “Ari takaru” we are told that he treats her bruises and suggests that she take the day off work.⁶ Similarly in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, Chika and Shinobu take care to treat each client with respect once each S/M session has come to a conclusion.⁷ Their arrogant dominatrix, Queen persona stays firmly locked behind the doors of the scenario rooms at the S/M club. While it seems that each time Lui has sex with the sadistic Shiba in *Hebi ni piasu* the tone of the narrative darkens. However, at the end of the narrative there is the promise of relief. After Lui takes control of her relationship with Shiba, shifting it from one of sadistic dictation to one of masochistic cooperation, she is depicted sitting in the bright morning sun.⁸ Here she is able to engage in reflection of the recent past. Lastly, every ladies’ comic narrative, no matter how distressing the subject matter might be, ends on a positive note – whether it be a promise for the protagonists to meet again, a marriage or relationship as in “Ze’chō bakutōsō,”⁹ or a pregnancy as is the case in “Hitotsuma renjō.”¹⁰

In this chapter, rather than a typical conclusion, I wish to enter into a period of ‘aftercare’ similar to that which concludes a successful masochistic encounter. The texts that have been examined in this thesis form part of a masochistic genealogy. The work of Kōno, Yamada and Kanehara showcase different aspects of masochism that follow the theories proposed by Deleuze, Reik and Numa. Each narrative presents women who choose to inhabit positions of active power within the masochistic landscape. For these women protagonists, masochism is more than skin deep. It governs their interpersonal actions and the place in which they exist in society. Through their rejection of traditional women’s places in favour of the small masochistic space, these characters can be seen as challenging pre-existing hegemonies. Rather than perpetuating an image of cowed and obedient Japanese wife locked in a sadistic, misogynistic marriage or relationship, the

⁶ “Ari takaru,” p. 49; “Ant Swarm,” p. 182.

⁷ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o-name*, pp. 15-16; “Kneel Down and Lick my Feet,” p. 196.

⁸ *Heb ni piasu*, p. 114; *Snakes and Earrings*, p. 118; Kanehara and Watanabe 2004, pp. 125-126.

⁹ “Ze’chō bakutōsō” p. 105.

¹⁰ “Hitotsuma renjō” p. 55; Ito 2002, p. 74.

narratives examined in the thesis present women characters who choose to inhabit a certain position in the masochistic landscape. For these characters, masochism offers an active position of power – dominance couched in the terms of apparent submission.

The masochistic narratives that have been examined in this thesis occur within small confined spaces on the fringes of Japanese society. In the work of Kōno and in many ladies' comic narratives these settings occupy what can be seen as traditional women's spaces. Kanehara's and Yamada's narratives occupy small back rooms and cramped apartments in and around Tokyo. It is inside these small spaces, such as the soundproof room, the S/M club scenario room and the tattoo parlour, that the women protagonists in each text are free to construct their masochistic fantasies and to act out their masochistic desires with (or without) the help of their chosen consort or partner. By entering these enclosed rooms the protagonists, and by extension the reader, agree to witness and take part in any number of horrific and violent acts.

Sacher-Masoch's 'Venus' is always cold. At the beginning of *Venus in Furs*, the goddess herself complains that the northern hemisphere is too cold for her, and that those who reside away from the equator do not know how to love.¹¹ Sacher-Masoch's Venus is constantly covered in furs. These furs are not used to give an aura of power – for example, ermines for royalty and purity; bearskins for power¹² – but to provide warmth.¹³ Similarly, unless Kōno's protagonists are engaged in masochistic sex acts, they are cold. However, the furs that Venus covers herself with are not solely utilitarian. A blanket or cloak (or, as in Kōno's "Gekijō," a *kotatsu*) would suffice to warm her icy flesh. These furs are part of the trappings of the masochistic enterprise. In the same way that Severin insisted that Wanda wear furs in *Venus in Furs*, Chika and Shinobu's S/M

¹¹ Sacher-Masoch 1991, pp. 144-145.

¹² Deleuze 1991, p. 47; Impelluso 2004, p. 228. In a Japanese context, we might think of the figure of Takabatake Kashō's sophisticated and dangerous modern girl wearing an elegant fur stole around her neck.

¹³ Deleuze 1991, p. 53; Sacher-Masoch, *Venus in Furs* 1991, p. 149.

club clients expect both girls to be perfectly turned out in black lingerie and spike-heeled stiletto shoes. Likewise, we have seen in Chapter 5 that when the S/M genre of ladies' comics became popular, *mangaka* felt that it was important that they familiarise themselves with the clothing and necessary accoutrements of masochistic sex, such as bondage gear and sex toys, so as to draw each item accurately.

