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Mapping Yasunari Kawabata's Multiplicity: Reading Snow Country as Rhizome

January 2001

Mapping Yasunari Kawabata's Multiplicity: Reading *Snow Country* as Rhizome

by

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Abstract

The work that a text does has long been of critical interest. Yasunari Kawabata's *Snow Country* is a text that works not toward ideological effect but for personal effect. By applying Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the rhizome to the novel, *Snow Country* becomes a multiplicity, an ever-growing system of constantly moving threads or elements. These elements represent the exteriority that is interiority, form that is substance. Furthermore, these threads that make up the exteriority intersect with each other in a random and haphazard fashion, at each intersection offering a different reading or map. Thus, in *Snow Country*, the intersections that occur between the train, snow country, Shimamura, the ballet, Komako, the novel and the short story create a plurality of geographical, political, aesthetic, and historical maps that continuously move and meet amongst themselves. Such intersections and mappings take the novel away from a traditional cultural work of literature, to either reflect the world or affect the world by disavowing or reaffirming power. Instead, the novel works on a micro-level, establishing personal agency for the reader's engagement with the text and the world.

Mapping Yasunari Kawabata's Multiplicity: Reading *Snow Country* as Rhizome

In her essay on Yasunari Kawabata's *Snow Country*, Iraphne R. W. Childs asserts that the "plot is simple, and in itself does not make *Snow Country* a literary masterpiece. This is achieved through Kawabata's uniquely Japanese style and symbolism."[1] This statement seems to beg the questions of what Kawabata's style is, what meaning lies behind the symbolism, and how the two - style and symbolism - work to create this magnum opus. For Childs, Kawabata's style in this novel is based on the haiku tenets of motion and silence, and this style serves as the vehicle through which symbolism - nature as harmonious with human existence - works.[2] Yet I make reference to Childs not for her interpretation of the novel but for the duality her comment indirectly introduces.. Style becomes associated with form or object, symbolism with meaning or subject. In this sense, the power of *Snow Country* stems from one of the oldest and most rigid of binaries. Reading the novel in this way is certainly logical. After all, dualities, whether thematic, imagistic, or symbolic, flood the text: past and present, ideal and real, city and country, tradition and change, beauty and ugliness, joy and pain, and man and woman. Hence, style and symbolism - form and meaning - exist as two separate aspects of the novel that work together to create a great whole. What happens, though, when this duality collapses, when form becomes meaning?

Here, I turn to Deleuze and Guattari because they offer a means of reading *Snow Country* as a text in which this binary has collapsed. In the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari discuss the book as rhizome. According to Deleuze and Guattari, a

book "has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds."[3] The idea here is that the book has neither because object and subject are the same: "There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made."[4] Through this merging, interiority gives way to exteriority; through this exteriority, the book becomes a "body without organs," where only the vast intersections of lines in constant motion matter.[5] The book becomes a multiplicity, a rhizome. Moreover, as a rhizome, the book becomes a plateau, a continuous middle.[6] Thus, the book does not mire itself in concerns of starts and stops, culminations and terminations. It is only concerned with communications and intersections between often dissimilar lines. For this reason, the writing that makes up a book becomes an activity of mapping instead of signification.[7] The idea is to find new worlds, new understandings, and new entryways that go beyond the eternal One, whether that One is God, progressive history, or the tree.

To read *Snow Country* through the lens of the rhizome, then, is to open up the very dualities that abound in the text. Therefore, instead of the parallel, binary relation between past and present that leaves the reader wondering which of the two is being privileged, as if there were only one choice, the reader would intersect the past with the concept of "man" or "woman," with each intersection offering a different interpretation. Such a reading can be valuable because it can lead back to critical issues about the text like those discussed by Childs. Or, it can open up the work that the text does. In particular, I want to examine *Snow Country* as a rhizome in order to arrive at an understanding of what Kawabata's *body without organs* does. By examining various "formed matters" or lines, including the

train, the ballet, Shimamura, Komako, snow country, the novel and the short story, as well as their intersections with each other, I want to show that *Snow Country* is a multiplicity of geographical, political, aesthetic, and historical *mappings* that works to perpetuate personal agency for the reader.

