People out of Place: Emotional Geography, Postmodern Identity and Gender in Three Contemporary Japanese Texts

By

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Declaration

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters, in the Graduate Programme in English Studies, Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, Paige Kendra Frankson, declare that:

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2.   This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines contemporary Japanese notions of place, gender and identity as discussed in three texts by Japanese and Japanese-descended authors. The texts under examination include Kiyoshi Kurosawa's film *Tokyo Sonata* (2008), Haruki Murakami's novel *After Dark* (2007) and Japanese-American author Ruth Ozeki's novel *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013). Within each text, I will discuss how the author or filmmaker's conception of location affects, and is affected by, their characters' shifting experience of identity and gender. I begin with a brief exploration of the history of Japan's exposure to the West, and the Orientalist notions which have been perpetuated about Japan which contribute to the image of Japan as other. Thereafter I examine theories of emotional geography, which is the exploration of the emotional connections between self, setting and society at large. I then tie this theoretical perspective with conceptions of the fluidity of gender and postmodern identity's imaginings of the fractured self. Each text progressively widens the spatial areas of interest – from Kurosawa's concern for the home, Murakami's focus on the city, and Ozeki's discussion of trans-oceanic and imaginative spaces – while emphasising the dynamic interplay of place, person and performativity within each of these spaces. Each of these arenas of thought are linked through their interest in the destruction of the rigid boundaries governing human experience, and I will argue that each of the texts under analysis presents a profound observation of not only what it means to be Japanese today, but also offers a touching and hopeful case for shared humanity on a global scale.

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Introduction

> Now, do you really imagine that the Japanese people, as they are presented to us in art, have any existence? If you do, you have never understood Japanese art at all. The Japanese people are the deliberate self-conscious creation of certain individual artists. If you set a picture by Hokusai, or Hokkei, or any of the great native painters, beside a real Japanese gentleman or lady, you will see that there is not the slightest resemblance between them. The actual people who live in Japan are not unlike the general run of English people; that is to say, they are extremely commonplace, and have nothing curious or extraordinary about them. In fact the whole of Japan is a pure invention. There is no such country, there are no such people [….] The Japanese people are, as I have said, simply a mode of style, an exquisite fancy of art. And so, if you desire to see a Japanese effect, you will not behave like a tourist and go to Tokio. On the contrary, you will stay at home, and steep yourself in the work of certain Japanese artists, and then, when you have absorbed the spirit of their style, and caught their imaginative manner of vision, you will go some afternoon and sit in the Park or stroll down Piccadilly, and if you cannot see an absolutely Japanese effect there, you will not see it anywhere. (Wilde, 1921, pp.44-46)

In a Socratic dialogue titled "The Decay of Lying", written by Oscar Wilde, two characters known as Cyril and Vivian discuss the degree to which art represents reality. In the above quotation, Vivian explains that Japanese art is merely a fictional representation of actual people, and that what Western nations have come to know about Japan, through its art, is a greatly skewed representation of the country, its people and its culture. The Japanese, Vivian explains, are wonderfully ordinary, and have merely been rendered exotic through the act of representation. It is this notion which lies at the heart of this dissertation. Through art – and, I would add, ideology and discourse – Japan has endured a long history of "Othering"; as its cultural differences have been amplified to create the image of a nation wholly dissimilar to those found in the West. In the wake of modernity and globalism, some of these notions of 'Japan as other' have dwindled; however, a number of cultural misunderstandings are still perpetuated today. My intention in this dissertation, through the examination of three Japanese texts, is to understand how contemporary Japanese (and diasporic) writers and filmmakers portray 'their' Japan through the heartfelt narratives of their characters, the spaces they inhabit, and the ways in which these characters make sense of themselves as both Japanese people and citizens of the world.

The texts which I have chosen for my project draw from a judicious selection and range of media, locations and situations. I will be looking at two contemporary Japanese texts – Kiyoshi Kurosawa's film *Tokyo Sonata* (2008) and Haruki Murakami's novel *After Dark* (2007) – as well as Japanese-American author Ruth Ozeki's novel *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013). I will engage with these texts by examining them through the lenses of emotional geography, which focuses on the located nature of human life, gender performativity and postmodern identity. These three, interrelated systems of thought are linked by their unified appeal for fluidity and the blurring of rigid boundaries of identity in terms of self-other and self-world relationships. My aim is thus an understanding of how the creators of the chosen texts endeavour to situate their characters within specific places and within themselves.

The Changing Face of Japan

Japan, as Western consumers of film and writing have come to know it, is remarkably exotic. Mark McClelland and Romit Dasgupta (2005, p.1) claim that novels such as Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* (1998), and films such as Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill: Volume 1* (2003) and Carl Rinsch's *47 Ronin* (2013) are extremely successful in the West because they play into our existing visions of Japan. These works, while loosely based on historical fact, do very little to add to our understanding of Japanese culture and society, which, like every other nation, is more than its represented aesthetic history, and is continually changing in the wake of local and global movements. Like any other globalised country, Japan experiences both major and minor cultural shifts over time due to ever-changing ideologies from within the country, along with influences arising from our increasingly globalised world.

Any given nation, at any time, grapples with tradition and modernity, but it is in Japan where this struggle is strongly evident; as Sven Steinmo (2010, p.88) claims, "Japan is both one of the most modern countries in the world and at the same time it is a remarkably traditional society". The country honours and maintains its old ways, yet is a global leader of technological advancement. The Japanese are bastions of tradition, yet they have birthed transgressive, groundbreaking forms of film and art. Japan is a country riddled with strong contradictions and contrasts, which are propagated both inside of Japan and by foreign nations. Many ancient and modern ideas about Japan, which are often greatly exaggerated for entertainment or political purposes, are constantly reiterated in order to render exotic Japan's

culture, history and aesthetics. Edward Said (2014, p.190) asserts that the perpetuation of such notions creates "a world elsewhere, apart from the ordinary attachments, sentiments and values of *our* world in the West", and the Orientalist notions which create this world ensure that we are barred from a deeper understanding and experience of many Asian countries.

Many essentialist notions of Japanese culture and identity are maintained in conjunction with Orientalist notions of the nation. Said (2014, p.1) defines Orientalism as "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience". By this reasoning, the numerous nations of Asia are reduced to a single cultural entity, known collectively as the Orient. The primary function of the Orient in Western conception is to serve as an exaggerated image of the Other, bearing characteristics which dramatically oppose those embodied by the West. According to Ziauddin Sardar (1999, p.4), this view of the East was conceptualised not out of objective fact, but to enhance the West's self-image, deliberately and inaccurately constructing a skewed portrayal of Eastern peoples and their cultures. The Orient, Sardar (1999, p.3) states, symbolised "all that the West was not and some of what the West actually desired". The Orient was thus seen as the site of barbaric violence as well as mysticism and exoticism.

Japan has, for many years, fallen victim to Orientalist ideologies, which are still perpetuated in the twenty-first century. The isolated island-nation has traditionally been viewed by the West as an exotic land of gorgeous aesthetics, exemplified by tea-ceremonies and cherry-blossom gardens, while it is simultaneously portrayed as a fearsome nation with a legendary militaristic history (Sardar, 1999, p.111). Sardar notes that this selective view of Japan has morphed and transformed and, coupled with essentialist notions of Zen spirituality, produced an image of Japanese people as "emotionless, robot-like people". During the Dotcom bubble period of the late 1990s, which saw the exponential rise in Japan's computer and corporate industries, the country's technological and business prowess allowed the propagation of a neo-Orientalism which Toshio Ueno (1997) calls "techno-orientalism", wherein Japan is classified as an "automated other", with Japanese people represented as more machine than human, cold and emotionless, churning out products and services at an inhuman rate.

Propagation of such essentialist notions of Japan not only originate from outside of the country, but are also disseminated internally on a large scale. Texts ranging from books and films to organisational brochures perpetuate supposedly quintessential characteristics and

behaviours which they claim are inherent in all Japanese people. These texts which attempt to define the constituents of so-called 'Japaneseness' are referred to as *Nihonjinron*. Yoshio Sugimoto (1999, p.82) states that fundamentally, *Nihonjinron* presents "a set of value orientations that the Japanese are supposed to share". These values are supposedly common to all Japanese people, across time, and serve to highlight the perceived differences between Japan and the Western world. Sugimoto (1999, p.83) suggests two differing strands within *Nihonjinron* literature: the nationalistic forms, and those writings which criticise them. Nationalist writings originate from anti-western attitudes, and seek to glorify traits which were innately 'Japanese', which should be protected from Western influence, and conceal the undesirable conflicts within Japanese society. The negative, critical *Nihonjinron* writing focuses on undesirable characteristics of Japanese people, such as "'having a narrow islander mentality', 'lacking individuality' and 'hiding under the cloak of ambiguity'" (Sugimoto, 1999, p.84). The only shared quality between these divergent branches of *Nihonjinron*, according to Sugimoto (1990, 83), is their view of Japanese culture as homogenous and static.

Joyce Gelb and Marian Lief Palley (1994, p.5) believe that some measure of Japan's desire for cultural uniformity stems from their long history of isolation from foreign influence. Duncan McCargo (2000, p.14) asserts that during the Edo period, Japan largely abstained from contact with other countries. During this period, a vast majority of Europeans living in Japan were expelled and Christian practices were banned, until the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry's American fleet in 1853. The Meiji period, from 1868 to 1912, saw the ending of the *shogun* feudal system, as Japan opened up and began to trade with foreign nations. By doing so the country's rulers ensured that, through engaging with the Western world, the Japanese could adopt Western scientific knowledge and technology; and Japan thus became the first non-Western industrialised country (McCargo, 2000, pp.18-19). Along with this, Japan also adopted various liberal, political and cultural ideals from the West – some of which they were compelled to adopt (De Vos & Wagatsuma, 2006, pp.119-120). After its defeat during World War II, Japan adopted a new constitution, which was imposed upon them by the United States and was designed in emulation of Western societies (McCargo, 2000, 27), leading to a Japan which is, at all levels, from government to home life, influenced explicitly or implicitly by Western ideology.

During, and indeed after, the introduction of Western science, technology and culture, many scholars, both Japanese and Western, have debated Japan's need for foreign intervention in order to attain modernisation. George De Vos & Hiroshi Wagatsuma, (2006, p.120) claim that problems of national and cultural identity originated from Japan's efforts to become modern and 'Westernised', as this "conflict involved national pride and the desire for cultural borrowing – in short, the need to be both modern and Japanese". Kazuo Kawai (1960, pp.234-248, in McCargo, 2000, p.29) posits three hypotheses which represent attitudes toward Japan's quest for modernisation through emulation of the West: the conservative hypothesis, which stated that true Japanese modernisation could only be attained through the preservation of Japan's traditional culture; the liberal hypothesis, a contending theory which calls for an integration of all Westernised changes in order for Japan to be equal to the West; and lastly the pragmatic approach, which holds that Japan needs to maintain a balance between traditional Japanese culture and Western ideas in order to attain a successful form of modernisation.

Japan differentiates itself from the West by upholding certain salient qualities. According to McCargo (2000, p.60), two extremely prominent aspects of Japanese culture are collectivistic thinking and the maintenance of harmony within groups, and thus within society at large. Developmental psychologists Kazumi Sugimura and Shinichi Mizokami (2012, p.124) claim that collectivist philosophy holds to the belief that the needs or desires of the group and the individual are co-dependent, which has led to criticisms of conformity and the Japanese people's lack of agency. Japan's so-called collectivist nature is not as static or salient as it may appear, as Sugimura and Mizokami (2012) claim that Japanese adolescents especially are becoming increasingly more individualistic than the previous generation. This individualistic sense of self does not, however, undermine Japan's typically collectivist ideology. Instead, Sugimura and Mizokami (2012, p.124) assert that these adolescents maintain a sense of "individualistic collectivism", combining the society's collectivistic values while pursuing and developing their own autonomy.

Sugimura and Mizokami (2012, p.125) claim that for Japanese people, the group's sense of harmony is more important than an individual's personal inclinations. Joan Lachkar (2014, p.302) refers to this as "reverse narcissism" – an overarching pull to fulfil the needs of the group before the needs of the "omnipotent, grandiose self". Both McCargo (2000, p.61) and Lachkar (2014, p.304) point to the Japanese notion of *honne*, an individual's true feelings, or

true self, and *tatamae,* the public façade. McCargo emphasises the legitimacy of both selves, as *tatamae* must be maintained in order to preserve *wa*, or group harmony. Lachkar (2014, p.304) speculates that the *tatamae* is constructed in order to protect the true self from embarrassment or public humiliation. McCargo (2000, p.61) states that, while this mode of being may appear unusual or even dishonest to Westerners, "[to] the Japanese, however, operating on two levels of 'reality' may seem entirely normal".

Dissent and disagreement, especially voiced by women, is greatly discouraged in Japanese society (Gelb & Palley, 1994, p.14). Gelb and Palley (1994, p.3) assert that traditional gender norms and foreign 'Western' philosophies of autonomy often clash in the search for modern Japanese gendered identity. Many of Japan's traditional ideas around gender stem from religions such as Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism, as these religions proclaim that gender rightfully segregates humans according to their differing talents and abilities. Confucian ideals, known as "The Three Obediences", dictated the allegiances to which all Japanese people were bound (Gelb & Palley, 1994, p.3). While young men put their loyalty to their lords above the needs of their family, women existed wholly for the male members of their family, as they were obedient first to their fathers, then to their husbands, and later, to their sons. Haruko Okano (1995, p.19) states that these religious principles were taken over by the state, and contributed largely to Japan's patriarchal society.

Women are socialised into very specific roles within Japanese society. Within the media, Midori Fukunishi Suzuki (1995, p.79) claims that the ideal young Japanese woman is one who is "young and 'cute' or beautiful". Suzuki (1995, p.80) reveals that female characters are typically depicted as "dependent, emotional, romantic, cute, tender, warm, dedicated, submissive, cheerful and peaceful", and this characterisation is based on traditional Japanese views of femininity. Women who do not conform to this ideal are portrayed in a negative or comedic light. Gelb and Palley (1994, p.9) state that women in Japan are expected to fulfil only the roles of wife and mother. Within the workforce, women have mostly occupied administrative positions, with very little hope of employment advancements. Women are expected to leave work once they marry, and devote all their time to their husbands and children. Although Japan has instituted legislature dictating the equal treatment of women in society, this legislature has been slow in penetrating the beliefs and attitudes of the Japanese people. McClelland and Dasgupta (2005, p.6) state that hegemonic gendered norms persist,

especially among heterosexual Japanese males, who seem less willing to accept increasingly diverse performances of femininity and masculinity.

McClelland and Dasgupta (2005, pp.2-3) note that, although much attention has been afforded to Japanese women and feminist movements in recent decades, much less consideration has been given to the modern Japanese man. Futoshi Taga (2005, p.153) states that the experiences of men are often taken as archetypal of human experience, whereas women's experiences are seen as markedly different, and thus worthy of inquiry. This downplays the variety and conflict arising in issues surrounding male experience and masculinity. McClelland and Dasgupta (2005, p.3) claim that discussions of the 'salaryman' the obsessively dedicated company worker, have dominated research and debates around Japanese masculinity, leaving very little room for explorations of alternative expressions of masculine identity. This narrow-minded opinion of masculinity, and indeed gender, is being dismantled in the wake of evolving feminist theory, which seeks to blur the rigid boundaries of gender, and globalism, which is greatly inclusive of most forms of identity.

Due to its increasing involvement with and contribution to the global community, many of these perpetuated notions of Japan, both positive and negative, have been revisited and reimagined. Sugimura and Mizokami (2012, p.137) state that "the processes of identity formation is becoming increasingly globalized" – a statement which Japan has both embraced and contested. As a country which now encourages foreign trade and exchange, De Vos and Wagatsuma, (2006, p.121) claim that on average, Japanese people require at least 2,200 foreign words within daily conversations, and an extra 3,000 words are necessary for sophisticated conversation.

Adolescents in Japan, as with the youth of most nations, are constantly grappling with both traditional ways of being, as well as newer, more globalised modes of living. Judy Park (2011, p.17) notes that Japanese adolescents are resistant to the rigid lifestyles enacted by older generations, choosing instead to emphasise a life filled with enjoyment and freedom, and thus dress and act in ways which serve to visually separate them from the previous generation. The image of Japanese youth, with their brightly-coloured hair and clothes, also forms another stereotypical portrayal of the Japanese, which is that of the anime and manga fan, typically found in Tokyo districts such as Harajuku and Akihabara. These places, and their associations, are well-known not only within Japan, but also around the world.

Emotional Geography, Gender and Postmodern Identity

In order to understand how place and space are utilised and developed within my chosen texts, a look into humanist imaginings of spatiality is required. Humanist geography became popular during the 1970s, as geographers were concerned with the outright 'objective', empirical focus within the discipline of geography. Tim Cresswell (2004, p.20) states that human geography's concern is not merely physical space, but the individual's notion of place as a "way of being-in-the-world". H. J. de Blij, Alexander Murphy and Erin Fouberg (2007, p.8) state that the focus of human geography is, essentially, our subjective experience of place, especially "how people make places, how we organise space and society, how we interact with each other in places and across space, and how we make sense of others and ourselves in our locality, region and world". Geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan, Anne Buttimer and David Seamon sought to inject the discipline with a sense of humanity, and placed emphasis on the emotional subjectivity of place rather than just cold rationality (Cresswell, 2004, pp.19-20).

According to Tuan (1979, p.388), the humanistic view of geography seeks to understand and explain "people's spatial feelings and ideas in the stream of experience". This connection between people, place and feeling is captured in the spirit of the sub-discipline of emotional geography. Liz Bondi, Joyce Davidson and Mick Smith (2007, p.3) state that the crux of emotional geography is its "attempts to understand emotion – experientially and conceptually – in terms of its socio-spatial mediation and articulation rather than as entirely interiorised subjective mental states". Emotions are thus not only viewed as internal states, but as lived and highly located experiences. Tuan (1977, p.10) notes that emotion is just as important as rationale with regard to experience, as both are necessary to know and develop a sense of place. Emotions and emotionality are typically conceived of as psycho-social in nature, existing only internally or interpersonally. However, these emotional interchanges are played out upon various stages, interchanged between self and other, as well as between self and location.

For Bondi, Davidson and Smith (2007, p.2), emotional geography imbues the typically empirical specialisation of geography with "a sense of emotional involvement with people and places, rather than emotional detachment from them". Tuan (1974, p.93) coined the term 'topophilia' to describe our affective relationships to the physical places we have inhabited.

The degree of affect, he asserts, can vary in intensity, from brief enjoyment of the aesthetics of a particular scene, to the deeply emotional ties held within and around a specific place. Liz Bondi and Joyce Davidson (2007, p.20) describe the relationship between people and the places they inhabit as "powerful and contingent, persistent and mutable".

Tuan (1977, p.136) states that intimate experiences are located firstly within the intimate parts of our beings, and are then enacted in physical space. These experiences are ineffable, for we are not entirely aware of their formation or existence, but they are always formed within and tied to place. Emotions, Joyce Davidson and Christine Milligan (2004, p.523) claim that emotions have long been linguistically tied to spatiality, as "we speak of the 'heights' of joy and the 'depths' of despair, significant others are comfortingly *close* or distressingly *distant*". Tuan (1977, p.65) emphasises the notion of spaciousness in our emotional connection to the world, as "the world feels spacious and friendly when it accommodates our desires, and cramped when it frustrates them".

Spatial terminology, utilised across numerous disciplines, is greatly disputed and often contradictory. Amongst the various fields which investigate and analyse issues of spatiality, location or geography, the definitions of, and indeed boundaries between the terms 'place' and 'space' are often highly contested, as these terms are often used interchangeably, or conversely, used to designate contradicting spaces. Tuan (1977, p.3) delineates these two concepts in terms of knowledge and experience, as "place is security, space is freedom". Place is thus the locations which are known to us, which we are comfortable in, to a degree, while space is largely unknown, dangerous, untamed and unconfined. While 'place' is essentially safe and familiar, it is also restricted, and allows for limited movement, and although space is dangerous and leaves us exposed, it also suggests openness and potential. Doreen Massey (1994, p.9) adds that the space/place dichotomy defines place as "local, specific, concrete, descriptive", while space is embodied in its opposing terms, as "general, universal, theoretical/abstract/conceptual".

According to Tuan (1977, p.52) space is linked to freedom and movement. The openness of space allows for ample motion, and the freedom of action. Space, Tuan notes (1977, p.6), can however become place, as undifferentiated spaces are cultivated and habituated, and imbued with personal value. Space is transformed into place when we are completely familiar with it, and it becomes meaningful (Tuan, 1977, p.136). Place is also very concrete and specific, such

as a bedroom, a home, a specific restaurant or a particular city, whereas space, Tuan (1977, p.34) notes, is much more abstract, such as the ocean, or a continent. Space is conceived through both the senses and through logical understanding, as Tuan (1977, p.16) observes that we may be able to see distances and places, but we can only imagine the vastness of continents and oceans.

Space, as a mostly abstract conception, is highly subjective, as our imagination of space does not necessarily need to be shared to become meaningful, nor does it require the presence of other people. Tuan (1977, p.59) suggests that our sense of space is intensified when we are alone. Whereas the presence of others requires us to limit our individual projections of space, and share in the projections of others, solitude grants us "a sense of immensity". Solitude, for Tuan (1977, p.61), is not entirely dependent on the number of people inhabiting a particular space, but also on a sense of "busy-ness", within both a particular place and within our minds.

Place, as mentioned, is conceived of as notably more concrete than space. Cresswell (2004, p.7) states that, at its core, place is simply "a meaningful location". Cresswell's view of place (2004, p.11) is "a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world", thus our 'sense of place' imbues a physical location with personalisation and subjectivity. John Agnew (1987, in Cresswell, 2004, p.11) claims that when we speak of "a sense of place", we refer to the emotional relationship we form with the places we inhabit. Our emotional interchanges and experiences within a place shape our understanding of that place. Tuan (1977, p.141) claims that "there are as many intimate places as there are occasions when human beings are truly connected", because each act or moment of emotional expression is located in or tied to a particular place. Cresswell (2004, p.10) states that a fundamental notion of place is that it requires habitation – as embodied beings, we are always *inside of* places.

The body is the primary element through which we experience place, both emotionally and rationally. Gill Valentine (1999, pp.48-49) asserts that the body is the first space to which we assign meaning, and is thus the instrument through which we experience space. The body is essentially the centre of our axial understanding of space, as Tuan (1977, p.35) notes that humans orient space around the body, moving backward or forward, left and right, stationary or in motion. Each individual is at the central point of his or her entire world, and thus organises their space in reference to their own body; as Tuan (1977, p.47) notes, "*I* am

always *here* [….] In contrast with the here where I am, *you* are *there* and *he* is *yonder*". The concept of distance is also important for interpersonal relations, as we are concerned with how far we are from important people, objects and places (Tuan, 1977, p.46). Distance is thus governed by the position of the self, and becomes the yardstick with which we measure the relative location of everything else.

Davidson and Milligan (2004, p.523) locate emotions, firstly within the body, noting that "our first and foremost, most immediate and intimately *felt* geography is the body". The body, then, is *a* place, the place in which emotions are generated and initially experienced. These embodied emotions are then shared and enacted between people and places. Our emotional connections are not only limited to the body and the places it currently inhabits, for though we exist in only a single *physical* space at any given moment, socially and ideologically, we exist not only within a single place, but within a number of places, each of which undeniably permeates the other.

Each place, regardless of its spatial dimensions is, fundamentally, a microcosm, a miniature representation of the world at large (Tuan, 1974, p.131). Following the writing of Neil Smith (1993, p.99), Valentine (2001, 7) suggests that thinking in terms of geographical scale is an effective manner of understanding how place is conceptualised at various levels, such as home, community and city. Each of these places serves as a site for particular actions or behaviours. For Cresswell (2004, p.102) and Massey (1994, p.5), place is greatly influenced by what lies beyond its borders, borders which are only very faintly defined, and are extremely permeable. As Smith notes that social interactions within one level influence the other, place is thus a dynamic entity, subject to changes from within and without. Bondi and Davidson (2004, p.23) promote a messy understanding of place and an openness to "the radical otherness of 'disorderly' spatial experiences". This 'extroverted' sense of place acknowledges a place's ties to the world at large, establishing a porous connection between the global and the local.

According to Tuan (1977, p.54), if space is motion, place is the desire to pause. Tuan (1977, p.161) thus defines place as "whatever stable object catches our attention". Massey (1994, p.146), however, disagrees with Tuan's understanding of the fixity of place, as she insists that globalism and international exchange gives rise to an ambiguity in the definition of place. Globalism and the merging and blurring of cultural, national, and societal boundaries have

caused uncertainty of both identity and spatiality. It is this sense of uncertainty, Massey (1994, p.151) notes, that causes us to seek a sense of stability in place. We feel the need for fixity and a stable experience of place and a secure identity amidst the wild, fast-paced turmoil of our lives today. This bond with stable place, or as Massey names it, 'rootedness', provides for the formalisation of identity. Massey (1994, p.151) rejects this idea as essentially evasive, as an escape from the dynamism of the world, as this idea conceives place as being separated from the movements of society, which are never stagnant or stationary, but are continually evolving.