Sacher-Masoch stated that the figure of the woman in furs (in 'regal ermine, in bourgeois rabbit fur or in rustic lamb's fleece'¹⁴) who was to inspire him in both his literary and masochistic endeavours¹⁵ emerged from his growing awareness of:

the mysterious affinity between cruelty and lust, and then of the natural enmity and hatred between the sexes which is temporarily overcome by love, only to reappear subsequently with elemental force, turning one of the partners into a hammer and the other into an anvil.¹⁶

The construction of one partner as hammer and the other as anvil can be seen as part of the course of education that each consort/partner/torturer embarks on under the tutelage of the masochist.

Throughout the thesis, occasional reference has been made to the production of cruel *femme fatales* in the work of Tanizaki. Mizuta Lippit proposes that the masochistic Tanizakian hero does not pursue beautiful women for 'the sake of erotic fulfilment' but rather he pursues 'an unattainable absolute, the symbolic essence of feminine beauty.'¹⁷ Whereas Tanizaki's narratives tend to focus on the education process Kōno's narratives present the consort/partner/torturer as already having undergone this training. In "Yōjigari" and "Ari takaru" the protagonists are in

¹⁴ McNeil 1991, Appendix I, p. 276.

¹⁵ In a contract between Sacher-Masoch and Mrs Fanny Pistor, he requests that she should 'undertak[e] to wear furs as often as possible, especially when she is being cruel.' McNeil 1991, Appendix II p. 277.

¹⁶ McNeil 1991, Appendix I p. 276.

¹⁷ Mizuta Lippit 1977, p. 230.

established relationships that can be described as ‘classically masochistic.’ Both Akiko and Fumiko’s respective lovers are fully aware of the role they are expected to play and, for the most part, happily comply. As we saw in Chapter 3, this education process is explored from the perspective of the consort/partner/torturer in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o name* in the context of Chika’s ‘on-the-job-training’ at the S/M club. In contrast, in Chapter 4 we saw that in Kanehara’s texts the characteristics of masochism that Deleuze formulates, namely education and the contract are inverted, or discarded entirely. Rather than undergo a process of education so as to become Lui’s consort/partner/torturer, both Ama and Shiba have a profound influence on Kanehara’s protagonist. This influence manifests as changes to Lui’s physical body: first through the process of piercing and splitting her tongue so that it matches Ama’s and secondly with the tattoo that represents both men comprising of Ama’s dragon and Shiba’s *kirin*. They are literally under Lui’s skin.

We have seen that masochistic acts leave their marks on the bodies that experience them. In “Yōjigari” Akiko is careful to hide her battered skin when at the public baths while in “Ari takaru” Fumiko revels in the idea of showing her future daughter the marks that Matsuda leaves on her flesh. During the scenarios acted out at the S/M club in *Hizamazuite ashi wo o name* Chika and Shinobu are careful to pull the strokes they give with their whips so as to avoid leaving marks on their client’s bodies.¹⁸ The marks left on Lui’s body in *Hebi ni piasu* in the form of tattoos and piercings, are more permanent, as are the other body modifications that feature repeatedly in Kanehara’s work, such as food refusal and wrist cutting. As noted in Chapter 5, the emphasis on women’s bodies is a hallmark of ladies’ comics, without which the genre would cease to function. Each masochistic act is depicted in graphic detail, down to the last drop of perspiration.

¹⁸ *Hizamazuite ashi wo o name*, pp. 13-14; “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” p. 192.

In this final paragraph of the thesis I will return to my original claim that masochism, imperfect though it may be, offers the women protagonists of the texts discussed - and the women who read these texts - the opportunities to experience, either in fantasy or real life, a degree of sexual freedom that is denied them by the hegemonic discourse of the 'good wife, wise mother.' Like Orbaugh and Bullock, I too wish to foreground the fact that the emphasis on women's bodies in terms of masochism and violent sex (amongst a long list of other disturbing themes) is a means of escape from this archetype. When the women protagonists depicted in the works of Kōno, Yamada, Kanehara and various ladies' comic *mangaka* are in the throes of passion they could not be further away from the state sanctioned ideal of Japanese womanhood. Masochism permits women the right to desire, the right to fantasy and the right to heightened sexual pleasure. No longer good wife or wise mother, the woman in the masochistic relationship transgresses all discursive boundaries of femininity in Japan.

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