One of the very first intersections to occur in the novel is that of the train and snow country. The first lines of the novel establish the juxtaposition of train against land: "The train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country. The earth lay white under the night sky."[8] This one intersection is rich in interpretation and the work it does. One reading reflects a geographical mapping. According to Childs, "Until modern rail and road transport became available in the 20th century, the Yukiguni [snow country] was isolated from the rest of Japan during the long winter months because of the deep snow."[9] Thus, the suggestion is that the snow country of Kawabata's novel is relatively unexplored territory, particularly for the urban dwellers of Tokyo and other modern cities. The train, then, can be taken as a tool for exploration. Each mile that the train travels is another segment of the snow country surveyed and mapped, even if unconsciously. Shimamura notices the way "Individual shapes were clear far into the distance, but the monotonous mountain landscape, undistinguished for mile after mile, seemed all the more undistinguished for having lost its last traces of color."[10] The view to be had from the train may not be the most intriguing, especially as the speed of the train would make the already white background even more blurred, but the train does offer Shimamura the opportunity to arrive in this area of the country that exists as a second and separate Japan. As an explorer of this different realm, Shimamura is

able to become a connoisseur of an ideal beauty that does not exist for him in his real life in Tokyo. Because of the train, Shimamura can enter "the reverse side of Japan" and experience a multiplicity of interactions that affect change within the landscape and within himself.[11]

This same interaction between the landscape and the train is also a political mapping of Japan's interaction with the West. According to Patrick J. Moore, Kawabata developed as a writer during Taisho era, a period of restrictive xenophobic orthodoxy geared towards the rejection of anything harmful to Japanese society, and, during this time, literary works were under constant threat of suppression and censorship.[12] Kawabata was aware, then, of fears over the influence of the outside world on Japan. Kawabata's depiction of the train can and should be interpreted as a commentary on this outside influence. The train is a mechanism for transport. Males and females, young and old use this machine to travel around Japan. For Shimamura, the train is his means into the snow country. It offers him fast travel as opposed to slow, meditative travel. The train is used so regularly that it becomes part of the Japanese setting and scenery. Yet, for all its seeming naturalness, the train as a foreign presence inevitably makes itself known. After all, the first trains were Western inventions, not Japanese. Despite the fact that the Japanese adopted this Western technology, the train can be read as being no more Japanese in Kawabata's world than it was during the industrial revolution that followed the Meiji Restoration. Therefore, the train traveling through the tunnel into the snow country at the beginning of the novel is a powerful sign of Western invasion.

Snow country is an area of Japan that is arguably "for its latitude . . . the snowiest region of the world."[13] This is an environment that "suggests long, gray winters, tunnels under the snow, dark houses with rafters black from the smoke of winter fires--and perhaps chilbains, or, to the more imaginative, life divorced from time though the long snowbound months."[14] Yet, for all its coldness and darkness, the snow country is still innately Japan. The Japanese know how to live with the land. In this land of ice and snow, "Children were breaking off chunks of ice from the drains and throwing them down in the middle of the road."[15] Likewise, they know how to work and make a living in this frigid region. As Shimamura, the novel's hero, thinks of the precious Chijimi linen woven in this country, he recalls an old saying that "There is Chijimi linen because there is snow . . . . Snow is the mother of Chijimi."[16] This area, then, is very much "divorced from time," for it is Japan in its traditional and rural state. The snow country, its young girls with cracked feet in sandals, is unadulterated Japan.

However, juxtaposed against this pure landscape is the alien train, which inspires alien behavior and perceptions of the natural world. For example, on the train, Shimamura rudely watches a young girl tend to a sickly man. Shimamura looks into her beauty and creates an identity for her without getting to know her. For him, she is "'The girl'--something in her manner suggested the unmarried girl." [17] This covert observation is rude behavior, yet while on the train, Shimamura forgets this basic rule of etiquette: "It did not occur to Shimamura that it was improper to stare at the girl so long and stealthily."[18] In fact, Shimamura does not even realize his folly until he exits the train. At the train station, "the cold air on the

platform made him suddenly ashamed of his rudeness on the train."[19] The train places people in close contact, and this contact makes Shimamura believe that he can become a voyeur, that he can see into the individual passengers' lives. Yet, the contact established by the train is a false and sterile one. People are pushed together but still remain isolated. The girl is in her own world with her sick companion as is Shimamura watching them. This train contact is nothing like the contact of those playing children who inhabit the snow country. Thus, the train is a foreign force that disrupts traditional beliefs. The difference between Shimamura's behavior on the train and off the train is marked. Once free from his train-induced stupor, Shimamura can return to right action. Once he moves from interiority (inside the train) to exteriority (cold air) he comes to his senses. "Nature" brings him back.