Notions of essentialism and homogeneity of place such as those discussed above are often motivated by political and ideological goals, and these notions are continually being questioned within many theoretical frameworks. Ian Gregson (2004, p.4) quotes the work of poststructuralists such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes as the key theorists behind our continual preoccupation with "disbelief". A key point within postmodern thought is a deep-seated suspicion toward the structures or systems which permeate our lives. These systems, practised within both large and small scales of daily life, are so deeply embedded within our existence that we take them for granted, treating them as naturally occurring (Gregson, 2004, p.5). Gregson (2004, p.7) notes that philosophers such as Michel Foucault assert that various systems of thought present themselves as objective forms of theoretical knowledge, but are enacted as ideological systems, which Foucault calls 'discourses'. These discourses institute specific ideas and ideals, expressing them as normative and universal in order to mask their political nature.

David Harvey and Doreen Massey assert that discourses of place and space have come to be seen as tacit, presupposed concepts, whereas these concepts are actually constructed through time and social interaction. Harvey (1996, p.261) argues that "[place], in whatever guise, like space and time, is a social construct". Valentine (1999, p.47) states that our invention of place is evident in Said's notion of Orientalism. Valentine argues that although imagined spaces, like the Orient, are conceptual in nature, they have very real, material implications. For Massey (1994, p.2), conceptions of place and space, along with gender, are socially constructed. Because social relations are always changing, conceptions of place and space are dynamic and fluid. Thus, Massey (1994, p.3) claims, as each person experiences space differently, this leads to "a multiplicity of spaces: cross-cutting, intersecting, aligning with one another, or existing in relations of paradox or antagonism".

This dynamic view of space, Massey (1994, pp.154-155) explains, does not deny the exceptionality of place, but asserts that place is not derived purely from historical, static accounts, but from the sum of its social interactions, which coalesce at particular locations. Liz Bondi (2005, p.142) notes that the making of place is informed by "the particular and dynamic position within the complex of social relations that stretch far beyond any particular place". Thus, Massey asserts that we should see place as "moments in social networks and understandings", which are defined not only by events occurring within that place, but affected, and contributing to, the wider spaces around it. Cresswell (2004, pp.32-33) insists that place can be both a social construct and a pre-scientific fact of human life. Although it is impossible to speak of place without the socially constructed meanings with which it is associated, place exists whether or not we construct it. Cresswell adds:

> [Place] is a construction of humanity but a necessary one – one that human life is impossible to conceive of without. In other words, there was no 'place' before there was humanity but once we came into existence then place did too. (2004, p.33)

This 'messy' understanding of the fluidity and dynamism of human experience is also celebrated in postmodern conceptions of identity, which are, in many ways, tied to issues of spatiality. Postmodernism rejects the idea of a stable or secure sense of self; as Maggie MacLure (1996, p.274) states, postmodern thinking resists the notion of a core within identity. One of the aims of postmodern views of identity, postulated by Patti Lather (1997, p.288 in Atkinson, 2010, p.308), is to "unsettle readers into a sort of stammering knowledge". Postmodern conceptions of the self, Gregson (2004, p.6) states, are driven by "an archaic force that tears selves apart". This view of identity is essentially disordered, creating a sense of confusion with regard to the self, or in postmodern thinking, selves. Gregson (2004, p.42) suggests that postmodern philosophy regards the self as "eerily diminished or fissured".

This diminished self is not a cause for mourning, however, as it allows for a much more fluid sense of identity. Postmodernism embraces confusion and conflict; as Roger Frie (2011, p.46) notes, this perspective sees human experience as marked by contestation between multiple identities. This contestation occurs within the self and between self and other – two concepts which are never completely isolated; as the self, Elizabeth Atkinson (2010, p.310) observes, consists of *both* self *and* other. Postmodernism stresses the presence of the other within the self, as Gregson (2004, p.55) states:

Identity is supplanted by the experience of its own otherness and fragmentation: the separation of the self from itself that occurs because the self feels itself to be entirely different from the self that is represented in language.

Renowned philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1984, p.287) observes that the individual makes sense of the self through their interactions with the other:

I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another. The most important acts constituting self-consciousness are determined by a relationship toward another consciousness (toward a *thou*) [….] The very being of man (both external and internal) is the *deepest communion*. *To be* means *to communicate* [….] to be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary: looking inside himself, he looks *into the eyes of another* or *with the eyes of another* [….] I cannot imagine myself without another: I must find myself in another by finding another in myself.

In this passage, Bakhtin makes clear two fundamental notions of the self. Firstly, notions of selfhood are determined through constant interactions with the other; not only the physical other, or interlocutor, but also the parts of the self which are other, which can only be represented through the other; hence, Simon Dentith (1995, p.44) notes that construction of the self is intersubjective. Secondly, because selfhood changes through constant interaction with the other, identity is a process, and thus is dynamic and constantly changing.

Atkinson (2010, pp.308) suggests that the postmodern concept of the self is linked to the deconstruction of boundaries between identities. Atkinson offers terms such as 'mother/daughter', 'amateur/professional', 'doer/thinker' and 'lesbian/straight' as examples of binary categories used in the conception of identity. Drawing from MacLure's (1996, p.273) invitation to "resist resolution and embrace in-between-ness", Atkinson proposes that postmodernity allows us to belong to either side of the slash between these terms, or even within the space of the slash itself. Although this slash-space may seem extremely small, Atkinson (2010, p.311) suggests that we see this space as "a doorway into a world of infinite possibilities […] or the thin line that separates the 'rational' waking world from the world of dreams". To live within this slash-space brings with it the possibility of a loss of stable

identity, but also allows for a wealth of new experiences in embracing multiple identities (Atkinson, 2010, p.314).

Gregson (2004, p.41) highlights two significant tenets of postmodern identity: the importance of social and ideological forces in the construction of identity, and the notion of idea as performative. Atkinson (2010, p.307) insists that there is not only a multiplicity of selves, but also an array of contexts within which these selves exist and interact. Frie (2011, p.46) notes that the postmodern view of identity is a reflection of "the increasingly mobile landscape of human life". Identities, Frie (2011, p.58) goes on to say, consist not only of self-reflective elements, but are also assigned by forces outside of our control. The postmodern standpoint sees identity as created through discourse, as our identities are forged by especially dynamic forces such as culture, ideology, politics and the economy (Frie, 2011, p.57).

Another greatly contested social construct within academic thought is that of gender. Davidson and Bondi (2003, p.325) describe gender as "an aspect of subjectivity that is both taken for granted and extraordinarily elusive". According to Rachel Alsop, Kathleen Lennon and Rosalind Minsky (2002, p.16), the segregation of human beings into 'male' and 'female', along with the associated characteristics 'masculine' and 'feminine', have long been viewed as naturally occurring categorisations. Men and women have often been associated with a number of binaristic terms, with many of the more negative concepts attached to women. Philosopher Genevieve Lloyd (1993, p.37) states that men are seen as rational and independent, and thus greatly elevated from the animal world and the sway of the body over the mind, while women were (and still are) tied to more physiological characteristics, because of the importance and uniqueness of their reproductive functions. Women were thus associated with the body, and emotionality, rather than rationality. Because of this, women are consigned to the body, while men triumphed over it (Butler, 1990, pp.11-12). This consignment of women to the realm of the body is political in nature, as Anita Brady and Tony Schirato (2011, p.32) claim that by designating women to the realm of the body, their societal roles thus become limited.

Sex, Alsop, Lennon and Minsky (2002, p.31) claim, has often been utilised in order to naturalise socially defined gender roles. The distinction between sex and gender is thus extremely significant for feminist theory. While 'sex' refers to physiological differences

between males and females, gender refers to the socially constructed roles assigned to men and women (Alsop, Lennon & Minsky, 2002, p.26). Thus, Judith Butler (1990, p.7) states: "gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex".

Simone de Beauvoir (1997, p.295) illustrates the constructed nature of gender with her oft-quoted line, "One is not born but rather becomes a woman", and Butler (1990, p.8) adds that Beauvoir's process of 'becoming' is socially and culturally mediated. The process of becoming 'gendered', for Alsop, Lennon and Minsky (2002, p.35), is extremely dynamic and greatly inclined to shifting according to salient norms. Gender, Butler (1990, p.33) claims, is constituted through the conscious fashioning of the body and the repetition of particular behaviours which become established over time, and thus appear to be second nature.

Amongst gender theorists, the work of Judith Butler has been fundamental in changing the binaristic and essentialist notions of sex and gender. One of her earliest works, *Gender Trouble*, begins Butler's formulation of the notion of performativity, an idea which has since become popular not only within the realms of feminist and gender theory, but also in discussions of discourse, human life, social identity and spatiality. Butler (1990, p.140) ties gender to both time and place, as she proposes that gender is constituted incrementally over time, and performed in an external space through the repetition of behaviours and actions. Space thus becomes the stage upon which gender, like emotionality, is performed.

Butler refers to gender as performative, meaning, in her own words, that gender is constantly "constituting the identity it is purported to be" (1990, p.25). For Butler, (1990, p.136), the essential enactments of gender, which claims to emerge from a stable, internal identity, are represented on the stylised body. These enactments, which claim to be 'essential', are in fact produced and sustained through their constant enactment and invocation, which suggests that they have no real, essential, internal core, but are, at heart, constituted by the behaviours they claim to produce, and thus, as Butler (1990, p.140) claims, gender "conceals its genesis". This, in turn, reveals the inherently political nature of gender, which presupposes a natural, internal, self-regulated core, but is in actuality a repetition of presumed, normative behaviours.

Butler argues for an open view of gender, one which refuses definitive categorisation. Butler (1990, p.3) points out that the category 'women' often refers to a single, unproblematic,

shared identity. However, as gender is also greatly tied to issues of race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity, amongst other aspects, the singular category 'women' ignores the multiplicity of lived experiences of those who supposedly share in its identity. Butler (1990, p.15) asserts that the incomplete nature of gender, and its constantly contested meanings and attributes, should be the aim of feminism, rather than a unified, inflexible model of gender which is merely imposed upon women. This "open assemblage" (1990, p.16) will provide a platform for multiple voices to interact, clash and be created.

Selected Texts

For Bondi and Davidson (2005, p.16) place, gender and identity are unfixed, unstable entities, and the interplay of these terms is thus likely to produce "inertia and 'stickiness'". Place, Creswell (2004, p.35) suggests, is never stable, but is constantly in a state of 'becoming'. Massey (1994, p.7) argues that just as gender and identity are varied, dynamic and unfinished in their construction, so is the identity of a place. It is this dynamic view of the emotionality of place, gender and identity which I will consider in the analysis of my chosen texts. As Japan is seen in mostly essentialist terms, I believe that the selected texts, chosen from an array of contemporary Japanese works, not only acknowledge and present essentialist notions of Japan and her people, but seek to derive new and ever-evolving meanings of not only life as a member of the nation of Japan, but what it means to live as both an individual and a citizen of the world.

The first text, Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Tokyo Sonata* (2008), is located almost entirely within the home of a typical Tokyo family. The film examines the rigidity of the salaryman myth, and the consequences and possibilities which arise when this myth is destroyed. After father Ryūhei Sasaki loses his administrative job – and thus, for a husband and father, his identity – and his family are forced to renegotiate their relationships and their roles within the family. Most of the film is set in the Sasaki family's Tokyo home, which like many Japanese homes is spatially confined. Despite this, each member is emotionally distant from the other, living together more out of convention than for familial support and intimacy. Stripped of his employment, the very quality which, for a Japanese man, defines masculinity, Ryūhei finds his position as the family's source of protection and power is greatly undermined, as his sons and wife question his authority. Kyoko Yoshizumi's reading (1995, p.183) of the traditional Japanese *Ie,* or family, system, (2003, p.109) and an understanding of the changing roles of

Japanese men within the family as described by Gordon Mathews, James Robertson and Nobue Suzuki (2003) will be utilised for analysis in this chapter. According to Roman Rosenbaum (2010, p.133), although the loss of Ryūhei's employment plunges his family into turmoil, it is a necessary occurrence, as the family must come to terms with a sense of identity which does not impose confined, constructed roles upon each other in order to create a sense of familial unity.

Tokyo Sonata exposes the supposed harmony of the typical Japanese home, revealing it to be illusory (Rosenbaum, 2010, p.25). In his examination of the film's undoing of the middle-class, nuclear family, Romit Dasgupta (2011, p.384) notes that the film highlights the disruption of physical locations in the wake of emotional upheaval. Dasgupta (2011, p.383) especially draws attention to the emotions attached to 'home' and 'work' in the film and how these seemingly stable spaces are transformed in the wake of emotional upheaval. In addition to this, I aim to analyse the film through Cresswell's (2004, pp.24-25) discussion of contrasting literature on the home and its various conceptions, from a nostalgic site of stability to a view of the home as a confined and destructive space.

The next novel moves outward from the home into the city, as Haruki Murakami's novel *After Dark* (2007) explores the individual, the home and the dreamlike night time streets of the metropolis, which, though no less vibrant, lively and full, is constituted of a more eclectic and treacherous sort of people. Murakami's *After Dark* uses magical realism to explore the unconscious, the normality and strangeness of city life, and how the liminal space of Tokyo after dark allows for a breaking of boundaries. The novel explores the dynamism of city life, which is intensified by the use of a fictional city much like Tokyo, known for its bustling, energetic atmosphere, as its setting. The city setting is well-researched in terms of its spatial representations, and Donatella Mazzoleni's discussion of the city as a spatial representation of the body will be used for analysis.

Murakami's novel embraces the liminality of night-time Tokyo, which is both a dangerous, threatening entity, as well as a possible safe haven for the lost. In the novel, student Mari Asai seeks solitude in a crowded chain restaurant, yet unwittingly forms connections with the curious, dangerous people who come alive at night. Meanwhile, Mari's older sister, Eri, lies comatose within their suburban home, trapped in a dream which may be entirely too real. The watchful narrator-presence observes each character's physical (or metaphysical) journey,

which is paralleled by a psychological journey of self-discovery, as Murakami suggests characters' transformations can be reflected in physical, visual space. Otomo Rio (2009, p.354) suggests that Murakami plays with the boundary between safety and danger by reversing the trope of the dangerous city and the harmlessness of home by situating danger within the safety of a young girls' room, and creating a haven in the midst of a seedy hotel. Otomo (2009, p.354) adds that Murakami's disruption of boundaries highlights the instability of strict boundaries within space and imagined spaces within the self, as the *kochigawara* (the conscious world-over-here) and *achigawara* (the unconscious world-over-there) often co-exist and intermingle (Otomo, 2009, p.359).

Through the use of the first-person plural narrator, Murakami calls attention to the act of watching, especially in the observations of women. I will examine the act of watching in conjunction with Michel de Certeau's (1984) view of the omnipresent gaze afforded to "readers" of city life, and Laura Mulvey's (1975) and Judith Mayne's discussions (1993) of the male gaze, as well as Brian Richardson's analysis (2006) of the first person plural narrator.

The next novel, Ruth Ozeki's novel *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013), explores a cross-continental relationship between a Japanese-American author living in Canada, and a sixteen-year-old Japanese schoolgirl. Nao Yasutani's diary washes up on the shore of Canada's Desolation Sound and is found by a writer named Ruth, a fictionalised version of the novel's author. The novel skips fluidly between Canada and Japan, presenting first Nao's tale, and then Ruth's reaction to and analysis of the events occurring in Nao's diary. Here, the author takes on the role of the reader, as Ruth is drawn slowly into Nao's tale, and begins a number of attempts to intervene in Nao's life, attempting to seek out the troubled teenager.

Throughout the novel, Ozeki lays traces of the Buddhist principles of "interdependence, impermanence and interconnectedness" (Ty, 2013, p.161), which I will argue are evident in her conceptions of nature, death, time and the act of writing. According to Shaheem Black (2004, p.250), Ozeki's novels emphasise the interdependency of seemingly unrelated actions, which defy spatial and rational boundaries. Black (2004, p.228) notes that Ozeki's novels highlight a 'cosmofeminist' perspective, connecting women across borders in both explicit and implicit manners. The novel connects these women through not only a gyre in the Pacific Ocean, but also through the process of writing. Ozeki probes not only the physical spaces

around her characters, but disturbs the imaginary space between them. Ozeki blurs the distinction between writer and character, as both Ruth and Nao are able to reach across time and space to influence the outcome of each other's narratives.

By placing herself within the novel – as the character Ruth is a fictional representation of Ozeki herself – the author is allowed to, in her own words (Ty, 2013, p.162), "[play] the quasi-fictional role of the unreliable narrator". Not only does Nao's writing invade Ruth's reality, the semi-autobiographical tale of the author Ruth draws this work of fiction into a reality that exists outside of the novel. Rocio G. Davis's examination (2015) of the reader-writer relationship in the novel, as well as Gary S. Morson's (1994) discussion of narrative time will be utilised to highlight the novel's conception of time and space as fluid entities, which serve to link not only reader and writer, but all of humanity, past and present. The novel also constantly refers to the natural world, through which time becomes visible, thus I also aim to examine instances of interactions between nature and time through ecofeminist tenets set out by Hazel Henderson (1983), Greta Gaard and Patrick D Murphy (1998) and Ynetsra King (1990).

Valentine (2001) suggests that, as emotions are located further from the body, and move outward into the home, city and beyond, they become less explicit, but nevertheless, they remain immensely important to understanding and creating a sense of place. I am interested in analysing the relationships between characters and their localities, and how each successive text progressively widens the spatial dimensions explored, but retains the personal, subjective relationships between self, other and place.

Chapter 1

Domestic Disputes, Dissension and the Dining Table: The Salaryman, the Home and the Renegotiation of Roles in Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Tokyo Sonata*

This chapter will focus on an analysis of Japanese director Kiyoshi Kurosawa's film *Tokyo Sonata* (2008). Although the film is essentially a family drama, Kurosawa draws from his well-established background as a horror film director to present the insidious nature of Japan's seemingly 'natural' nuclear family. Kurosawa draws attention to the image of the salaryman as the dominant image of ideal Japanese masculinity, and Roman Rosenbaum (2010, p.125) notes that by highlighting the flaws within the film's male protagonist, Kurosawa seeks to disrupt the notion of ideal Japanese masculinity. The film also investigates the strict family systems and gender norms which have long plagued Japanese society, and illustrates how these can slowly poison both the relationships of families and the individual's sense of self. I will also focus on the manner in which the heart of the family home – the dining table – becomes the site of conflict and the renegotiation of parental authority within the home. Lastly, the film suggests that dramatic and difficult change is necessary in order to discover better, more open and accepting views of gender and family dynamics.

Kurosawa Kiyoshi (1955-) is one of Japan's most prolific directors, contributing a number of significant films to Japan's famed J-horror genre. Kurosawa's most popular J-horror films, such as *Cure* (1997), *Pulse* (2001) and *Retribution* (2006), all utilise the surrealism of the supernatural to showcase the innate terrors existing within human consciousness, exploring themes such as anger, dissatisfaction, loneliness, alienation and hopelessness. *Tokyo Sonata* is Kurosawa's first foray into the *shomingeki*[1] drama genre. The film has been internationally lauded, garnering a number of honours such as the award for best film at the Third Asian Film Awards and the *Prix Un Certain Regard* at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival. Although it lacks the fundamental presence of the supernatural which marked his earlier films, *Tokyo Sonata* delves into the same human conditions as Kurosawa's horror films, revealing them to be salient within even the most (seemingly) conventional of people. Rosenbaum (2010, p.120) suggests that *Tokyo Sonata* is not a complete departure from Kurosawa's earlier works

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[1] Films depicting the lives of ordinary, working class citizens and their home or family life.

within the horror genre; rather, Kurosawa presents a "depiction of the horrendous banality of a quotidian working-class existence", as exemplified by the fictional Sasaki family.

The Sasakis – a nuclear, middle-class family – reside in a typical Tokyo suburban area which is never entirely silent, as the sounds of trains on a nearby railway line often reverberate through their small home. Father Ryūhei initially works as the administrative director for a healthcare equipment company called Tanita, and is Kurosawa's representation of the typical Japanese salaryman. His family consists of wife and stay-at-home mother Megumi; elder son Takashi, a university student, and lastly, Kenji, a primary school student. The family's fragile illusion of harmony is shattered when Ryūhei loses his job after his company begins outsourcing cheaper labour from a Chinese company. He keeps his unemployment hidden from his family, leaving home each morning as if going to work, while he spends his days at a small park, mingling with the homeless and hopeless. His family, meanwhile, struggle to come to terms with their own crises. Megumi feels terribly restricted by her role as wife and mother, as she rarely ventures outside of the house. Takashi's classes and part time job are leading him nowhere slowly, so he enlists in the American army. Meanwhile, Kenji is greatly out of touch with those around him, caught up in the battles occurring between adults, while all he desires is to play the piano, which his father will not allow. The film follows these characters as they try to negotiate their desires within themselves, as well as their relationships with others in the spaces they inhabit.

The film deals with the volatility of the Japanese economy, and the effects this has on the lives of salarymen and their families. Kurosawa emphasises the troubling nature of Japan's working world through the crowding of work spaces. Many sites associated with employment, such as the Hello Work employment agency, and the building which Ryūhei visits for an interview, are also filled to capacity, as many shots include snaking lines of waiting people, as well as narrow passageways, signalling visually the over-saturation of Japan's working world in the face of economic instability.

The film's title also alludes to Yasujirō Ozu's classic film, *Tokyo Story* (1953), which is regarded as one of the greatest films of all time, ranking third in the British Film Institute's list entitled "The 50 Greatest Films of All Time" (Christie, 2012). Ozu's celebrated film follows elderly couple Shūkichi and Tomi Hirayama, who journey from Hiroshima to Tokyo to visit their adult children and the widow of their middle son. During the visit, Ozu subtly

portrays the tension between the visiting parents and their children, as the Hirayama children view their parents as little more than a burden and an inconvenience to their daily routines, allowing their parents to even become temporarily homeless for a night. Although their children are formally polite, Shūkichi and Tomi are aware of their imposition and the void which has affected their interactions with their children.

Both films occasionally shift from the home to exterior shots of Tokyo's winding streets and urban population. The use of these images of everyday life evoke the idea that such family dramas take place on a daily basis. By indirectly creating reference to Ozu's classic film, Kurosawa suggests that the Japanese family has become dangerously repetitive, as *Tokyo Sonata* echoes some of Ozu's earlier concerns. Donato Totaro (2009) claims that both films use the family to reflect societal issues, as both films observe "the same cracks and fissures that appear in the family fabric". Fifty-five years after Ozu's film, *Tokyo Sonata* illustrates that much of the Japanese family dynamic has remained the same. The home is still a site for the negotiation of family roles, and the tensions between parents and children remains worryingly similar, as each generation struggles to understand the difficulties faced by the other. *Sonata* goes further to insist that this divide does not only begin after children have left the home, but from a very young age, suggesting that this divided is mediated from within the family dynamic itself.

The Salaryman Family

Kyoko Yoshizumi (1995, p.183) discusses a distinct pattern that has developed within many Japanese families since the late twentieth century, which is emulated by the Sasaki family. Yoshizumi calls this arrangement the "pseudo-single-mother family". This refers to a nuclear family in which the father, as a salaryman completely dedicated to his career, spends very little time engaging with his wife and children. Yoshizumi notes (1995, p.185) that the father within a pseudo-single-mother family in no way sees this behaviour as neglectful, but "believes he is fulfilling the role of husband and father by earning wages to support his wife and children". Ideologically, it is considered taboo in traditional Japanese society to be overly affectionate, even within one's family, as this is especially incongruent with many men's view of masculinity (Mathews, 2003, p.124). The Sasaki family is plagued by a dearth of both emotional expression and meaningful communication, which is partially the reason for the complete turmoil which arises within their home.

The figure of the salaryman, the Japanese corporate samurai, has been perpetuated as the ideal Japanese man since the late 1980s. The career-driven father is completely loyal to his company, devoting most of his waking life to his work. Masanori Yamaguchi (1995, p.250) claims that many of these salarymen have no hobbies, interests or friends outside of their working lives. James Robertson and Nobue Suzuki (2003, p.6) admit that the salaryman has been perceived of in many lights, from the product of social construction, to a figure produced by nationalist ideology. For Gordon Mathews (2003, p.111), Japanese state ideology has created and perpetuated this faction of dedicated salarymen, as these workers see themselves not as corporate slaves, but as paragons of masculinity, sacrificing themselves for the sake of their company, and thus, their country.

Rosenbaum (2010, p.122) likens the relationship between the salaryman and his company to that of a child and parent. These companies demand absolute loyalty and dedication from their workers, and fathers expect the same from their own children at home. However, due to the diversion of their emotional energy from the home to the workplace, salarymen like Ryūhei are unable to engage with their families, and thus come to be viewed as insignificant, rather than as faultless family leaders. Steadfast dedication to work means that salarymen have little time and emotional energy to devote to their families, thus these men are absent from the process of raising children (Ohinata, 1995, p.208).

The pervasive image of the salaryman has enjoyed wide reach in Japan, influencing the lives of not only the salaryman himself, but also the lives of his family. According to Romit Dasgupta (2011, p.375), the discourse surrounding the prevalence of the salaryman has always been much greater than the actual number of salarymen actively working in Japan. These inescapable, unbending models from which the salaryman persona arises have great implications within the lives of salarymen, and failure to successfully adapt to these models has multifaceted effects. Robertson and Suzuki highlight three areas of concern in this regard (2003, p.8-9). Achievement of authority and power creates a divide between men who have achieved influential status and those who have not; it interferes with the psyche of each man; and greatly influences interpersonal relationships, especially within the family.

Work, Identity and Masculinity

Loss of Ryūhei's job thus translates to loss of a comfortable sense of self, and the shame of losing his employment affects his view of his own masculinity. When his company begins to outsource work from a Chinese organisation, where the company could supposedly hire three Chinese women for the same salary paid to a single Japanese man, Ryūhei is dismissed from his job. When he returns home after being downsized, Ryūhei finds that the home space is no longer a solid one. In his shame, he enters the family home through the side door, instead of entering through the front door as he usually does. The following morning, Ryūhei does not discuss his termination with his family: he merely leaves home, as he always does, without acknowledging the loss of his employment. Drawing on the work of Ruth Benedict (1946), Joan Lachkar (2014, p.306) notes that within shame cultures such as Japan's, shame acts as a replacement for guilt, and acts seen as shameful are not meant to be revealed or freely discussed.