Likewise, the train distorts Shimamura's vision of the natural environment. The train window becomes a mirror through which he views the young girl tending the sick man and the landscape. However, this girl, named Yoko, is as much a part of the snow country as the snow, so the train's distortion of her also distorts the environment. In the train window, "A woman's eye floated up before him . . . But he had been dreaming, and when he came to himself he saw that it was only the reflection in the window of the girl opposite."[20] The train window hinders Shimamura's vision; it affects the way he sees the world and the people in it. Yoko is no longer Shimamura's "unmarried girl." Instead, she is dismembered, reduced to an eye that does not see its own violation under Shimamura's scrutiny through the window. Likewise, the train window distorts Shimamura's perception of the unity between the girl, the sick man, and the surrounding landscape:

> In the depths of the mirror the evening landscape moved by, the mirror and the reflected figures like motion pictures superimposed one on the other. The figures and the background were unrelated, and yet the figures, transparent and intangible, and the background, dim in the gathering darkness, melted together into a sort of symbolic world not of this world.[21]

Not only has the train reduced the girl to an eye, it has also alienated her from her natural environment. The girl and the sick man, returning home, represent the snow country, yet the train window would separate them from the snow country only to merge them with it again but in an unnatural way.

Furthermore, Yoko's association with the landscape casts it as female, bearing the brunt of male oppression. Just as Yoko becomes dismembered by the train's window, the land suffers a similar violation. The train becomes the ultimate phallic symbol, invading the Japanese landscape as it travels through the long tunnels of the mountains. Thus, sexual mapping also arises from the intersections of train and landscape in the novel. The fact that three ideological fields open up because of this one tension in the novel reflects Deleuze and Guattari's claim that literature is not ideological.[22] Literature, as rhizome, cannot be about Ideology, which suggests the idea of One unifying belief, idea, or discourse. Instead, literature can only be about ideologies, the products of various rhizomatic interminglings. The political mapping and the geographical mapping seem incongruous and contradictory. They do not appear to be able to exist together in one text. The first instinct is to prioritize one reading over the other, but to do so is to undermine the very multiplicity that the text offers up for the reader's pleasure. The train, then, can serve as a positive embodiment or a negative one, but this is the dichotomy of dualism. A rhizomatic interpretation rooted

in the text's multiplicity, however, would demand that the train be both positive and negative simultaneously and in different ways.

Another intersection occurs between Shimamura and Western ballet, and it, too, evokes mappings - political and aesthetic. Shimamura is obsessed with what he calls "occidental dance." The fact that he identifies ballet as such already establishes the dichotomy between East and West. Shimamura is an Easterner, who ideally should study Eastern dance, particularly Japanese dance. Yet, Shimamura is a student of ballet, an aesthetic movement of the West. The fact that he used to study Japanese dance seems to make the situation worse because his story becomes one of the overthrow of traditional Japanese art by foreign art:

> He had grown up in the merchants' section of Tokyo, and he had been thoroughly familiar with the Kabuki theater from childhood. As a student his interests had shifted to the Japanese dance and the dance-drama . . . . Just as he arrived at the conclusion that there was nothing for it but to throw himself actively into the dance movement, and as he was being persuaded to do so by certain of the younger figures in the dance world, he abruptly switched to the occidental dance. He stopped seeing the Japanese dance. He gathered pictures and descriptions of the occidental ballet, and began laboriously collecting programs and posters from abroad.[23]