Even the familiar suburban streets of Tokyo become treacherous after Ryūhei no longer has to attend work. He leaves home the morning after his termination, dressed as though going to work as usual, but becomes perplexed when he actually has to choose a path and a destination. While a flurry of men, women and children set out for work and school, Ryūhei stands and watches them, until he reluctantly joins the stream of people. Ryūhei then joins what Rosenbaum refers to as "the diaspora of the unemployed and downsized" (2010, p.124), where he meets his old classmate, Kurosu. Ryūhei and Kurosu frequent a nearby park where a number of their fellow salarymen come to lunch. Unlike the two unemployed men, however, these men eventually return to work, leaving behind Ryūhei, Kurosu and a number of homeless people who gather for a free lunch. Ryūhei recreates this charade of employment for most of the film, playing, for both his family and himself, the role of salaryman.

His family does not detect the veiled untruths behind Ryūhei's actions, because they lack an emotionally close relationship with him. Ryūhei and Megumi's relationship especially consists only of a set of repetitive actions and empty conversations. Despite his termination, Megumi and Ryūhei still play out a choreographed sequence whenever he returns from work, and when he departs. David Seamon (1980, p.148) refers to this sort of behaviour as a "time-space routine", a particular, located set of actions which become routine as they are practised over time. When Ryūhei returns from work, Megumi greets him at the door, retrieving his

bag from him and stowing it away, performing the opposite when he departs. Megumi and Ryūhei communicate only through what Rosenbaum (2010, p.124) describes as "monosyllabic and hackneyed phrases devoid of any real meaning". The only conversations they seem to share involves the running of the household and discussions centred on the children. They share few meaningful conversations beside this. Speaking to Kenji about her own divorce, piano teacher Kaneko pronounces: "We were strangers once; we'll go back to being strangers again. That's what marriage is like", and this statement, and Miss Kaneko's own divorce, are a symbol of what could come to pass within the Sasaki family home.

The Role of Wife and Mother

As the stereotypical figure of the stay-at-home-mother, Megumi is fully dedicated to the role of wife and mother. Within the home, she is constantly seen preparing food, cleaning, and taking care of her husband and children. Masami Ohinata (1995, p.203) claims that nationalist ideas of motherhood propagated images of women who "sacrificed themselves joyfully for the sake of their children", and Megumi is a prime example of this sacrificial mother. Tending to the house is portrayed as her 'job', as she receives a monthly 'salary' from Ryūhei. She rarely leaves the home, only venturing outside its walls to attend to matters pertaining to the home, such as shopping and visiting Kenji's school.

The home, within disciplines such as humanist geography, sociology and literature, has become a multifaceted entity, which Tim Cresswell (2004) examines in his discussion of human impressions of place. The concept of 'home' is more subjective than the term 'house', as the latter refers to buildings within which people, in various collectives, reside, while the former is much more complicated, as it is has emotional and psycho-social associations attached to it; for if a house is a body, the home is the soul which lives within it. Home is often conceived as "a center of meaning and a field of care" according to Cresswell (2004, p.24); thus it is our first understanding of place, and informs our understanding of the greater world outside its walls. Home is often associated with nostalgia, and is viewed as a safe haven from the severity of society – an intimate space linked to warmth and rest, the proverbial "square-one" to which we return when identity is questioned.

More recent research, however, has suggested that the home is not this nostalgic, static site which it is romanticised as. Feminist theory especially casts a wary eye upon idealistic

conceptions of the home, and Cresswell (2004, p.25) cites the work of Gillian Rose as seminal with regard to the destabilising of notions of home. Rose (1993, p.53) claims that the view of the home as a place of belonging is untrue for many oppressed women. Kurosawa emphasises the confined nature of the home, and of the city of Tokyo, through his crowded mise-en-scene. The streets of Tokyo are always filled – with people, with homes, and with telephone poles and cables. The Sasakis' home too is claustrophobically confined, especially for Megumi. A number of the scenes filmed within the home, which focus on Megumi, are framed by furniture such as shelves, staircases and windows, signalling that she is almost a captive in her own home, caged in by her domestic duty to her husband and children. There are also numerous scenes where Megumi is placed near the front door, to greet her family, but rarely is she seen entering or leaving the home until the second half of the film.

The nature of Megumi's confinement to the home is depicted from the film's opening sequence. The film begins with a slow pan of the Sasaki household, the stage upon which most of the film is set. A gentle breeze blows through the home, and a light rain falls in through the open front door, until wife and mother Megumi rushes to close it. She pauses, and slowly re-opens the door, letting the rain and wind fall upon her. This introduction to Megumi succinctly highlights her desire for freedom, for a disruption to her family's very strictly organised roles. Because of her confinement in the home, however, Kurosawa states (Cinespot, 2009) that Megumi's greatest confrontation comes from battling herself, and so her journey is mostly a journey into herself, and it is this which imbues her with a sense of strength.

Megumi's desire for freedom is also illustrated by her interest in driving. Megumi visits a car dealership, and is immediately led by the salesman toward the 'family car' which is, according to the male salesman, perfect for family outings. Megumi regards the car with little interest, and is instead drawn to a red sports car. Megumi is fascinated by the car's retractable roof, and is surprised that "the roof disappears". One morning, she proudly displays her newly-earned driver's license to Takashi, who carelessly responds with "You'll never use it". Megumi claims that she has only acquired it as a form of identification, and in some ways, it is. Her driver's license serves to place Megumi not only within her family, but outside the bounds of her home, as it represents the potential for mobility, should she ever wish to pursue it. In time, her driver's license proves to be extremely useful, and a source of her freedom.

Megumi, however, serves not only in the limited role of wife and mother, but she is, unwittingly, the lynchpin that holds the family together. On the role of Megumi, and her contribution to the family dynamic, Kurosawa notes:

> She is the only character confined to the small world within the walls of her house, and she alone does not experience the obvious conflict with the exterior world that all the other characters go through. Yet because of that, she became the most direct symbol of the family. That is why it can be said that her destruction is the destruction of the family, and her revival is the revival of the family. (Quoted in Tinkman, 2009)

Although none of the members of the Sasaki family is portrayed as particularly affectionate, it is perhaps Megumi who shows the greatest affection, which is directed toward her children, and they, in turn express concern for her. Megumi and Takashi have one last meaningful conversation before he departs for America. At the bus terminal, mother and son discuss their very fragile family dynamic. Sensing the increasing dissolution between his parents, Takashi suggests that his mother leave his father. The idea shocks Megumi, but Takashi insists that she would be all right. Takashi cares for his mother's wellbeing, as he tells her that leaving the family in his father's hands is the one thing that troubles him. Megumi then asks, "Who will play the role of mother in the family?", suggesting that family dynamics are not as simple as picking up and leaving. Megumi's choice of words highlights the constructed nature of motherhood, as she responds to Takashi by saying, "Being in the *role* of a mother isn't all bad, you know", and Megumi actively plays this role on a daily basis, in an attempt to maintain harmony within the family.

Megumi often tries to intervene on her children's behalf, although there is often little substance behind her protests and intercessions. When Kenji voices his desire to learn to play the piano, Megumi is delighted at the idea, even suggesting that Kenji try to play piano at school when Ryūhei refuses Kenji's request for private lessons, until Ryūhei completely vetoes the entire enterprise. Later, when Takashi approaches Ryūhei about enlisting with the American army, Megumi attempts to mediate on Takashi's behalf, beginning the dialogue by asking of Ryūhei: "Just listen to him, dear, and try not to get angry". When Takashi threatens to storm out of the room amidst the argument with his father, Megumi intervenes, and insists that Ryūhei find a healthier way of speaking to their son.

Masculinity, Autonomy and Authority in the Father-Son Relationship

Ryūhei, on the other hand, cannot make meaningful connections with his sons. As they face subjugation at work, Japanese men tend take out their work frustrations on their families, enacting the sense of authority which is diminished at work (Mathews, 2003, p.114). This is linked to issues of authority; as Kimio Itō notes (2005, p.149), an adult male is not legitimised as a 'real man' unless he has effectively progressed in terms of power, authority and possession. Even when he is threatened with the loss of his employment, Ryūhei cannot humble himself to take on another position when asked by his employer what else he has to offer the company. During an angry diatribe after a particularly humiliating interview, Ryûhei laments the rigidity of Japan's corporate companies, saying "I'm prepared to accept anything, but why aren't they prepared to accept us?", yet he constantly refuses a number of job opportunities, as he sees them as inferior to his previous position of power. After losing his job and thus the defining characteristic of his masculinity, Ryūhei has no arena to enact his masculinity other than at home, through his role as patriarch, with the assumed authority this affords him.

Robertson and Suzuki (2003, p.8) claim that Japanese political ideologies emphasise the "public place, position, practice and power" of heteronormative masculinity, often by undermining alternative expressions of masculinity. Mathews discusses (2003, p.108) Japanese masculinity and its interaction with the Japanese concept of *ikigai*, which refers to "that which most makes life worth living", and is a standard, everyday concept for the Japanese. There is a gender divide in terms of *ikigai* in Japanese society, as men supposedly live for company and career, while woman are expected to place the greatest value in family. This taken-for-granted view of masculine *ikigai*, while greatly accepted by the older generation of Japanese males, is increasingly rejected by young Japanese men. Generational differences in the perception of masculinity are also an issue for young men, as Itō (2005, p.150) states that young Japanese men no longer adhere to the strict definition of masculinity which has haunted their forebears.

Takashi and Kenji represent new, alternative models of masculinity, and this is partially the reason for their distance from their father. Takashi and Kenji are both not only emotionally distant from their parents, but physically separated from them as well. While cleaning out

Takashi's room after his departure, Megumi notices a thin yellow line drawn around Takashi and Kenji's rooms marked "National Border", a visual symbol of their isolation from their parents. Kenji's emotional distance from his father plays out within physical space when the two meet in their neighbourhood streets. Also, Kenji and Ryūhei continually meet at the same fork in the road in the late afternoons, as Kenji returns from school and Ryūhei from work. They traverse the remainder of their journey together, but evidently are uncomfortable in each other's presence, and barely engage with each other.

One quality which Ryūhei lacks, which is evident in both his sons, is a willingness to rebel against authority. While Kenji can stand up to his teacher, and finds his own way to receive piano lessons, and Takashi can defy his parents to achieve what he wants, Ryūhei rarely ever speaks a word of dissent or anger to his superiors. He is silent when he is job is suddenly taken from him at Tanita, and during an interview endures humiliation without speaking out, or leaving the room. His sons, however, embody the radical spirit and willingness to break from Japan's strict view of what defines masculinity.

Takashi has a somewhat difficult relationship with his father, and rarely comes into contact with him. Ryūhei and Takashi's ideals and values differ greatly, and the oppositional relationship between the two men is shown in their arrivals and departures from the home. It is only after Ryūhei supposedly leaves for work that Takashi returns home. When Ryūhei does eventually meet Takashi at home, he remarks, "Oh, you're home, Takashi. That's rare". Though they rarely interact and differ greatly in their ideological views, both have to cope with the stresses associated with hegemonic masculinity.

Both of the oldest Sasaki males are frustrated with their lot in life, and express this in similar ways. It is only after his embarrassing interview that we are given a look at the anger and frustration which Ryūhei harbours. While sitting in the park with Kurosu, Ryūhei acts out his frustration by violently kicking and beating scrap metal and boxes. Takashi and his unnamed friend enact a similar scene, as they hand out fliers late at night. Eventually they throw the remaining fliers into the river, and proceed to kick the cardboard box filled with fliers into the street. Takashi's friend asks "When's that massive earthquake coming? The one that'll turn everything upside down".

Takashi is disillusioned by both Japan's social ordering and his inability to progress within it, so he excitedly decides to join the army. It is revealed that he has already taken the written test, and requires a parent's permission before he can proceed with the physical examination. During the argument with his father, Takashi claims that he wishes to join the military in order to attain peace. Takashi sees no future for himself within Japan. When Ryūhei tells Takashi that his concern is only Takashi's future, his son claims, "That's why Japan is so hopeless". Dasgupta (2011, p.30) asserts that Takashi's alignment with the United States represents an extra-textual reference to the complex relationship existing between Japan and the U.S., and suggests that the family portrays a microcosm of power relations on a global scale. Whereas Ryūhei is concerned only with the happiness and wellbeing of his family, Takashi thinks in terms of happiness and peace for both Japan and the whole world in general. Kurosawa states (in Hartzheim, 2009) that Takashi's decision to go to war is not motivated by patriotism but is an expression of Takashi's own *ikigai* – his need to achieve something for himself, and for his own belief system. He is drawn to the hegemonic power which the United States represents and the freedom from Japan's stringent social order which the U.S. offers.

The Sasakis' younger son, Kenji, a middle-schooler, is unwittingly caught up in his parents' struggles, all the while trying to come to terms with his own identity. His first meaningful interaction in the film sees him go head-to-head with his homeroom teacher, Mr Kobayashi. The students pass around a *manga*, a Japanese comic book, until it eventually reaches Kenji, who is apprehended by his teacher. When he is punished, Kenji reveals that he has seen his teacher reading pornographic manga on the train. With this revelation, Kenji's classmates lose respect for their teacher, and they begin to call him "Mr Eroto", as his public consumption of pornography has destabilises his status as a figure of authority and surrogate father-figure. Kenji apologises to Mr Kobayashi, but the damage has already been done. His classroom later becomes a scene of chaos, as the students run and scream through the room, with the teacher nowhere to be seen. Kenji's friend Taguchi triumphantly remarks that "Now, Kobayashi's totally lost all authority over us. It's just like a revolution". Kenji, however, is unmoved by their revolution even though, as Taguchi reminds him, "You're the one who started it all". This is Kenji's first experience of an adult losing a position of authority, an experience which remains with him as he tries to navigate through the world of adults.

Kenji's desire to play the piano is, according to Rosenbaum (2010, p.133), a form of "generational resistance". After being told by his father that he cannot play piano, as it is "just a whim", Kenji defiantly uses his lunch money to pay for piano lessons from Miss Kaneko. He has a natural talent for piano playing, and this artistic ability is far from the image of heteronormative masculinity embodied by his father. Mr Kobayashi tells Megumi that Kenji is "definitely out of place" at the school. Mr Kobayashi does not illuminate what he means by this sentence, but he is probably referring to Kenji's sensitivity, and his inability to connect with his teacher and classmates, rather than his academic capabilities. Miss Kaneko provides a kindness which fulfils a need in Kenji. Kenji confides in his piano teacher that he feels isolated from both his classmates and his parents, and the incident with his teacher still weighs heavily on his mind. He tells Miss Kaneko: "Recently, I feel better being on my own too. When I'm with someone, I always end up saying the wrong thing. And we both get hurt".

The *Ie* System

Ryūhei's inability to interact with his sons stems largely from his attempts to assert his dominance over them. When challenged by his sons Ryūhei often makes reference to his 'authority' as a parent, and he utilises his role as the ultimate figure of authority to tyrannise his family. This particular kind of family arrangement was prevalent prior to the end of World War II, when Japanese families were classified according to the *ie*, or family system. Yoshizumi explains (1995, p.187) that the primary characteristic of this system was loyalty and devotion shown toward the patriarchal family head. This meant that the father held sway over the lives of all the family members and was given total and complete authority over them. Each family member had to remain obedient to the family head, and any form of independent action was harshly punished. This family system frowned upon affective familial relationships, and the only form of affect, Yoshizumi claims, was in the form of servitude.

Although it may appear that the family dynamic has not changed much since the implementation of the *ie* system, Kurosawa pays particular attention to implicitly signalling the ever-changing nature of the family system. Although Yi-Fu Tuan (1977, p.54) suggests that places such as the home are stable entities, Kurosawa creates a sense that this solidity is only an illusion. The home is intrinsically unstable, and Kurosawa emphasises this by placing the Sasaki family near a railway line. Throughout the film, the passing of trains disrupts the

eerie stillness of the home, signalling both the presence of chaos and commotion. Much like the loud noises of the railway, Ryūhei's loss of employment rocks the Sasaki family home. The ensuing domestic disputes, which are essentially battles for authority, are especially centred on the dining room table.

Disputes around the Dining Table

The dining table serves as a gathering place for the family, and, in many Western dramas, is related to discussion, enjoyment and warmth. Kurosawa states (in Hartzheim, 2009) that the dinner table serves as a transitionary place within many Japanese dramas, as it does in *Tokyo Sonata*. The hierarchical ordering of the family is played out in physical space around the dinner table. Dinner time is an extremely organised affair. Each member of the family has an assigned seat, which they keep to throughout the film. Dinner time is arranged around Ryūhei, as Megumi first asks him whether he would like to eat dinner, and then calls the children for dinner once Ryūhei gives his assent. The family then waits patiently for Ryūhei to make himself comfortable at the table, and this scene is particularly lengthy in order to illustrate just how ritualised and ordered the Sasaki family has come to be. The dinner table serves as the site upon which Ryūhei enforces his authority over his family, and becomes the site of a number of conflicts when this authority is challenged.

When Takashi approaches Ryūhei for parental consent to join the American army, a small physical stand-off occurs, and while Takashi remains calm throughout, Ryūhei becomes angrier as the conversation progresses, frustrated by his inability to control his son. As with Kenji's piano-playing, Ryūhei immediately and absolutely refuses Takashi's request. Unlike Kenji, however, Takashi does not quietly accept his father's refusal. Ryūhei mainly sees Takashi's request as a deviation from his own desires for his family. Ryūhei claims that his goal in life has been to secure happiness for his children, and that Takashi's military aspirations "couldn't be farther from that goal". Takashi maintains that he strives to fight for the whole world, enquiring of Ryūhei: "Why should I alone have a happy life? It's better to make the whole world happy". The argument between the two escalates when they begin to discuss the family's protection. Takashi reasons with Ryūhei, claiming that the American military protects Japan's peace (as the country is constitutionally forbidden to go to war), and so, by enlisting with them, Takashi would be able to protect his parents and younger brother. Ryūhei angrily replies that the protection of the family is solely his responsibility, and not

Takashi's. He then asks Ryūhei a deeply poignant question: "You say you're protecting us, Dad, but what do you do every day?" Ryūhei cannot answer, and is seemingly stunned by Takashi's question. Kenji silently witnesses the entire exchange.

Kenji later has his own confrontation with his father. Miss Kaneko finds Kenji to be a piano prodigy, and suggests that he speaks to his parents about attending a professional music school. Kenji, sensing the discord within his home, does not want to further disrupt his family's fragile relationships; however, Miss Kaneko sends a letter to the Sasakis, informing them of Kenji's talents and encouraging them to send him to a musical conservatoire so that he may further develop his musical talent. The letter to Kenji's parents has the exact effect which Kenji had hoped to avoid, as its arrival causes a violent confrontation within the Sasaki home. Upon receiving Miss Kaneko's letter, Ryūhei, ironically, is angered by Kenji's secrecy, as he greets Megumi by saying, "He's been lying to us the entire time, the little sod". Kenji is called upon to explain his behaviour, and when he cannot, Ryūhei begins to push and pull Kenji furiously. Megumi listens silently while Ryūhei tells Kenji how much he despises such secrecy, as he claims he hates "this kind of cowardly attitude more than anything". He completely refuses the idea of Kenji being, as Kaneko writes, "a rare child prodigy", stating that it is a strategy employed by music schools in order to make money. Kenji cannot communicate with his father, and although he enjoys piano-playing, and excels at it, he says he will give it up if his father will leave him alone. Ryūhei reacts violently, and blames Kenji for his explosion. Kenji's reply to his father addresses both his father's inability to communicate and his own difficulty in interacting with adult male figures, as he tells his father, "You're the liar, Dad. You're lying when you say you'll listen if I talk. No matter how much I talk to you, you won't change your mind! Just like Mr Eroto. All you really want to do is lecture me and act tough!" Ryūhei progressively becomes more violent, and begins to lash out at Kenji, which only serves to prove Kenji's aforementioned complaint. Appearing as the ultimate authority figure for Kenji becomes Ryūhei's last attempt at maintaining control over his family. Eventually, Kenji's frustration causes him to reciprocate his father's violent behaviour, and the boy throws his broken keyboard at his father. The violent episode concludes with Ryūhei accidentally pushing Kenji down the stairs, resulting in a hospital trip, a concussion, and a family torn apart.

During Ryūhei's altercation with Kenji, a frustrated Megumi asks why Kenji still cannot play piano, in view of his teacher's validation; Ryūhei maintains that he cannot go back on his

previous refusal, as this would diminish his authority in Kenji's eyes. Ryūhei will not allow Kenji to play the piano, as it means he will have to revoke his initial refusal, which, he claims, "affects [his] authority as a parent". The loss of the Sasaki's *chōnan*, the eldest son, who has to continue the family's legacy, represents the destruction of the typical Japanese nuclear family structure (Rosenbaum, 2010, p.122), thus Ryūhei claims that because he was too lenient toward Takashi, he will continue "shoving [his] parental values down Kenji's throat". Ryūhei feels the need to be especially strict toward the younger boy, so that he does not stray from the 'natural' path, as Takashi has. Ryūhei maintains that Megumi must stand by him, as they must both portray a unified parental front. Megumi admits that she has been aware of his unemployment for some time, and confronts him about his hypocritical behaviour, telling him that she has already seen him in the free food line. Megumi is aware of Ryūhei's need to be viewed as the infallible family breadwinner, and participated in reinforcing this role, stating that, had she mentioned the issue earlier, Ryūhei's authority "would be screwed". She now actively denounces his authority and, in the wake of the family's turmoil, announces to Ryūhei, "Screw your authority". The patriarchal nature of Japanese society is present even in the forms of language used by women. Orie Endo (1995, p.29) notes that this speech style not only categorises the types of words women may utilise, but also their manner of speech, as they are taught to speak with "politeness and tentativeness". By divorcing herself from the use of *onnakotoba*, Megumi renounces both the passive role she is expected to play, as well as Ryūhei's hegemonic dominance. With this, Ryūhei's last hold over his family is destroyed.

The Tragic Fall of Kurosu

Ryūhei's image as infallible family head is destroyed by the confrontations with his family, and his inability to accept the demise of his salaryman image is lost through his interactions with the tragic Kurosu. Ryūhei's fellow faker, known only as Kurosu, is a reflection of the emptiness of the role which Ryūhei is playing, and the terrible downfall that possibly awaits him should he continue to hold so strictly to his performance. Ryūhei first meets Kurosu in the park after lunch, and both men initially pretend as though they are still employed. Recognising the signs of a fellow actor, Ryūhei soon comes to realize that Kurosu too is unemployed. After three months of unemployment, Kurosu has adapted to his pretence, and Ryūhei admires Kurosu's coping methods. Kurosu has set his mobile phone to ring five times per hour, and he answers these imaginary calls as though speaking to a client or employer.

Kurosu claims that these phone calls are "just for show" and that he needs these phone calls to "calm [his] nerves". Along with fooling anyone he happens to be around, these calls also serve as a method of keeping up Kurosu's pretence for his own sake. Kurosu teaches Ryūhei the ins-and-outs of unemployment, showing Ryūhei where he can sit undisturbed, how to manage his severance pay, and the application procedures for receiving unemployment cheques. Ryūhei admires the fact that Kurosu seems to have made a career out of unemployment, and Kurosu's presence seems to bolster Ryūhei's own morale. The two are encouraged by each other's company, and frequent the park and work agency together.

Ryūhei and Kurosu's performance is disrupted when Kurosu confides that he is beginning to see mistrust in his wife's eyes. He invites Ryūhei for dinner in an attempt to assuage his wife's worries. During a pained dinner, Kurosu overplays his role, even taking his fake phone calls while at the dinner table. Kurosu also arranges their roles to place himself in a position of power, constructing Ryūhei as his underling and himself as a superior. The pretence clearly takes its toll on Kurosu, and it appears to be more difficult to bear emotionally than his previous work. Both Kurosu's wife and his daughter are aware of the difficulty of Kurosu's 'work', as his wife requests that Ryūhei take care of Kurosu, and his daughter asks of Ryūhei: "It's tough for you too, isn't it?"

Eventually, it is evident that Kurosu has lost his sense of purpose, and he expresses the hopelessness of the situation which he and Ryūhei face by comparing them to a sinking ship:

> When you think about it, we're like a slowly sinking ship. The lifeboats are long gone. The water's up to our mouths. We know it's hopeless, but we're still looking for an exit. But we don't have the courage to dive underwater either.

Kurosu illuminates the desperation with which men like him and Ryūhei have to contend – their situation seems inescapable, but they continue to search for a solution. Kurosu also touches on a significant matter, as he notes that they lack "the courage to dive underwater". He and Ryūhei are unable to find their own means of escape, to create new paths for themselves, and merely rely on "the lifeboats" – the roles they are afforded by society, the roles they have come to cling to. This echoes Takashi's friend's earthquake metaphor, emphasising both the young and older men's desire for renewal; however, whereas Kurosu and Ryūhei appeal to nostalgic notions of salvation and stability, Takashi and his friend wish for society to be completely disrupted. Kurosu himself is unable to keep himself above water,

and he and his wife commit suicide; and it is implied that he has forced his wife to commit suicide with him. Kurosu thus leaves his only daughter without parents, ignoring his parental responsibility to her. Ryūhei is alarmed when Kurosu does not appear at the park, so he visits the Kurosu home to investigate, and is stunned to learn that his friend has taken his own life, and, seeing Kurosu's daughter as he walks by their home, is reminded of his own duty to his family.