Shimamura's defection becomes a reflection of his social isolation. Not only does he reject traditional Japanese dance, he also separates himself from the occidental dance that he now favors. He does not go to see any ballets; he just collects programs and pictures of them. He is unable to see "with his own eyes occidentals in occidental ballet," yet he deliberately refuses "to study the ballet as performed by Japanese."[24] The distance between Shimamura and his topic of study is immense. In this way, Shimamura is the alienated Modernist man, influenced by the intellectual mood of his time, and that mood is a

mixture of Japanese and Western thought. According to Ivan Morris, "Shortly after the war there was a vogue . . . for French existentialism," which provided a "philosophical basis for their prevailing nihilistic mood." [25] Thus, Shimamura's interest in the "occidental dance" appears as another critique of Western influence. His social alienation melds well with this Western art form in a way that is impossible with traditional Japanese dance. After all, Shimamura abandons Japanese dance when it becomes too real, too probable in affecting material change in his life. Occidental dance cannot become too real for Shimamura, especially if he is only appeasing his interest in it through pictures and programs. So, the intersection between Shimamura and ballet engenders a definite political critique.

Moreover, Shimamura's interaction with ballet results in an aesthetic mapping. For Shimamura, the best ballet is one that is not seen: "A ballet he had never seen was an art in another world."[26] This type of ballet not only allows Shimamura comfort in his study, it also allows him to indulge in "uncontrolled fantasy."[27] Part of the appeal of this fantasy is its solitary quality. This is one reason why Shimamura does not want to study ballet performed by Japanese. It also helps to explain Shimamura's rejection of traditional Japanese dance. His involvement there connected him as a patron of the art and of young dancers. Shimamura cannot indulge in uncontrolled fantasy about Japanese dance because there are so many voices speaking on the subject. For Shimamura, the beauty of ballet lies in its ability to give him "unrivaled armchair revelry."[28] This solitude stimulates Shimamura's imagination. He can relish "the phantasms of his own dancing imagination, called up by Western books and pictures."[29] Art

should inspire one to creativity, and Shimamura's imaginings are creative phantasms indeed. In his thoughts about the ballet, Shimamura assumes the air of a poet. He feels as if he is in love with an unseen woman. He also feels as if he has been touched by "a lyric from some paradise."[30] The aesthetic mapping that occurs with this intersection, then, is set by the lines of solitude, art, imagination, and emotion.

Of course, this aethetic mapping is just one such map in the novel. The question of beauty is addressed by other intersections that are made. One such intersection occurs between Shimamura and Komako, the hot springs geisha he visits occasionally over the course of two years. Komako, like Yoko on the train, represents the snow country landscape. Komako "was born in this snow country" after all.[31] She is the pristine white that reflects perfect Japanese beauty frozen in time. When Shimamura first meets her, he is taken with her cleanliness: "The impression the woman gave was a wonderfully clean and fresh one. . . So clean indeed did she seem that he wondered whether his eyes, back from looking early summer in the mountains, might not be deceiving him."[32] Komako is so beautiful in her cleanliness that Shimamura doubts his eyes, believing that the beauty of summer in the mountains may have spilled over onto her. Yet, mingled with this beauty is the hint of decay. When Simamura learns that Komako is nineteen instead of the twenty-one or twenty-two he figures, he is comforted. For Shimamura, "the knowledge that she had aged beyond her years gave him for the first time a little of the ease he expected to feel with a geisha."[33] The ease that Shimamura feels despite the signs of decay in Komako suggest that beauty is not constructed of only health, vigor, and joy. Instead, beauty seems to

be a mixture of health and illness, vigor and frailty, joy and pain. The interaction of these elements is constant in each of Shimamura and Komako's intersections. During their second visit together, Komako sings and plays the samisen for Shimamura, and his reaction to her performance illuminates this merging of pain and pleasure:

> A chill swept over Shimamura. The goose flesh seemed to rise even to his cheeks. The first notes opened a transparent emptiness deep in his entrails, and in the emptiness the sound of the samisen reverberated. He was startled - or, better, he fell back as under a well-aimed blow. Taken with a feeling of almost reverence, washed by waves of remorse, defenselessness, quite deprived of strength - there was nothing for him to do but give himself up to the current, to the pleasure of being swept off wherever Komako might take him.[34]

Shimamura is consumed with emptiness. The sounds of the song shock him, and he feels as if he has been hit. Likewise, he is flooded with remorse and left in a state of frailty. The language here is effective in expressing the idea of pain. This pain, however, is accompanied by pleasure and seems, in fact, to be part of that pleasure. He feels "almost" reverence as if total reverence is impossible, that the beauty of the experience is very much rooted in the lack. Even the idea of emptiness or lack expressed here suggests a merging of pleasure and pain, beauty and ugliness. According to Kawabata, his own works "have been described as works of emptiness, but it [the emptiness] is not to be taken for the nihilism of the West."[35] Thus, the emptiness that Shimamura feels is also a fullness; it is an emptiness filled with a spectrum of emotions ranging from shock to remorse to joy.