Though tragic, Kurosu's suicide forces Ryūhei into action, as he sees the horrors which may lie at the end of his own path. Compounded with Takashi's rebellion, Ryūhei realises that his own position as breadwinner is now tenuous, and that he must take action. Whereas he had declined several different types of employment, he now humbly accepts a job as a cleaner at a shopping centre. Dressed in garish orange overalls, Ryūhei's made to clean filthy toilets and sticky floors, working on his hands and knees to clean up after women and children. It is a far cry from his glorious senior position at Tanita, and immensely difficult for him to come to terms with, much less reveal to his family.

Leaving the Home

Dasgupta (2011, 383) highlights the conflicting ways in which domestic space is used within the film. The home acts as a temporary refuge from the troubles of the outside world, as Megumi lovingly attends to her children, and Ryūhei is able to relax in front of the television. However, the home also acts as a stage upon which the family plays out the deliberate performances of a typical salaryman family. In the end, each member of the Sasaki family has to leave the home, and each other, in order to navigate through their own identity before they can attempt to change the dynamic within the home. These physical and metaphorical journeys take place within the second half of the film, over a single night. The slow-paced, linear narrative becomes disrupted in the second half of the film, as "the line between reality and unreality [becomes] blurred" (Dasgupta, 2011, p.378). This temporary suspension of reality allows the Sasaki family to undergo the changes they need.

A single, turbulent night sees the Sasaki family scattered across Tokyo, as they contend with extraneous circumstances and their own wills in order to acclimatise themselves to the messy, though necessary disturbances which have occurred within the home, and within their selves. While Megumi is alone during the daytime, a blundering masked thief enters the Sasaki

home, and accidentally reveals his face to Megumi. He then abducts her and forces her to drive a stolen car – the exact same model as the one she had admired in the car dealership. Contrary to Takashi's prediction, Megumi does make use of her driver's licence. Megumi requests a bathroom break, and they drive to the mall parking lot, with the thief warning her to return. Curiously, Megumi purchases lunch for both herself and her captor, signifying that she had intended to return to him, instead of fleeing. It is then that she encounters Ryūhei in his cleaner's uniform for the very first time. In a stunned panic, Ryūhei proclaims, "It's not what it looks like", and flees from her. She returns to the thief, because as she says, she had promised. The thief offers to leave her at a station, so that she may return to her home, but Megumi stops the car, stows the car's roof, and calmly says, "I can't go home. I've come this far. I can't go home now". Ignoring her responsibility to her son and husband, she then takes control of her own abduction, and drives them to the sea.

For the thief their arrival on the beach signals the end, for they cannot continue their car trip. Megumi, however, leaves the car, in order to see what lies ahead. As she looks out onto the ocean, she asks, "Can I start over again? From this moment, can I start over again?" Standing on a short dock, Megumi admires a distant shape on the horizon, but despite his desperate attempts to see the object which holds Megumi's gaze, the thief sees nothing beyond the ocean, angrily crying out, "I can't see a thing!" They two spend the night in a small wooden shack, and their ensuing sexual encounter is somewhat complex. Rosenbaum asserts (2010, 126) that this encounter represents the meeting of two characters representing peoples at the periphery of society – as one is an almost powerless women, and the other a man losing his masculine identity. Dasgupta suggests (2011, p.381) that this encounter does not occur as a result of attraction between the characters, but "out of despair and loneliness". Although Megumi is initially resistant to the thief's advances, she eventually stops trying to fight him off. The remainder of the act occurs off-screen, as the camera focuses on Megumi's face as she voices the fantasy that her life is merely a dream, and that she will someday awaken as someone else. The thief, meanwhile, is unable to complete their sexual act, and notes that this too signals another failure, along with the loss of his job. Even his attempted abduction goes awry, as Megumi takes control of her own kidnapping. The thief has thus completely lost all of the elements which constitute his sense of masculinity – his career, his sexuality and his dominance.

While the shoreline symbolises the end for the thief, for Megumi, it is the end of one part of her life, and the beginning of another. Megumi later walks along the shoreline, gazing at a star, and becomes distressed when she loses sight of it, breaking down into tears while lying in the lapping water. It is implied that the thief rescues Megumi from the sea and the cold, as we next see her as she awakens the following morning alone in the derelict beach house. As if to offer his life in exchange for Megumi's, the thief drives off into the ocean. All that remains of him are tyre tracks leading into the sea. In the wake of acquiring a metaphorical new life, Megumi slowly makes her way back from the beach, and she stops to experience the gentle breeze and the light of the sunrise before making her way home.

Earlier that day, Ryūhei finds an envelope full of money in a toilet stall, and, while briskly walking away with the money in his pocket, runs into Megumi. After fleeing from her, he completely leaves the mall, and begins running along the vast Tokyo streets, as if chased. Ryūhei runs on into the night, until he is desperately tired, sick, and unable to breathe, crashing into objects along the pavement. Ryūhei desires a new beginning, crying, "How can I start again? How can I…I want to start again". He continues to stumble through the street, until he is hit by a minivan, and left battered and bleeding on the side of the road. This is Ryūhei's lowest point; a far cry from his prominent position at a renowned organisation, he is now sprawled on the side of the street like garbage. The next morning, he stumbles to a police station, and deposits the envelope full of money in a lost-and-found box. In an interview with Michael Guillen (2008), Kurosawa suggests that Ryūhei turns in the money he has found because "he needs to be at zero. He doesn't need the negative baggage of unlawfully-acquired money".

Kenji, meanwhile, encounters his friend Taguchi sitting in a side street. Taguchi has decided to run away from home, claiming to be tired of the highly structured, ordered way of living. Both children protest the detestable nature of adults, until Taguchi spies his father and the boys attempt to escape, while the adults give chase. Taguchi's asthma soon brings the chase to an end, even as Kenji desperately tries to protect him, hiding Taguchi and holding the suffering boy to him as he tries to regain his breath. Taguchi is eventually found by his father, and Kenji, like his father, takes to the streets. At night, he is caught hiding in the luggage station of a bus, presumably inspired by Taguchi's attempt to run away. Unwilling to utter a word in his defence, or offer a single detail about his identity, Kenji is taken to the police station and booked as an "adult fare cheater". He is forced to spend the night in an

overcrowded jail cell, which he shares with a number of adult male criminals. After a few hours, his case is dropped, and he is allowed to leave.

The morning after their life-changing experiences, each of the Sasaki family members returns to their home. Kenji arrives first and is confronted by an empty home, still in shambles. Megumi returns and prepares food for Kenji, just as she always has. Ryūhei eventually stumbles home, filthy and still in his cleaning uniform. All Kenji says is, "You look strange, Dad". The family eat breakfast together, seated in their usual spaces around the table. None of the Sasakis discuss their nights, and it appears that very little has changed; however, small details suggest that the family dynamic is no longer the same. For once, Megumi is not at home to greet Kenji with a warm meal, and, when Ryūhei eventually returns, Megumi does not stand to receive him, nor does she offer him food. Kenji makes his comment about his father's appearance without fear, and without any retaliation from Ryūhei.

The Possibility of Change

Rosenbaum claims (2010, p.127) that the film's ending is somewhat disappointing, for "watching [the family] eat in silence, we know that things have not really changed". To an extent, this view is valid, as the family sit in the same places around the dining table, and eat their meal without a word shared between them. However, Kurosawa seems to be illustrating the point that although all the members of the family have endured traumatic experiences, and have come out of the proverbial fire, the changes that this trauma has planted within them are not changes which can mystically be enacted immediately.

Kenji and Takashi appear to be the characters in whom Kurosawa places most of his hope for the future of Japan. Rosenbaum claims (2010, p.127) that the ending of their narratives represents a new beginning for Japan. Takashi's open-minded and cosmopolitan nature results in him remaining in the Middle East to learn more about the people he has been ordered to fight; as he writes home:

> I've come to realise that America isn't the only one that's right. That's why I've decided to stay a while in this country so I can learn to understand the people in this country better. I've come to the conclusion that the best path for me is to fight alongside these people in order to find true happiness.

The need to start again, or to be renewed, is of great importance within the film (Rosenbaum, 2010, p.125). Four months after the events of that turbulent night, Kenji has experienced the greatest renewal, as he is accepted into music school. Ryūhei is still a cleaner at the mall, although now, presumably, his family is well aware of his occupation, and he has accepted Kenji's talent and allowed it to flourish, acknowledging that his own definition of masculinity cannot hold for his sons. The film ends with Ryūhei and Megumi attending Kenji's recital, as he plays Debussy's "Clair de Lune" (2008) for an enthralled audiences. This particular movement was inspired by Paul Verlaine's (2009) poem of the same name, in which the poet describes the intertwining of beauty and sadness, as a group of splendorous masked dancers, though beautiful in appearance, are "sad in their fantastic trim" (2009, line 4). This musical piece and its allusion to the wearing of masks – and an acknowledgement to the sorrow hidden behind them – is an apt piece for the ending of the Sasakis' story, as they now face life without the comfort of their masks, and hopefully without the sadness hidden behind them. The Sasakis are clearly proud of their son, and as the family departs from the recital together, they leave with a sense of openness, and the impression of a hopeful future.

Chapter 2

"Those unidentifiable people who inhabit the city at night": The City, the Gaze and Shared Humanity in Haruki Murakami's *After Dark*

> Between the time the last train leaves and the first train arrives, the place changes: it's not the same as in the daytime. (Murakami, 2007, p.58)

In this chapter, I will analyse Haruki Murakami's *After Dark* (2007), examining how the city becomes the stage for shared humanity, and the hopeful and damning consequences that accompany it. I will begin with Murakami's conception of the city as a site which encourages the destabilising of binaries, while remaining a monstrous and dangerous entity. Thereafter, the first-person narrator will be discussed, focusing on how the narrator acts as both objective eye-in-the-sky as well as concerned onlooker. The importance of the act of looking will be examined by investigating the novel's preoccupation with the gaze, as Murakami suggests that the screen that is regarded by an audience also gazes back at the observer. I will also draw attention to the male gaze, as it is focused upon the novel's vulnerable female characters. I will thereafter examine the Asai sisters' physical and metaphorical journeys. Murakami's disruption of notions of danger and safety will also be looked at, both in the conception of the love hotel, and in the novel's male characters Shirakawa and Takahashi. Next, notions of realistic and imaginary spaces, as well as local and global locations, will be discussed. Murakami also troubles the distinction between mind and body and consciousness and unconsciousness. Lastly, I will examine the novel's emphasis on the unpredictability and predestiny demonstrated in the city at night, and I conclude with the meeting of Eri and Mari's narrative strands, and what this means for notions of shared humanity.

Haruki Murakami's 2007 novel *After Dark* presents Tokyo's night-time scene as not only a site of danger, but as a liminal, fantastical space which exceeds physical boundaries. In my analysis of Murakami's novel, I aim to describe how he utilises the breaking of spatial boundaries to cast doubt upon the need for binary terms, indicating that human life takes place in the intermingling of so-called oppositional terms. The novel tackles the overlap between binaries such as imagination and reality, consciousness and unconsciousness, body and mind, closeness and distance, and danger and safety. The night-time city serves as both stage and character in the novel, and the innovative use of the first person plural narrator

highlights the importance of the gaze and the power of watching. Ultimately, Murakami uses both the city and the gaze to tie characters together in unseen and unexpected ways, resulting in both encouraging and disturbing effects.

The Anthropomorphised City and Night-Time Setting

In her analysis of *After Dark*, Rio Otomo (2009, p.361) suggests that the main character of the novel is the city itself, while the characters, acting mostly as props, are "important but always replaceable". Yi-Fu Tuan (1977, p.172) deems the city "a center of meaning, par excellence", and acclaimed author Murakami utilises this view of the city throughout *After Dark*, allowing the city to serve not only as the stage for the enactment of human life, but as a character in and of itself, able to exert a palpable force upon its denizens. The city is a site of complex interrelations, not only between people, but between people and place, as the city, outside of the home, is often at the heart of our emotional connection to place. We are citizens of a particular city – we are called New Yorkers or Durbanites, and thus the city becomes part of our identity, yet our relationship with the city, and our understanding of it, is complex; as Donatella Mazzoleni (1993, p.293) claims, "the body of the city is at once deeply penetrable (you can touch its 'heart') and, equally, easy to leave".

Mazzoleni (1993, p.285) insists that the city cannot be conceived in merely physical or social terms. As much of the city is constituted within the human imagination, discussions of the city must also be centred "not only on levels of cultural consciousness but also on those of the collective unconscious". The city in particular, and its historical emphasis on socio-spatial relations and experience, provides an apt space for the blurring of distinctions between the most fundamental spatial boundaries: the division between "inside" and "outside", and between "self" and "world" (Mazzoleni, 1993, p.298). Within *After Dark*, Murakami pushes the city's ability to muddy such division by locating the narrative's events within the night, as the day/night dichotomy provides fertile ground for the flourishing of other such divisions, including, for example, the binaries of light/darkness, good/evil and conscious/unconscious. Jon Bannister and Nick Fyfe (2001, p.807) state that research into the spirit of the city has also led to an outpouring of literature which either celebrates the city as a lively location embodying diversity and unity, or denounces it, portraying it as a dark and disorderly site of fear. Murakami takes advantage of both conceptions of the city within the novel, showing

that such distinctions are a fallacy, and that human relations are much too complicated for such simple divisions.

Murakami begins his discussion of the immensity of the city by bringing it to life, allowing the city to have a body and a purpose. Mazzoleni (1993, p.294) describes the city in general as a giant metaphor for the humanoid body. It performs functions similar to the body and contains numerous "systems of systems", which operate both in isolation and in unison. The movement of human bodies contributes to the city's "collective anthropoid body" (Murakami, 2007, 3)[2], acting as cells within the body of the city. Murakami's city is "a single collective entity created by many intertwining organisms" (3). Murakami describes, in great detail, the circuitry which constitutes the body of this creature, which is not described in human terms, but is a living being nonetheless. The city is portrayed as a monstrous, almost malevolent creature, said to produce a continuous "moan" which "neither rises nor falls but is pregnant with foreboding" (3). The city is not a rational creature, as the author stresses its base functions by referring to the creature's metabolism, indicating that the city is a mindless creature that merely consumes without thought, requiring the endless movement of people to survive.

The monstrous image of the city is, however, only reserved for the city at night, which is portrayed as somewhat less transparent than the day-time city. According to Carl Jung (2001, p.109), the sun's descent signifies "the reversal of all the ideals and values that were cherished in the morning"; however, Murakami suggests that this is not so much a reversal as a subtle shift. By setting the events of the novel in the night, the author allows for the long-standing mythology of the night, specifically its ability to meld the unnatural with the natural, to introduce the fantastical into common city life.

The novel suggests that the distinction between night and day is not a distinction at all, but rather a shifting spectrum of time and light. The novel follows the arc of time at night, suggesting that the night has various stages. These stages are signalled through sensory images such as the presence, and then the absence, of light, the incremental increase of silence, and the feel of the night's dense air receding in the early hours of the morning. Takahashi Tetsuya, the novel's main male protagonist, states that three o'clock in the

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[2] Subsequent references to the novel will contain only page numbers.

morning is "the darkest part of the night – and the hardest" (91), whereas at just before twelve, the city is alive with light, sound and activity.

Although the night-time activities may differ from those of the daytime, the level of activity and the degree of liveliness do not decrease late at night, especially not within the amusement district. The only marked difference is the sun's descent, and how this affects those who choose to be active in the dark. Murakami begins his novel just before midnight, when, we assume, most of the citizens would be sound asleep. Thus, the people awake before the witching hour are somewhat different from the sleeping masses. Takahashi discusses humanity's evolutionary response to night time, stating:

> Historically speaking, it's quite a recent development that human beings have felt easy about going out after dark. It used to be just after sun set, people would crawl into their caves and protect themselves. Our internal clocks are still set for us to sleep after the sun goes down. (184-185)

Thus, those still active in the darkest hours of the day are inherently rebellious, going against both societal and biological order to frolic (or prowl) about the streets at night.

The Narrative Gaze

Murakami immediately homes in on both the night-time setting and the nature of the novel's narration early on, as the second line of the novel states: "Through the eyes of a high-flying night bird, we take in the scene from mid-air" (3). The narrator begins with a mid-air shot of a fictional city which, had it existed, would certainly resemble Tokyo, taking in the details of the city as a whole before narrowing its gaze to focus on specific scenes. There is a focus on Tokyo's "amusement district" (3), which Rio Otomo (2009, p.356) states could be (or resemble) Shibuya, as Murakami describes the area as dominated by loudspeaker noise and "a sea of neon colours" (3).

After observing the denizens of the area, we suddenly find ourselves in a Denny's chain restaurant. The narrator chooses to focus on a nineteen-year-old named Mari Asai, who sits alone in the restaurant, unwilling to return to her home in Hiyoshi, as her sister Eri has been asleep for almost two months. Her silent, solitary night is disrupted, first by Takahashi Tetsuya, Eri's former classmate, and then by Kaoru, an ex-wrestler and manager of a love

hotel called Alphaville, who requires Mari's understanding of the Chinese language. At Alphaville, a young Chinese sex worker named Dongli has been assaulted by her customer, an office worker known only as Shirakawa, and Mari and the staff of the Alphaville help the distraught young woman, return her to the Chinese gang who 'own' her, and try to discover the identity of the perpetrator. Eri Asai, meanwhile, is transported into an empty warehouse room through a portal in her television screen, and desperately tries to make her way back to reality. The narrator follows the pathways of these characters as they interact, converging and diverging throughout the city under our watchful eye.

In her analysis of the novel, Otomo (2009, p.356) likens the narrator to Google Earth, as it is "equipped with an observing camera lens that can soar to capture panoramic views or zoom in close to see inside closed doors". The narrator begins with an aerial description of the city, allowing it first an almost celestial presence in the sky. Michel de Certeau (1984, p.92) consigns an air of godliness upon the aerial view of the city, for we[3], as viewers, are elevated above mere existence *within* the city, and are transformed into "the voyeur", a transcendental collective who peer into the heart of the city. The city's "text" lies open for us to observe and interpret as it becomes readable and transparent, for nothing is hidden from the all-seeing eye-in-the-sky. The ordinary citizens, who contribute to the city's grand narrative, are what de Certeau calls "the walkers" (1984, p.93). Living at ground level, the walkers see only their own pathways, writing only segments of the city's narrative, the entirety of which they, unlike the omniscient eye, will never be able to read.

Another important feature of narration which the second line of the novel calls to attention is the use of the first-person plural pronoun "we". The "we" of *After Dark* does not originate from a group of characters within the novel, but rather relates to the camera-narrator, who controls the reader's view of events. The narrator describes itself as "pure point of view" (108), not an embodied person or collective, but rather a means through which we, as readers, directly view the unfolding of the narrative. Murakami therefore draws readers into the novel as characters unto ourselves, making us active participants, rather than passive recipients of it. The use of the "we" also creates a sense of a shared, group identity, although TaraShea Nesbit (2014) states that authors can use this unified voice for harmonious or sinister ends, as

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[3]In order to differentiate between the narrator and the reader, I shall use "we" to refer to the composite narrator/reader, and refer to the responding reader as we, without parentheses.

the "we" may stem from a deeply emotional, communal bond or denote a vision of helpless, often mindless conformity, and an absence of individual choice.

It is during the chapters which focus on Eri Asai where our presence as viewers is made most evident, and Murakami defines the narratorial abilities of the observing entity, its nature and the rules which govern its prescience:

> We are invisible, anonymous intruders. We look. We listen. We note odours. But we are not physically present in the place, and we leave behind no traces. We follow the same rules, so to speak, as orthodox time travellers. (27)

The narrator's ability to participate in the story is limited – "we" may only watch, but never engage with the players. But because "we" cannot intervene, "we" cannot govern, or control, or manipulate the events of the story. The observer-narrator vacillates between autonomy and compulsion, as in certain instances "we" choose the object of focus, and at other times, are forced away from them, especially when "we" attempt to interfere with Eri's tale. The viewpoint shifts between the narratives of Mari and Eri Asai, as the former wanders the city streets at night, while the latter lies in an unnatural sleep in their suburban home. Murakami suggests that this shift between locations, which moves with increasing unpredictability toward the novel's end, is not entirely under the narrator's control. The camera also specifically focuses on a set cast of characters, with an ambition to watch the pathways of its chosen cast play out on the city streets. The characters in the novel are peripherally aware of an omnipresent gaze. Kaoru, the manager of the Hotel Alphaville, ironically remarks: "you never know when there's a camera watching these days" (74), unaware that she and her co-workers are the focus of an almost-omnipotent viewpoint camera.

One of the greatest concerns in the analysis of novels written in the first-person plural is determining the level of objectivity or subjectivity held by the narrator (Richardson, 2006, p.59). In order to become the all-seeing-eye (which de Certeau asserts is a fiction), we must rid ourselves of "the murky intertwining of daily behaviours and make [ourselves] alien to them" (1984, p.93), calling us to cast off our human subjectivity and become pseudo-mechanical beings. The "we" of Murakami's novel often exerts what de Certeau (1984, p.92) calls "a lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more"; however, Judith Mayne (1993, p.31) insists that spectatorship is not merely an act of passive watching, but is also burdened by the viewer's subjective values. Despite its desire to remain objective, the narrator does not

remain as "pure" as it purports, as it eventually tries to intervene in the narrative, suggesting that the narrator is not as objective as it appears to be. During Eri's most desperate moments in an empty warehouse room, whose existence in reality is undetermined, the narrator desperately wants to intervene, but remembers that it is forbidden from doing so. The narrator expresses sympathy for young Eri, as "we" watch her from the other side of a screen, trying to make her way back to the normality and safety of her room. The narrator wants to reach out to Eri, but "unfortunately (we should say), there is nothing we can do for Eri Asai. Redundant though it may sound, we are sheer point of view. We cannot influence things in any way" (152). The narrator disobeys its own rules briefly, as its prescient knowledge perceives that the connection between Eri's room and the warehouse is closing: "'Run!' We shout to her. On impulse we forget the rules that require us to maintain our neutrality" (152), becoming like an impassioned audience of a horror film, screaming at the heroine to flee for her life.

Like a film audience, the narrator is not always content to wait for the information it needs to connect the narrative dots. The curious nature of the camera is made evident in its incessant need for knowledge. When "we" cannot make educated guesses, or have insufficient information to make assumptions about characters and their inner worlds, the narrator-presence asks questions which often go without answer. When trying to determine the motivations of the Man with No Face, the masked man who watches a sleeping Eri from inside her television screen, the narrator fires off a barrage of questions: "Is the man's presence a good thing? A bad thing? Are his thoughts straight? Twisted? Is the mask meant to hide him? Protect him? We have no clue [….] All we can do is defer judgement and accept the situation as it is" (51). As both audience and director, the narrator requires this knowledge in order to decide on the pathways it will choose to focus on.

The observant narrator makes estimations of each character's personality from the visual hints given. The narrator's knowledge of the characters' background and motivation is mostly unknown, as "we" know nothing about any of them other than what is seen by the camera-narrator, and the inferences it makes from these visual cues. Murakami emphasises the importance of looking throughout the novel, as he draws attention to the visual through his description of settings, situations and actions. Murakami expresses a preoccupation with the portrayal of "situations" rather than presenting an overarching message or moral in his novels, as he aims to give his readers "a picture of reality as truthfully as possible" (Shibata,

1989, p.29, cited in Nihei, 2013, p.73). Murakami's descriptions are short but well-detailed, reminiscent of his earlier, hard-boiled novels, and are evocative of film scripts and storyboards – all pictures and brief words, without the need for extended explanation. Murakami is concerned with painting pictures of his characters and settings, highlighting the sense of sight above all others.

Filmmaker Wheeler R. Dixon (1995, p.2) notes that although audiences may react verbally and physically to films, the relationship between film and audience is mediated by looks, and as much as Murakami emphasises *our* ability to observe – through the omnipotent camera-narrator and the filmic descriptions – he also suggests that we are not the only ones who are watching. According to Todd McGowan's reading (2003, p.29) of Jacques Lacan's theory of the gaze, the spectator does not retain a masterful view of the object under scrutiny, as the object gazes back toward the spectator, destroying the image of the audience as "all-perceiving and unperceived". Dixon refers to this returned gaze as the "look back", which occurs when the image under scrutiny, mostly the film, also turns its gaze toward the viewer. The "look back" is symptomatic of all film forms and genres, and even though some films may not emphasise this "look", "there is still a gaze that is *returned* by the frame, by a force deep within the field it embraces, a force focussed by the rectangular dimensions of the screen" (Dixon, 1995, p.7).

The Act of Watching

While Dixon notes that the returned gaze is achieved through the use of shot composition and editing in films, Murakami makes the returned gaze literal, as an entirely new world exists beyond the television screen in Eri's room. Unlike the flat world that typically exist within the screen, this world is capable of physically gazing out into our world, observing what we observe, and observing us. The television screen becomes a window through which each side can see the other, a

As fellow watchers, "we" are especially linked to the television set in Eri's room, as "we sense its intuition intuitively" (29). "We" are able to determine the existence of a presence behind the television set, just as we, situated with the narrator-presence, are behind the camera, which serves as our viewpoint. The room beyond the screen appears to be an empty office space, devoid of furniture or features beside a single chair, in which the Man with No

Face, an anonymous, masked man, sits, observing the sleeping Eri through the screen, like an uncomfortable, unwanted mirror to our gaze. "We" are uncomfortably associated with this voyeur. His face is never accessible to us, as it is initially cloaked in shadow, and then, once revealed, is covered by a strange mask, which is made of transparent plastic yet blurs his features. "We" cannot directly see the man's gaze; rather, both the direction and intention of his gaze is felt – he is staring, through the screen, directly at Eri. Caught in a web of observation, we, the reader, through the camera-narrator, watch the Man with No Face while he watches Eri. The narrator troublingly suggests that, because we share a space and a gaze with the Man with No Face, whose voyeurism and facelessness are innately threatening, we share a connection with him as well.