Shimamura is drawn to the everlasting beauty of the snow country, a beauty that is different from the beauty that he can experience in his urban life. He comes to snow country with pain, and

he feels more pain while there. Before he leaves Tokyo for his third trip into snow country, Shimamura interacts with a moth trapped in his screened window: "That one spot of pale green struck him as oddly like the color of death. The fore and after wings overlapped to make a deeper green, and the wings fluttered like thin pieces of paper in the autumn wind."[36] The beauty of this experience lies in the predicament of the moth. Only in death can its wings overlap to deepen its color. Only in death can its wings flutter in the breeze as if it is in flight. This is an example of Deleuze and Guattari's *aparallel evolution* in which two different exteriorities "are not models or copies of each other."[37] Here, life and death become each other without mimicking. The dead moth is becoming a live moth; in death, life gets another expression.

This process of *becoming* aptly applies to the creation of beauty. Becoming-beauty in ugliness is the intersection of beauty and ugliness so that the two coexist simultaneously. In his intersections with snow country and Komako, Shimamura enacts *aparallel evolution*. Shimamura brings, perhaps, a different type of beauty to snow country and, in doing so, becomes a new snowflake to fill the landscape. As each snowflake is similar yet different, each conception of the beautiful is similar yet different. Likewise, Shimamura and Komako, so different from each other, initiate any number of emotions, including love, irritation, obsession, revulsion, pleasure, and loneliness. The fact that they each participate in the same experiences yet see those experiences in different ways illustrates that they are "mapping" beauty but using different entryways into the maps. This idea is important because it reflects back onto the reader

that there is no one way to engage with the text, no one way to make assemblages, or connections, with the text.

Komako lives her life as if from behind a mask. She loves Shimamura, but will not openly admit to it. She says, instead, that "only women are able really to love."[38] The suggestion here is that she refuses to see herself as a woman; she refuses to immerse herself completely in the joy and pain that coexist in love. Shimamura, however, views Komako with a different eye: "He was conscious of an emptiness that made him see Komako's life as beautiful but wasted, even though he himself was the object of her love; and yet the woman's existence, her straining to live came touching him like a naked skin."[39] Komako's love is beautiful but wasted as is the object of that love. Beauty, then, is many things or nothing. It is itself a multiplicity, a rhizome. It is marked by intersections in the novel but not confined to them. Once the various grids of beauty are established, they intersect with each other (the beauty of snow country meeting the beauty of the ballet) and with other mappings (the beauty of Shimamura's relationship with Komako meeting with the political critique of the train, for Shimamura pulls in and out of his relationship with Komako as if he himself is the train).

The intersections connected to this novel are not just confined to the text, however. The novel, as an exteriority, intersects with the outside world. This text meets up with the short story, and, in doing so, it creates a larger aesthetic map as well as a historical map. In 1972, Kawabata wrote his last palm-of-the-hand story, "Gleanings from Snow Country." This story is a concentrated version of the novel *Snow Country*. The concept of a story that can fit in the palm of one's hand is quaint and hints to other miniaturized forms of

Japanese literature like the haiku. With this miniaturization, however, comes concision and density. What this means in terms of "Gleanings from Snow Country," then, is a story that is even less tenable than the novel. According to Thom Palmer, the palm-of-the-hand story "requires the kind of synthetic appraisal we give to paintings, photographs, sculpture, or architecture: one first *sees* a work, perceives it, assimilates it."[40] Thus, this short story form is linked with other art forms. To understand its aesthetic principles, one must be able to understand the aesthetic principles of painting, photography, and architecture. To grasp its meaning, one must *read* it in a certain way. The palm-of-the-hand story, however, brings into question this idea of *meaning*. Lane Dunlap, in his initial interaction with Kawabata's palm-of-the-hand story, "mistook their subtlety for slightness, their lack of emphasis for pointlessness."[41] The idea expressed is that Dunlap was incorrect in his judgment because he did not approach his initial reading in the right way. The palm-of-the-hand stories do have meaning, but Dunlap missed that meaning because he did not employ "synthetic appraisal."

Yet, if meaning collapses into form, and the form is concise to the point of slightness and pointlessness, then would not the meaning be slightness and pointlessness? This pointlessness correlates well to the idea of the rhizome. The various threads crisscross haphazardly, meandering in ways that do not necessarily lead anywhere. This pointlessness, this rhizomatic structure, is beautiful. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari, "Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes."[42] So, "Gleanings from Snow Country" is indeed "a palm-sized story of astonishing, concentrated beauty."[43] That beauty,

however, stems from the threads that are picked up and dropped, the continuous plateau that the story forms, not any one particular reading. This conception of the palm-of-the-hand story as meandering, pointless, and beautiful connects back with *Snow Country* because the novel, in a way, is an extended palm-of-the-hand story, an extended narrative:

> Kawabata's "novels" are not really novels at all; the term is an anomaly. [*Shosetsu*, the Japanese approximation for the word *novel*, literally means "brief account," and was only in usage one hundred years when Kawabata won his Nobel.] Much of his long fiction fits the criteria for the Post-Modern "anti-novel": plotless, amorphous strings of text holding the frail beads of character, recurrent images, abstruse "themes," carefully constructed tableaus. Works like *Snow Country* and *Thousand Cranes* are best described as extended narratives. They are, after Lady Murasaki's *Genji*, meandering rivers of sensation, organic structures, suggesting vastness and enormity without necessarily growing to such proportions. Their purposes and component parts are elusive, unstressed, and nebulous, and the works, as a whole, seem unfinished.[44]

Snow Country is a plateau. It does not concern itself with culminations and terminations. Instead, it maintains the middle. The novel can suggest "vastness and enormity" because it is vast and enormous. Its "amorphous strings" and "rivers of sensation" can connect and reconnect to infinity so that any attempt to contain the intersections will explode.

Finally, the intersection of *Snow Country* with "Gleanings from Snow Country" overlays the aesthetic map with a historical map. One of the "abstruse themes" of the novel is the theme of change. The most basic of interpretations will situate snow country as traditional Japan - the Japan of the past - and Shimamura as representational of the Japan of the present - the new Japan rooted in the cities and tinged with the modern temper. Shimamura, a man of the present, falls in love with the past. What Shimamura discovers, however, is that the

past can only be visited, not permanently ensconced in his life. Those brief visitations should serve as intersections that open up the world for him. They should bring into view new worlds to be surveyed and mapped. Yet, for Shimamura, visits with the past pose the danger of causing him to lose himself. Shimamura contemplates his visits to Komako, and he realizes that "He stayed not because he could not leave Komako not because he did not want to."[45] As two threads intersecting, Shimamura and Komako cannot be reduced to a simple duality. The nature of their relationship is not either/or. Shimamura thinks that he stays with Komako because "He had simply fallen into the habit of waiting for those frequent visits."[46] Yet, this third choice is not "simple," for it involves a host of reasons and motivations. For Shimamura, his visits to Komako construct an assault, and "the more continuous the assault became, the more he began to wonder what was lacking in him, what kept him from living as completely."[47] The more he visits the past, the more he feels that he is missing something in his life. Shimamura is not able to effectively negotiate his relationship to the past.

Similarly, "Gleanings from Snow Country" is a visit to the past that is the novel. However, there is effective negotiation between "Gleanings from Snow Country" and *Snow Country*. The fact that the novel precedes the short story is a variation that liberates the standard relationship between novel and short story. This sequence also suggests that the past is alive in the present but is a much smaller part of life. "Gleanings from Snow Country" allows the reader to revisit not only *Snow Country* but also the history of Japan. What this means, then, is that the modern Japanese man or woman does not have to become the alienated specter that the age seems to demand.

Instead, he or she can be in constant flux, moving from Modernist icon to traditional snow country citizen to feudal court denizen at will. The reader can be Shimamura or Komako or Yoko depending on the assemblages made. Thus, the connection between the short story and the novel maps history and its changes as well as the reader's position in that ever changing history.