The Male Gaze

The Man with No Face serves as an insidious representation of the threat of watching, and the power afforded to the watcher, who is, in this case, a male figure. Film theorists of the 1970s, especially Laura Mulvey, have thoughtfully analysed the engendered nature of the gaze. According to Mulvey (1975, p.309), the act of looking has been coded to represent males as active figures, while women remain passive. This theory, Mayne (1993, p.23) claims, asserts that the cinematic institution casts women as the object under constant scrutiny of the male subject. Women are thus assumed to be the object of male desire. In what Mulvey (1975, 309) calls "their traditional exhibitionist role", women are specifically "styled" to be viewed as passive, erotic figures. Rosalind Coward (2000, p.34) states that the male preoccupation with viewing women's bodies is an attempt to be distanced from the female body. A woman's body may be an object of desire, but it is also a site of danger and crises (through menstruation and childbirth); therefore the act of looking is the only 'safe' relationship men may have with women.

Otomo (2009, p.356) also notes that although the camera strives to appear as an objective, mechanistic observer of humanity, it is representative of the male gaze in the manner through which it observes women's bodies. This is made especially evident in the description of Chinese sex worker Dongli, who is assaulted by Shirakawa when her menstrual cycle begins during their encounter. As a sex worker, her body is her trade, and even though the narrator expresses some sympathy toward her plight, her body ultimately serves as a beacon for our gaze, as "we" view her as a sight of violence and desire. When we first meet her, she is

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crouched naked in a towel amidst blood-soaked sheets, unable to communicate. When Dongli stands to don a bathrobe, Mari quickly averts her gaze, but because the narrator presence continues to watch Dongli, we, as readers, are given no choice as to the direction of our gaze, as we observe the young woman's "small but beautiful body" (39), with the gaze firmly focused on her private parts. It is distressing to note that her body is described as "still girlish" (39), making our gaze almost paedophilic and forcing us to trespass upon the body of young girl.

Murakami continually makes use of the "we" to remind us of the act of watching. He especially makes use of the first-person plural during Eri's storyline, which constitutes the second narrative strand. The description of Eri Asai marks her as an object of desire and a passive woman in the most fundamental of ways. Eri, Mari's older sister, has lain asleep in her bedroom in Hiyoshi for almost two months. Otomo (2009, p.359) likens Eri to *hikikomori* – a collective term for young Japanese people who withdraw from society, and remain locked inside their homes.

This uncomfortable use of "we" during Eri's narrative accentuates the fact that both reader and narrator are actually "peeping" (25) in on a young, vulnerable woman. Eri is described as a "young, beautiful woman" (25), and "we", as narrator and reader, scrutinise her body for signs of life and consciousness – "we" examine her "small chin", her "slender white neck", and "well-shaped lips" (25-26). By partitioning her body in this manner, Eri is objectified – rendered nothing more than a collection of aesthetically-pleasing parts instead of a whole human being. As a professional model, Eri's body is the focus of most of the attention she receives, therefore, to the outside world, Eri is, as she has always felt herself to be, just a body. Eri sees herself as "a lump of flesh, a commercial asset" (114), existing only as a physical being, and our scrutiny only furthers this view. Eri's body, though, is only desirable on the surface, as she actually houses an array of allergies and sicknesses, which leads Mari to call her "the delicate Snow White" (118). While Mari is extremely conscious of what she eats, ensuring that she remains healthy, Eri merely presents her body as perfect and pristine, masking the illness lurking beneath the surface.

The Asai Sisters

Eri is placed under tremendous pressure to perform – to live up to her role as the beautiful Snow White, and although many people are drawn to her, maintaining the façade of perfection is a taxing endeavour, and Takahashi laments that because of this, Eri has never been able to "establish a firm self" (129). Eri's parents remain hopeful that she will soon "wake up like nothing ever happened, and everything'll go back to normal" (162), unaware that the situation leading up to Eri's extended sleep suggests that her pre-sleep life was clearly abnormal – that this is likely the reason why she has chosen sleep over reality. Eri can only escape, rather than confront her troubles. Korogi, one of the staff members at the Hotel Alphaville, suggests that Eri merely needs a temporary break from "the flesh and blood world" (162), which is significant, as Eri can only perceive herself to be commodified flesh. Eri has to travel deep inside herself to discover what makes her who she is when she is not embodied – who she is without her body.

Throughout their narrative strands, both Mari and Takahashi make constant references to the differences between the Asai sisters. Eri is the good older sister, known for her beauty, and the daughter in whom the Asais invest most of their time. Mari, on the other hand, is the rebellious, smart, younger sister. Takahashi takes an almost anthropological interest in the polar oppositions evident in the sisters' personalities, as he recalls his time spent with both sisters during a double date at a swimming pool years before:

> You're born to the same parents, you grow up in the same household, and you're both girls. How do you end up with such wildly different personalities? And at what point do you, like, go your separate ways? One puts on a bikini like little semaphore flags and lies by the pool looking sexy, and the other puts on her school bathing suit and swims her heart out like a dolphin... (16)

Otomo (2009, p.359) claims that the difference between Eri and Mari stems from their relation to their parents, as "Eri grew up suffering from the inability to say 'no' to parents' expectations, while Mari had the strength to resist them. Mari and Eri's parents chose the roles their daughters would play, with Eri cast as the fairy-tale princess and Mari as "the little genius" (57). Mari describes Eri and herself as "the delicate Snow White and the hardy shepherd girl" (118), and both girls have played into these roles. Mari acknowledges that

although she and Eri grew up under the same roof, they existed in separate worlds, and these worlds have been constructed, maintained and developed throughout their lives.

Mari, though, has resisted her parents' attempts at pre-destiny. While they wished for her to attend a prestigious school and earn excellent academic achievement, Mari, though smart, attended a local Chinese school, and achieved very standard grades, and took her identity into her own hands. Unlike Eri, Mari possesses an awareness of herself, and a quiet mental fortitude which Eri cannot access. Mari is accustomed to existing in her sister's shadow, and, as she is spared from the light of scrutiny, she has been allowed to quietly flourish on her own terms. Mari speaks of identity in terms of a constructed world, telling Korogi: "I do feel that I have managed to make something I could maybe call my own world…over time…little by little" (166).With a strong sense of identity, Mari also appears to have clearer goals and a better understanding of herself.

The narrator cannot explain why Mari has been chosen as the subject of observation: "Why her? Why not someone else? Hard to say. But for some reason, she attracts our attention – very naturally" (4-5). The observer-narrator is inexplicably drawn to Mari, and this demonstrates the subjective nature of the act of watching – we cannot choose the sights which attract our attention, and each person's focus is drawn to different features, for different reasons. Mari is initially marked as a foreign element in Denny's, as she is the only female amidst the late-night Denny's crowd. The location of her night-time haunts is arbitrary, and does not appear to hold any importance for Mari, as Kaoru remarks that the young girl simply has to be "some place killing time till morning" (54).

The arbitrary location and faceless crowd is what Mari is essentially seeking in the midst of the city. Here, the need for a solid identity becomes less important, less central to human life, as it becomes possible "to immerse oneself. To be swallowed up. To lose one's identity in the 'ant-heap' of the crowd" (Mazzoleni, 1993, p.298). It is this sense of invisibility and immersion which Mari is chasing late at night. Despite her resistance to companionship, however, Mari makes a number of relationships in a single night; from strengthening links with an old acquaintance in Takahashi, to forging new friendships with the Alphaville women, to bonding with a random bartender over a love of LPs. All of these random meetings leave an imprint on Mari, especially her encounter with Dongli. After meeting the young Chinese woman, Mari explains that, though she spent very little time with her, she

feels a deep bond with the girl. Mari claims to share an embodied connection with Dongli, telling Takahashi, "I didn't spend much time with her, and we hardly talked at all, but I feel as if she is living inside me now. Like she is part of me" (130).

Mari makes a number of connections through her encounter with Dongli, chiefly with the women working at the Hotel Alphaville, which serves as a site of both danger and safety for the city's young women. Juxtapositions of these kinds are celebrated in the novel, as, aside from the violence of Guo Dongli's assault, Otomo (2009, p.357) suggests that Hotel Alphaville, the love hotel managed by Kaoru, becomes a haven for the novel's female characters. The Alphaville is a typical love hotel, much like those found in cities like Tokyo and Osaka today, where guests rent rooms for either an hour, or a night. These hotels are often perceived negatively, for, as their hourly rates suggest, they often house illicit extra-marital affairs, as well as sex workers and their customers. At the Alphaville, guests select and pay for rooms at a vending machine, without having to engage with staff members. The love hotel thus provides anonymity for both guests and staff, which is an advantage for customers seeking respite from watchful eyes, as well as some of the staff who, like Korogi, require a space to hide from their pasts.

The Love Hotel

In his documentary on the socio-cultural aspects of Japan's love hotels, simply titled *Love Hotel* (2014), director Phil Cox explains that the dynamics of love hotels are more complicated than the view that they are the sites of violence and illicit sexual relations. Couples seeking to rekindle their connection and couples seeking new connections often frequent love hotels. In contrast, love hotels are often frequented by individuals, as their inexpensive rates are appealing to travellers. They are also a haven for people seeking a moment of freedom, because, as Japanese urbanites are constrained to living in crowded conditions, staying alone at a love hotel offers them a moment of quiet solitude. For the women of the novel, although invaded by occasions of violence, the Alphaville is also a site of relative peace, warmth and closeness.

The hotel is run by Kaoru who, as a former wrestler, defies Japanese conventions of femininity. This transgression allows her to successfully navigate both the dangers of the city at night and the threatening individuals who inhabit it. Kaoru is familiar with and comfortable

in the late-night city, able to easily pass through the dangerous, labyrinthine streets without trouble. Because of this ability, she becomes a pseudo-mother to the lost women of the night, collecting and aiding troubled young women such as Korogi, Mari and Dongli. Kaoru and her two members of her staff, the vivacious Komugi and the mysterious Korogi, are accustomed to each other's presence and personalities. Murakami indicates the strength of their associations through their interactions, as the writing style occasionally switches to that of a dialogue when Kaoru, Komugi and Korogi converse, highlighting their interactions instead of their actions, as the women are comfortable enough in each other's presence to speak frankly and without subterfuge.

The easy relationship held by the Alphaville staff stretches to encompass the women who find themselves in the establishment. Returning to the Hotel Alphaville near the early morning hours, the sight of the place begins to feel "fondly familiar" (148) for Mari, as it steadily becomes more comfortable than her own home. For the Chinese sex worker, Kaoru, Komugi and Korogi provide welcome relief from her dangerous lifestyle. Initially an inconvenience, Dongli is eventually treated with the utmost care by the women of the Alphaville, as they tend to her wounds, clean her up and ensure her safety as best as they possibly can, without, of course, the involvement of police or emergency services. Kaoru and company also seek justice for the young woman, utilising their security cameras to discover the identity of Dongli's attacker, passing on the information to the gangsters who are responsible for the woman, in the hopes they can track down the vicious attacker.

Portrayals of Masculinity

After the staff of the Alphaville are able to identify the perpetrator of Dongli's assault, through their security cameras, the narrator is able to find his location, much like facial-recognition software. "We" now choose to observe this man, and slowly construct a mental image of him. Shirakawa works for a company called VERITECH, presumably as a programmer. He retains many qualities of the typical salaryman – he remains at work late into the night, is extremely conscious of his image, holds very superficial relationships with his wife and children, and works tirelessly every day. Shirakawa is described by the women of the Alphaville as "a totally ordinary guy" (71), but Kaoru quickly points out that the ordinariness is merely a mask, as the working-class Japanese companyman carries with him "a shitload of stress" (71).

Shirakawa is also implicitly described as an egotist and a predator, with very little regard for others, and a desire to satiate his needs in the most disturbing way. The only male body under observation is Shirakawa's, as he exercises to classical music in his office. The narrator appraises Shirakawa's body, noting that "he has a slender build, but he is thick in the chest, and his midsection has no excess flesh" (132). Shirakawa's physique is at odds with that of the typical salaryman, and this description of Shirakawa's body is a signal of hidden menace, as his build is hidden under the cloak of innocuousness granted to him by his suit and tie. He is the proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing, and his predation is revealed during his conversation with his wife, in which Shirakawa compares his experience with Dongli to food:

> "Your midnight snack. What'd you eat?"
> "Oh. Chinese. Same as always. Keeps me full".
> "Was it any good?"
> "Not especially". (83)

Shirakawa's interaction with his family is restricted to a single telephone conversation with his wife. He actively avoids contact with his family, remaining at work late into the early hours of morning, and actively ensuring that he is asleep before they rise for the day, suggesting that they merely exist as part of his mask of ordinariness. Shirakawa is Murakami's example of the danger present in the supposed safety of the everyday life (Otomo, 2009, p.360). Due to the incongruence of his appearance and the violence of his actions, Shirakawa represents the banality of evil, and the danger which dwells amidst relative safety.

Shirakawa, as we come to know him, serves as Murakami's critique of the salaryman whose desire for control and perfection borders on pathology. Shirakawa moves fast and works efficiently, unlike the patrons of the amusement district, who move at their own, unhurried pace. He is also very aware of time, and seems at pains to try to keep pace with it, whereas the logistics of time work differently at night. Every aspect of his day is perfectly ordered, and the only imperfection in Shirakawa's scheduled, organised night is the residual pain in his right hand from his attack on Dongli. Shirakawa's attitude toward Dongli is revealed in his treatment of her personal items, stolen from her after he beat her. He regards her bloodstained clothing and the contents of her bag as "worthless garbage, stuff that has no business invading his life" (135).

Acting as a foil to Shirakawa's carnivorous nature, *After Dark'*s male protagonist Takahashi Tetsuya is a typical, temperate Murakami male. By drawing a comparison between these men, Murakami highlights the vastly different forms which Japanese masculinity can take. Shirakawa's preference for logical analysis is at odds with Takahashi's casual philosophy; the former presents a pristine image of corporate success, while the latter is a casual mess with only vague goals. Murakami highlights the differences in Takahashi and Shirakawa even in their musical tastes, for Takahashi favours the rhythmic, casual sounds of jazz and the blues, while the latter prefers the ordered sounds of classical music. Whereas music is used for organisation rather than enjoyment for Shirakawa, music is Takahashi's passion, although he plans to forego the trombone to study law, work for a good company, and start a family, much like the ambitions of a salaryman. At the beginning of the new day, Takahashi stands at a threshold in his life, unsure as to which side of the sunrise he belongs, as he prepares to forego his music and enter the world of law and order. Takahashi's desire to conform to this role is alarming because this chosen path is so dissimilar to Takahashi's artistic, quiet personality. He serves as the author's example of a less rigid form of masculinity, and thus less taxing and invasive than that of the salaryman, and thus Takahashi is a representation a more open, progressive gendered identity.

In her review of Murakami's male protagonists, Chikako Nihei (2013, p.63) discusses the image of the *sōshoku-keidanshi* or "herbivorous man", who is resistant to traditional Japanese models of ideal masculinity. These young Japanese men eschew the rigidity of the carnivorous salaryman, and dedicate less effort to the workplace and their careers. Nihei (2013, p.65) describes these men as "gentle", as they are never aggressive in their pursuit of women or sex, and are appealing to women because of their kind nature.

Takahashi is a relaxed, easy-going young man who hardly ever hurries, described as "the type for whom everything takes time" (7). Like the typical Murakami protagonist, Takahashi labels himself as "a low-key guy" (14). He summarises his personality to Mari, explaining: "The spotlight doesn't suit me. I'm more of a side dish – coleslaw or French fries or a Wham! back-up singer" (14). It is because of this that he was once paired with Mari on a double date, as Mari has always been something of a side dish to complement Eri. Takahashi is without a concrete destination, both figuratively and literally, as he is only vaguely aware of how he wishes to continue with his career, and seems to roam the city at night without forethought.

Related to Japan's young herbivorous man is what Nihei (2013, p.69) calls Murakami's *boku* (the Japanese male pronoun), a timid, decent young man who is compassionate and unpretentious in nature and casual in appearance. When Takahashi encounters Mari, he "smiles to show he means no harm" (7), and this impression of him lasts throughout the novel. Takahashi admits that he often comes across as harmless to both young men and women, and is often assumed to be a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community, which he neither confirms nor denies. This harmlessness, stemming from the fluidity of his identity, allows others to relate to him easily, and thus many a stranger feels comfortable revealing secrets to him.

Real and Surreal Spaces

Murakami connects Takahashi and Shirakawa by, aside from the assault at the Alphaville, a number of real-world objects. One of these is a particular brand of low-fat milk, but again this is a point of divergence, for while this is the specific type of milk which Shirakawa goes out of his way to purchase, the same Takanashi low-fat milk causes a "fundamental moral problem" (86) for Takahashi, and he rejects it. Murakami litters his novel with recognisable places and objects such as Takanashi low-fat milk, Denny's and 7-Eleven (Otomo, 2009, p.364). These everyday locations and objects mainly act as talismans which connect the reader to the physical world. At the beginning of the novel, no specific reason is given to explain why "we" have chosen to focus our attention on Denny's, an international chain restaurant, as even the narrator comments that "everything about the restaurant is anonymous and interchangeable" (4), suggesting that Murakami merely needed an internationally-known, unassuming location for the novel's beginning, with no ties to locality.

By beginning in this sort of eatery Murakami suggests that the events and people found in the novel might exist anywhere in the world, as though the conditions explored are universal to all cities. On the other hand, Murakami also grounds his novel in urban Japan through a number of subtle references, such as the aforementioned evocation of the Shibuya district, love hotels, which have a long history within Japanese consciousness, the suburb of Hiyoshi, and the characters' uniquely Japanese names.

The fictionalised city in the novel not only serves to highlight the universality of the novel's themes, but also brings the issue of imagined space to the forefront, as Murakami suggests

that there is almost nothing separating the physical and fantastical world, as Murakami locates both of these worlds within the world of reality. Otomo (2009, p.359) utilises the terms *kochigawara*, or 'world-over-here' and the *achigawara*, or 'world-over-there' to describe Murakami's conception of space. She notes, however, that these spaces often collide within Murakami's works, as the boundary between them is a porous one. In the space which contains both *kochigawara* and *achigawara*, notions such as reality and self become difficult to grasp.

In his essay "Of Other Spaces", Foucault (1984, p.3) defines two types of imaginative place: utopias and heterotopias. He defines a utopia as a "site with no real place", while heterotopias, by contrast, are real places "which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites […] are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (1975, p.4). Foucault offers the mirror as an example of both utopia and heterotopia. The world within the mirror is utopian, for within the mirror:

> I see myself where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself where I am absent. (1984, p.4)

The mirror serves as a place of projection and interpretation – we see only a projection of ourselves within it, but it always becomes our only means of viewing the self. Foucault asserts that the mirror is also a real space, which serves as a reference point for the location our bodies currently inhabit, thus, the self in the mirror which gazes back at us allows us to view ourselves as we exist in real space; however, this view has to come to us through the mirror world, which is entirely unreal.

Mari and Shirakawa are linked through their individual acts of self-gazing, as both characters regard their reflections in bathroom mirrors – Mari in the bathroom of a bar named the Skylark, and Shirakawa in the bathroom at work. Again, as though a temporary portal, activated by the act of watching, is opened, and it brings with it a sense of foreboding – the knowledge that "something" is about to happen beyond the mirror. Both Mari and Shirakawa stare into the mirror, willing their reflections to break from mere mimicry, but they are only shown their exact, unchanging reflection. It is only after they leave the room that the camera, with its own prescient knowledge, remains to capture the activity within the mirror, for, although they have left the scene, both characters leave their reflections trapped within the

mirror. These images act according to a time delay, mimicking the actions of their originals, only after their predecessors have left. Unlike Mari's image, however, Shirakawa's goes beyond mimicry, as the image touches its own cheek, "as if checking for the touch of flesh" (134), trying to assert that it is not only an image, but a living being as well.

Brian Richardson (2006, p.58) asserts that such bending of reality is entirely normalised under the guidance of the first-person plural narrator, as he describes this narrator as a "postmodern first person narrator who is not bound by the epistemological rules of realism", meaning that the narrator can travel not only to physical locations, but to mental spaces as well. Amit Marcus (2008, p.48) argues that the first-person narrator's ability to infer the thoughts and motivations of others is neither uncommon nor implausible. Murakami exploits this inferential ability, as he is able to tease out the internal workings of his characters by switching to third person narration. This collapse into third person narration exposes the fragile nature of the boundary between these two modes of narration, as "a homodiegetic character narrator discloses that which can only be known by an external heterodiegetic intelligence" (Richardson, 2006, p.59). Thus, the all-seeing camera can intrude even into the mental and emotional spaces of the novel's characters.

As with Shirakawa and Mari's shared mirror, and Shirakawa's and Takahashi's separate visits to 7-Eleven, Murakami often connects characters not through interaction, but through location. He subtly links Shirakawa to Eri through the VERITECH pencil which Eri finds in the empty room, which Shirakawa later twirls between his fingers. This pencil is the talisman which connects these two characters and their worlds, and suggests that Shirakawa may be the Man with No Face, although the narrator does not explicitly make this connection. Murakami does not discuss the verifiability of their link, nor does he provide reasons as to how the locations – the room in Eri's television and Shirakawa's office – could possibly be the same place, both of which are occupied at the same time. He merely hints at their connection, allowing the reader to determine whether this is possible, or if this verification is even necessary.

As "we", the camera-narrator, first observe Eri, asleep in her room, a rather fantastical occurrence unfolds in her seemingly ordinary bedroom. At the stroke of midnight, Eri's unplugged television comes to life, and an image slowly appears on screen, of an empty room, which may be a classroom or an office of sorts. Peering on screen, "we" come to

realise that the room is not empty, but houses a single chair, in which sits the Man with No Face. Later, after "we" depart from Eri's room, the sleeping woman is spirited away, taken *into* the room on the screen.

Tuan (1977, p.37) notes that the ordering of space is strongly linked to the time of day. In the daytime, we are constantly upright, creating and moving through ordered space, whereas at night, we give in to gravity and become horizontal, submitting to sleeping and leaving the carefully constructed human world. With this, Murakami poses the following question: is the space to which Eri is transported a space which exists in the conscious world of reality, or a space which exists only within her unconscious mind? Murakami does not answer this question, suggesting that this distinction is irrelevant. The author has claimed that he often leaves many of his narratives open-ended, refusing to provide readers with easy answers, thus allowing them to draw their own conclusions. Otomo (2009, p.154) states that the novel presents the concepts of the 'quotidian' and 'extraordinary' through the use of *mise-en-abyme* in Eri's narrative. *Mise-en-abyme* refers to the existence of one element *within* another, reflected infinitely within each other. Eri's room is a site which reflects the idea of *mise-en-abyme*, as her bedroom contains another room, which may be located upon a boat, sailing over the sea, which may be located in her mind.

Consciousness/Unconsciousness and Mind/Body Dichotomies

According to Anthony Easthope's analysis (1999, p.24) of Sigmund Freud's work on the unconscious, the unconscious is *located*, for it exists "elsewhere, since censorship ensures it never appears directly, but only indirectly, disguised, in traces". Eri herself eventually concludes that, whether this space is physical or fantastical, it exists in reality *somewhere*, and she has been here for some time. It is likely Eri's transgressive sleep, which, as an interstitial state between the conscious and unconscious, sleep and death, allows this portal to be opened between her room and the empty room on screen. The television screen, like the mirror, is a thin membrane separating co-existing worlds. Night-time is the playground of the unconscious, as the night is tied to sleep and the depths of the dream world. Eri's sleep-like state defies this notion of the night, for her sleep is continuous, existing both at night and during the day. She is also not entirely unconscious, and, existing between conscious and unconscious, she is the catalyst for the breakdown in other dichotomies.

Easthope (1999, p.13) asserts that dreams are not the sum-total of the unconscious, but are merely one way in which the unconscious attempts to "speak" – to breach the division between conscious and unconscious. Since the narrator is unable to penetrate Eri's mind, much less the unconscious parts of it, the incredible occurrence within her room may be an external reflection of her unconscious – the world of her dreams. The sound originating from beyond the television sounds "like an amplified sonic version of someone's brain waves" (52), suggesting that the events occurring in the room are a projection of some action occurring within Eri's mind, blurring the line between inside and out, body and mind, reality and imagination, and conscious and unconscious.

The nature of sleep also opens up an interesting consideration for the body/mind dichotomy. After returning home from the city, Shirakawa suffers a body-mind disconnection, for although he is exhausted, his mind denies him the pleasure of sleep. Eri experiences this same phenomenon, only in reverse, as her mind struggles to hold on to sleep while her body is determined to awaken. While lying in her bed, inside her room, Eri's body registers almost no signs of consciousness, as her family never witness her moving or hear her breathing. Strangely, Eri does appear to wake from her slumber, occasionally eating and going to the bathroom, fulfilling the basic requirements of survival to keep her body alive. The only time "we" observe a fully conscious Eri is in the empty office room, which could be her unconscious. Eri's mind initially fights consciousness, but her body disobeys her intention and she gradually returns to consciousness. Murakami portrays this awakening as traumatic, for though her body gives way to consciousness, the pain of waking is unpleasant, as it is accompanied by nausea, muscle pain and numbness.