In conclusion, reading *Snow Country* as a rhizomatic text situates the novel as the multiplicity that it is. Trying to write about the novel proves to be as meandering as the "amorphous strings of text" mentioned earlier, for interpretations clash and spring from each other. The way the novel maps geography and political and aesthetic discourses creates a plane of consistency where the number of interactions between constantly moving threads and lines is more important than the depth of these interactions.[48] This is not to say that depth is not important, only that depth (meaning) is contingent upon the interaction. So, Shimamura interacting with Komako during his first visit to snow country is different from Shimamura interacting with Komako during his second and third visits. Shimamura's observation that "Everything is broken to little bits" reflects the plurality that exists within the novel and, as interiority merges into exteriority, without.[49] I did not account for every intersection or mapping that this novel fosters, nor did I try. To do so would have worked against the multiplicity. Such writing would have tried to contain the novel by accounting for every relationship in it, and that would have been an ideological move. This novel is not overly concerned with disavowing or reaffirming power, or gender politics, or other brands of discourse. Instead, it concerns itself with establishing a multiplicity in which the reader

can find himself/herself in many guises and positions. The novel works to give the reader some sort of agency in navigating the multiplicity. The streams of consciousness evoked from Kawabata's pen twist, turn, stretch, tangle, separate, and move on, leaving behind a trail of mingling geographical, political, aesthetic, and historical maps that chart different, if not new, ways of thinking about the novel.

Notes

[1] Iraphne R. W. Childs, "Japanese Perception of Nature in the Novel *Snow Country,*" *Journal of Cultural Geography* 11.2 (1991): 2.

[2] Ibid. 2-3

[3] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Rhizome," *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1987) 3.

[4] Ibid. 4.

[5] Ibid. 4.

[6] Ibid. 21-2.

[7] Ibid. 5.

[8] Yasunari Kawabata, *Snow Country*, trans. Edward G. Seidensticker (New York: Perigee, 1957) 3.

[9] Childs, 3.

[10] Kawabata, *Snow Country*, 9-10.

[11] Yasunari Kawabata, *Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself: the 1968 Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech*, trans. Edward G. Seidensticker (Palo Alto: Kodansha International Ltd, 1968) 64.

[12] Patrick J. Moore, "The Edge of Darkness: A Study of *A Thousand Cranes* by Yasunari Kawabata," *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology* 8 (Aug. 1987): 201-2.

[13] Edward G. Seidensticker, Introduction, *Snow Country*, by Yasunari Kawabata (New York: Perigee, 1957)v.

[14] Ibid. v-vi.

[15] Kawabata, *Snow Country*, 50.

[16] Ibid. 150.

[17] Ibid. 6.

[18] Ibid. 11.

[19] Ibid. 11.

[20] Ibid. 7.

[21] Ibid. 9.

[22] Deleuze and Guattari, 4.

[23] Kawabata, *Snow Country*, 24.

[24] Ibid. 25.

[25] Ivan Morris, ed., Introduction, *Modern Japanese Stories: An Anthology* (Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle, 1962) 21.

[26] Kawabata, *Snow Country*, 25.

[27] Ibid. 25.

[28] Ibid. 25.

[29] Ibid. 25.

[30] Ibid. 25.

[31] Ibid. 18.

[32] Ibid. 18.

[33] Ibid. 19.

[34] Ibid. 71.

[35] Kawabata, *Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself*, 41.

[36] Kawabata, *Snow Country*, 90.

[37] Deleuze and Guattari, 10.

[38] Kawabata, *Snow Country*, 130.

[39] Ibid. 127-8.

[40] Thom Palmer, "The Asymmetrical Garden: Discovering Yasunari Kawabata," *Southwest Review* 74.3 (1989): 397.

[41] Quoted in Palmer, 397.

[42] Deleuze and Guattari, 15.

[43] Palmer, 400.

[44] Ibid. 393.

[45] Kawabata, *Snow Country*, 154.

[46] Ibid. 154-5.

[47] Ibid. 155.

[48] Deleuze and Guattari, 9.

[49] Kawabata, *Snow Country*, 118.

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