Another possibility for the existence of this excessive sleep is that it is merely Eri's attempt at disembodiment. Eri's identity has been dislocated for some time, and one condition of being an urbanite, according to Hana Wirth-Nester (2001, p.53), is constant inaccessibility. There are many spaces which urbanites are barred from traversing – behind closed doors, down darkened alleyways and through closed windows. Because of this, Wirth-Nesher states that "every urbanite is to some extent an outsider". Urbanites overcome this exclusion by filling in the blanks, or, as in Eri's case, by creating new worlds as substitutes; placeholders for the worlds they cannot inhabit. Because Eri exists mainly as commodified flesh she creates a mental world, where she can exist without the pressure of being embodied and the rigidity this brings for women marked as merely beautiful.

In her discussion with Mari on escaping from the harshness of consciousness, Korogi emphasises the pull of the sleeping world. It is suggested that Eri's deep sleep has been wilfully induced, as she announces to her family, "I'm going to sleep for a while" (161), before retreating into the world of sleep, which provides her with relief from the terrors of the waking world; however, this relief is not entirely attainable, as the room in the television, representing the deepest part of Eri's sleep, further blurs boundaries by being both a representation of safety and danger.

Outside of the room in Eri's television, there is only "an uncoloured space, like a pure abstract idea" (113). Eri is awake within the realm of unconscious, which is formless, abstract and unending, and Murakami likens this state to the sea. Eri feels a subtle rocking motion, as though she is aboard a boat. She desperately tries to escape this room, but to no avail. The room represents both danger and safety. It is entirely foreign to Eri, and the method of her transposition to the room is unknown, both to her and to us. However, it is also the only seemingly stable location available to Eri, as all that lies outside, she assumes, is the sea.

The room at sea in which Eri finds herself is another example of Foucault's notion of a heterotopia, which is also capable of representing several spaces at once. Foucault (1975, p.6) uses the example of the theatre, which houses a stage, upon which a number of places are displayed, which may or may not be related to each other. Foucault (1975, p.9) describes a boat upon the ocean as a heterotopia, for it is "a place without a place, that exists by itself and yet at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea". Murakami evokes images of the sea to represent Eri's deep, impenetrable sleep, acknowledging that as she sleeps, Eri's heart and mind are located "at the bottom of the sea" (52) of her consciousness. The invocation of the sea, Otomo suggests (2009, p.359), serves to conjure a "calm and serene effect and the sense of infinity". The infinity of the sea is not always a source of calm, as the endlessness is a source of anxiety, especially in Eri's case. Eventually, however, Mari comes to share in Eri's oceanic sleep, easing its anxious symptoms by accessing her sister's unconscious through shared, human connections, a theme at the heart of the novel as a whole.

The City, Coincidence and Shared Humanity

In his imagination of the city as a site of porosity, Murakami emphasises randomness and coincidence as essential for understanding shared humanity. Murakami makes reference to

this initially through his arrangement of the novel. His chapters are organised both numerically and chronologically, as each chapter begins with a recorded time, with the first chapter reading 11:56 pm, and the last 06:52 am, thus the events of the novel take place within a single night, in just under seven hours. In keeping with his interest in situations, through locating the events within one specific night, the author adds to the feeling of coincidence evinced within the novel by creating the sense that, just as any other citizens could be chosen as the narrator's subject of scrutiny, so could the narrator have chosen any other night for observation.

The novel houses a number of coincidental meetings between seemingly unrelated characters, meetings which they are completely unaware of, but which "we", as the eye-in-the-sky, can easily spot. Murakami illustrates that we, as people living on the ground, are incapable of seeing the connections we share with strangers. A number of these coincidences involve the Chinese gangster who comes to the hotel to retrieve Dongli, although neither the gangster nor the people he encounters are aware of the crossing of their paths, highlighting the fact that threats lurk just within reach, even as the characters are unaware of them. Troublingly, all the characters are connected to Shirakawa, the sociopathic salaryman, as the women of the Alphaville, as well as Mari, help Dongli after she is beaten by Shirakawa, and Takahashi not only installs the security cameras used to identify Shirakawa, but also answers a telephone call meant for Shirakawa. Lastly, if Shirakawa is the Man with No Face, as the novel implies, then he is also connected to Eri.

The city, which was seen as site of solipsism and loneliness in the modernist novel, is instead used by Murakami as a place where people may find commonality and unity. According to Wirth-Nesher (2001, p.52), the German school of metropolitan thought shares many features of the modern novel, as this philosophy sees the city as a site of loneliness, brokenness and alienation. Murakami's novel draws upon some of the conditions of the modern novel, such as isolation and alienation, but its postmodern sensibility shines through in the privileging of fragmentation of the self, and its privileging of the connections with the other. Nesbit (2014) suggests that the use of first-person plural narration highlights shared humanity, because "individual characters can dissolve into the background, as our relationships and responsibilities to our fellow humans are foregrounded".

Murakami suggests that connections can be forged between anyone, even people who have just met. The only moment of respite Korogi is allowed from her past is in the company of Kaoru and Komugi, and after some time, Mari, as Korogi is able to reveal – in part – the truth about her past to Mari. Korogi has just met Mari a few hours earlier, and has already forgotten the young girl's name, yet Korogi reveals to Mari details she has kept hidden even from her closest companions. This harkens back to Takahashi's conversation with Eri about engaging with someone who is almost anonymous.

Takahashi and Eri had previously shared a brief connection some time before the events of the narrative. Although they attended high-school together, the two seldom interacted until Eri unburdened herself to Takahashi, sharing a "deep and personal" (120) albeit one-sided conversation. Takahashi sees himself as a place-holder, as Eri merely needed *somebody* to talk to, a "wall with human features that could respond to her now and then as necessary" (124). Takahashi's relative closeness to Eri, however, means that he is unable to help her, for, like the narrator, he can only bear witness to her struggle without being able to intervene.

The connections between people are often inexplicable, and the narrator cannot explain why "we" are drawn to characters, and why they are drawn to each other. When asked why he might be interested in Mari, Takahashi can supply no concrete answer, for he does not know the answer himself; he just casually replies that perhaps someday "a whole slew of concrete reasons why I'm interested in you will line up out of nowhere" (188). This is the message at the heart of Murakami's novel – connections, whether fleeting or deeply emotional, exist everywhere, tying human beings from all walks of human life together in ways we cannot even begin to imagine. No single character exists in and of him- or herself – they are connected to and constituted by other characters.

Murakami's notion of shared humanity extends even to criminals, who are typically at the periphery of society. Before regularly attending court cases, Takahashi, like most members of civilised society, saw the people on trial as "a different kind of human being" (96). After hearing the testimonies and witness accounts given in court, however, he comes to realise that there is very little separating the common citizen from the criminal, as he explains to Mari:

> There really was no such thing as a wall separating their world from mine. Or if there was
> such a wall, it was made of papier-mâché. The second I leaned on it, I'd probably fall right

through and end up on the other side. Or maybe it's just that the other side has managed to sneak its way inside of us, and we just haven't noticed. (96)

The idea of "the Law" and "the Nation" is also embodied in monstrous terms, as Takahashi compares it to a giant, fearsome octopus, dwelling in the dark depths of the ocean, invincible and untouchable, able to penetrate into the minds of all human beings with its far-reaching, yet intangible tentacles. This creature represents the pervasive nature of ideology, and the systems which govern and control human activity, a sort of overarching superego. The rather sensitive Takahashi becomes emotional at the thought of the impending death of an arsonist and murderer, one whom Takahashi himself describes as "a real bastard" (98). Takahashi feels connected to the criminal, 'scumbag' that he may be, because all human beings, he says, are trapped by the sheer power of the giant octopus.

Distance and Intimacy

If we can be close to strangers, and even criminals, then surely we can be especially close to friends and family? Nihei (2013, p.70) notes that Murakami's protagonists maintain a careful distance from others, finding their place in society "without either complete conformity or absolute detachment, allowing them to find new means of expressing their individuality". Mari, despite her solitude and self-imposed alienation, is constantly surrounded by people, although, Otomo (2009, p.364) notes, she maintains a distance which is "not too far and not too close". The question of a "reasonable distance" is discussed by Mari and Takahashi, as they note the subjective nature of distance, especially between the Asai sisters, for although Mari has made a number of new connections, she fails to achieve a suitable *closeness* with her own sister.

Struggling to come to terms with her sister's deep sleep, Mari confides in Korogi about her relationship with her sister, the differences between them, and the distance which this difference has caused, as the sisters now live in almost separate worlds. Mari does, however, desire a connection with her sister, and Korogi thoughtfully tells Mari that "memories are maybe the fuel [we] burn to stay alive" (168), and convinces Mari that since she cannot be as close to Eri as she would like, she should summon the memory of a time when the sisters were close, and use this memory to reach out to Eri.

Mari conjures up the memory of being held by Eri whilst the two were trapped in a lift. Mari clearly remembers the bodily connection the two shared as, being held so close to her sister, Mari felt as though their bodies were beginning to fuse into one single entity. When she returns to her home after her busy night in the city, Mari attempts to recreate that powerful memory with Eri, who has been returned to her bed. Mari slips into Eri's bed and holds her sleeping sister tight, until their bodies "exchange signs of life" (195). Overcome with unexpected tears, Mari is overwhelmed by emotions. In this moment, Mari embraces the similarities between herself and her sister – their names are *only* one syllable apart, and when she kisses her sister, their bond is so strong that she feels as though she is kissing herself. She becomes so close to Eri that she is able to hear consciousness within her sister, lurking like a vein somewhere deep in Eri's body. Sleep comes easily for Mari now, "like a great soft wave from the open sea" (195), and this reference to the sea suggests that as she gives to Eri from her physical and biological life source, so too does Eri relinquish some of her somnolence to Mari.

We are given the sense that no further mystical events will occur and that, with Eri's return, "a cycle has been completed" (176), as Murakami suggests that Eri's disturbance was a necessary one, one which could only be accomplished during the liminal, indistinct hours of the early morning, where "none of our principles have any effect" (176).As the world returns to daylight, Murakami suggests that the effects of the night's journey – for both Mari and Eri – will be lasting, as Mari has opened herself up to people, and Eri has been opened up to herself. Murakami suggests that Eri's sleep will soon be broken, as the novel ends with her safe in her sister's embrace, and her mouth twitches minutely, signalling the beginning of her waking process. By reuniting Eri and Mari's narratives, Murakami suggests that connections, once made, cannot be easily undone – that no matter the journeys we undertake the remnants of our connections to others remain. The city makes for an apt setting for this because of its mythology as a hub of humanity large enough to allow for random connections between people, yet intimate enough to provide coincidental links between seemingly unrelated people.

Chapter 3

"You start where you are": Time, Interconnectedness and the Reader-Writer Relationship in Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*

Ruth Ozeki's novel *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013) is an exploration into the complexity of time, and the interconnectedness of human existence, in both its immediate experience and in the art that represents it. This chapter features an analysis of two of the novel's premier preoccupations: the relationship between reader and writer, and the complex and dynamic nature of time. I will examine how the novel, as a fictional autobiography, deals with the relationship between reader and writer, and text and reality. Focusing on the Yasutani family, I will examine issues of cultural reassimilation, as well as the familial inheritance of names and natures. Thereafter, I will focus on the number of ways in which Ozeki deploys the motif of time in the novel, looking at the influence of time in narratives, nature and identity. I will also look at the novel's depiction of female sexuality, and conclude with a discussion on the circular nature of time, and the possibilities for interconnectedness which this allows.

A Tale for the Time Being follows two separate yet deeply interconnected narratives. The first narrative presents the diary entries of sixteen-year-old Nao Yasutani, a young Japanese woman. Her autobiographical accounts detail her family's return to Tokyo from Sunnyvale, California after her father loses his position as a programmer. Nao unflinchingly recalls the trauma of relocation – which requires not only a change of locality, but also a major shift in identity, especially since Nao is so out-of-touch with Japanese culture and people. Nao discusses a myriad of topics, from her Buddhist great-grandmother and becoming a victim of bullying, to her father's suicide attempts, and her own desire to die.

The second narrative set some time after Nao's, presents the daily life of Ruth, a Japanese-American author who discovers Nao's diary on a beach near her home in rural British Columbia. These sections detail Ruth's reading of and reaction to the tale unravelling in Nao's diary. Ruth steadily becomes immersed in Nao's world, and becomes concerned about the girl and her fate, while dealing with her own inability to write. As the two narratives

become intertwined the diary becomes an almost magical object, linking the two women across both space and time through the acts of storytelling.

Writing the Self

In his analysis of the novel, Rocio G. Davis (2015, p.87) focuses on Ozeki's reimagining of the writer/reader distinction through the inclusion of factual detail into her fictional work. Davis notes that the past fifteen years have seen an explosion in the publication of fictional autobiographies like *A Tale for the Time Being*. Novels such as these combine actual details from the author's life with fictional events, characters and settings, blurring the boundary between real and imagined narratives. Ozeki utilises this sense of realistic fiction to foreground the act of writing itself. Patricia Waugh (1984, p.2) categorises works such as the fictional autobiography under the umbrella term "metafiction", which refers to any work of fiction which essentially shows its hand, revealing the artifice behind its writing in order to bring salient issues to the fore. Waugh (1984, p.2) notes that the prefix "meta" became increasingly attached to a number of disciplines and philosophies from the 1960s onward, revealing a shift in academic preoccupation to focus on how people "reflect, construct and mediate their experiences of the world". Ozeki (in Ty, 2013, p.161) states that, in her experience, the art of writing is greatly tied to the art of understanding. Writing allows her physical evidence of her thoughts, which have to be recorded, because, Ozeki states, "if I don't do it in/on the page, how will I know what I think? I have to act it out on the page in order to understand what's really going on".

Paul John Eakin (1985, p.3) insists that "the self that is the centre of all autobiographical narrative is necessarily a fictive structure", and Ozeki extends this conception by inserting 'herself' into the novel in the form of the character Ruth. The inclusion of this fictional self encourages the reader to discover the similarities between the fictional Ruth, and the author, Ruth Ozeki.[4] As Ruth reads through Nao's diary, she gathers as much information as possible to mount a search for Nao's existence in her own narrative. Through the insertion of the character Ruth, whom Davis (2015, 95) refers to as "the implied author", Ozeki inspires us to take the same journey which the character Ruth does – to scour the Internet to discover those details of the author's life which are congruent with those of the fictional Ruth. The basic

[4] For the purposes of distinction, I shall hereafter refer to the fictional character as "Ruth" and the author as "Ozeki".

details of both author and character do indeed match, as they share a number of traits such as Japanese ancestry, a home on Cortes Island in British Columbia, a husband named Oliver and a background in writing.

Deconstructing the Reader/Writer Relationship

As she calls attention to Ruth's status as a writer in the novel, Ozeki also discusses taken-for-granted notions of readership. When Nao begins to pen down her narrative, she makes a number of assumptions about her reader – chief amongst which is the assumption that her narrative will be read. Although she acknowledges that there are some risks involved in sending her diary out into the universe, Nao is confident that because she has written them, her words will be read, thus she calls a reader into being. With this, Ozeki (Ty, 2013, p.162) highlights the reversed order of the creative process – as the writer Ruth has not created the character Nao; instead, "the character reaches out and calls forth an imaginary author", much like the Yogic adage, "when the student is ready, the teacher appears". The novel reverses the notion of the character's conception, as, in this instance, the character/writer Nao, through the act of writing, creates the character/reader, Ruth. As the character Nao is afforded the ability to create her reader, Davis (2015, p.91) claims that both reader and writer are allowed a sense of agency within the narrative.

The profound relationship between reader and writer is displayed through the almost karmic connection between Ruth and Nao. Nao begins her writing by addressing a "you" – a specific, though unknown, recipient of the diary. According to Nao, her writing is "an antiblog" (Ozeki, 2013, p.26[5]), addressed to a single, special reader; as though she has already selected the individual who will discover her autobiography. Nao is highly aware of the existence of a reader and, flouting the typical laws of writing, addresses the recipient of her diary on a personal level, reaching beyond the narrative to engage with her (or them) directly. Nao has an uncanny knowledge of her reader and, amidst her guesses, is able to alight upon some truths about Ruth, such as her cat that smells like "cedar and fresh air" (3), and that Ruth has graduated from school quite a while back. Nao engages in a one-sided conversation with her reader, enquiring into his or her personality and location, expressing a desire to know her reader, just as Ruth strives to know about Nao. According to Davis (2015, p.94), Nao's writings assume a single recipient where there are actually many. Nao's "you",

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[5] Subsequent references to the novel will contain only page numbers.

the reader she addresses in the narrative's beginning, becomes somewhat complicated as the novel progresses. Nao believes she is addressing a single reader, whom she does find in Ruth. However, as Oliver points out, the "you" could be singular or plural, thus Nao's "you" could be a reference to both Ruth and Oliver; and to us as readers of both narratives.

Ruth's narrative begins with her discovery of the lunchbox containing Nao's diary, augmenting the idea that she only came into being once Nao's diary found *her*. The diary's appearance upon the shore is a mystery. Initially, it is thought to be part of the debris from the 2011 Tohōku earthquake and tsunami; however, the flotsam from the tsunami is not expected to make its way to shore for some time, suggesting that the package found its way to shore through alternative means. Oliver suggests that the package is actually jetsam, which refers to items which have been purposefully discarded. As the contents of the Hello Kitty lunchbox are neatly wrapped and sealed within a freezer bag, it is implied that it was actively set adrift upon the ocean. The lunchbox contains items belonging to Navy Second Sub-Lieutenant Haruki Yasutani: namely, a stack of letters in Japanese, a diary in French, and an antique "sky soldier" watch. The lunchbox contains only a single item belonging to Nao – a diary, stored craftily within a copy of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, or *In Search of Lost Time*.

Nao explains that her diary is a work of clever craftsmanship, as the pages of the book have been removed and replaced by blank pages. The "crafty girl" (22) who performs the book hack acts in contradiction and connection to the writer: she empties the book of words, so that new narratives may be written. Although this is beneficial for Nao, she acknowledges that the hack is also an act of literary sacrilege, as she is now imposing her narrative upon Proust's work. Initially, Nao struggles to find a narrative worth recording upon the beautifully-emptied pages. Meanwhile in the present, Ruth, like Nao, is confronted by the blank page and the responsibility of trying to fill it, for the writer must have a story worth recording if she wishes to trespass upon the sanctity of a blank page. Once it is filled, however, Nao's hacked diary defies the expectations of what a reader expects to discover within a book. After dismissing the book due to its title, Ruth is stunned to find "adolescent purple handwriting" (10) where she expects to find typewritten French.

Nao herself knows that the incongruence of the diary's cover and content will surprise her potential reader. Nao is attracted to the hacked books for the security it offers, thinking that

any curious soul who happened to pick it up would discard it, thinking it to be no more than an old, worn, French novel. After almost forsaking the book herself, Ruth decides to inspect its contents and is immediately drawn to Nao's writing, even before she begins reading the diary. She is attracted to the diary's visual details, including the adolescent handwriting and the presence of English interspersed with kanji[6] symbols. She also feels a strange physical connection with the diary as she examines it, tapping into "felt sense, murky and emotional, of the writer's presence" (12). Her instantaneous connection to Nao allows her a clear image of the diary's writer, just as Nao is able to conjure a (possible) image of her reader. With this, the connection between reader and writer is established.

In his review of the novel, David L. Ulin (2013, in Davis, 2015, p.102) notes that the two narratives are linked "not because one can ever verify the other, but because their journeys are fundamentally the same", especially in terms of their writing. Davis (2015, p.95) claims that both Nao and Ruth are on similar authorial paths, as Nao seeks to record the fascinating life of her Buddhist great-grandmother, Jiko, while Ruth tries to compile a memoir detailing her mother's experience of living with Alzheimer's disease. Both women struggle to capture the narratives of their beloved, aged matriarchs, and both are distracted by Nao's tale – one as author, and the other as keen reader. Nao's intention, upon beginning to write within her "hacked" (20) version of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, is to record the life of her 104-year-old great-grandmother, Jiko Yasutani. However, the novelty book actually comes to house Nao's own autobiography, as according to Davis (2015, p.92), "the urgency of her own pain consistently distracts her from Jiko's story". What begins as a simple cursory introduction by the author, which is often found at the beginning of a novel, is extended until the very last page of her diary, serving as a prequel to Jiko's story, which Nao admits she may abandon in the future.

In depicting Ruth, Ozeki calls attention to the relationship between narrative and critique, revealing both these terms to be of equal importance within the writing process. Aside from being cast in the role of reader, Ruth also acts as Nao's editor. Ruth uses the changes in Nao's handwriting to gauge the teenager's pacing and emotional state in order to determine a method of ordering Nao's narrative. Ruth then imposes a numbered format upon Nao's diary in an attempt to organise the narrative, so that Ruth may read it in "real time" (38), matching the pace of her reading with that of Nao's writing. Through her role as editor, Ruth is an

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[6] A set of characters used in the Japanese writing system.

intermediary between Nao's tale and us as readers, as Ruth researches and annotates a number of Japanese colloquial and formal terms found in Nao's writing which we, as a Westernised audience, may not be familiar with. It is also suggested that Nao herself re-reads what she has written, as after her first entry, she remarks, "Ugh. That was dumb. I'll have to do better" (4), although Ruth notes that Nao rarely deletes any of her writing, confident that what she has written is true to her experiences as she writes them.

Nao's initial entries are firmly grounded in the now, as she describes her setting, her emotions and her actions in great detail. Her account then delves into the past, tracing her history from her family's return to Tokyo until her recollections catch up to her in the present. During the accounts of her past, Nao occasionally interrupts the seamless retelling of her story to ensure that her reader is still journeying with her, and importantly, as a method of reminding the reader that the events she discusses are located in her past – something her chosen reader, Ruth, appears to forget.

With painful irony, Ruth stumbles upon a full, rich narrative whilst struggling to pen down her own, as she endures her neighbours' constant, harassing inquiry of "How's the new book coming anyway?" (34). Living upon such a sparsely populated island, almost every one of Ruth and Oliver's neighbours learns about her discovery, and provides a theory on the diary's travel narrative. The "tsunami theory" (119) is the first logical theory posited – one which Ruth romantically clings to, until neighbour Muriel warns Ruth not to let narrative preferences interfere with the truth. Ruth eventually becomes possessive over Nao's diary and narrative. She is anxious when her neighbours ask to examine her find, and is hesitant to share the story laid out in the diary. It is only her need for translation which allows her to part with letters and diary, which we only read in the second half of the novel.

Narrative coherence, David Carr (1991, p.6) suggests, is never "given", but is something which both writer and reader must contend with, for event narratives arranged in sequence must struggle with temporal dissonance. As the typified reader, Ruth is entranced by the story-world, forgetting that the diary is an artefact of the past. As she begins to read Nao's narrative, Ruth becomes so engrossed by the diary that the events which it details become current for her, until Oliver tentatively reminds her that, in their present time, Nao is either in her late twenties, or deceased. Because of Nao's early declaration of her intention to end her life, and Ruth's urgent pursuit of extra-textual information pertaining to Nao's whereabouts

and wellbeing, Ozeki draws attention to an important impulses at war in the act of reading – for although we need to know how the narrative ends, we also seek a deferment of the end, willing the narrative to continue beyond the pages.

Oliver's patient nature allows him to work well with the natural world, as most of his projects will only see fruition long after has died, which he accepts. Ruth, on the other hand, is "neither patient nor accepting, and she really liked to know" (61). Ruth feels a "sense of urgency" (29) early on in her consumption of Nao's tale which is attached to Nao's declaration of her intention to commit suicide. Soon, Ruth takes to the Internet in an attempt to verify the details provided in Nao's tale. Ruth's incessant search for Nao consistently drives her to the Internet, inputting more search terms as she progresses in her reading and sifting through tsunami victim lists like a concerned relative desperate to locate a family member. She admits that she is "searching for a body" (115) – for tangible proof of Nao's existence. Ruth searches for Nao's funeral video and blog, trying to find evidence that this character exists in her own reality. Her inability to locate Nao is due to a software programme created by Nao's father Haruki, which has erased traces from his daughter's existence from the Internet. Davis (2015, p.101) claims that it is this programme which consigns Nao to the world of fiction – for no matter how 'real' she may be, she cannot be found in Ruth's reality. Thus, she remains a fictional character, existing only through her own written account.

As the events of the diary become more supernatural – with talk of metal-binding, spirit attacks and ghostly visitations – Ruth becomes desperate for real-world verification. Along with finding evidence of Haruki's existence, Ruth also finds an article written about Jiko's contribution to the female I-novel. However, this article too disappears into the "temporal gyre" (114) that is the Internet, as though the information she seeks is actively avoiding her. After becoming frustrated with her fruitless search for Nao, Oliver suggests that Ruth is "looking too hard" (230), becoming too distracted by facts to appreciate Nao's writing. Ruth misses the *now* in her search for Nao.

Where her writing once filled the book from cover to cover, toward the end, Nao's words seem to disappear from the page, leaving behind a number of blank pages. Davis (2015, p.101) notes that, rather than coming to a conclusion, the diary simply ends. Muriel insists that this reader's block is caused by Ruth rather than Nao, as Ruth has to confront her own present, and stop searching for answers in order to receive them. It is only once she learns to

temper her stubborn desire for answers, and accepts that she cannot always simply know the ending, that the story can reach its own end.

The Difficulties of Coming "Home"

Nao's recollections begin with her family's move from Sunnyvale, California, where her father worked as a "hotshot computer programmer" (42), back home to Tokyo due to the collapse of the economy in the late 1990s. Although Nao is of Japanese nationality, her family moved to the United States when she was only three, and she thus characterises herself as American. The loss of her father's job and the move back to Tokyo serve as a crisis which upsets the dynamics of the Yasutani family, as the jarring move from west to east causes friction within each individual's identity, and with their human relationships, both inside and outside of the family.

Ozeki has focused on forms of bullying in previous novels *My Year of Meats* (1998) and *All over Creation* (2003), but states that *A Tale for the Time Being* is the first of her works to look at this theme explicitly, stating, "if the book is about anything, it is about bullying" (Ty, 2013, 164). Although she is Japanese, Nao is treated like a foreigner by her classmates, and becomes a victim of *ijime*, the Japanese term for bullying. Upon returning to her country of birth, Nao finds that, other than possessing minor conversational abilities, she is completely out-of-touch with Japanese language and customs, and is regarded as a *gaijin*, or foreigner. Nao is persistently and brutally abused by her classmates, and bears an array of scars which tell her body's tale of exclusion, suffering and hopelessness. Her classmates are always careful to ensure that Nao is never hurt too badly, so that they may continue their attacks without notice. They attack her like hyenas – more for sport than any other reason – and she has learn to be aware of their movements in order to evade them. After years of silently enduring these attacks, the bullying reaches a crescendo after the 9/11 attacks. When Nao discovers that her menstrual cycle, which had stopped after her family's return to Japan, has resumed, her classmates corner her in the bathroom, bind her and record a fake-rape scene, which they post on the Internet. They also steal her stained underwear, which they auction off on a fetish website. After this traumatic experience, Nao drops out of school.

Nao does not reveal the pervasive nature of the abuse she endures to her parents, as her relationship with them has slowly deteriorated. In the beginning of their re-acclimatisation

with Japan, Nao and Haruki remain quite close, travelling together each morning as she goes to school and he endeavours to find employment. Dressed up as they are, Haruki in his "ugly polyester blue suit" (46) and Nao in her ill-fitting uniform, the two are like "bad actors in terrible costumes in a play that was guaranteed to tank" (46), forced to perform the roles of dedicated office worker and demure schoolgirl in order to survive in Japanese society, even though they are both still tied to America. Haruki in particular cannot re-establish a connection to Japan's working world, which becomes a major source of shame for him.

Ozeki also touches on another discursive thread which constantly arises in discussions of Japanese culture – that of the corporate salaryman. Nao addresses this from an outsider's perspective, discussing how Westerners see the corporate world in Japan; stating:

> You've probably heard horror stories about Japan's corporate culture and the long working hours and salarymen who never have time to hang out with their families or hug their children and who drop dead from working too hard. (82)

Haruki turns out to be unfit for survival in the rigid Japanese corporate world, although he still wishes to provide for his family. Nao explains that, within a Japanese household, although husbands provide the family's income, their wives are responsible for managing their income. According to Nao, this is clearly more acceptable than the Western alternative, as Haruki had proven to be unreliable where the management of finance is concerned. When he is unable to find employment, Haruki earns (and loses) money through gambling. This 'income' provides false hope for the family, and allows Haruki an opportunity to once again become a breadwinner, until his wife discovers the truth behind his so-called income. Haruki develops a deep sense of shame, which, he describes to his friend, Dr Leistiko, "comes from outside" (308), from failing others rather than the self. Haruki attempts to end his life by jumping in front of the Chuo Rapid Express train, but is unharmed and arrested. He is released into his wife Tomoko's custody, and made to pay a five-million-yen fine for causing a "human incident" (52), so not only does Haruki fail to end his life, he also has to pay for it.

Haruki's suicide attempt is not only mediated by his inability to attain work in Tokyo, but also by a sense of guilt about work he performed while living in the United States. Haruki's project in the United States involved the development of "semi-autonomous weapons technology" (307), utilising a video game interface which allowed military personal to become somewhat removed from the act of killing. Seeing that this removal of humanity

from acts of war may cause indiscriminate mass murder, Haruki tries to research the nature of the human conscience, in order to create a sense of morals and ethics for his programme. His employers, however, are unhappy with his endeavour, so he is let go. Watching America wage war in Iraq some time later, Haruki knows that it is his programme which is responsible for the horrific deaths which are reported; thus his own life means very little to him in the face of such destruction.

As he battles with his own conscience, human relationships become problematic for Haruki after returning to Tokyo. In Japan, an individual's social circle is composed almost entirely of their colleagues, thus Haruki finds himself without company, bar his wife and daughter. After his failure to find work, and his failure to end his life, he becomes a *hikikomori*, or a shut-in. Haruki stops going online, cordoning himself off from people and current events, choosing instead to return to the past by reading old Western philosophy and practising the ancient Japanese art of origami. He only leaves the home at night to roam the city while his family sleeps, miraculously managing to select streets and alleyways which are devoid of human presence, as though he has "an avoidance algorithm built into his program" (27). He becomes a pale shadow of the vibrant, intelligent, care-free man he once was.

Seeing that her husband is unable to take charge of the family after returning, Tomoko has to take on the role of caregiver and breadwinner. While she was unhappy with the initial move to Sunnyvale, Tomoko accepted it. She never adapted well to life in America due to her inability to learn English or establish any meaningful relationships, therefore she does not become "Westernised" like her husband and daughter. After the return to Tokyo, she is able to re-assimilate to the Japanese way of life faster than her husband and daughter. This adaptation, though, is not an easy one, as Nao discovers that her mother initially endures a phase of deep depression. Tomoko spends her days at the aquarium watching jellyfish while her husband and daughter leave the house, as she had read that observing the calm and graceful movement of jellyfish was a good method of relaxation. Tomoko, and a number of housewives with the same idea, gather at the invertebrate tank to observe the graceful, fluid motion of these creatures. This is Tomoko's escape from the stresses of her new life in Tokyo, and Nao is certain that her mother was suffering through a nervous breakdown at the time.

After Haruki's first suicide attempt and consequent withdrawal from society, Tomoko decides to take charge of the family, and miraculously manages to find a job at a publishing house, even though Japan's corporate world is saturated, and "nobody hires thirty-nine-year-old [office ladies]" (73). Tomoko becomes the family's provider, which is rare in Japanese society. She proves to be skilled at adapting to the demands of the working world and is eventually awarded a promotion; much like a salaryman, she works herself into exhaustion, taking up overtime to provide for her family and, Nao implies, to avoid them. Tomoko turns a blind eye toward her family's problems, insisting that her husband is merely accident-prone instead of suicidal, even after two attempts. Because of her new job, she does not notice her daughter's abuse until she catches sight of Nao's scars at the public bathhouse. Tomoko holds firmly to the Japanese concept of *wa*, or harmony, as she is reluctant to rock the boat, addressing issues in the most indirect manner when they become unavoidable. Although they do care for each other, Nao and Tomoko have a formal relationship, and thus, although she does have some sense of her daughter's pain, she herself cannot aid her daughter.

In an attempt to save her troubled husband and daughter, Tomoko appeals to their only surviving relative: Haruki's grandmother, Jiko Yasutani. Jiko, "the famous anarchist-feminist-novelist-turned-Buddhist-nun of the Taisho era (19)" is an ancient and mysterious time-being who lives in a temple in Sendai, a coastal city in the Miyagi prefecture. Jiko is a wise, peaceful and humorous woman, with whom Nao generates a very close relationship. Jiko has lived a long, full life, and has even lost track of how long she has lived, thus she chooses her own age, as Nao claims that some time ago, her great-grandmother "got fixated on a hundred and four, and that's what it's been ever since"(18). Like an ancient creature, Jiko moves with painstaking slowness, which frustrates young Nao. Jiko jokes that by performing every action slowly, she is stretching out her allotted life span, which is why she is so old. Jiko's spirituality and profoundly felt sense of time allows her a sort of mystery and transcendence, suggesting that she exists in between the human and metaphysical planes.

In an effort to give Nao time away from the toxic environment at home, her parents send her to Jiko's mountainside temple in Sendai for a summer vacation. Nao describes the journey to Jiko's temple in Sendai as "travelling backward about a thousand years in time" (154). Although it is a far cry from her urban habitat, Nao soon adjusts well to life at the temple, enjoying the natural beauty and peaceful atmosphere. The temple becomes a sacred place for Nao, not only for religious reasons, but also because of its connections to her family. The

temple holds important memories of happier times for her father, and later for Nao as well, as it is here that she gets to know Jiko and herself; and it is here that she meets the ghost of her grand-uncle.

The Inheritance of Names and Traits

The third narrative strand, which briefly intersects Ruth and Nao's tales, is that of Haruki Yasutani the First (whom Nao refers to as "Haruki #1"), Jiko's only son and Nao's grand-uncle. The passing on of names is predominantly tied to males, and after the death of Haruki #1, the Yasutani's *chōnan* or eldest son, the family name faces extinction, as Jiko is left with only her daughters Ema and Sugako. Ema marries a man named Kenji, who is adopted by Jiko, and takes on the Yasutani name, and thus the Yasutani family is essentially matrilineal. Within the novel, the inheritance of names is also an inheritance of history, as is seen in the two Yasutani men, both of whom are named Haruki.

According to Ruth, names act as "either a ghost or a portent depending upon which side of time you were standing" (59), and this is especially true of the two Harukis. Aside from their names, Haruki #1 is also startlingly similar to his nephew in appearance, so when his spirit appears to Nao during *Obon*, the festival celebrating the deceased, Nao initially mistakes him for her father, which is compounded when he responds to the name Haruki Yasutani. Along with inheriting his name, Haruki #2 also inherits his uncle's preoccupation with death, as Nao explains:

> Haruki #1 was a kamikaze pilot, which is kind of weird when you think of it because before he became a suicide bomber he was a student of philosophy at Tokyo University, and my dad, Haruki #2, really likes philosophy and keeps trying to kill himself, so I guess you could say that suicide and philosophy run in the family, at least among the Harukis. (68)

Nao comes to build a picture of her grand-uncle through Jiko's recollections of him, and then through his letters and diary. Haruki #1 is a gentle, kind and thoughtful young man who is out of place in a war which he is compelled to fight in. Because of his temerity and compassion, he, like Nao, receives several beatings, and is subjected to intense victimisation. He is made to perform demeaning actions and, it is implied, is the victim of sexual abuse at the hands of his commanding officer. Knowing that he will surely die during the war, Haruki endeavours to die in a way that will bring his family honour, and thus decides to become a kamikaze

pilot. This becomes his last attempt at maintaining some control over a life which, at the end, is hardly his own.

Haruki #1 produces two accounts of his time in the military, which, according to Davis (2015, p.96), is inspired by a dualistic performance of the self. Haruki is required to play very different roles in each of these narratives because each of them is meant for a different reader. The letters he writes home are first read by military officials in an attempt to censor the recruit's accounts of the events of the war, and to ensure that these letters do not contain any anti-nationalist sentiments. In his missives, Haruki is careful to maintain a façade of bravery and a sense of honour and pride in his impending death. However, he is committed to recording the true account of his last months of life, so he goes to great lengths to record and protect his last words, writing them in French while his fellow soldiers sleep, and storing this account within his rations of rice. Nao and Haruki #1 are linked by their "secret French diaries" (26), both of which are intended for a distinctive reader. His diary, addressed to "*Chere Maman*" (318), reveals the truth about both his experiences and emotional state in the time before his death. While his letters portray the decision to become a kamikaze pilot as one he makes without regret, his diary reveals the fear he battles as he acknowledges the inevitability of his death.

Death and Non-existence

Haruki #1 experiences the weight of time as it bears down upon him, his impending death hanging over his head like the Sword of Damocles, and, during his last few days, Haruki #1 becomes a living ghost, concluding his diary with the words: "I do not feel like a person who is going to die tomorrow. I feel like a person who is already dead" (328).Nao too experiences the strange phenomenon of existing between life and death when, just before the attack in school bathroom, her classmates resort to a different method of bullying by attempting to erase her existence. While enduring the brutality of her classmate's physical attacks, Nao hopes that by remaining quiet and pretending not to exist, her classmates might cease to notice her:

> My strategy was basically to ignore them or play dead or pretend I didn't exist. I thought that maybe if I just pretended hard enough it would actually come true, and I would either die or

disappear. Or at least it would come true enough for my classmates to believe it and stop tormenting me. (49)

After Tomoko's complaints to the school officials about her daughter's *ijime*, Nao's desire is granted, and she becomes invisible. Instead of their usual torture, Nao's classmates choose to ignore her completely, rendering her non-existent. Even her substitute teacher, in an effort to gain popularity, goes along with the class's scheme. At the height of their silent bullying, Nao's classmates hold a "funeral" for her, extending their elaborate scheme by making decorations and saying ritual prayers for her. Strangely, Nao is deeply moved by this tribute, even though it is done out sheer spite, as this is the only time her classmates have shown any affection for her. After this ritual, Nao decides that she truly has become the living dead. She likens herself to an *ikisudama*, a "living ghost".

After becoming the living dead, Nao, like her father, merely puts effort into surviving, performing basic functions in order to stay alive and occupied. It is during this time that Nao begins to reassess her conception of death. Initially she takes a Western psychological stance on suicide, believing the will to die stems from psychopathology. In his letter Haruki discusses the discrepancy in conceptions of suicide between Japan and America, noting that Westerners' strong sense of self allows them to value life, whereas according to Japanese society, a single 'failed' man such as himself is a damaged cog, disrupting the functioning of the entire machine.

In his letters to Ruth, Dr Rongstad Leistiko, a psychologist and friend of Haruki's, discusses Japanese attitudes toward death. Rather than an escape from life, suicide makes life more real, more tangible, for while life feels "just like a dream" (87), death is concrete and certain. Haruki describes the idea of committing suicide as "finding the edge in life" (87), as death provides a concrete boundary in a life becoming ever more immaterial.

Nao herself comes to share both Harukis' fascination with suicide. She never addresses it directly, but her father's suicide attempts weigh heavily upon her. After her father's first suicide attempt, and in preparation for his inevitable successful one, Nao begins to read about violent deaths and suicide, and it is then that she becomes fascinated with death and its history within her family tree. Nao declares early within her narrative her firm decision to commit suicide, for she mysteriously announces that the book "happens to be a diary of [her]

last days on earth" (3) and that she will soon "drop out of time" (7). Nao makes her intention to take her own life very clear from the outset, thus (we assume) she knows how the story will end – with her own death. This is the ending she, as author of her life and narrative, has decided, thus she does not foreshadow this event as much as she explicitly concedes its inevitability.

Sidedshadowing, Narrative Possibility and Time

Gary Saul Morson (1994, p.7) notes that foreshadowing reveals the artifice of fictional writing, as in reality, we have no experience of future events which hint at their arrival by sending clues to us in the present. The foreshadowing of events, Morson believes, originates from the most fatalistic conceptions of time, as an event is pre-destined and thus, despite a character's best interest, inescapable. There are, however, more open notions of time; these allow a novel's characters a sense of agency. Morson (1994, p.11) utilises the idea of sideshadowing as a potential alternative to foreshadowing.

Sideshadowing presents "the possibility of possibilities" (Morson, 1994, p.119), suggesting that the outcome of any given occurrence or experience is merely one of many which could have been realised. According to Morson, this means that at any given moment, countless temporalities are battling to become actualised. This is also reflected in the novel's discussion of Dogen's teachings of the possibilities existing within a single moment. Ozeki quotes Zen Master Dogen throughout the novel, drawing from his work *Shōbōgenzō*. According to Dogen, there are 6,400,099,980 *setsuna*, or moments, in a day, with sixty five moments contained within a snap of a finger. Each of these moments, Dogen preaches, is "an opportunity to re-establish our will" (62), to decide how to act, allowing for an innumerable amount of possible courses for our lives to take.

Ozeki's characters feel the immense weight of possibility and time throughout the novel, especially through impending death. When trying to discover what torture her classmates have planned for her, Nao corners her fellow victim Daisuke for information, threatening him by holding a kitchen knife to his throat. She becomes exhilarated by her own power, and comes dangerously close to killing Daisuke. She experiences time fully when she holds the life of another in her hands, explaining how, in a single moment, she experiences a myriad of possibilities for both herself and Daisuke:

> Time slowed down, and each moment unfolded into a future filled with infinite possibilities. It would be so easy. Slice the artery and watch the red blood spurt and stain the ground, draining his stupid nothing life from his stupid nothing body. (104)

Death, or rather impending death then, provides the most profound understanding of felt time, and thus Nao's diary becomes, according to Davis (2015, p.92), "a long suicide letter, a way for its writer to engage with time before dropping out of it altogether". Morson (1994, p.2) notes that time is often thought to be *anisotropic*, originating from a concrete past and heading toward an inevitable future. Ozeki's novel challenges this by suggesting that, along with multiple avenues of progress available in a single instant, time can also cycle backward, to touch the past, as the past is not locked away behind us, but is simply an collection of "earlier presents" which we are still able to interact with (Morson, 1994, p.6).

Existing within time, or being in time, David Carr (1991, 95) writes, means that we are essentially *located* in time, as we are in space. As Yi-Fu Tuan (1977, p.47) notes that we exist "Here" in space, Carr suggests that "Now" is our exact location in time, from which we can see behind into the past, or ahead into the future. Nao immediately highlights the issue of the narrative's temporality as the novel begins, stating that she sits in Akihabara within their own present, which is the reader's past, as the reader exists in Nao's future. Time is personified, having its own identity, or multiple identities as it were, each interwoven into the next, spreading outward from the present.

The present, although an adequate starting point, is itself elusive, especially in the act of writing; for Nao notes that once she begins to write about the present – the now – it is already passing by. Nao is fascinated by the word "now" as it is pronounced like her name, and thus she likens trying to find herself to trying to catch now, to catch up to herself, thus her identity is always a self-in-progress.

If the present is intangible, the past is even more so. Nao attempts to find the location of both the past and present. She asks if the past exists, and if so, "where is it? And if it did exist but doesn't now, then where did it go?" (97). Morson (1994, p.17) notes that our inability to perceive time beyond a few seconds limits our comprehension of its movement, and to aid our understanding, we turn passing time into memory. Ozeki also calls attention to memory in the novel, and how this augments our understanding of ourselves. She achieves this effect

through the narratives of the older women in both strands. The threat of Alzheimer's looms over Ruth, and she is conscious of her memory and its slippages. Nao too is guilty of forgetfulness, as shown in her deferral pf recording Jiko's history (Ty, 2013, p.163).

Memory also features powerfully in non-human narratives. The Internet serves as an example of both eternal and temporary memory. Events such as Nao's funeral and the sale of her stolen underwear would exist on the Internet forever had Haruki not developed the programme to erase her electronic existence. The Internet, however, is also guilty of forgetting, as Ruth notes that newsworthy events like tsunamis explode across the Internet, only to die down until they are only mentioned as part of history, if at all. Ruth likens the Internet to oceanic gyres, which collect and redistribute flotsam and jetsam in the ocean. Some of this debris gets caught within the Great Garbage Patches; whirlpools in the ocean which amass colossal quantities of refuse. Ruth wonders if this might have eventually become the diary's fate had it not been caught in a current which led it to her shore. These garbage patches house the lost and forgotten debris of time, which will never be rediscovered by its owners, much like lost memories. This is what the act of writing tries to prevent.

Ecofeminism: Nature and Natures

In *A Tale for the Time Being*, the focus on time is strongly tied to the natural world. Nature, which is a force of both creation and destruction, often lies forgotten in an increasingly urban, technological world. Schools of thought such as ecology, and especially ecofeminism, according to Hazel Henderson (1983, p.207), are concerned with the reclamation of the mystery of Nature as a force beyond human comprehension, simply because we are so deeply involved in it; and it is this involvement which Ozeki addresses, especially within Ruth's narrative.

Ecofeminism is greatly concerned with both the past and the future. In the introduction to *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism* (1998, pp.3-5), Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy claim that ecofeminism is linked to restoration of pre-historic notions of Nature, as well as the preservation of not only natural features, but also of our interconnectedness with the natural world. The novel's greatest advocate of this view of ecofeminism is Oliver, Ruth's husband. He is more at home with the natural world than with people, spends a large amount of time on his own, and is closer to his cat than to anyone else; even, at times, his wife. He is a firm

believer in permaculture, a branch of agriculture with a philosophy of working with nature, rather than against it. Oliver is also dedicated to the restoration of nature. His project, called the Neo-Eocene, is his "collaboration with time and place" (61), as he attempts to cultivate species which had flourished in the area during the Eocene period, which occurred 55 million years ago.

While Oliver thrives within the natural world, Ruth, an unquestionable urbanite, is never entirely at home in the wilds of the island. Early in their relationship, with Ruth living in New York City and Oliver in British Columbia, it is thanks to the Internet that the couple maintain a relationship, and Ruth is initially attracted to Canada because of the beautiful images Oliver describes via email of the rural islands' flora and fauna in his "missives from the mossy margins" (56). Ozeki painstakingly paints a picture of the gorgeous natural features of the island, from its beaches to its towering trees – "ancient beings" (59) that seem to reduce the passing of human life to almost nothing. Although she is attracted to the majesty of the landscape, Ruth, like Nao, is out-of-place in her second home. Ruth is only able to feel the passage of time in the urban environments of places like New York City, surrounded by the movements of human life. Ruth considers that she and Oliver are *hikikomori* as well, as their isolation on the island means they are removed from the stream of world events, which are experienced with greater immediacy in the company of other people. Embedded within the unhurried eternity evinced by nature, Ruth loses her grasp of human time.

Nature is not, however, merely beautiful and peaceful: it is also insidious, as well as ferociously powerful. Ruth experiences some of nature's poisonous influence through its slowness, as she feels the languid passage of natural time and the steady approach of the forest into her home. She feels as though she is trapped in a "malevolent fairytale. She'd been bewitched. She pricked her finger and had fallen into a deep, comalike sleep" (61). After summer, once the tourists have departed, the island reveals its "churlish side" (142). Living in the pseudo-wilderness of the Desolation Sound, there are a number of lurking dangers, especially during the storms. These storms, like the earthquake and tsunami, have the power to erase time and human progress, cutting off the residents' electricity supply, "hurling everything backward in time" (148). The islanders lose power for days on end until the storm passes, and their homes are "slammed back into the twenty-first century" (172), a jarring yet welcome experience, as human order is restored to the wilds of the island.

Non-dualism, a fundamental principle of Buddhist teachings, is evident not only in nature, but in the self. After leaving school, Nao likens herself to a *ronin*; a samurai without a master, and thus, without a reason to exist. Nao explains that the word *ronin* is written with *kanji* characters for "wave" and "person". She becomes a wave-person, drifting through time aimlessly until her end. She does, however, come to find a deeper understanding of herself after spending time with Jiko. As Jiko is a *bosatsu*, on the path of achieving Enlightenment, and a woman with vast life experience, Nao frequently seeks her great-grandmother's advice, and Jiko is often frustratingly vague. Jiko constantly speaks about non-dualistic aspects of life, which she calls "the not-two nature of existence" (194). She insists that concepts like "up" and "down" are neither different nor the same – each condition contains the other. She explains this in a poem:

> When up looks up, up is down.
>
> When down looks down, down is up.
>
> Not-one, not-two. Not same. Not different.
>
> Now do you see? (39-40)

Jiko's philosophy includes and accepts both the positive and negative aspects of human and non-human life. She attentively listens to Nao's grim reports of violence and tragedy from around the world, praying for both victims and perpetrators. Nao learns to speak about and acknowledge her problems through interaction with Jiko. When Jiko asks Nao about the feelings she bears toward her classmates, Nao crassly replies that she obviously feels poisonous rage directed toward the bullies, and recounts her experiences to Jiko. Her great-grandmother reveals that she has only asked so that Nao herself could hear and confront her answer. Jiko teaches Nao to sit *zazen*[7] (which Nao teaches to her reader) in order to cultivate peace within herself. As her reality is harsh and cruel, Nao finds a sense of home while meditating. Whenever she sits *zazen*, no matter where she is, "it feels like coming home" (182). Home for Nao thus exists inside herself.

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[7]Seated Zen meditation, practised in order to attain self-awareness, which Nao states, involves "noticing everything that's going on both inside and outside of you" (181).

Female Sexuality

Ecofeminism, Ynestra King (1990, p.117) states, is tied to issues of domination – not only of natural or ecological systems (such as the subjugation of nature through industrialisation), but also over aspects of nature, such as sexuality. Ozeki discusses female sexuality by addressing certain fetishised aspects of Japanese culture, namely bar hostesses and maid cafés. In the squalid apartment which Nao and her family call home, most of the surrounding suites are occupied by bar hostesses; women who entertain men in exchange for money. These women sometimes bring their "dates" home to the apartment building, and Nao and her parents are forced to endure the sounds of their sexual activities. Far from being scandalised by their lifestyles, Nao befriends the bar hostesses, and enjoys their company, as they are "pretty and bold and behaved in a liberated way and did exactly what they wanted" (72).

After leaving school, Nao frequents a little restaurant in Akihabara called "Fifi's Lovely Apron", a French-themed maid café. These cafés feature wait staff dressed as French maids – complete with "pushed-up breasts and frilly uniforms" (15) – who treat customers as their "masters" (16), catering mostly to male customers and fans of anime and manga. They greet customers with "*Okaerinasaimase, dannasama!*" or "Welcome home, my master" (16), playing into the role of erotic servant. Rather than being compelled to work in such a place, which would be frowned upon in Western society, Babette, Nao's only friend, enjoys this highly stylised lifestyle, as her "life passion is cosplay, and at Fifi's she can wear her pretty little petticoats and pinafores and stockings and lace" (289).

Seeing how these women have chosen to engage in both gendered and sexual lifestyles which are commonly denigrated, Nao herself discovers her own identity and inclinations with regard to sex and gender. After her father's second suicide attempt, Nao shaves her head, and although her mother sees it as an act of rebellion, it is likely in emulation of Jiko; and Nao is delighted to find that her shaved head now allows her to have an ambiguous gendered identity. She embodies Jiko's non-dualistic philosophy with regard to gender, as her shaved head allows her to pass as both male and female.

During her first 'date', set up her friend Babette, Nao is initially unable to engage in penetrative sex, remembering the trauma of her assault in the school bathroom. In an effort to comfort her, her date, Ryu, dresses Nao in his designer suit. After struggling with her self-

image for years after returning to Tokyo, Nao sees herself as beautiful while dressed in men's clothing, and falls in love with this image of herself. She also garners appreciative looks from many women when she wanders the streets dressed in his manner. After putting on the suit, Ryu encourages Nao to take on the masculine role during their encounter, telling her "pretend you're me" (301). It is only when she takes on the role of the dominant partner that she is comfortable enough to enjoy penetrative sex. In reciprocation, Nao asks Ryu to wear her school uniform. The sight of him in her clothes however, causes Nao to become so enraged that she begins to beat him, her anger growing as he passively allows the attack, which only fuels Nao's anger. Eventually, Ryu stops her, telling her that her violent outburst will only hurt herself. Seeing Ryu as a representation of herself, Nao is essentially hurting herself in much the same way that her classmates did, enacting her own internalised feelings of self-loathing.

Nao also becomes a victim of sexual violence. At the beginning of her writing, Nao is watched by an "*otaku* salaryman". Nao, noticing his observation, imagines – in great, sordid detail – what may come to pass should she decide to leave with him. She imagines that his shy nature would eventually turn to a violent display of sadomasochism, which may see her "lifeless naked body bent at odd angles on the floor, next to a big round zebra-skin bed" (5). Babette later forces her to endure a date with the *otaku*, and Nao's prediction becomes a reality, with the exception of her death as she returns the *otaku*'s penchant for violence, beating him and stealing his clothing and money. She becomes alien to herself, seeing her reflection as "a naked girl in the mirror" (336) who is rendered "raw-looking, gawky and awkward" (336). It is after this incident, and after discovering that both Jiko and her father will die soon (the former through natural causes, the latter through a renewed attempt at suicide) that Nao's entries disappear from her diary, and Ruth has to employ mystical means to retrieve them.

The Reader Enters the Narrative

Aside from personifying aspects such as time, the novel houses one very important non-human character – the Jungle Crow. Instead of working, Haruki sits at Ueno Park feeding crows, and on the other side of the world, Ruth and Oliver are haunted by the presence of a single, incongruous crow. Rather than a lonely local crow, this recent addition belongs to the species *Corvus japonensis*, a subspecies of crow native to Japan. Oliver, the nature

enthusiast, cannot explain the presence of this alien crow, although he thinks it may have ridden upon debris from the tsunami. According to Japanese mythology, the Jungle Crow, also known as Yatagarasu, is deployed by the Heavens to intervene in human life and to offer guidance during journeys.

The crow appears twice in Ruth's dreams. In her first dream, Ruth sees Jiko outside of the temple, calmly extending her arms and "spreading the wide black sleeves of her robe like a crow – stretching its wings and preparing to fly" (40), suggesting that the crow is the reincarnated form of the Buddhist nun, or that it is sent to Ruth by Jiko's will. The crow appears in Ruth's dreams, guiding her through the murky endlessness of time in her dreams in order to place her in the correct time in Nao's narrative, so that she may intervene.

During her most desperate hour – after a violent encounter with the otaku from Fifi's, and after receiving word of Jiko's impending death – Nao flees to Sendai to be with her great-grandmother. Her father, meanwhile, awaits the arrival of the members of his suicide group on a park bench, and it is here that Ruth finds him during her dream-travels. Ruth speaks with Haruki, encouraging him to forego his suicidal plans, as they would only deepen Nao's suffering. She reveals that Nao has gone on to Sendai, and asks Haruki to go and comfort his daughter. Ruth then finds herself in Jiko's temple, holding Haruki #1's French diary, which none of the Yasutanis were able to find, as it was likely lost at sea along with its owner. Because it exists in her present, Ruth is able to take it back in time to Nao, so that it may reach her in the future. She places the diary in the empty *ikotsu* box, which is supposed to house his remains. The diary, Haruki's last words, is all that remains of his life, and Ruth rightfully returns it to his family. Reunited at the Sendai bus stop, Haruki and Nao are at Jiko's side for her last moments. Jiko's final word to Haruki and Nao is "*ikiru*" – "to live" – a message which the gathered reporters and congregation try to analyse at length, but which was simply given to her last remaining family, inspiring them to make the most of their lives.

The changes Ruth made in Nao's narrative have ripples outside of it as well. Dr Leistiko discovers an email from Haruki that he cannot remember receiving, which provides some details about the lives of the Yasutani family after the end of the diary. Ozeki (Ty, 2013, 169) states that she herself has no clue as to the end of Nao's tale, although she does admit that there is an "optimistic sensibility" present at the novel's end. Haruki #2's email to the Professor suggests that each member of the family is an individual whom they have chosen

for themselves, with which they seem content, and the end of Nao's narrative suggests that the family is in the processes of healing their broken bonds. Also, Ozeki (Ty, 2013, 169) adds that, by writing to Nao at the end of the novel, Ruth is "calling Nao into being just as Nao does for Ruth in the beginning, continuing the cycle of both time and being".

Possibilities beyond Narratives

Ozeki's elaborate, detailed novel highlights an important facet of human life: that time is dynamic and present at almost every level of human and non-human life. It has the power to traverse borders, art forms, natures and even death to serve as a unifying force, bringing together families and strangers in unimaginable and even supernatural ways. Ozeki utilises nature in the novel to link not only time and space, but to tie both of these concept inextricably to human life. The debris caught in the Great Pacific Gyre, which eventually finds its way to North American shores is evidence, for Ozeki (Ty, 2013, 162), of how closely connected human beings truly are. Ruth and Nao are connected by the ocean, through Nao's diary's travels. Oliver also reveals that Japan has become physically closer to Canada as the earthquake caused the epicentre of the island of Japan to shift at least thirteen kilometres west, bringing the country minutely closer to him and Ruth. Nao and Ruth are also connected through Canada itself, as in his last email to Dr Leistiko, Haruki #2 suggests that Nao has relocated to Canada to study French culture; thus reader and writer are much closer than expected. Not only a narrative of Japan or Canada, *A Tale for the Time Being* is a story for humanity, embracing the interconnectedness between people, the places they inhabit, and the stories they tell.

Conclusion

> It's not as if our lives are divided simply into light and dark. There's a shadowy middle ground. Recognizing and understanding the shadows is what a healthy intelligence does. And to acquire a healthy intelligence takes a certain amount of time and effort. (Murakami, 2007, p.28)

In this chapter, I will examine the idea of 'Japaneseness' as it is discussed in the texts as a whole, and thereafter, I will look at how this view of Japanese uniqueness is challenged through notions of place, performative gender and identity in the chosen texts. Beginning with emotional geography, I will address the manner in which the texts under analysis come to terms with conceptions of place; looking specifically at how each text views the home, the city, engagement with foreign nations and the metaphoric imagination of the ocean. Thereafter I examine two common renderings of gender in the texts – namely the salaryman and the mother figure – as well as the representations of female sexuality. Next, I will look at how the texts as a collective deal with identity; highlighting how social mediations of identity, as well as the concept of universal interconnectedness, create a notion of identity which is inexplicably linked to both gender and emotional geography. Lastly, I discuss how these areas of focus can be utilised for further research, especially for cross-cultural examinations of literature.

Each work under analysis calls for a troubling of the concept of 'Japaneseness'. Each novel presents concepts which are of concern almost uniquely within Japanese society, such as the salaryman, fetishised aspects of sexuality like prostitution and love hotels, shame culture and *ijime* – terms that are associated with contemporary and traditional Japan. These texts neither attempt to hide nor explain away the existence of such phenomena. Instead, each text addresses these concepts directly where they are relevant, revealing how such conceptions associated with Japan are dealt with in the face of an ever-changing society, while simultaneously exposing these issues to the outside world. Each text also assesses Kazumi Sugimura and Shinichi Mizokami's idea (2012, p.124) of collectivism and the preservation of group harmony as salient traits in Japanese society. While the preservation of harmony is revealed as a dangerous attempt at maintaining the *status quo* – which should always be challenged – the concept of collectivism is reworked rather than rejected. While the works

examined acknowledge the importance of discovering the individual self, each text also states that this self cannot be extracted from the interaction with the other.

With regard to emotional geography, each of the three selected texts prizes a specific place or space although, as Gill Valentine (2001, p.7) asserts, each centrifugal level of place, from the home to the globe, is influenced by the changes made at other levels.Our first experience of place, outside of the body, is the home, and according to Tim Cresswell (2004, pp.24-25), the home is not only a site of safety and protection, but also a site of multiple crises. In Haruki Murakami's *After Dark*, the home is mentioned as a location to be avoided. Mari Asai leaves her comfortable home in the relative safety of Hiyoshi, choosing to escape into the night in order to flee from the sight of her sister Eri, who is trapped in her bedroom, in her body, and in her mind due to a coma-like sleep. Mari – and Eri, to some degree – also escape from the immense pressures placed upon them by their parents, who control the enactment of their identities. For the Yasutani family of Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*, the home is synonymous with a lack of communication, hopelessness and even attempted suicide, for their Tokyo apartment is not conceived of as a home, merely as a place they are forced to live in the wake of displacement. For father Haruki, it eventually becomes his world; for, as a *hikikomori*, the outside world proves to be too harsh and damning for a man struggling to cope with shame and a lack of agency.

In Kiyoshi Kurosawa's film *Tokyo Sonata*, most of the action – bar the otherworldly experiences of a single night – is set within the home. For the Sasaki family, a prime example of a typical Japanese nuclear family, home is characterised by a lack of the warmth and communality typically expected of it, as it merely serves as a place of residence. The director highlights how the home becomes a site of disruption in the face of changing identities, and also reflects how, in such close quarters, the shifting of a single member's identity has ripples into the lives of the entire family. As he negotiates through the loss of his job and his identity, father, breadwinner and unquestioned authority Ryūhei Sasaki struggles desperately to hold onto the power afforded to him by these roles within the family, as he can no longer lay claim to these identities outside of the home. For his wife Megumi especially, the home becomes a cage, as she is rarely seen leaving her house. It also serves as a constant reminder of her role as wife and mother, which is strongly tied to domestic duties. The Sasaki sons, especially the eldest Takashi, on the other hand, mainly use the home as a place of rest, and seek affection and self-discovery away from home.

Each of the texts under analysis shares the idea that, in order to address the turbulent issues arising within the home, individuals must first assert their identity outside of the home. Thus each text suggests that identity must also be constituted by leaving the home and engaging with the city and beyond. After her troubling experiences at school, and with her father at home, Nao journeys to her great-grandmother's temple in Sendai, where she learns to come to terms with her own trauma, and her family history, before returning to her home in Tokyo. She also discovers a new side of her identity, sexuality and writing abilities by venturing out into the vibrant streets of Akihabara Electricity Town. Likewise in *Tokyo Sonata*, each member of the Sasaki family takes to the streets of Tokyo during a single, almost supernatural night to reconcile their own conflicts of identity within themselves, so that each of them may return to the home with a stronger sense of self. This, Kurosawa suggests, allows the home to become a more dynamic place, in which each member feels comfortable enough to express themselves and accept each other.

The theme of journeying away from home is most evident in *After Dark*, as the novel follows a number of characters who constitute the Tokyo nightlife, who have all left home as a means of escape. The sinister salaryman Shirakawa works late into the night to avoid having to interact with his family at home, and, no matter how much she would like to, the mysterious Korogi can never return to her home, as she is being hunted. The Asai sisters both leave the home, although they travel to vastly different places (or even planes), with the liminality of the night allowing for more than just physical journeys. Mari finds herself in a number of places throughout the city, learning to engage with others, and relearning how to engage with her sister, with whom she wishes to cultivate a close relationship. Eri, meanwhile, journeys into her unconscious as a means of escaping the pressures to be embodied. She discovers that she cannot easily be separated from this part of herself, but also learns that she can exist outside of it. The sisters come together at home at the break of day, with their night-time wanderings concluding with the potential for a greater bond.

In terms of the spaces beyond the city of Tokyo, and in fact beyond Japan, each text discusses the engagement with foreign counties to varying degrees, although the most hopeful interaction with foreign lands is brought out through the adolescent characters in each text. Due to its author's fondness for engagement with Western culture, *After Dark* is littered with references to American jazz and artworks, French films and international chain restaurants. It also deals with the issue of Chinese immigrants, and the troubles they face in Japanese

society, as women such as young Dongli have to turn to the sex industry in order to remain in Japan. The Chinese language serves as the catalyst for a bond between Mari and Dongli when the former has to act as a translator. Mari also intends to study in China, as she has been educated in Chinese from a young age – against her parents' wishes – and aims to broaden her horizons by engaging with China on a personal level. *Tokyo Sonata* also includes interactions with the Chinese, although this interchange is much more threatening, as Ryūhei's company decides to outsource cheap labour from China, and consequently loses his comfortable position. The possibility of beneficial exchange with foreign nations comes from Takashi, who decides to enlist with the United States armed forces, who are recruiting in Japan. Through the army's engagement with the Middle East, Takashi comes into contact with other nations and other narratives, and remains in war-torn lands in the hopes of gaining an understanding of their stories. The exchange of narratives across borders and oceans lies at the heart of *A Tale for the Time Being*, as Nao is connected to Ruth through the reader-writer relationship. Japan and Canada are connected through a gyre in the Pacific Ocean, making these two lands both close together and extremely distant. Ruth and Nao are thus able to establish a connection across time, space, age and culture through the written word.

With its status as an island nation, the ocean plays a significant role in the Japanese narrative and imagination. Of the selected texts, *A Tale for the Time Being* presents the ocean as an intermediary between lands, and between narratives, as Nao's diary is delivered to Ruth through the gyres and currents of the Pacific Ocean. The ocean is also used as a metaphor for memory and time, as it can preserve the debris of human life, and is also capable of destroying hundreds of years of progress in an instant, as is demonstrated by the ferocious power of the 2011 Tōhoku tsunami. The ocean is synonymous with freedom and opportunity for Megumi in *Tokyo Sonata*. After being kidnapped, Megumi drives herself and her kidnapper to the ocean, and where she is able to see "something" on the horizon, he cannot. The sea is thus a symbol of hopelessness for the older males in the film, as Kurosu makes reference to the ocean as a metaphor for the strict male order within Japanese society: for without employment, he and Ryūhei are left adrift at sea, with no sign of relief in sight. Lastly, although it makes no physical appearance, the semi-supernatural view of the ocean is used as a metaphor for sleep and the unconscious in *After Dark*. Eri is transported to a space in her dreams which she assumes is upon the ocean, and Murakami describes the nature of her sleep as deep and oceanic, signalling that, though dangerous and all-encompassing, the

spatial vastness and changeability of the ocean is also a welcoming alternative to the rigidity of real-world roles.

Judith Butler's conception (1990) of the highly constructed nature of gender is especially seen within the chosen texts' discussions of masculinity. With regard to gender performativity, each text calls attention to the most predominant representation of masculinity in Japan: that of the salaryman. The salaryman, as the modern-day descendent of the samurai, is characterised by his severe work schedule; and, as a result of this, an emotional disconnection from his family, who are rarely able to engage with him in a meaningful manner. *Tokyo Sonata* is centred on the life and identity of the salaryman without work. Ryūhei Sasaki is an almost textbook example of the salaryman: a man so tied to his career and workplace that without his job, he loses his identity and control over his life. His employment is so tied to his sense of self-worth that he continues to act in the role of salaryman even after he is let go from his company. It is only after witnessing the destructive nature of clinging to such a role – through the death of his friend Kurosu – that Ryūhei realises the need to change his conception of masculinity.

The salaryman in Murakami's *After Dark* is portrayed by Shirakawa, the man who violently attacks Dongli during their sexual encounter at Hotel Alphaville. The violence of Shirakawa's nature is hidden behind his suit and tie, which literally hides his powerful build, and figuratively masks his dangerous personality. He, like Ryūhei, is dedicated to his job, working long into the night. He is also guilty of a lack of an emotional relationship with his wife and children, and the novel implies that he is actively avoiding them, using them only as a means of cementing his image as a salaryman. Shirakawa's obsessive-compulsive desire for control – over his work, his body and even his sexual activities – serves as Murakami's critique of the Japanese salaryman, whose image is merely that – an empty role which conceals much more danger than it suggests.

Surprisingly, the salaryman in *A Tale for the Time Being* is not a man, but is in fact Nao's mother, Tomoko. Haruki #2, who used to dress in casual clothing and ride a bicycle to work in the United States, cannot find employment upon returning to Tokyo, so it is up to Tomoko to seek employment for her family's survival. She flourishes in the business world, which is unusual due to Japan's lack of interest in women in the working world. After her promotion, Tomoko too dedicates more time to her work than to her family. She is absent during some of

Nao's most trying times, such as when Haruki commits suicide. After this Tomoko almost disappears from Nao's narrative, mentioned only in passing, and without any narrative impact.

Each of these texts presents the salaryman narrative as a cautionary tale. Where the salaryman is present, his or, thanks to Ozeki, her family may enjoy some margin of financial benefits, but they have to endure the trials of living in a pseudo-single-parent family, as one of their parents becomes a placeholder figure only. Even when characters are without employment, as with Haruki #2 and Ryūhei, the salaryman model still has pervasive influence within their lives, for, when they cannot achieve or maintain gainful employment, the sense of shame they suffer through being unable to attain this role proves to be damaging to their self-worth and sense of themselves as men who can provide for their families.

Each novel also presents characters that represent alternative, and often more open, images of masculinity. Takahashi of *After Dark* is one example of this, as he serves as the "herbivorous man" (Nihei, 2013, p.63), whose temerity and casual sense of aesthetics and ideology serve as a counter to predatory masculinity, the latter of which leaves women like Dongli and Eri in its wake. Both Harukis of *A Tale for the Time Being* represent a divergence from traditional images of Japanese masculinity, especially in acts of war. Haruki #1's gentle nature is out-of-place in the military during World War 1, and even though his role as kamikaze pilot means certain death for him, he refuses to kill his enemy. Decades later, Haruki #2's sense of consciousness is out-of-place in the engineering of semi-sentient weaponry, and even though it costs him his livelihood, he strives to embed a conscience in his programme, so that it will not kill indiscriminately. The Sasaki boys of *Tokyo Sonata* embody the spirit of rebelliousness which refuses to relive the rigid, destructive roles of their forebears. Even though he goes off to war, Takashi uses it as an opportunity to learn more about the diversity of human life; while back at home, Kenji uses music as a means of understanding himself, even though the arts are a far cry from the world of business which men like his father inhabit. Ryūhei too learns to humble himself and accept a life without the power afforded to him by his position as an administrator, or as a tyrant at home.

With regard to women and gendered representations in the chosen novels and film, no single stereotypical image is present throughout all three texts, as it is with the salaryman; however, each text does make explicit reference to the mother figure. In Kurosawa's film, Megumi, in

her role as dutiful wife and mother, is the counterpart to Ryūhei's salaryman, and this role too is revealed to be destructive. Although she cares for her children, her role as subservient wife means that often she cannot stand up to her husband to protect her sons' best interests. The narrow role of wife-and-mother, and her near-imprisonment in the home, means that Megumi can only define herself in terms of her family. Thus, on the night of her kidnapping, she finds a tentative sense of freedom away from the home and the ability to discover herself outside of her matriarchal role, and the breakdown of Ryūhei's role as male authority allows Megumi to assert herself in terms of parenting. She does not divorce herself from the role of wife and mother, but is able to begin to see who she may be outside of it.

The mother figures found in *After Dark* and *A Tale for the Time Being* are not traditional imaginings of the mother; rather, they stand in place of the elder female figure for the young people who require them. As an ex-wrestler, Kaoru, the owner of the love hotel in Murakami's narrative, serves as an unconventional mother to the women on her staff, accepting them despite the dangers of their past. She extends this acceptance and protection even to her customers, as she does for Dongli, ensuring that the young girl is safely returned to her handlers, as this is the best way she knows to keep the girl safe. As Tomoko proves to be a well-meaning but inadequate mother to Nao, Ozeki continues the theme of unconventional mothers in the form of both Jiko and Ruth. Jiko has some claim to the term mother, as she is the Yasutani family's matriarch. She teaches Nao not only about spirituality, but also about herself, her history and her potential. On the other side of the world, Ruth serves as a mother-like figure in her role as Nao's reader and confessor. Through reading the young girl's detailed autobiography, Ruth comes to know Nao intimately, despite the vast distance between them. Ruth also exhibits great care for the suicidal girl, going so far as to travel through dreams and time in an effort to save Nao's life. Through these women, the authors represent the benefits of female solidarity, which appears to be presented as more prevalent and valuable than male commonality.

In their discussion of gender, these works also examine female sexuality to varying degrees. Murakami presents the troubling picture of female sexuality which is under the control of men, as both Eri and Dongli are reduced to bodies under the gaze – and hand – of the male subject. Eri, as a professional model, becomes a victim of the male gaze, as even in her sleep, she is held in the eager gaze of the Man with No Face. Dongli, as a sex worker, is also made to serve male desire, and is punished brutally when her body acts in a manner which

interrupts the fulfilment of that desire. Nao too, at the age of sixteen, becomes the victim of a violent sexual encounter at the hands of a 'date'. However, she is also able to explore her sexuality through experimenting with gender. Although she identifies as heterosexual, the androgynous appearance Nao is granted after her head is shaved allows her sexual freedom. This sexual ambiguity is also present in Jiko, who Nao notes, had a number of lovers, both male and female. Megumi is only portrayed in a sexual situation outside of her marriage, as she is made to have sex with her captor in a rundown beach house. While he cannot complete their sexual act, she uses their encounter as a means for self-reflection.

The postmodern conception of identity which, according to Ian Gregson (2004, p.6), seeks to "tear selves apart" is present in each of the texts under analysis. The self, according to postmodern thought, is constantly in-progress; thus acts of crisis, disturbance and change are part of the constitution of the self. According to Elizabeth Atkinson (2010, p.207), the self is never a singular entity, as we constantly call upon diverse facets of ourselves in different contexts. As the above discussions on gender and space show, identity is tied to every facet of our lives, as negotiations of the spaces we inhabit and the gendered roles we choose to portray are interwoven into identity. Doreen Massey (1994, p.2) and Judith Butler (1990, p.8) state that our conceptions of space and gender respectively are not constructed in isolation, but that they are created and mediated socially, and the same truth holds for identity. We define ourselves in relation to others, claiming terms such as "mother", "manager", "student" and "author". Thus identity is reactionary, and indeed depends on an other to serve as the mirror through which we see ourselves. Each of the texts, which focus on human relationships, provides a counterpoint and a reflection, with which and through which the self is realised.

Each text, by progressively opening up the spaces under consideration, reveals the necessity of the other in terms of reconciling the self. *Tokyo Sonata* looks at the changing and clashing of identities within the home and the family, which is greatly influenced by the role played outside of it. It suggests that stasis serves as a poison to identity; for an identity which cannot bend with society risks the loss of a sense of self. Through the interactions and flow of the night-time city, Murakami suggests that all people are subjected to the movements of the city, which we may be unaware of, but are always at work. The smallest movements within this arena lead to the greatest changes, as people who are seemingly thrown into our paths by coincidence become important mirrors to our selves. All of these notions come to play within

A Tale for the Time Being, as Ozeki suggests that not only are we influenced by interactions in the home or city, but that we are also caught in the tide of time. The notion of interconnectedness has firm roots within each text, showing that, rather than focusing on the unique attitudes and conditions of the Japanese people, these texts, viewing life through the lens of Japan's people and places, are reflections of the human condition: tales for the time being in society today.

The novels covered in this dissertation are, it goes without saying, hardly representative of all of the genres, themes and forms which could be examined from Japanese literature and film – without mentioning works from authors and directors from the Japanese diaspora. The country's collective body of literary work does provide extremely fertile ground for analysis, as only few countries offer academic courses or classes investigating Japanese literature. Although translation does pose a significant problem for this endeavour, there is a steadily-growing number of works being translated into English, especially due to an international interest in Japanese film, television and literature. The works presented here are also chosen from works of internationally-celebrated artists, so a look at conceptions of place, identity and gender in less well-known works could prove worthwhile. Furthermore, a look into specifically Japanese forms of artwork, such as the I-novel and anime, may also provide insight as to how uniquely Japanese narrative media handle the same issues raised in this dissertation. With regard to gender and sexuality, it would be worthwhile to examine how Japanese narratives from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community are presented today.

The exploration in this dissertation focuses on emotional geography, identity and gender from a Japanese perspective, and suggests that, rather than describing an entirely isolated experience of these concepts, these texts cross through time, space and peoples, presenting a universal, interconnected narrative of the world through the eyes of Japanese artists. The universality of these themes means that a comparison of Japanese and South African texts would be greatly beneficial, especially with regard to issues of the home and the troubling of gendered identity – issues which are salient within contemporary South African literature. A cross-cultural examination of thematically-related narratives would thus be an excellent method of expanding upon an understanding of emotional geography, identity and gender in contemporary world literature. This examination would also serve to build bridges between

not only Japanese and South African literature, but lead to the creation of a global literary understanding of what it means to be an embodied human in today's dynamic world.

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